

Ambition: Good and Bad

Throughout my years upon the earth, I have observed that ambition – fueled by compassion, wisdom, and integrity – is a powerful force for good. It will turn the wheels of industry and open the door of opportunity for you and countless thousands of other people.

But fueled by greed and the lust for power, ambition is a destructive force that ultimately does irreparable damage to the individual in its grasp and to the people within its reach.

It is more than just a cliché to say that ambition can either make us or break us. It makes us when we hear the words of Henry Van Dyke (author, educator and clergyman), who said, “There is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world. It is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher.”

George Matthew Adams (a newspaper columnist) observed, “He climbs highest who helps another up.”

John Lubbock (a British statesman) put it this way: “To do something, however small, to make others happier and better is the highest ambition, the most elevating hope, which can inspire a human being.”

Zig Ziglar, noted author and motivational speaker who died in November 2012, wrote in his book, *Something to Smile About: Encouragement and Inspiration for Life's Ups and Downs*, about growing up in Yazoo City, Mississippi. “I frequently heard my mother and the man for whom I worked in the grocery store describe an individual by saying, ‘He is really a very ambitious young man,’ or ‘She really has a lot of ambition.’ The tone of voice indicated that they were very favorably identifying one of the traits of that young person.

“I understood implicitly that they were talking about ambition fueled by compassion, wisdom, and integrity,” Ziglar continued. “On the other hand, I heard them say on numerous occasions, ‘He is a nice person, but he just doesn’t have any ambition.’”

Like Ziglar, I have heard – and I am confident you have, too – similar conversations in which those descriptions were applied.

From my point of view, people who have ability – and that includes anyone reading these words – and do not use that ability represent one of the real tragedies of life. The old saying that you either *use it or lose it* is true.

On the other hand, folks who realize God’s plan for their lives – and who identify and maximize the talents He has given to fulfill it – find inner satisfaction and a peace that passes understanding.

– Beecher Hunter