

**HOW TO HAVE A GOD-HONORING CHARACTER:
AN EXPOSITION OF 3 JOHN**

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**3 John 9-14
Part 2**

I. INTRODUCTION:

In his book, *Rise and Shine*, Chuck Swindoll, offers the following observation and plea to Christians:

Ministry is a character profession. To put it bluntly, you can sleep around and still be a good brain surgeon. You can cheat on your mate and have little trouble continuing to practice law. Apparently, it is no problem to stay in politics and plagiarize. You can be a successful salesperson and cheat on your income tax. But you cannot do those things as a Christian or as a minister and continue enjoying the Lord's blessing. You must do right in order to have true integrity. If you can't come to terms with evil or break habits that continue to bring reproach to the name of Christ, please, do the Lord (and us in ministry) a favor and resign.¹

One of those bad habits that find expression in our communities, churches, and pulpits is the personal quest for power. But those who pursue this sort of power, what are they actually pursuing?

Consider the words Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, in view of his experience under the rule of communism:

Power is a poison, well known for thousands of years. If only no one were able to acquire material power over others. But to the human being who has faith in some force that holds dominion over all and who is therefore conscious of his own limitation, power is not necessarily fatal... But for those, however, who are unaware of any higher, power is a deadly poison. For them there is no antidote.²

Transition

- A. One known such character in 3rd John who is poisoning himself, his reputation, and people that are in his sphere of influence on self-serving ambition is Diotrephes.

¹ Chuck Swindoll, *Rise and Shine*, 198.

² Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, cf. *Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, 32.

II. AN EXPOSITION OF 3 JOHN 9-14:
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A. Let's begin our study of Diotrephes by examining verses 9-10:

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.³

B. Immediately we are faced with the question, "What church was John referring to?"

1. We can't be entirely sure. It may very well be that both Gaius and Diotrephes attended the same church. In contrast, John goes on to say, "but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them." If Gaius was a leader, whether officially or non-officially in Diotrephes's church, it would have made sense for John to say, "Diotrephes, who loves to be first among you" rather than saying, "Diotrephes, who loves to be among them."
2. Why do I bring this up? For one, it very well could be that Diotrephes is in charge of one church and Gaius is of another. If they do both belong to the same church, then Gaius is disobeying Diotrephes but is obeying God.
3. If Gaius is a member of Diotrephes church, it seems that Gaius was perhaps unfamiliar with a letter that the apostle John wrote to Diotrephes, asking that they provide for these traveling missionaries and allow them to minister to his church.
4. So, we perhaps have two churches at odd with each other or we have one church with Diotrephes, who is ultimately disobeying God and Gaius, who is disobeying Diotrephes, but who is obeying God.

C. What do we know about Diotrephes?

1. Outside of this epistle we know nothing:

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.⁴

2. A professor from University of Aberdeen, Professor A.F. Walls, described Diotrephes this way:

A refractory person of over-weening ambition who would not recognize John the Elder, publicly attacked him, forbade the reception of his adherents, and, whether by formal excommunication or physical violence, excluded those who did receive them. Though the Elder's personal intervention

³The New King James Version. 1982 (3 Jn 9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴Ibid.

would eventually be decisive, the effect of his letters could be annulled by the present influence of Diotrophes (3 Jn. 9-10). It is not clear whether this was in virtue of a regular office (*e.g.* as an early monarchical bishop—*cf.* T. Zahn, *INT*, 3, pp. 374ff.) or by dominance of personality among his peers (*cf.* J. V. Bartlet, *JTS* 6, 1905, pp. 204ff.). For other imaginative reconstructions, *cf.* J. Chapman, *JTS* 5, 1904, pp. 357ff., 517ff.; B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, 1929, pp. 83ff.; C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, 1945, pp. 161ff.

From this passage we know the following:

3. He loved to have the preeminence among them (vs. 9); it is all about him.

If that was not enough...

4. He rejected the authority of the Apostle John (vs. 9), a disciple who was intimately associated with Jesus Christ, who ministered under Christ, who was loved by Christ, and one who came to experience the glorified Christ, both on earth and in heaven.

If that was not enough...

5. He rejected the opportunity to minister to traveling missionaries who needed their support (vs. 9)

Not only did he hinder them and hinder the Great Commission...

