

#1 The Importance of Your Reputation (A Good Name)

November 29

I'm going to start tonight by reading you a list of names... (picture on the screen)

- Christopher Columbus (sailed the ocean) / Alexander the Great (conqueror) / Adolf Hitler (Nazi reich) / Benedict Arnold (betrayal) / Richard Nixon (cheater)
- Mother Teresa (kindness) / Martin Luther King, Jr. (change) / Oprah Winfrey (generous) / Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) / Taylor Swift (artist) / Walt Disney (Disney world - creative) / Dora the Explorer (getting lost) / The Wright Brothers (flying) / Bill Gates (money) / J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter) / Sherlock Holmes (detective) / Abraham Lincoln (President) / Anne Frank (courage) / Princess Diana

[Perhaps could read the name, then go back and read the word associated with it...]

Now all these names I read... They all are people we know. Most of us. Maybe you didn't associate the same word that I did with all of them... But I would guess you had some word or thought associated with each of these people... **Probably pretty close.**

Reputations are attached to our name.

There is a reputation attached to your name. There is a reputation attached to my name.

All of these people have **a reputation**... Many of these have been dead for years. Many of these will still live for years. Some of these people are completely made up.

The reputation for many of these is the reputation they wanted to have. The reputation for *some* of these is probably *not* the reputation they *really* wanted (Nixon).

We're starting a 3 week series tonight that is entitled, "reputation". You might be familiar with this title "reputation." Possibly the most popular singer in the world — Taylor Swift — just released her 6th album named **reputation**.

This album broke records within the first week of sales... Taylor Swift - *Reputation* - 1.238 million. After only 4 days of its release, reputation became the most sold album in the US this year...

The ideas of *reputation* is in front of a lot of people's minds — perhaps many of you have thought a lot about your reputation recently because of this.

It's important to talk about things that are *current and applicable* to teenagers.

I think most all of us wonder about "our reputation" while we are teenagers.

So... What is a reputation? I googled this... It is "The beliefs or opinions that are **generally** held about someone or something" / "**a widespread belief** that someone or something has a particular habit or characteristic"

Solomon — man who asked God for wisdom and he got it! — says in one of his proverbs,

Proverbs 22.1 "A **good name is to be chosen rather than great riches**, and favor is better than silver or gold."

There are *lots of angles* we can take with regard to your reputation. **But tonight in our lesson AND in our cocoon discussions, we want to focus on the importance of a reputation.** Because maybe there are times — and I don't know about you — where we feel like we might not care about our reputation — we might not care what others think of us...

I want us to look at the story of Daniel for just a few moments. Do you remember what Daniel is usually remembered for? What's his reputation? [Typically, we think of Daniel and his surviving the Lion's den.]

I want us to especially notice the events surrounding Daniel being thrown in the Lion's Den. Daniel is thrown into a den full of lions in Daniel chapter 6.

In Daniel chapters 1-4, Daniel interprets a couple of dreams for Nebuchadnezzar — builds his reputation with Nebuchadnezzar.

Then in Daniel chapter 5, there is this mysterious handwriting on the wall scene.

- Daniel 5.11-12 // In an instance where the king is scared to death — his color has changed — he doesn't know what to do... Daniel comes in to show the interpretation of the writing on the wall.
- 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.
10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 **There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.** In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 **because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel,** whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."
- Daniel 5.14 "I have heard of you"

- Daniel 5.16 "I have heard you can give interpretations and solve problems"
 - Daniel had already interpreted a couple of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. He had been promoted by Nebuchadnezzar, given high honor and great gifts, made ruler over the whole province of Babylon (2.48)
 - Makes interpretation for Belshazzar. Belshazzar dies. Darius becomes king. (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, now Darius...)

By the time we get to **Daniel chapter 6**, Daniel's reputation has already been *well* established in the kingdom...

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2 and over them **three high officials, of whom Daniel was one**, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 **Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps**, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

- Daniel 6 — first few verses are FULL of big reputation stuff for Daniel
- He was going to be made one of the 3 high officials (verse 2) // but then (verse 3) he became distinguished above all others because **an excellent spirit was in him** — what does this mean? "This may refer alike to his wisdom and his integrity — both of which would be necessary in such an office"
- Integrity is another word we could associate with reputation.
- A lesson for us: **Let's have high integrity.** Let's have a good name.

