

## Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit

### Ambition

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#### Life Questions:

What is it that drives you? What is your ambition for? Is it personal worth, family, God? Do you have an end that you are seeking with the life you live?

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**AMBITION.** n., an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power; desire to achieve a particular end

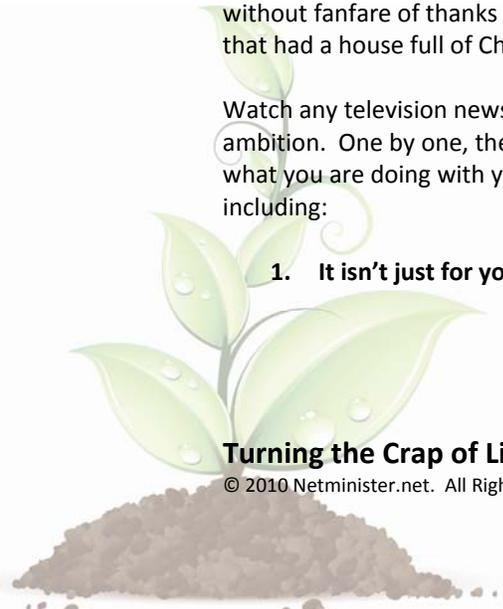
"I want two things, to be rich and to be known." That was what he said to me. A man I had hired to work for me was perplexed that the name of my company had no tie in to my own name. He on the other hand was all about self-promotion. As I later found out, he was all about self-promotion to the point of doing whatever it took to achieve those two goals. To the detriment of his family, he works constantly not to provide more for them but to make his name known. To the detriment of his belief, he works constantly to put himself into a position that he can be talked about at church. To the detriment of his relationship with Christ, he puts his own name on his work without giving the glory to whom it belongs. And to the detriment of himself, he has a string of broken relationships with people who have tried to help him only to find that when the opportunity presents itself, he is willing to bury anyone to advance himself.

Pastors can exhibit this behavior. Look on television to see pastors whose greatest desire is to have their name known. Their ministry is named for them, their church is known as their church and they regularly write books more along the lines of personal self-help over the foundation of God's word. Several times a year we see another pastor bound up in a sex scandal, money problems or some bizarre event that seems to turn fewer and fewer heads because we have become accustomed to these less than biblical events by the leaders of our church. Locally doesn't change it. Routinely we are presented with pastors, worship leaders or small group leaders accused of all sorts of inappropriate behavior all rooted in the desire for self-promotion over promoting Jesus.

Compare these two to Charlie. Charlie was a guy that every organization needed. He didn't need to be patted on the back, he just did the work that needed to be done. His ambition wasn't for himself, as a matter of fact, without accidentally finding it out myself, I wouldn't have ever known about the work Charlie did. His ambition was to do work for the Lord, that meant that if the shrubs needed trimming he trimmed them, if a room needed painting he painted it and if the roof needed repairing it got repaired; all without fanfare of thanks because his ambition was on doing the work for the Lord. Imagine a church that had a house full of Charlies. How much work would be accomplished for the kingdom?

Watch any television news show and you will see paraded almost nightly a stream of people who had ambition. One by one, their ambition drove them, some to good some to evil ends. So how do you know what you are doing with your ambition? There are a couple things you can know that will tell you including:

1. It isn't just for you



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### **James 4:1-6**

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

NKJV

What causes us to misuse ambition? We misuse it when we want to use it on ourselves. Here James tells us that wars and fights come from desires for pleasure. The word for pleasure there is the word in the Greek from which we get the word heathen. The word means sensual pleasures of this world. The first thing you begin to see when your ambition is for sensual things of this world is nothing but trouble surrounding you. Constantly in wars with your members – members being other Christians, is a sign that your ambition is for your own personal pleasures and not Christ. There is an old saying about after the 9<sup>th</sup> marriage you are probably the problem. It shows up here as well. When you are constantly at odds with your fellow believers it can be that you are putting your own ambition ahead of what is right.

James goes on to show the areas that we begin to operate within when it is our own needs that are the focus of our ambition. Murdering – maybe not in the sense of taking a life but certainly in the assassinating of another Christian's character to the point of lying to fulfill your own ambition is certainly the case here. We desire, the word for adulterous is not necessarily focused on the act of extra-marital affairs as much as it is focused on the issue of desiring something that is not meant for you. When a man lusts after another man's wife it is something God does not intend for him to have therefore, the lust is part of what is driving him, his impure ambition is leading him to a sinful result.

When our ambitions are all about ourselves then we begin to find kindred spirits in the world. The world sees ambition for oneself as something to be admired. Many people have been noted to have said you have to put yourself first and everyone else a distant second. Scripture bears out that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. That means that everyone should be on par with ourselves.

Not only is this type of ambition against the bible, but it brings us into open conflict with God Himself. The word says that to be friends with the world is to be an enemy of God! Let me put that again, an enemy of God! The word for enemy is the ultimate enemy Satan, literally we are Satan in God's eyes when we are friends with the world. Does that sound like something you would want to be? Do you really want to be the enemy of God?!

