

Changing the Way You Think

Church and Culture (Part 11):

Purpose & *The Anxiety of Ambition*

Identity * Purpose * Success * Beauty * Love * Hope

Purpose: *the reason for which something or someone exists...*

- Invigorating
- Inspiring
- Confusing
- Overwhelming
- Paralyzing



“What do I want to do with my life?”

Ambition: *a strong desire to achieve something...*

The language of purpose and ambition often highlight words like *dreams, goals, and believing in yourself...*

“Our imagination and hope become a reality if we have the courage to believe and take action to realize them...”

“Dreaming is good; dream more. Never forget that dreams have little value until you take action to realize those dreams...”

“All you need in life is two-step action: Dream and then make it happen!”

“Ambition is a very dangerous thing because either you achieve it and your life ends prematurely, or you don’t, in which case your life is a constant source of disappointment. You must never have ambition.”

Even the Bible Seems to Offer Differing Views

1 Thess. 4:11-12

We urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, ¹¹and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹²so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders

VS.

James 3:14-16

¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.¹⁵Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

What are we to make of our purpose?

Making Plans Under the Umbrella of God's Will & Purpose

Proverbs 16:9 We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

- The Prayer Labyrinth
- No Small Surrender

Jeremiah 10:23-24

I know, Lord, that our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course. So, correct me, Lord, but please be gentle.

- The Essence of Being a Christ-Follower

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.

Remaining & Continuing Where God Has You

1 Cor. 7:17, 20-24

¹⁷Each of you should **continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you.** This is my rule for all the churches...

²⁰Yes, each of you should **remain as you were when God called you.** ²¹Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. ²²And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. ²³God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. ²⁴Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should **remain as you were when God first called you.**

Gamaliel's Rule: Be Careful That You Are Not Fighting Against God

Acts 5:33-39

The high council was furious and decided to kill them (the apostles). ³⁴But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was an expert in religious law and respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while. ³⁵Then he said to his colleagues, "**Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do** to these men! ³⁶Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About 400 others joined him, but he was killed, and all his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. ³⁷After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered.

"So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. **You may even find yourselves fighting against God!**"

Proverbs 19:21 You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.