Well, The other high officials were *not* so happy that Daniel was the one getting all the attention — attention he doesn't really seek after — so **they try to find a complaint against him**. But his reputation is flawless! "No error or fault found in him". No blemishes in his past...

They *tried* to find something that damaged Daniel's brand — his image. But they couldn't because Daniel lived life the right way.

Another lesson: **Let's live so that "no error or fault can be found" in us.**

- (verse 5) So they decide they have no choice but to cause him to do something wrong... **Choose God or Choose the king.**
- [Paraphrase the following verses — They established a law that said no one should "make petition" to any God or man for 30 days. // They knew this would cause a problem for Daniel... Daniel would pray to God daily, he was known for doing such... So, the other leaders thought they cause Daniel to "do wrong" toward God or "do wrong" towards the king... Forcing Daniel to **Choose God or Choose the King**]
- Another lesson: **When faced with the decision of God or King, let's choose God.**
- Daniel upholds his moral integrity and maintains his reputation of following God. He continues to go into his room and pray to God, which violates the law the other leaders had just made...
- That means Daniel is thrown into the lion's den (verse 16)
- We look down then to verse 19.

- 19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, **whom you serve continually**, been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!
- Daniel survives the lion's den! An incredible act that displays the awesome power of God... But did you see what the King said in reference to Daniel? He recognizes that Daniel is ultimately faithful to God over King... He says, "has your God, **whom you serve continually**, been able to deliver you!?" // The king has heard of Daniel's allegiance and has seen Daniel's allegiance to God first-hand...
- Daniel's reputation has made a tremendous impression on the King...

22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

- (Verse 22) No harm because he had a "blameless" reputation before God and before the king
- (Verse 26) And in verse 26... Because of Daniel's actions and reactions to maintain his allegiance to God, Darius' heart was changed...
- 25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to **tremble and fear before the God of Daniel**,
for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.
- Another lesson: **Your reputation can change hearts**. Your reputation can have such an impact on others... It can open the door for you to help others... Your reputation can make a way for someone's life to change...
- Daniel's reputation changed the heart of the king... But it also changed the direction of the nation.

shut it down

If Daniel doesn't have this good reputation, he isn't given the opportunity to become ruler over all.

If Daniel doesn't have this good reputation, he isn't given this chance to prove his faith.

If Daniel doesn't have this good reputation, he doesn't have this influence on the king. (change hearts)

If Daniel doesn't have this good reputation, the king's heart would have probably remained the same.

Your reputation is important. My reputation is important. And it's important that we live in ways *NOW* that help build our good reputation...

If you're the only Christian someone will ever meet, your reputation is important.

Protecting Your Reputation

Tonight I want to start by going a little video game nerd on ya. If you're not a gamer, stay with me because I promise it's got an interesting point.

A little less than a month ago, a company called "EA" (Electronic Arts) was set to release a highly anticipated video game called "Star Wars Battlefront 2." By and large the gaming community was pretty pumped about this, and rightfully so, because by all accounts it was going to be an awesome, beautiful, expansive game.

Plus it's a Star Wars game, and the timing is really appropriate given that a new movie is about to be released. Is anybody else excited about this?!?

Well, everything was great until players discovered just before the game was released, that the game would feature microtransactions. In game purchases. In other words, the more money you spend the in the game the further you can get in the game.

Translation: EA is greedy and thereby punishes players that are not willing to spend more and more money into the game. It's more than just paying for the game one time.

Needless to say this made players very upset, and needless to say they took to Reddit to complain. There were so many comments and the outcry was so bad, that EA actually publicly responded to the players' concerns.

Well, the players didn't like what EA had to say. In fact, EA's response to the players concerns that they gave about three weeks ago, received 673,000 down votes on Reddit, making it the most disliked comment on Reddit history, and it wasn't even close. The 2nd most disliked post in Reddit history is around 23,000.

And so here's EA developing this video game, that is getting some terrible publicity over a Star Wars game, and here's where it gets interesting...remember, we're talking about protecting an image.

EA is making a Star Wars game but what company owns Star Wars?

Disney. Now why would Disney step in?

This isn't the kind of publicity or attention that Disney wants to bring to their cash cow that is Star Wars. So Disney stepped in and as of now EA has removed microtransactions from the game, and there is no timetable on exactly when, or even if, they will return.

Power to the players.

Again, why would Disney step in? They have an image to protect, a brand, a reputation, and they can't afford to have someone mess it up for them.

