

**Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church**  
**2080 West Grand Blvd.**  
**Detroit, Michigan 48208**  
**Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor**

## **Lesson 19: “Guard Each Other’s Reputation”**

**Scripture: *Romans 15:1-3; Acts 2:1-11***

**Goal:** To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

**Objective:** To understand the importance of guarding each other’s reputation.

**Covenant Segment:**

*“We further engage ...to guard each other’s reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others.”*

As we delve further into the church covenant, our care and sensitivity for one another becomes even more evident. In this segment of the covenant, we pledge to guard each other’s reputation and the reputation of the church and not to needlessly expose weaknesses. This is poignantly illustrated by Jesus in John 8: 1-11 where a nameless woman caught in the act of adultery faced a penalty of stoning. Rather than publicly condemn her, Jesus skillfully sidesteps the trap against Him posed by the Scribes and Pharisees to cover her with His compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. Are we quick to throw one another to the wolves with demeaning remarks stemming from sinful motives of anger, hatred, public humiliation, scorn, or pride? Jesus covered our sins not only with His love and compassion, but also with His blood. Do we have enough of the love of Jesus to carefully guard the reputation of others even when they have wronged us? Christ suffered slander and crucifixion to remove the reproach that kept us in our weak state unfit and disgraced before God. Therefore, those among us who are strong ought to help and support the weak with spiritually sensitive love and care. Our Church Covenant moves us deeper into our life together in Christ. It reveals the intricate, delicate nature of the relationship that exists among us as members of the covenant community when we are pleasing to the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

**Overview:**

*“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”*  
—Romans 15: 1-3 ESV

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002). 99

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**Question 1: Why do Christians have a responsibility to guard each other's reputation?**

*“So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.”*

*—Romans 14:19 NLT*

- **We are enjoined in essence to be guardians of the reputation and infirmities of others.<sup>2</sup>**
- **Many people make their initial decision concerning faith based on what they see, hear, and believe about the church.<sup>3</sup>**

**Summary:**

Just as a family's treatment of its members demonstrates to others what important values are held by that family, how we treat each other reveals what's important to us. The church's values are rooted in the love of Christ for those who are lost. If the words they hear from the mouths of church members are negative, destructive and derogatory, what would cause them to want to even be a part of such a fellowship. We demonstrate God's love through the unity, harmony, and the way we build each other up.

**Question 2: Why does *needlessly exposing the infirmities of others* damage and hinder the growth of the Body of Christ?**

*“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”—Proverbs 22: 1 (ESV)*

- **The reputation—a good name or good report —is to be highly treasured by the believer.<sup>4</sup>**
- **It ought to be a painful thing for us to see the name of a brother or a sister in Christ dragged through the mud.<sup>5</sup>**

**Summary:**

To needlessly expose the infirmities of our brothers and sisters demonstrates that we do not really believe in a Savior who can transform our lives. The key word here is 'needlessly'. If we believe that the Holy Spirit is, moment by moment, transforming us into the image of Christ, why would we constantly bring up those things He is weeding out of our lives? It only serves to make others wonder if our testimony that we are new creatures in Christ is true. Constantly damaging each others' reputations is unnecessary. Do we truly believe in the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit or not?

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<sup>2</sup> Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002), 99

<sup>3</sup> Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002), 101

<sup>4</sup> Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002), 100

<sup>5</sup> Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002), 100

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**Question 3:** Why should Christians not respond to ugly rumors and disparaging remarks about fellow church members?

*“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him... a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” — Proverbs 6: 16, 19 ESV*

- We are called to take a stand against a sinful nature, which leads to gossip and demeaning others, sometimes demolishing others to enhance our own egos.<sup>6</sup>
- In caring for one another in the midst of infirmities, we need to see Jesus on the cross. He takes our infirmities, our weaknesses, and our shortcomings. He exposes them not to the world but to the Father.<sup>7</sup>

**Summary:**

We, as believers, ought to imitate Christ’s example and bring each other’s infirmities to the Father in prayer. This also helps us develop habits of holiness that allow us to conform to the character of Christ. II Corinthians 5: 17 states, *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”*. There can be no better demonstration that we are being transformed into new creatures than our refusal to participate in vicious rumors, gossip, derogatory remarks about another person.

**Closing Reflection:**

Believers are united by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of spreading the Good News of the Gospel. The church is founded on the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the fact that we’ve been drawn to the truth of who Jesus is, and what He has done for us, that provides the foundation of the relationship between us. When the covenant admonishes us to guard each others’ reputation and not needlessly expose each others’ infirmities, it recognizes both our individual and corporate responsibility to the church. The consistent goal of the Holy Spirit is that we maintain right relationship with God and each other.

*“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13: 34-35 NKJV)

Every conversation, every interaction holds a moment of decision for each believer. Will we, through our speech and attitude, honor or dishonor our Lord and the community of faith in which He has placed us? Four question support clarity about the seriousness of this issue:

1. *Do I, believe that life in Jesus Christ is worth living?*
2. *Do I believe that lives are made better and transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit?*
3. *What is the testimony that I share with others about the hope I have in and through Jesus Christ?*

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4. *Does my testimony build up and edify or tear down and destroy members of the household of faith individually and therefore, the body of Christ corporately?*

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## ***Where we are in the Church Covenant... \****

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; ***to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others;*** to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

***Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.***