

3. Be ambitious to serve others.

“They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the road?’ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all’ ” (Mk.9:33-35, NIV ’84).

“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ ” (Mk.10:42-45, NIV ’84).

Nearly all leaders are motivated, at least to some degree, by ambition—a driving desire to succeed or excel, advance or be promoted, achieve or accomplish something, gain respect or admiration, recognition, or earn more money or other tangible benefit.

In these passages, Jesus directly addresses the subject of ambition. He taught that good ambition is a virtue. It is not wrong to desire to be great or to make a significant contribution. Jesus never rebuked the disciples’ ambition; instead, He channeled it, which is exactly what He wants to do for you. Jesus wants to steer your energy and motive and efforts in the right direction.

- a. First, look at** the world’s view of ambition. The world thinks in terms of power, fame, wealth, position, and influence. Within the business world, people want a position that assures them of a high income, bonuses, pension, recognition, privileges, and achievement. Some even seek powerful, prestigious positions for the purpose of exercising authority over others. They do not always think in terms of service or in terms of how they can help the company, their employees, their customers or clients, their community, and society as a

whole. Far too often, their thoughts are on themselves, on the honor, reward, influence, and benefits they receive.

Sadly, most people in general are caught up to some degree in worldly ambition, seeking more and more of what the world has to offer. Few are totally void of worldly ambition. In fact, the majority of people tend to judge the success of others by their . . .

- wealth
- jobs or titles
- homes or vehicles
- influence or authority
- social standing
- clothing or other worldly possessions

- a. **Second, look at** the Lord's view of ambition, which stands in direct contrast to the world's view. Godly ambition does not seek greatness for the purpose of exercising authority over people. It does not covet and strive for a high-ranking position simply to hold authority or to secure more money or benefits for oneself. Godly ambition is not self-centered or selfish, not worldly-minded.

Note Jesus' exact words: ". . . whoever wants to become great among you. . . ." It is acceptable to be ambitious, to seek after success and achievement, to seek to be great at whatever you do. But note a crucial point: you become great by doing what Christ says, that is, you do not seek greatness for your own sake but rather for the sake of serving others. Godly ambition seeks to serve rather than be served. It looks for people to help and for ways to help them.

What Christ means is this: you are to be a servant of others. True greatness is not found in holding a high position or in having authority over others, but in helping others. You become truly great when your driving ambition is to be *a servant of all*. Make this your goal and purpose, to use your position and influence as a business leader to help as many people as you can. From a broad, business perspective, your

mission should be to help others by:

- providing a beneficial service or product for people
 - providing legitimate jobs for people
 - providing opportunities for people to find purpose and significance in doing honorable work
 - creating opportunities and a culture in which people can thrive, advance, and better themselves
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- helping to change society—inner cities, the deprived, jobless, downtrodden, third world nations—through setting up businesses, training people to use their resources, teaching a strong work ethic, and stirring up a passion within fame or popularity
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- people to be productive and to better themselves
 - guiding your business according to God’s Word—principles and values of righteousness—simply doing what is right
 - helping meet humanity’s greatest need, the *spiritual* need, the need for the gospel and God’s Word

The way to greatness is through humble service. If you wish to be great, then this needs to be your driving ambition. You need to actively seek to serve others.

As a business leader, you occupy a position of authority and influence over others. But no matter what your position is or how much authority you have, you are still called to serve. You are to actively work for the sake and benefit of others by producing the best product or providing the best service possible for your customers or clients, always treating your fellow workers and all others as you should. Your ambition should never be to lead just for the sake of holding a position of authority or for receiving more money, benefits, or honor from other people. Instead, your ambition should be to help as many people as you can. This is *true greatness*!