Large companies have an entire department devoted to public relations. Why? To make sure they maintain a proper image to the public.

If you are good enough to play in the NFL, guess what? You yourself become a brand, and you cannot afford to harm your image. Your pay grade depends on it.

Ask Johnny Manziel how that turned out for him. A guy loaded with talent but had such a terrible image that he's not the league anymore.

Tiger Woods hurt his image and he lost all of his contracts with Gatorade and Gillette and AT&T.

Why? Because it became bad for their image/their brand to even be associated with his image.

Turn on the news right now, and every single day it seems like there's another studio executive or Hollywood actor or somebody in Washington that's being accused of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Louis CK / Bill Cosby / Harvey Weinstein / Bill O'Reilly / Roy Moore / Kevin Spacey.

There is a lot riding on your image.

Thankfully you don't have to hire a publicist to have a good reputation. Thankfully the Bible has a lot to say about your image and what you can do to protect it.

How can you protect your reputation? This all kinds out of Ephesians 5 tonight.

I. Focus on **purity**.

1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children **2** and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **3** But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. **4** Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

As we begin on this point tonight, I need to confess to you that I've made plenty of mistakes in my life. I've done things that have hurt my image, and I hate it, but I know myself well enough to know that I'll make mistakes again when it comes to my image and my reputation.

I've done things I shouldn't have done, I've said things I shouldn't have said. I've done some really stupid things in my lifetime, and so this class is sort of hard for me to do, because I haven't done everything the right way.

I wish I had done some things differently. And when I was dating I made some poor decisions and I wish I could go back and do some of those things differently.

I wish I had taken God's warnings more seriously.

Look at verse 3. Don't even let there be a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity. Why? Because those things are not proper for God's holy people.

Instead of asking: How close to the line can I get? Can I do this with my girlfriend and it not be wrong? Can I watch this movie? Can I go to this party? The Bible never said I couldn't!

You know, actually it does. God says, "Listen, if something has a hint of immorality about it, stay away from it."

We've got to stop looking for loopholes and start seeing the big picture of being God's holy people. It's about purity and holiness.

Have you noticed how even in nature there are some things that God gives us hints about?

-Oh, look. What a beautiful creature. Maybe I should pet it. No. You don't pet a rattlesnake. Ok, this dude is making all kinds of noise and it looks terrifying. God's giving you a hint.

-Look at this guy. Hmmm...he's really cute. I think I should give him a hug.

-Oh what a beautiful cliff. I'm going to try to avoid falling off of that.

If there is a hint of immorality about it, avoid it. God says, what? Don't even let there be a hint.

If a girl dresses a certain way, she's giving you a hint. Ladies, if a guy talks a certain way, he's giving you hint. If he treated the last girl he dated like trash, he's giving you a hint about the kind of guy he is.

God wants us to protect our reputation by keeping our pure identity in mind.

Number two, how can you protect your reputation?

2. Surround yourself with the right **people**.

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[e] **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. **7** Therefore do not be partners with them.

Verse 7 is interesting. Do not be partners with them. Who is them? Look back in verse 6. It's those who are disobedient. Those who disobey God. Who don't care about doing the right thing or what God has to say.

Sometimes it's fair, sometimes it's not, but your image has a whole lot to do with who you hang out with. You can like it or you can hate it, but it won't really change it: you are judged for the people you associate with.

You want to protect your image. Be careful about who you run with. Be careful who you date.

There are some girls that have a certain kind of reputation, just as there are guys that have a certain reputation. And you know who they are. And you know what people say about them.

I'll tell you a secret, 99 times out of 100, they earned that reputation. You don't have to go on a date with that person to know that he or she is bad news.

They have a reputation. And so do you. And if you want to protect it, you've got to surround yourself with the right people.

3. Practice **precaution**.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

NKJV: walk circumspectly. (**15** See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise...) It means all the way around it. Survey the area carefully. Walk all the way around it.

Before you even get into a situation, you need to consider, is this a good place for me to be? It's it really in my best interest to go to this place and be around this?

Do any of y'all remember Pacman Jones?

After headline number 32 of his shenagigans as a Titan, there had to be a time where his publicist (and there's a full time job for you) said "Hey, Pac-Man, you think maybe not go to the strip club tonight?"

Bad things happen when you're in bad places.

