

Chapter 2: Ambition Corrupted

Class Text: Harvey, Dave. *Rescuing Ambition*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

Selfish ambition – Any ambition that does not have God as its goal.

Text to ponder: Gen 3:1-5. Satan tempts Eve to steal glory belonging to God. “When you eat it...you will be like God.”

Sin is “the universal human driver to disregard God’s moral law and live independent of him.” One of the effects of sin is that “rather than promoting God’s order and glory, we become relentless self-promoters.”

- What does Harvey mean by this statement: “We grow small trying to be great.”
- Give one example of where trying to be great makes you small.

Text to ponder: Jam 3:13-16. When we have selfish ambition, we yield to the same temptation that Adam and Eve yielded to. We steal God’s glory. Instead of harmonious relationships we bring disorder and every kind of evil.

- Why is it that selfish ambition and envy in the church bring disorder (rebellion and insurrection) and every kind of evil (morally base or substandard)?
- Give examples of what we are selfishly ambitious for in the church and the repercussions of this ambition.
- How should we respond to others in the church who are selfishly ambitious?
- How can we minimize our own selfish ambitions in the church?

Glory thieves swipe attention from God and demand greatness for themselves.

- What motivates us to swipe attention away from God?

Dave lists several ways that he has displayed self-centeredness: Dave the Occasionally Great, Dave the Great-In-His-Own Mind, etc (43-45).

- Which of these do you relate to?
- Give an example where you sought personal glory in this way.

The primary problem with trying to achieve our own greatness is that we fall short of God’s standard and set ourselves up to receive his wrath.

- What moves God to send his wrath upon glory thieves?

Bridges, Jerry. *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007.

► **Jerry Bridges: Selfishness**

(Ch. 12 on pg. 101)

A. We are all *born with a selfish nature*. Just observe preschoolers at play.

B. Degrees to Selfishness (pg. 102).

1. Some selfishness may be *crass and obvious* from a person who doesn't care what others think of him.
2. Most people care what others think of them, so selfishness will likely be more *delicate and refined*.

C. Four Areas of Selfishness:

1. **Selfishness with our *interests***: Self-centered focus on one's concerns, affairs, needs, and subjects of interest (pg. 102-103).
 - a. "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:4).
 - b. An ugly sin that is characteristic of the "last days" is to be "lovers of self" (2 Tim 3:1-5).
 - c. Question: How much time do you spend talking about your interests compared to listening to others?
2. **Selfishness with our *time*** (pg. 103-104).
 - a. We tend to be selfish by either inordinately guarding our time or unduly imposing on another person's time.
 - b. Reluctance to step outside one's normal responsibilities.
 - c. "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2).
3. **Selfishness with our *money*** (pg. 104-105).
 - a. Americans, who live in the richest nation in all of history, give less than 2% to charitable and religious causes.
 - b. Heart of Compassion (Rom 12:15; 1 Jn 3:17).
 - c. Stewardship of Finances (Chapter 20).
4. **Selfishness in the trait of *inconsiderateness*** (pg. 105-106).
 - a. Not thinking about the impact of one's action on others:
 - i. Being late and keeping others waiting.
 - ii. Talking loudly on cell phone in public.
 - iii. Leaving messes for others to clean up.
 - iv. Only thinking of yourself.
 - b. Not thinking of the feelings of others:
 - i. Being Rude to waitresses and store clerks.
 - ii. Indifference to others' feelings.
 - iii. Not saying thank you.
 - c. Unselfish Example of Jesus (2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:5).

- d. Reality Check: Living unselfishly will cost us effort, time, and money.
- e. Seek Help: Without being defensive, ask those close to you to point out any tendencies toward selfishness they see in you.

► **Jerry Bridges: Strategy to Overcoming Sins**

(Ch. 6 on pg. 51)

1. Apply the gospel.
2. Depend on the Holy Spirit.
3. Recognize your responsibility.
4. Identify specific sins.
5. Memorize and apply appropriate Scriptures.
6. Cultivate the practice of prayer.
7. Involve one or a few (ideally 3) other believers with you.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the root of our selfishness? (See Gen 3:1-6; Jeremiah 17:9; Hosea 6:7; Romans 7:17-20; 8:6-7; Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 2:3)
2. Which phrase in 2 Timothy 3:1-2 describes a selfish person? Why is this so convicting?
3. Because time is precious, it's easy to be selfish with it. What do the following verses reveal about sharing our time with others? (See Acts 9:36; Romans 16:2; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 6:10; 1 Peter 4:10)
4. In contrast to someone who is inconsiderate—not thinking about how what he or she says or does affects other people—what does God say about being considerate? (See Titus 3:1-2; James 3:17)
5. Why is it sometimes difficult to focus on and listen to other people's interest areas rather than talking about our own?
6. How do our selfish tendencies influence our conversations? Our activities? Our thoughts?
7. If we allow selfishness to take root in our lives, what consequences should we expect? (See 1 Corinthians 5:6). Can you think of a time when you allowed this to happen? What did you experience as a result? What do you think other people felt about you?
8. Have three participants read aloud Romans 12:1-3; Philippians 2:3; and 1 Corinthians 13:4. After each verse, identify how God wants us to counter the sin of selfishness.

Selfishness Is Not Love (1 Cor 13:4-6, MSG)

Love cares more for others than for self.
 Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
 Love doesn't strut,
 Doesn't have a swelled head,
 Doesn't force itself on others,

Isn't always "me first,"
 Doesn't fly off the handle,
 Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
 Doesn't revel when others grovel.