6. Diotrophes “*prated*” against them with malicious words (vs. 10)

The phrase, “*prating against us with malicious words*” can mean:⁵

- i. “In ridiculing us with his wicked tongue”
- ii. “How he is maliciously accusing me”
- iii. “Idle and mischievous talk against us”
- iv. “He lays baseless and spiteful charges against us;”
- v. “He maligns us with his foolish gossip”

In today’s world, we call it gossip and slander.

⁵ Looking more closely at these words, “prating” and “malicious” we recognize:

The word “prating” φλυαρέω (*phluareō*) has been interpreted to mean **talk nonsense**; unjustly accusing, spreading false charges, laying baseless charges, and also gossiping.⁵

The word “malicious” is translated from a Greek word for “evil.” This word has been used to refer to what is wicked, evil, bad, morally corrupt; it has been used to refer to the guilty, the result of an evil deed, to be sick, diseased, jealous, envious, and a crime, and evil that is legally chargeable.⁵

Not only did he speak maliciously against John and these ministers...

7. Diotrephes abused his power by forbidding people in his assembly who wanted to minister to them by threatening to expel them if they do.
 - a. By not offering hospitality to these traveling brethren, Diotrephes failed to demonstrate truth in action.
 - b. What is interesting is that we have a church leader, "Diotrephes was condemned not because he violated sound teaching regarding the person and nature of Jesus Christ but because his 'life' was a contradiction to the truth of the gospel."⁶
 - c. In fact, verse 10 states that John, who is coming to the church, will personally confront Diotrephes with what he has done.

Let's pause and consider what power hunger in our churches look like?

- A. For one it is not accepting those who we see as a threat to our own position. In the case of Diotrephes, he would not allow John or his followers anywhere near his church.
- B. It is resenting those who may share an opinion different than ours. Diotrephes knew that John was coming with a different message than what he was preaching. So, he was acting out that resentment.
- C. It is belittling those who instead need our encouragement. Diotrephes spoke malicious words against John and these missionaries.
- D. It is hurting those who need our help. Diotrephes refused to provide for these missionaries and forcing one's hand over members who sought to minister to these traveling missionaries.
- E. It is losing our cool when we no longer have control over a particular situation or position. Expelling people out of one's assembly for providing for these missionaries is losing one's cool.
- F. We feel the right to punish those who are not in agreement with our own views. Diotrephes felt like he had the authority to punish those who were not in agreement with his position
- G. The bottom line Diotrephes saw his own need for personal power to be greater than the needs of those who were followers of Jesus Christ. In other words, he totally disregarded the needs of others in exchange for the fulfillment of his own needs.

What a weak little man! He lost sight of who the Savior was. So busy building the pedestal he wanted to stand on when he should have been sitting at the footstool washing feet.

⁶Glenn W. Barker, "3 John," in *Hebrews-Revelation*, vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 375. John never raised the subject of heresy in 3 John directly.

8. Another way to look at the problem John is facing with Diotrephes is to closely consider the phrase in verse 9, “*will have nothing to do with us*”. Now this phrase is in present tense. So, it might be suggesting that this is not a one time single act of defiance but an enduring attitude he has against the Apostle John. If that is the case, then “Diotrephes was rejecting not merely his obligation to be hospitable to these missionaries, but John himself as elder.” In essence, the rejection of these missionaries was a way to scorn the authority of John. The real intent might be to use these traveling missionaries and his people as pawns to show contempt, once again, towards the authority of the Apostle John.
- a. I think this is affirmed if we look closer at verse 10.

¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.⁷

1. The phrase *and not content with that*, or “not satisfied with that” (*NEB*), or, as a new sentence, “But that is not enough for him” (*TEV*), ‘He doesn’t stop at that,’ ‘That is not the end of it,’ ‘That is not the only thing he does.’⁸

(He) himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.⁹

2. *(He) puts them out of the church.* This phrase, “To put out” means “to drive out,” “to expel,” more or less forcibly. The word may refer to official excommunication from the congregation, but it can also be taken in a less forceful sense. In the latter case it serves to indicate that Diotrephes stirred up the congregation against the persons in question, thus isolating them and curbing their influence.¹⁰

Why this enduring hostility to the apostle John?