Oh be careful little feet where you go. Oh be careful little eyes what you see. Oh be careful little heart who you trust. For the Father up above is looking down in love...I sort of forgot about that song because it's a kids song, but I sort of like it. The Father up above is

looking down in love. Not ready to blast you with a lightning bolt.
He's looking after us because He loves us.

I used this analogy recently but I'll use it again...why do parents with small children put up baby gates in their houses? To keep them from busting their heads open.

Interns...

Close with the words of Solomon. Proverbs 22:1 says "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold."

In Cocoons

—Read Proverbs 7:6-27

1. If he had been focused on purity...
2. If he had had more concern for the type of person. He threw sense and reason to the wind.
3. He used no precaution. Instead he begins his wander into the streets.

6 At the window of my house

I looked down through the lattice.

7 I saw among the simple,

I noticed among the young men,
a youth who had no sense.

8 He was going down the street near her corner,
walking along in the direction of her house

9 at twilight, as the day was fading,
as the dark of night set in.

10 Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

11 (She is unruly and defiant,
her feet never stay at home;

12 now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks.)

13 She took hold of him and kissed him
and with a brazen face she said:

14 “Today I fulfilled my vows,
and I have food from my fellowship offering at home.

15 So I came out to meet you;
I looked for you and have found you!

16 I have covered my bed
with colored linens from Egypt.

17 I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

18 Come, let’s drink deeply of love till morning;
let’s enjoy ourselves with love!

19 My husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.

20 He took his purse filled with money
and will not be home till full moon.”

21 With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.

22 All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer[a] stepping into a noose[b]

23 till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.

24 Now then, my sons, listen to me;
pay attention to what I say.

25 Do not let your heart turn to her ways
or stray into her paths.

26 Many are the victims she has brought down;
her slain are a mighty throng.

27 Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death.

I. What are some things you can do to proactively protect your image?

I. Tonight’s lesson has been about protecting your image. I’m going to give you three scenarios

Scenario #1: You’re at a friend’s house and they want to watch a rated “R” movie that you know has some stuff in it that you don’t have any business watching.

Scenario #2: You hear about a party going on this weekend at someone’s house and a lot of your friends really want to go, but you know that there’s going to be a lot of things going down at the party that aren’t going to be good.

Scenario #3: A guy and a girl fall in love. They aren't married yet but they are in love and decide to move in together.

Verses to keep handy, Cocoon Leaders.

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity,” (Eph.5:3)

Ephesians 5 would be a great passage to study... (vs.3, 7, 15)

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

2. What are some things you can do to proactively protect your image?

3. Think back on a time where you might've damaged your image. Is there anything you could do or should do to try to make it right? (Sadly, sometimes the answer may be no. There are some things we can't undo, but the good news is, God can fix what's broken. In fact He specializes in the broken. He can take away our sins, and He can make us new. He can rebrand our image.

*Mention that next week we are going to talk about rebranding your image. Maybe you've done some things and you're not very proud of where your image is right now...

#3 Rebranding Your Reputation

[open showing Dominoes video (end about 2.35)] // WHO LIKES PIZZA? Jen and I have been trying to hit up a different pizza place each month...

I like pizza. I like good pizza. Some people don't care whether the pizza is good or not — I do.

Within the last few years, apparently, lots of people thought Dominoes' pizza was not very good. In fact, they became known **for having sub-par pizza**. [Some of you might really like Dominoes pizza, but a good portion of this country thought it wasn't very good.]

"pizza was cardboard" // "processed cheese!" // my favorite: "microwave pizza is far superior!"

If your business is pizza, **you don't want to be known for selling bad pizza**.

So, what did they decide to do about it?

Some of you might go off to college and major in marketing — you can have a career in knowing how to market a company — in the marketing world, there is something called your "brand". And, your 'brand' in the marketing world is very, very important. // You want to have good branding.

Your *brand* is developed (built up) by advertisement, quality, how your product is promoted and portrayed — your brand is your reputation. Your brand is very important...

[picture and quote] Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, said this...

Your brand is what others think when you're not in the room. -**Jeff Bezos** (founder of Amazon)

We've been looking at this idea of "reputation". // We've talked about 2 things so far in the series: importance of your reputation and protecting your reputation/image.

