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You want to do well. You enjoy competing. You like winning. Something in you wants to be good at what you do – maybe even the best. By the time you reach a certain age you'd like to have.....

Perhaps you want to be sure that when you look back on your life it has really counted. Whatever phrase you use to describe your work we're talking here about ambition.

The British have a love-hate relationship with ambition. It's seen as a virtue in job advertisements but as rather vulgar in a new young recruit. We want to harness it for the good of the cause but not display it for all to see. It's not too bad to be described as ambitious but to describe yourself as ambitious can be in rather bad taste. So we have a new language – driven, single-minded, highly motivated or daring – to dress up our naked ambition so that it is fit to be seen in public.

This whole idea doesn't sit well with the Christian value of humility. Consequently Christians include 'ambition' in their repertoire of guilt inducing words. But, as is so often the case, it's not appropriate to feel this way. For it's not ambition but rather selfish ambition that gets bad press in the sacred columns.

According to James, selfish ambition is not best practice. It causes disorder and, coupled with envy, leads to all kinds of fights and quarrels.

So be ambitious today. Achieve something today. But let's make our ambitions noble and other centred rather than selfish. Let's not seek to be kings in our own kingdom, for that would indeed be in bad taste.

WORK WELL
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National Director
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James 3

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness

Philippians 2

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.