9. There is a lot of debate in N.T. literature about what is the specific nature of the problem between Diotrephes and John. Why is Diotrephes treating John this way? Is the problem simply that Diotrephes was a “refractory person with an over-weening ambition?” Among all the views out there, let me give two views tend to prevail:

⁷*The New King James Version*. 1982 (3 Jn 9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸Haas, C., Jonge, M. d., & Swellengrebel, J. L. (1994), c1972). *A handbook on the letters of John*. UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (184). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁹*The New King James Version*. 1982 (3 Jn 9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰Haas, C., Jonge, M. d., & Swellengrebel, J. L. (1994), c1972). *A handbook on the letters of John*. UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (184). New York: United Bible Societies.

- a. **1st Major View:** Following the period of after the apostles, elder-bishops began to emerge, who enjoyed independent authority over their local congregations. Perhaps Diotrephes was on such leader, and one who coveted control. He may have even been the host of a house church in his home for some time and now coveted more influence. So some suggest that this enduring attitude against John is one he resented John extending his authority into an independent body of believers.
1. Related, some suggest that the issue is not about church authority, government and structure but that Diotrephes was a charismatic leader who held an office and was now enjoying a following. Perhaps he had usurped his power and it was the power of his personality that intoxicated him with dreams of more authority. If that is the case, then John is trying to limit Diotrephes dreams.
- b. **2nd Major View:** Still others say the problem is not about church authority but it had to do with doctrine. As evidenced in 1 and 2 John false teaching is creeping into the church. So, some look at Diotrephes as a rival missionary working in the church or a member that has been converted away from apostolic truth
10. Regardless whether the problem is church authority or doctrinal, in John's exhortation to Gaius in verses 1-12, which is nestled between this description of Diotrephes and a new person being introduced, Demetrius, we may summarize Diotrephes' reputation by saying that he imitated what was evil and not what was good, in contrast to Demetrius who imitated what is good: Look at verses 11-12:
- ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.**
- ¹² Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.¹¹**
- a. I find this command in verse 11 to be fascinating. If you agree with me that this admonition should not be seen in isolation from what he just mentioned about Diotrephes and what he is about to say about Demetrius, then consider the following:
1. John implies that it is possible that Gaius, a man who has a dynamic spiritual walk with God and whose Christian conduct is known, perhaps even all the way down to Jerusalem, to be ensnared by Diotrephes. Could it be possible that Gaius could

¹¹The New King James Version. 1982 (3 Jn 11-12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

TDNT:

The admonition of 3 Jn. 11: μή μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν, is general, but it stands in close relation to what precedes and follows. Gaius must not be ensnared by the Diotrephes who is denounced in v. 9f. He should follow the Demetrius who is praised in v. 12.

be turned against John to the point that he would imitate Diotrephes. Perhaps Diotrephes is such a mesmerizing person that even one as godly as Gaius could be drawn in. Regardless how it might be done, John exhorts Gaius not to imitate Diotrephes, but to imitate Demetrius, a man who is praised in verse 12.

2. I also find it interesting that John points to another man, Demetrius as one who is imitating what is good.
3. So, verses 11-12 point to the fact that we are not immune to being ensnared by someone else no matter who we are and that it is possible to imitate goodness.
4. But there is also another point I would like to make. John directs Gaius to Demetrius as an example as one to imitate.

11. But what does “*imitate*” mean?

μιμέομαι (*mimēomai*): vb.; **imitate, follow an example, use as a model.** To my knowledge this word occurs only 4 times in N.T. Listen to the other three times it is used:

- a. *2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9:*⁶ **But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.** ⁷ **For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;** ⁸ **nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,** ⁹ **not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.** ¹²
- b. *Hebrews 13:7:* **Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.**

12. So, Gaius is lovingly exhorted to imitate Demetrius. But why Demetrius? Who is he?

Consider verse 12:

¹² **Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.**¹³

¹²*The New King James Version*. 1982 (2 Th 3:6-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹³*Ibid.*