If I asked you what Christians would want to be known for, we would probably say these things: kind / loving / easy to talk to / get along with others / easy to be around / smiling / friendly / goes beyond what's asked.

sometimes we don't have the reputation we want

But *sometimes*, what we would like to be known for is *not* what we're known for. Sometimes we're known for doing things we wish we weren't known for doing.

You could be known for living the wrong way consistently.

You could be known for something you did one time, and it has stuck with your name.

You could be known for something you said one time, and it has stuck with your name.

The truth is, sometimes we have a reputation that we don't like. Sometimes we're known for doing things that God doesn't like.

What am I getting to? It could very well be the case there are people in this room who feel this way... It might be that your reputation is *not* what you want...

Sometimes, we need to rebrand our reputation.

So... what do you do? How do you rebrand your reputation? // Turn with me to Luke 19.

zaccheus // the tax collector who didn't like what he was known for, so he did something about it

Gonna start with reading verses 1 and 2.

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a **chief tax collector and was rich.**

It says in verse 2 that Zaccheus was the chief tax collector and was rich. This verse is loaded (is rich) with deep and applicable information. **First**, this city Jesus is walking through -- Jericho -- was a very wealthy and important town of the day. It lay in an ideal location in Jordan river valley, it was world-renowned for its balsam grove rose gardens... Many called it the "City of Palms" -- Josephus called it a "divine region". It was a wealthy place. All of this came together to make Jericho one of the greatest taxation centers in Palestine.

Second, Zaccheus was a tax collector in Jericho. If you were a tax collector in *Jericho*, you were very much "well off". And not just a tax collector, but he happened to be the *chief tax collector*. Some here might be familiar with tax collectors of the day. [For reference on tax-collector, Luke 5.27-32?]

Tax collectors like Zaccheus were hated among the Jews. Why was were they hated? Often with tax collectors, they were Jews who betrayed their people by going to work for the Roman government, collecting taxes. They would have an amount of taxes they were required to collect according to the Romans — but what they would end up doing is collecting more than the required tax amount. They would cheat the people and keep the extra for themselves...

Zaccheus was a man who had reached the top of his profession — "chief tax collector" — it could be the case that **he was the most hated man in the district...**

What a tremendous challenge Zaccheus was facing, as a man despised by the people of his town. An outcast in his city. To change his reputation would be a big task.

Are you familiar with the grinch? [picture of the Grinch] Story of bad, bad, bad man. not happy with where he's at. Wants something more. that change is tough. it is a test.

Like the Grinch stole everybody's gifts, Zaccheus was known for stealing everybody's money. Grinch was once a member of the community — zaccheus was too. Both were outcast.

Let's keep going.

3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

In verse 3, we learn that Zaccheus was seeking for Jesus. Though he was despised and rejected by men, he was reaching out for the love of God. He was "seeking to see who Jesus was"...

Now, Jesus was a friend of sinners and tax collectors... In the previous chapter (18), Jesus tells the parable of the tax collector and Pharisee praying in the temple. In chapter 5 of Luke, Jesus reaches out to Levi (Matthew) and asks him to "Follow Me." He goes on to dine at Levi's house with a crowd of tax collectors and sinners...

And perhaps these are the very reasons that this outcast, most hated man in town, Zaccheus, decided to climb a tree and look for Jesus. He was curious.

First thing: be willing to look for Jesus. If you're looking anywhere else, you're not going to find what you need to find.

3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and **climbed up into a sycamore tree** to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

A lot can be said about climbing a tree. It takes effort. It takes trust. It takes mental stability / physical stability. It takes strength to pull yourself up.

We say, "Going out on a limb" when someone is taking a risk. It's dangerous. If you don't know what you're doing, it could come back to bite you.

I want to tell this story to hopefully illustrate my point: My wife Jennah and I were eno-ing (hammocking — show a picture) one time in the Cane Creek Wildlife Refuge. Q: How many here like to ENO? [Picture to help explain.] We each had a hammock on two of these limbs beside each other. The way we've strung them up, we're actually hanging OVER this shallow creek.

At one point, I thought *for some reason* that I would stand on the branch that both ends of Jennah's hammock was hanging from. Essentially, I put all my weight on that limb. ... [Dramatically] In doing so, it caused that limb Jennah was hanging from to break. To snap completely. All the while, Jennah is in her hammock — she has now fallen from the limb in her hammock *into* the ice cold creek. Of course, this threw us both in shock. I jumped down to save Jennah from the calm current! Understandably so, she is shaking from the surprise events that have happened...

