

the Boss of me

Study Five The Boss' Reputation



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Introduction & Review

We have been studying for the past few weeks about a mindset built upon the proper understanding of Christ's rightful POSITION over His creation. As Creator, and as Savior, He not only is the owner of me, He is the BOSS of me. And therefore, I do not own the things that are in my life, I am simply performing as the MANAGER of the things that God has entrusted to me. And until I see myself as a MANAGER and stop acting as the boss of me, I will not experience the fulfillment, the blessing, and the protection in my life that Christ offers to the believer who is living out Christ's teaching on this subject of stewardship.

IN PREVIOUS weeks we have looked at several of the Boss' assets that He permits us to manage.

The first asset the Boss let's us manage is the **RELATIONSHIPS** we are a part of throughout our lives. We concluded from Scripture that our relationship with God and our relationships with people are INSEPERABLY LINKED. I can not seek closeness with God while harboring animosity toward others. I can not seek forgiveness with God if I am unwilling to extend it to others. Our horizontal and vertical relationships are connected and directly impact and influence each other.



The second asset that the Boss let's us manage is the **TIME** each one of us has been given to manage. We learned from several passages that Christians must remember we've been given a **FIXED AMOUNT** of time for the **PURPOSE** of **GROWING** God's eternal Kingdom. Christians must spend God's time carefully in order to maximize its eternal effect for His Kingdom.

A third asset that the Boss let's us manage is His **MONEY**. And while many Americans can, could, and do use various money management services, the focus of our study regarding money was focused on preventing Christians from having a **SELFISH IMBALANCE** in the way they spend God's money. We learned from Scripture that beyond financially supporting their local church ministry, Christians can prevent a selfish **IMBALANCE** when spending God's money if they **WATCH** for opportunities to spend money that they've set aside for themselves -- on someone **ELSE**. It sounds like a simple practice but it can help change the tendency that many Christians have when it comes to spending God's money as if it were their own.

THIS WEEK we are going to talk about an asset that the Boss let's us manage that is less tangible than money but has a much greater eternal impact whether we are aware of it or not. *To get our study going today, let's start out with a little Q & A.*

QUESTION: What do the following items have in common?

- Icons, logos
- Websites
- Senators, representatives, delegates
- Police, military
- Ambassadors
- Jesus Christ

ANSWER: The items above represent something or someone else.



Class Questions

- What do logos represent? **A company or organization.**
- How about senators and representatives, what or who do they represent? **Civilians. You and me.**
- Ambassadors? **Ambassadors represent a whole country.**
- Police and military? **Law enforcement / national sovereignty.**
- Who does Jesus represent? **God. In fact, He so perfectly represents God, Jesus is referred to as the exact representation of God into humanity. Jesus is called "the Word", the perfect expression of God who is Spirit, into our physical world. In the Greek language the word describing Jesus is *logos*; related to where our English word for the word *logo* comes from. (John 1:1)**

Representation, Marketing, and Image Companies worldwide spend billions of dollars annually on marketing. They have entire divisions of people devoted to shaping artwork and mottos, logos and icons, and marketing campaigns to create an **IMAGE** they want their customers to see. Much effort is put into website design and TV and print advertising. Think of how quickly they will drop an athlete or spokesperson for their company if there is some sort of scandal. *Why do they do this?*

Because the **IMAGE** that people get from whatever media they see or come in contact with, is what **SHAPES** their **OPINION** about that entire company or organization. The perception and subsequent conclusions that a potential consumer makes about a company influences their decision about whether or not they want to support that company by buying its products and/services; and/or if they want to be associated with it by wearing or using what they are selling.



Employee Training and Customer Satisfaction Likewise, companies spend vast quantities of their annual resources on employee training in order to improve CUSTOMER SERVICE SATISFACTION. Why? Companies do this because the INTERACTION that employees of a company have with customers can make or break the success of that company; and corporate executives know this. And this is why so much energy and capital is spent on CUSTOMER SATISFACTION and EMPLOYEE TRAINING.

Transition So what does all of this *marketing* and *customer satisfaction* stuff have to do with the Christian's management of the Boss' assets? Let's answer that question with another question.

