

Explore the Bible Series for Feb. 12: Is there room for Christian ambition?

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Is there room for Christian ambition?

- Romans 15:1-13

By Trey Turner

Canyon Creek Baptist Church, Temple

Are some Christians so afraid of being walked on they are reluctant to serve others? Or do they say, "If I am going to be noticed as a witness for Christ, I need to take the lead and not be a follower?" A person may ask still, "How much of an impact can I make being a servant when I could lead a group to greatness?"

The eternal challenge of Jesus is "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).



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I do not wish this to be judgmental, but does anyone remember the series of newspaper and journal articles written as people speculated about Pope John Paul II's health? The media began to talk about who might be the next pope. I remember these humble and yet influential men themselves struggling to make it known they would like the great position of head of the Catholic Church. Still, they did not want the position so badly it would disqualify them.

Is there such a thing as Christian ambition? Christians should be ambitious for glorifying God. Here the Apostle Paul tells what behaviors glorify God.

Serve others (Romans 15:1-4)

A key phrase in this passage is "please ourselves." Paul notes Jesus did not come to serve his own interests. He served his Father at great cost. He served people to his Father's glory, which also caused him personal grief and pain. So Paul says to follow Christ's example and endure the pain caused by those weaker in their faith.

Chris Seay, in an online article for Leadership Journal, writes that while he was in Waco, after having attended Baylor, he started University Baptist Church. This church was a cultural anomaly. It grew to 600 in six weeks. When an obviously threatened minister in town wrote a terrible article in his newsletter, Seay called him, available to correct a misunderstanding.

As Seay describes it, “The same man who stood behind a pulpit to preach God’s word the day before now uttered vile and arrogant words through the phone line: ‘Son, we are in a different class. You don’t amount to _____ and you never will.’”

This encounter hardened the young pastor. When others try to harm us, guard yourself from being hardened, instead do the best you can to take the attitude of Christ, serving.

Get along with others (Romans 15:5-6)

Paul asks that God give the Romans a spirit of unity which comes from one goal—that of glorifying God while personally and individually following him.

It should not be easy for any Christian to shut out another believer while personally trying to follow Christ. Those believers have the same goal; they should be in harmony with one another. This will glorify God. The Christian is challenged by this verse to live in harmony with others who lift their lives to Christ as disciples, not only those who completely agree with them.

Treat others well (Romans 15:7-12)

Paul encourages unity among believers and between the Gentiles and Jews by pointing out Christ has received us. If this does not immediately give reason enough for real humility, Paul points to Scripture that shows Gentiles and Jewish believers bringing glory to God in worship. The basis of our fellowship together is connection to the same Lord: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body ... and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13). In both passages, Paul lays out the reasons why we should be accepting of one another—to glorify God.

Find hope by the Spirit (Romans 15:13)

Finally, Christians glorify God by expressing confidence in his instructions. God's word grants peace and joy as it is obeyed, then new hope overflows. Doubtless, that was Paul's personal experience; he wants the same experience as each believer walks with God.

Discussion questions

- On a scale from one to 10, how would you rate your acceptance of others? How does your acceptance score rate with other believers you know?
- How near or how far is that from the acceptance you have received from Jesus?
- What makes it hard to be gracious to others?
- If it glorifies God to humbly consider others before yourself, why does the church not do a better job doing it, preaching it and teaching it?