There was shock. There was surprise. It was risky — and the risk proved true.

It's risky stepping out on a limb...

I did a lot of climbing when I was younger. I did a lot of testing branches to see how much weight one would be able to hold. THIS: I thought I was okay out on that limb... It's risky stepping out on a limb... It's challenging. It's dangerous, physically and for Zaccheus it was a dangerous socially.

Zaccheus was a short man. But he climbed that sycamore tree to *get a different perspective*. He climbed that tree *to see what he was doing wrong*. He climbed that tree *to see what he needed to change*.

I say all this about climbing trees because...There might be a tree in your life that needs climbing. // It could be the case, that you need to climb a tree. To get a different perspective. To look for Jesus. To seek Him out.

Be willing to look for Jesus.

Second thing: Be willing to listen to Jesus.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

It's unbelievable to the people that Jesus — the Son of God — would want to eat with sinners. But Jesus eats with sinners.

6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

Something that sticks out to me in this passage is seeing Zaccheus receive Him joyfully.

Zaccheus — the one who has all those bad things going for him, who has all those bad friends, who has all those bad habits, bad reputation... // He comes down the tree, not in a bad mood, not disgruntled that Jesus wants to talk about what he's done wrong... He comes down the tree with joy.

Even though Zaccheus is about to make some serious lifestyle changes — he is receiving Jesus joyfully.

Okay, what does that say for us?

In our listening, it's good to be excited. To have some motivation. Being a Christian should not be something that's *boring*. Be excited to dive into a passage of scripture. Be excited to be here tonight! Be excited to do something for somebody. Be excited to walk with a smile on your face!

What I'm saying, and what Zaccheus' example shows us, if you want to change your reputation, you need to be willing to look and listen to Jesus, but you also need to have joy because of what Jesus can do.

I can't help but think about what is going through Zacchaeus' mind... He has to have heard about the healings, the raising from the dead, the mass production of loaves and fishes, the teachings... He has to know the potential power that Jesus has!

And if anybody can help Zacchaeus know how to change his reputation, it's Jesus!

1 Peter 5 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

In changing a reputation, it's wise to see what kind of thing Jesus would want us to be known for. This leads us to the last thing...

Third thing: sometimes we have to be willing to confront our reputation / the people we hurt / we have a bad reputation. The people we affected. The people who don't have a pretty image of us. // But Will, this is embarrassing... Yeah, for a few moments. But some really good things will come of it. Be willing to do something to create a change. // "I have to admit that I'm wrong!?" Be willing to admit you're wrong and you're willing to do something to make it right!

8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, **the half of my goods I give to the poor.** And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, **I restore it fourfold.**" 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

Okay, so we gotta look to Jesus. We gotta listen to Jesus. But what do you need to do with those who think of your bad reputation?

[Some of you will talk about this in cocoons...] But when you've hurt somebody with words, you go to them and say "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?" If you've got a reputation for disobeying you Parents, decide for yourself that you're going to be different— "mom, dad, I'm sorry I've disobeyed you. I don't want to do that anymore." If you've hurt a friend through your actions - you didn't say anything but you pushed them away, you acted like you didn't know them, you said things to other people about them - true or not, say "hey can we talk? Can we fix what's going on?"

Something I've learned — Going to that person and saying "I'm sorry, I think I did something that hurts you. And I didn't mean to do that." (Situation with Mark in high school. Tot calling just this Sunday apologizing for our friendship thinning out.)

And it might take more than words! It'll probably take a lot more than words. **Words hurt a lot faster than they heal.** And you know what? You can't just say I'm sorry and keep living the same way toward your friend. Or your parents. You have to change the way you live.

If Zaccheus had given back fourfold and given to the poor BUT kept living the same way as a dirty rotten tax collector, who would say his reputation changed? NO ONE. Because he kept doing the same things as before. // If Domino's has kept making the same kind of pizza that tasted like cardboard, even though they're making new buildings and changing what they say, who would say they're pizza is better? NO ONE. They would still be doing what they did before. So we can use our words to start the mending process but it's going to take repeated consistent lifestyle to change our reputation.

Look for Jesus // Listen to Jesus // Confront your reputation

So I ask, what are you known for?

We're gonna end with this: Solomon — man who asked God for wisdom and he got it! — says in one of his proverbs,

Proverbs 22.1 "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold."

Sometimes we need to rebrand our reputation.