- Who and/or what does every Christian REPRESENT? *God, and Christianity in general.*
- How do we know this? *Here's just one passage, listen to:*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. **18** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; **19** To wit [*even as*], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **20** Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. **21** For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- From this passage, do we all agree, that as a Christian, I have, and you have, the responsibility to represent Christ and Christianity well? *Yes, we're ambassadors for Him and His Kingdom.*

The principle is pretty clear: we are to REPRESENT Christ *and* Christianity well. If we do not, and we think we are only hurting our own reputation, we are mistaken because we are hurting Jesus Christ's REPUTATION and Christianity's REPUTATION as well.



Question

Image and Hypocrisy But whenever “how Christians appear” and their “image” is being addressed, we run the risk of only influencing the outside; of only changing our outer behavior. You know, “image control.” After all, it is easier to “go through the motions” of Christianity and “fake it”, than it is to let God actually *change our hearts* and *transform our lives* beyond just our outer appearance, right? But to be fair, Christians aren’t the only ones to have been accused of only maintaining an image. Jesus Christ accused the religious elite of His day, the Pharisees, of being hypocrites. He referred to them as polished tombs – their outside image looked beautiful but they’re hearts, the inside of them, was dead and decaying. (Matthew 23:27-28)

But the fear of becoming hypocrites does not release us from the truth that we ARE to have a certain image to the world because we DO represent Christ and His Kingdom.

So the dilemma Christians are faced with today is:

How can Christians maintain a good REPUTATION for Christ without becoming FAKE like hypocrites?

Transition In other words, what principle can we find from God’s “play book” that will help us stay on a mission of representing Him well without being hypocritical. There are many passages that address a Christian’s reputation but we will look at just one today. In fact, it is a continuation of Paul’s writing about how we are to represent Christ in found in **2 Corinthians 6**.



Passage

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

6:1 We then, as workers together [*co-workers*] with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain [*or for no purpose*]. **2**(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured [*helped*] thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) **3** Giving no offence [*Greek proskope meaning: "a reason to stumble, fall, or trip up"*] in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: **4** But in all things approving [*Greek sunistao meaning: "to exhibit, show, or display"*] ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, **5** In stripes [*beatings*], in imprisonments, in tumults [*instability, commotion*], in labours [*hardship*], in watchings [*literal: sleepless nights*], in fastings [*hunger*]; **6** By pureness [*literal: blamelessness*], by knowledge, by longsuffering [*or patience*], by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned [*or genuine*], **7** By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, **8** By [*literal word: through*] honour and dishonour, by [*through*] evil report and good report: [*understood: treated*] as deceivers, and yet true; **9** As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened [*disciplined*], and not killed; **10** As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Passage Question

1. From 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1, Paul explains that ALL Christians have the responsibility to be representatives for Jesus Christ and begs his readers not to accept God's grace to no purpose. *What does he mean?* People should not only accept the gospel for their own salvation but also represent God for the greater PURPOSE of growing His Kingdom.



2. From 2 Corinthians 6:3, what was Paul's prime objective in the way he lived and practiced ministry? *Paul's lifestyle and ministry work was performed in a way that would not "TRIP any one up" from accepting the good news about God's Kingdom.*
3. How does properly understanding the phrase "approving ourselves as ministers of God" in verse 6:4, affect a Christian's attitude about the image or reputation they maintain? *The phrase in the original Greek means to "exhibit" or "display" or "put out there" an image that clearly shows we REPRESENT God, not our own selves, and therefore our behavior should exhibit God-lieness.*
4. In verses 6:4-10, Paul used himself, and those traveling with him, as examples of maintaining a godly image. What two categories did Paul mention that could potentially throw any Christian off course with regard to protecting Christ's reputation? *The examples Paul used fell into two categories: CONFLICT WITH PEOPLE and ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES.*
5. Did Paul throw out his godly reputation when he was mistreated by *people*? *No.* How about when facing adverse *circumstances*? *No.*

Passage Summary



Christians must understand that their reputation really isn't *their* reputation but that it is God's **REPUTATION**. Whether we like it or not, we are constantly "marketing" for God, either positively or negatively. And there are two main sources of opposition that Christians must face when trying to protect a godly **IMAGE**: *people* and *circumstances*.