## **2. Your effort has eternal consequences**

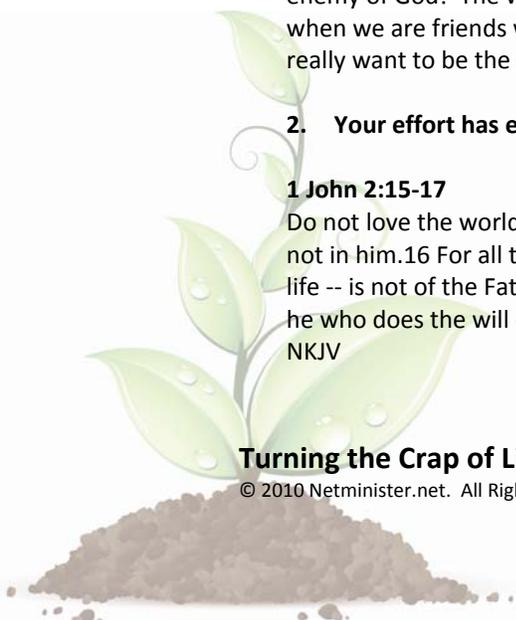
### **1 John 2:15-17**

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.16 For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world.17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

NKJV

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Simply put, when our ambition is focused on ourselves and the things of the world, we are not showing the love of the Father, God. So ask yourself, is your ambition of the world? How can you know?

Simply, are you seeking things that are all about your own flesh? Are you all about making money, making a name for yourself, becoming popular regardless of the costs? Is it about your own selfish pleasure?

Are you using your abilities to promote yourself? Do you ever use your efforts and gifts for promotion of the Lord? And if you do, do you demand that people repay you for the efforts? Recently I was working with a church that was cleaning out an older building that had been occupied by several other churches. In going through the mammoth of materials we found several plaques addressed to former pastors. By finding them stuck everywhere, it was obvious that the pastor did not care about all the "awards" he was being given. By the time we were finished, there were more than ten awards with his name on them, broken, torn and otherwise discarded. It showed that the awards were not important. Promote the kingdom where your treasure will not rust, or be torn up or discarded.

Lastly is everything you do meant to prolong your legacy? Do you give to organizations that will promote your name? A few years ago you couldn't go through Birmingham, AL without seeing something with the name Richard Scruchy. Roads, buildings, conference centers all bore out his name, even to the point of having a life-size statue. The problem is now Richard Scruchy is spending his days in jail for bribing a public official. Everything that could be changed has been, including the statue which has been removed. The legacy of the pride of life now tarnished because the ambition was for self-promotion over substance.

All of it, the world, is passing away. Why would you invest your ambition into something that you knew for a fact wasn't going to be around? People do, Christians do, and churches do all to the point of changing everything for promotion of themselves without any desire to give their effort for Jesus. Most of the people that really make a difference, that really put their ambition to the Lord, you will not know about in this world, that is for sure.

### **3. It will cost you when your ambition is wrong!**

#### **Luke 9:25-26**

25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

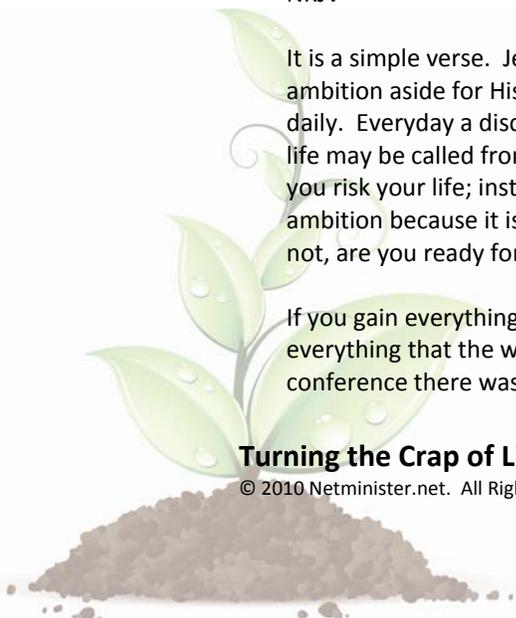
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It is a simple verse. Jesus is talking in context about following Him completely, putting our personal ambition aside for His glory. He tells His disciples that they must take up their cross and follow Him, daily. Everyday a disciple has to make the conscious decision to follow Christ. That means that your life may be called from you. Your life itself isn't always about being called to a mission field where you risk your life; instead, it is about being able to deny what you want to do to supplant your own ambition because it isn't what Jesus wants from your life. Are you willing to do that? And if you are not, are you ready for the consequences?

If you gain everything that is possible in this life, everything power, position, money, fame – everything that the world has to offer and you lose your soul, what have you gained? At a marriage conference there was a time for everyone to go play board games with a five minute limit. The

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presenters pressed everyone to finish as fast as possible. Get as much money as possible, as much property as the game will let you get as fast as possible, until as time ran out, you were told to put everything into the box. Without giving anything to the winner, everything went back into the box, just like the end of your life – everything is put back into the box and buried. At the end, you take nothing with you. The bible tells you that you bring nothing into this world and out of the world you will take nothing.

In the end, there will be nothing. Lost, the word in the original means to perish or be destroyed. That is, for everything you have gained, you are destroyed because of a life with the wrong ambitions. Destroyed, after gaining it all you lose the most important thing- your soul. Is everything worth your soul? Do you know of anything in the world worthy of losing your soul for?

What is your ambition? When everything is over, when everything is finished, what will you be able to tell Jesus about your ambitions? Is it really important? Get ready because one day you will have to answer for the goals and ambitions of your life.

**Final Analysis:** What is the end? What is your goal for your life? For your job, family, church, or social life? What is the goal? Your ambition is what drives you, where is it driving you and what will be the result when you arrive?



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