- a. First, Demetrius was a common Greek name and there are two people men mentioned by this name in the N.T.
1. In Acts 19:24, 38 a man named Demetrius, who was a silversmith of Ephesus, stirred up a riot again the Apostle Paul.
 2. Then there is this Christian whose witness is commended by the Apostle John here in verse 12.
 3. Some scholars wonder if Demas, a companion of Paul mentioned in Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:10 is the same Demetrius in verse 12. Others speculate if the silversmith converted and became Demetrius John commends here in verse. In other words, they are not two different people, but one and the same.¹⁴
 4. Who knows? But it would not surprise me because we serve an amazing God!
- b. The Apostle John offers a phenomenal testimony about Demetrius. What a reputation! John commends him for three things:

THE REPUTATION OF DEMETRIUS:

1. He has a good reputation among all those who know him.
2. His character and behavior are in harmony with the teachings of Christ and apostolic doctrine. In other words, he intimately lives out biblical truth by inward conformity and outward obedience.
3. He is personally associated with the Apostle John (not a bad person to know).

Interestingly, Gaius is exhorted to imitate, to mimic Demetrius.

- c. "Like Gaius, Demetrius is 'walking in the truth.' His life matches his confession. In Pauline terms, he manifests the fruit of the Spirit. In Johannine terms, he lives the life of love."¹⁵
- d. Here's a guy John exhorts Gaius to **imitate**:
1. Possess good reputation among all who know you.
 2. Intimately live out biblical truth by inward conformity and outward obedience.
 3. Have interpersonal relationships with godly people.

13. Returning to verse 11 we have this statement that is peculiar to John's writing style in the latter part of this verse. I think this phrase in verse 11 sheds further light on both Diotrefes and Demetrius:

¹⁴Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (270). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

¹⁵Barker, p. 376.

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

- a. What does John mean when he says, “***but he who does evil has not seen God.***”? Though some scholars differ with me on my interpretation of this statement, especially those who think 1 John offers tests of salvation rather than tests of fellowship, others would agree with my interpretation. But before I give you my interpretation let me clear away one particular question.
1. Was Diotrephes a Christian or a non-Christian? Some conclude he was a non-believer because of the evil fruit he was bearing. While he may have been doing evil deeds that statement itself does not conclusively prove that Diotrephes was an unbeliever. In John’s *First Letter*, he makes the statement that we all do evil deeds.
 2. If he was a non-believer, then why would John confront him about his behavior and not his need for salvation? Let me put it differently, if Diotrephes was unsaved he can’t help behaving the way he did; he is depraved possessing an unregenerate mind, heart, and will.

Does the Scripture not say...?

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ... Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenant of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. Ephesians 2:1-3, 12

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. Titus 3:3

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires

- b. So, Diotrephes did not need to be taken to task about his behavior, he needed to be saved. But if that is the case, why does John say what he does about him. If Diotrephes is unsaved, he can’t help it. Rather, I would think John would be grieved that he was unsaved and would have made mention of that fact to remind Gaius that Diotrephes needs salvation. Moreover, John would be grieved that an unsaved leader has gained so much power and influence over Christians. So, I disagree with those who don’t agree with me and agree with those who agree with me.

- c. I do not think their support is weighty. Rather, I believe that the weighty evidence favors the idea that Diotrephes was behaving as if he were unsaved. Here's why:
1. First, John makes comments about the behavior of Diotrephes in verses 9-10 in contrast to his commendation of the behavior of Demetrius in verse 12.
 2. Second, when this verse states, "**He who does good is of God, ⁵but he who does evil has not seen God**"-- it can't mean who does good deeds is a believer. Because we know a lot of good deeds atheists have done and can do.
 3. Third, we all know genuine believers (not me, of course 😊) who possess "over-weening ambition." So, we can't say that because they have done evil they have not seen God.
 4. What does harmonize best with not only John's terminology but the whole of Scripture, is to say this:
 - a. He who obeys reveals or reflects God and he who does evil does not reveal or reflect [manifest] God.¹⁶ The key to reflecting or revealing God is by intimately fellowshiping with Him. We call it abide. John's phrase, "of God" is used as a fellowship term, not a salvation term.
 - b. We are to abide in Him and He in us and when this takes place, we will not only reflect Jesus Christ, we will

¹⁶ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* on 1 John offers the following comments on 1 John 3:9-10 that are worth considering:

One who is born of God (cf. 2:29; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18) does not **sin** precisely **because God's seed remains in him**, and he cannot sin **because he has been born of God**. "God's seed" is His nature, given to each believer at salvation (John 1:13; 2 Peter 1:4). The point here is that the child partakes of the nature of his Parent. The thought of a sinless Parent who begets a child who only sins a little is far from the author's mind. As always, John dealt in stark contrasts. All sin is devilish (1 John 3:8); it does not stem from the believer's regenerate nature, God's seed, but the child of God cannot and does not sin. The explanation here is the same as that given in verse 6. The "new man" (or "new self"; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) is an absolutely perfect new creation. By insisting on this point, John was seeking to refute a false conception about sin. Sin is not, nor ever can be, anything but satanic. It can never spring from what a Christian truly is at the level of his regenerate being.

3:10a. Literally, the first phrase of this verse is, "By this are manifest **the children of God and the children of the devil**." The words "by this" probably refer back to the whole previous discussion. By sharply differentiating between sin and righteousness, John made plain the fundamental way in which God's children are manifest over against the children of the devil. The key to his idea is the word "manifest" in which the ideas presented in 2:29 and 3:1 are touched again. Because a child of God is sinless at the core of his being, he can never be "manifest" through sin as can a child of the devil. While an unsaved person can display his true nature through sin, a child of God cannot. When a Christian sins, he *conceals* who he really is rather than making it *manifest*. If the readers perceive someone doing real righteousness, then—but only then—can they perceive this action as a true product of new birth (2:29) and can thus behold God's love (3:1). This consideration is crucial to John's advancing argument.

imitate Him. But when we do not abide or be in fellowship with Christ, we will not bear spiritual fruit..

- d. This interpretation is affirmed when we turn to his earlier epistle: 1 John 3:6-9:

⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been ^oborn of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.¹⁷

Looking more closely at verse 6:

1. Sin can never come out of seeing and knowing God. It can never be a part of the experience of abiding in Christ. ***“No one who abides in Him sins”*** (v. 6a).¹⁸
2. In fact, sin is a product of ignorance and blindness toward God 6: ***“No one who sins has seen Him or known Him (vs. 6b).”***

In our struggle to come to terms with the phrase, “*seen Him, known Him*” as a form of fellowship, let’s drop into John’s culture. It seems odd to have expected anyone, save John himself, to have seen God. Why use this, “seen Him, known Him?” Back then, of course, the only way to have an interactive conversation was “face-to-face.” They couldn’t use the phrase, “I haven’t seen him but I talked to him on the phone everyday; he just e.mailed me this morning and texts me every hour. Only if someone had seen his loved one face-to-face could he claim intimate fellowship.

So, to use the term, “seen Him, known Him” means a daily interaction, a continual update on each situation.

- e. So John was not questioning or confronting Diotrephes salvation, but was affirming that Diotrephes’s conduct reflected the fact that he was not in intimate fellowship with the Lord. In other words, Diotrephes was not walking intimately with God, but was walking away from Him. As a result, Diotrephes was behaving as if he were unsaved.
- f. Gaius was ***to be*** careful to shun, to not mimic the practices of Diotrephes.¹⁹ Why make the appeal to imitate Demetrius and not Diotrephes if it does not mean that it was possible for Gaius to follow him. Surely by now Gaius is aware of the fact

¹⁷*The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Jn 3:6-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.\

¹⁸Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:894). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:914). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

that Diotrephes was not pursuing and promoting God's interests in intimacy; No he was a man who was pursuing his own interests and not that of God's.

- g. So it is with us. When we pursue sin by focusing on ourselves rather than God, we not only alienate our intimacy with God, we become a tool of the devil. But when we intimately abide in Christ, we do not do commit ourselves to evil deeds, we bear fruit. And this spiritual fruit is His work, His ministry. It is of God! In other words, when we are "of God," we are practicing godliness.