Transition Paul, and the Christians with him, showed that despite difficulties with people and extremely adverse circumstances, a **GENUINE** godly **IMAGE** before others *could* be maintained. *So what was their secret?*



Application

The answer is in the passage. We saw from 2 Corinthians 6 that the sources of opposition to maintaining a godly reputation could be distilled down into two basic categories: **CONFLICT WITH PEOPLE & ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES**.

Our proper management of a *previously* discussed asset will help us correctly manage *this* asset of God's reputation. Remember our study on MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS? Watch how the relationships study can help us MANAGE God's reputation.

Class Questions

- If I am at risk of throwing my godly reputation out the window because I am experiencing a conflict with another person, does Christ instruct me to fight for my agenda and position in the matter or even worse to close that person out of my life? **No**. Why? **The conflict I am experiencing is damaging my relationship with that person. Fighting to win my position will not restore the relationship nor will shutting the person out of my life restore the relationship.**
- If we have a damaged relationship with someone, what does Christ teach us to do? **Christ teaches His followers to seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness. Our relationship study focused on the connection between our relationship with God and our relationships with others. We learned that we can not seek closeness with God while harboring animosity toward others.**

So how does this help me to maintain a godly reputation?

Stay with me – don't miss this: Following this simple principle in dealing with relationships here on earth not only will maintain a Christ-like practice regarding human relationships but it actually **LOOKS** like how Jesus deals with people. When we **ACT** like Jesus by actually choosing to forgive and love others, we **LOOK** like Christ. We project God's **IMAGE** in the here and now. This is what Paul meant in verse 6 by **UNFEIGNED** love. It is **GENUINELY** extending forgiveness to actual people around us even when it is not deserved.



Okay, but this only addresses opposition to our godly image due to **CONFLICT WITH PEOPLE**. What about when we are tempted to throw the towel in on our Christian image when we face **ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES** in life?

Did **ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES** cause Paul and the others to forget about the Boss' reputation? **No**. So Paul didn't say, "Okay, I've had enough. This isn't worth it – I can't keep up this godly image anymore!" No, he didn't.

So what was Paul's secret in not letting **ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES** get him discouraged enough to throw away his Christian image?

We can see some clues to Paul's mindset in verses 2 and 7 of 2 Corinthians:

2(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured [**helped**] thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Paul quoted a verse from Isaiah 49 to the Corinthians that reminded them that God keeps His word and that He will rescue His people in their time of need. And in verse 7, Paul told the Corinthians how he battled against **FEELINGS** of discouragement by God's power by using the **TRUTH** of His word.

Paul's advice to us is simply this: take God at His word and trust He will help us in the time of need. If we can not exercise **TRUST** in our relationship with God, then our relationship with God is in disrepair and is in need of restoration.



So how can Christians today maintain a good **REPUTATION** for Christ without becoming **FAKE** like hypocrites?

The answer is this:

If Christians will seek to **TRUST** God amid all circumstances and truly seek and offer **FORGIVENESS** with others, then our **IMAGE** will genuinely represent Christ without hypocrisy.

Group Bonus Question

- How does hypocrisy enter into our Christian image in the first place? When our objective becomes maintaining a Christian image in and of itself and less attention is given to our relationships with God and others, then we are at risk of living the Christian life hypocritically.

Transition Okay, so where do we begin?

Call to Action

Here are some evaluation questions regarding our management of the Boss' reputation and how to review our progress before the Boss does.

How well am I managing the Boss' reputation?

1. Do I accept my role as a "marketing representative" for God's Kingdom? **Yes. No.**
2. Do I realize that I am ALWAYS "on duty" as Christ's representative? **Yes. No.**
3. Am I currently trusting God (*vertical relationship*) amid adverse circumstances to prevent "quitting" my job as His marketing rep? **Yes. No.**



4. Am I currently managing my relationships with others (*horizontal relationships*) with genuine forgiveness and love?

Yes. No.

5. What specific area(s) of my Christian image should be adjusted to better represent Jesus Christ? *Be specific and trust God to work change into your life at a pace that HE knows you can handle.*

Renewing Our Minds with Scripture Memory

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

2 Corinthians 6:3



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