

## Y.R.P. - The Gangsta Rap of the Bible

A good reputation is more valuable than costly perfume. And the day you die is better than the day you are born. Ecclesiastes 7:1

In the late 80's I was listening to M.C. Hammer, RUN DMC, and Vanilla Ice. And then in the early 90's, a group of rappers known as N.W.A. hit the music scene and a new genre of rap music known as gangsta rap emerged. Gangsta rap was controversial because it seemed to glorify violence, misogyny, and gang affiliation. Politicians and preachers cried out against gangsta rap. But when interviewed, the rappers simply said they were rapping about real life. They were rapping about what they saw in their hoods. They rapped about police brutality. They rapped about crack cocaine. They rapped about pimps and prostitutes. They rapped about shootings and killings. They were simply rapping about what they observed in their lives and communities.

The book of Ecclesiastes is the gangsta rap of the Bible. King Solomon, near the end of his life, is writing about what he's observed in his life. Like gangsta rap, it's often in your face. It doesn't hold back. It's blunt, but like Ice Cube's song "It was a Good Day," Ecclesiastes also has brighter moments extolling the joys of life on earth.

In Ecclesiastes 7:1, King Solomon is talking about our character and reputation. We are all born unknown to the world. We have no reputation. It is during the course of our lives that we develop a reputation. Being a loving man of integrity, honesty, and generosity leads to a good reputation, but being a selfish man of hypocrisy, dishonesty, and greed leads to a bad reputation. It takes years and years, good choice after good choice, kind word after kind word to develop a good reputation, but that can all be lost in an instant with one bad choice or one unkind word. That's why a good reputation is worth far more than the most expensive cologne or perfume.

Ultimately, our reputation will be summed up at our funeral. That's why King Solomon says the day of our death is better than the day of our birth. At our birth, we have no reputation, but at our death, we will be remembered for our reputation. When I was in grad school, one of our professors asked us to write our own eulogy. We had to think about our character and our reputation and put it down on paper. What will people say about us? Will they have to lie and make up nice things to say about us? At the end of our lives, no one will care about how many games we won or lost. They will care about the people that we were. They will care about how God used us to change their lives and bless them. They will care about if we were the same person in private as in public. How are you growing in your character and reputation? What will people say at your funeral?

***P2R (Point 2 Remember):*** "What you are as a person is far more important than what you are as a basketball player." - Coach John Wooden