D. The apostle John ends his letter to Gaius by saying:

**¹³ I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;
¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.
Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name²⁰**

III. HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE? OR HOW TO HAVE A GOD-HONORED CHARACTER?

- A. When I began this expositional series on Third John the central question I posed after examining the reputations of Gaius and John was, "*What are you known for?*" In other words, "*what is your reputation?*" I also gave to you an interesting definition of the word "reputation" by Edgar Watson Howe. He said, "What people say behind your back is your standing in the community." But I want you to realize that while this question was good and perhaps wise to habitually reflect upon, it still does not get to the heart of what it means to have a God-honoring reputation.
- B. See our first concern should not be what our reputation is. Rather, our first concern should be about the nature of our character. Here's why:
1. Character is the one thing we make in this world and take with us into the next. The circumstances amid which you live determine your reputation; the truth you believe determines your character.
 2. Reputation is what you are supposed to be; Character is what you are.
 3. Reputation is what you have when you come to a new community; Character is what you have when you go away.
 4. Reputation is made in a moment; Character is built in a lifetime.
 5. Reputation grows like a mushroom; Character grows like an oak.
 6. Your reputation is learned in an hour; Your character does not come to light for a year.
 7. A single newspaper report gives your reputation; a life of toil gives you your character.

²⁰The New King James Version. 1982 (3 Jn 13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

8. Reputation makes you rich or makes you poor; Character makes you happy or makes you miserable.
9. Reputation is what men say about you on your tombstone; Character is what angels say about you before the throne of God.
10. Your character is what God knows you to be. Your reputation is what men think you are.

~ William Hershey Davis

How can we have a God-honoring character, not merely a God-honoring reputation? I believe that question is settled when we live out one simple truth in the moment-by-moment details of daily living: Not I, but Christ. It is not mere imitating, it is allowing the Lord to live through us by means of the Holy Spirit.

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live,
But Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh
I live by faith in the Son of God,
Who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

The bottom line is that our character should be Christ. If our character is Christ, our reputation will be honorable before God. And it is Him we seek to please.

- C. Not I, but Christ, be honored, loved, exalted.
Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard;
Not I, but Christ, in every look and action;
Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.

Not I, but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow;
Not I but Christ, to wipe the falling tear;
Not I bur Christ, to lift the weary burden!
Not I but Christ, to hush away all fear.

Not I, but Christ, in lowly, silent labor;
Not I, but Christ, in humble, earnest toil;
Christ, only Christ! No, no ostentation.
Christ, none but Christ, the gatherer of the spoil.

Christ, only Christ, ere long will fill my vision;
Glory excelling, soon, full soon, I'll see-
Christ, only Christ, my every wish fulfilling-
Christ, only Christ, my All in all to be.

Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord,
Oh, to be lost in Thee;
Oh,, that it may be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.

A.A. Whiddington

How?

*Intimately know and conform to the Scripture (It is truth in action)
Center your life around Jesus Christ (we are impacted by our environment)
Rely on the Holy Spirit (This is the One who does the transformation).*

Take the 'I' out of your life; your life is now 'crossed out, and your glory is found in the Christ of the cross.

IV. IN CONCLUSION:

A girl was sent to a finishing school by her wealthy parents. There she learned science, art, dancing, and many other things. One night she went to an evangelistic meeting, and at the close of the service she accepted Christ as her own personal Savior. She gave her heart to Christ, yielded to Him, and decided she would dedicate her life to missionary service. She wrote home to her father and told him of her decision.

He went into a rage and wrote to her immediately, saying, 'Get on the next plane and come home.' She obeyed and returned to her home. As her father met her, he said, 'I did not send you to school to get religion. That is all right for poor folk and half-wits, but not for a child in your stratum of life. You will have to get this religion out of your head. If by tomorrow morning you have not decided to give up this foolish notion of religion, you may pick your suitcase and leave this home.'

She went to her bedroom with a heavy heart. It would mean loss of love, culture, money, prestige. On her knees she fought it out. The next morning she packed her suitcase. Before leaving, stepped over to the piano in the living room and started to play and sing:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all must be:
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought and hoped and known;
Yet how rich is my condition:
God and Heaven are still my own!

She arose and, with tears streaming down her face, turned toward the door. Before she could open it, her father stepped out from behind the curtain where he had been listening to her playing and with emotion said, 'Wait! I did know that Jesus Christ meant as much to you as that, I did not know that you were willing to give up father, mother, home, and prestige just for Jesus. Daughter, forgive me. I must be beside myself. If such a great love can take hold of your heart, there must be something in it. Sit down here and tell me how I can be a Christian.

Truth in action.

You are writing out your own history by the way you live. We see it with the Apostle John's life. We see it with Gaius. We see it with Demetrius. What are others seeing with your life?