

A Life Worth Living
Session 7 June 9 2024 New Ambitions
Philippians 3:10-21

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' video 7

(all videos can be found at www.woodside-church.org under the sermons tab)

Icebreaker: Share any stories about winning a prize you had to work hard for.

Introduction

Key Point: We should eagerly pursue God-given and God-focused ambitions

Key Verse: *"I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus" (v.14)*

Read Philippians 3:10-21

1. Jesus centered ambition (Philippians 3:10-16)

The Point: The over-riding ambition of every Christian is to know Christ (v.10)

Paul's ambition is *"to know Christ"* (v.10) – a personal relationship not intellectual facts, through: *"The power of the resurrection"* (also Romans 8:11) *and the person and power of the Holy Spirit.*

"fellowship in suffering" (v.10) not as a penalty, but as a privilege. Following Jesus often involves struggle and suffering, but these times bring us closer to him, sharing Jesus' new life in heaven (v.11), the completion of everything we hope for

Paul is single-minded about his ambition (*"one thing I do"* v.13)

It's not wrong to have ambitions in every area of life – we should – but they should all be subordinate to our ambition to know Christ

Paul *"strains ahead"* (v.13) and *"presses on to win"* (v.14) just like an athlete, and he urges us all to do the same (v.17)

We must also *"forget what is behind"* (v.13), and not dwell on past success or failure

- **What are your ambitions in life?**
- **What do you think about Paul's ambitions?**

Application: Fear of failure holds back so many of us. In your personal time tomorrow ask God to show you any past sins or failure you are still living with, which you need to be freed from.

2. Self Centered ambitions (Philippians 3:17-21)

The Point: self-centered ambition is unchristian, unachievable and ends in disaster!

Paul shows three hallmarks of self-centered people heading for disaster (v.18-19): 1)

- They focus on sensuality and personal satisfaction (*"appetite"* v.19)
 - There's nothing wrong with enjoying these things and the body is not evil, but when these things become our "god" they displace Jesus.
 - Much of our culture is focused on satisfying bodily desires. Lives that revolve around satisfying bodily desires never achieve their aim.
- They are self-important (*"their glory is in their shame"* v.19)
 - They spend their time boasting about possessions, bonuses, sexual conquests or spending sprees
 - Sensual ambitions lead to earthly thinking (*"their mind is on earthly things"*)
 - Our citizenship is in heaven where we will get new, *"transformed bodies"* (v.21) this certainty motivates us (v.12) to greatness
- **How can we live with an eternal perspective?**
- **Are there any areas of your life where you might need to change from self-centered to Jesus-centered ambitions?**

Application: We must renew our minds in those areas of our lives where we have been sucked in to earthly thinking, e.g. our spending decisions or the things we choose to read or watch on TV. Ask God to reveal these places in your life and to help you change your focus.

Conclude

Read out the last paragraph of Chapter 7 in Nicky Gumbel's book 'A Life Worth Living':

"In this passage Paul tells us that everyone is on one of two paths. There are two destinations: one is heading for heaven, the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of our bodies to be like 'his glorious body'. The other is heading for destruction. There are two powers at work: the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit and the power of bodily appetites. There are two possible lifestyles: those willing to share in his sufferings and those who want a lifestyle of ease and comfort. There are two possible gods: our Lord Jesus Christ or our 'stomachs'. There are two possible attitudes to Jesus: either friendship at an intimate level or enemies of the cross. Ultimately there are only two possible ambitions: either his glory, Jesus-centered ambition; or our own glory, self-centered ambition. Paul says, in effect: 'I have changed my ambitions. Now I am Jesus-centered. Will you join me?'"

Ideas for Ministry

- Stand together in silence and ask the Holy Spirit to show us any past fears or failures, selfish ambitions, pride or worldly patterns of thinking that we are struggling to be free from
- Break into pairs to briefly share these things and pray for one another, asking God to break the power of these things and to show us how to walk into the freedom of his forgiveness
- Stand together in silence and ask the Holy Spirit to show us His ambitions for our lives and to help us see the vision He has for us
- Break into pairs to briefly share these things and pray for one another, asking God to show us how to pursue this vision and prepare for it

After today's discussion, what is one action you will take this week?