

What is your ambition?

Reference: VLG-S01-001-A-R00-P1

(Written on 16 May 2002)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org>

This article is protected by copyright © 2002 Lim Liong. Permission is given to reproduce part (where the meaning is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all, of it, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that **no changes are made** and the article is **distributed free** of charge. Please do so prayerfully and discreetly.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The paragraphs above as well as this paragraph must be included when the article is reproduced so that others who reproduce it will be conscious of the conditions stated above.

During conversations with children, adults often ask them, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Towards those who are older, the question may become, "What is your ambition?" Children may reply, "I want to be a soldier", "I want to be a fireman", "I want to be a teacher", or "I want to be a pilot". Older ones may say, "I want a career with the civil service", "I want to build my own business", or "I want to be a professional tennis player". Others who are "more ambitious" may declare, "I want to make my first million dollars before I am thirty", or "I want to be a politician, and improve the social conditions of my country". Some others may say, "I don't have any ambition. I just live from day to day."

What is your ambition? If we regard "ambition" as what is most important in life for you, what you want to become or achieve, what would you choose as your ambition in life?

Thinking about our future, planning for a lifetime career, and preparing for what we want to accomplish in our earthly responsibilities are appropriate and relevant aspects of our lives. It is proper to carefully consider what is suitable for us to study in school, polytechnic or university, and what would be helpful for us to be occupied with in our working life, in the years ahead of us.

However, as we reflect on our lives, it may dawn on us that while working life may occupy much of our time each day, and may affect us deeply in our conscious thoughts and planning, this is only one of many areas of our lives. It is also not the most important area. Is there something deeper in our hearts that we want to be and we want to accomplish while we are on earth?

Would you be satisfied if at the end of your time on earth, you have earned millions of dollars, or you have become an internationally known tennis player, or you have achieved a significant scientific discovery that can help improve the lifespan of people on earth, while in your heart you are lonely, anxious and afraid of death? Is there something more valuable and worthwhile to pursue beyond the attractions of earthly achievements and possessions?

During my younger days in school, I had initially thought that I would spend my life as a mathematics teacher, as I was eagerly interested in this subject - this was my 'ambition' at that time. However, in the midst of daily studies and the happiness of school life, I recognized that there was something missing within. These activities in the world, while interesting, did not bring deep or lasting meaning and tranquillity to my heart.

When I came to recognize my need to come to God for help and responded to Him (which I have shared in Booklet 2, of A Journey in Life), I began to appreciate a different realm of meaning. It was still in its early stages, but I recognized that beyond the physical and material world of things and activities, there is a far greater and more important realm of the realities in the heart - the moral and spiritual meaning and realities of life, during our time on earth as well as after we leave this world.

The presence and relevance of *God* in my daily life became an issue of concern and significance. Before this event, I had settled in my heart to concentrate on mathematics in my studies. However, after my personal response to *God*, I became conscious that it was His intention that I should study medicine in the university. It was not my personal ambition, but there was a reality in my heart that this was the course that I should take. I had previously said to myself that the study of medicine would be “the last thing that I want to do”. I had unpleasant encounters with medical treatment as a child (with the remembrance of intra-muscular injections for my tonsillitis), and the smell of medicinal contents in the hospitals brought a sense of apprehension and aversion. Now, in recognition of *God’s* intention for me, I decided to choose this course for my studies. In pondering over what the medical course would lead to, I also appreciated the meaningfulness of helping those who were sick to recover from their illnesses.

As I proceeded in this direction, I began to discover that my interest in the subjects related to this course began to grow and I found my studies enjoyable and meaningful. At an early stage of my medical course, I entered into a deeper commitment to *God* and fellowship with Him, and the consciousness of *God* in my daily life became more pronounced and intense. With such fellowship with *God*, my studies brought a deeply joyful sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of *God* in His creation of the human body, with its complex, intricate and marvellously well-coordinated structures and functions.

An interesting development is that in the midst of preparing for what some would consider a new ambition in life, I discovered that as I grew in my fellowship with *God* and knowledge of Him, the importance of my studies and the subsequent career as a doctor

diminished in significance. While I found the course very interesting and I sought to be responsible in my studies and subsequent working life, I knew that my true ambition did not consist of these areas of my life. What truly mattered now was to develop moral and spiritual reality and quality in my heart and my fellowship and oneness with God.

Arising from this reality, all activities and involvements became meaningful, whether it be studies, or working context, or attending to household responsibilities, or going through commonplace events, as long as the right direction was sustained and nurtured. The meaningfulness of contribution to the lives of others now centred on communication and transmission of moral and spiritual meaning, in the midst of attending to physical and material needs. It became refreshingly clear that the primary aspect of our working life and other daily involvements is not the physical and temporal, but the meaning and quality of life and values that we develop and transmit as we fulfil our earthly responsibilities and respond to the pulls and pressures of life in this world.

The words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5: 9 are particularly helpful for our consideration of this subject: "Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." We may wonder why it is a meaningful ambition to be pleasing to God. Why should we live our lives to please someone else, rather than solely live according to what we think is good, or do what is pleasing to ourselves? When we have come to appreciate who God is in reality, we grow in our wonderment at the meaningfulness of living a life fully pleasing to God. That is because God is perfectly good morally and spiritually. In addition to that, He is also perfectly wise, and what He plans and purposes, He does so with infinite wisdom and love and goodness, in the

context of His omniscience. With joy and gratitude, we discover that whatever is truly pleasing to Him is morally and spiritually good, as well as the most meaningful course of action, in any particular situation.

When we live a life that is truly pleasing to God, we are not passively waiting for God to tell us what to do. Instead, we seek to appreciate and identify with the values that are important to Him, and grow in our understanding of what is of true and lasting value. What we thought to be good and meaningful may be shown to be short-sighted and selfish at a deeper level. We increasingly learn to ponder over the life that we are living and compare that with what we have come to appreciate of the perfect and the best. As we give of ourselves in this direction, we grow in the quality of our being, and enter into a stable and meaningful fellowship with God, deeply appreciative of His love, His patience and His wisdom. We discover with amazement that God does not want us only to listen to Him, but He delights in listening to us too, as we express our understanding, our concerns and our considerations in all areas of life. At the same time, we are deeply conscious of our own weakness and helplessness in a healthy and humble sense, and learn to trust Him and receive life from Him to transform our being.

As we make it our ambition to be pleasing to God, life grows in its meaningfulness. It becomes a daily adventure with God, as we find that routine situations may bring deep lessons about life and character, and we behold the glory and power and wisdom of God at work in our personal lives and in the lives of others. As we learn to seek not for what we like but what is right, we enter into the peace and joy of that which is good and pleasing in His sight. Our daily responsibilities and involvements become exciting moments, with the joyful companionship of His constant presence.