



# **GODLY AMBITION:**

## 3 Questions to

# **GUARD YOUR MOTIVES**



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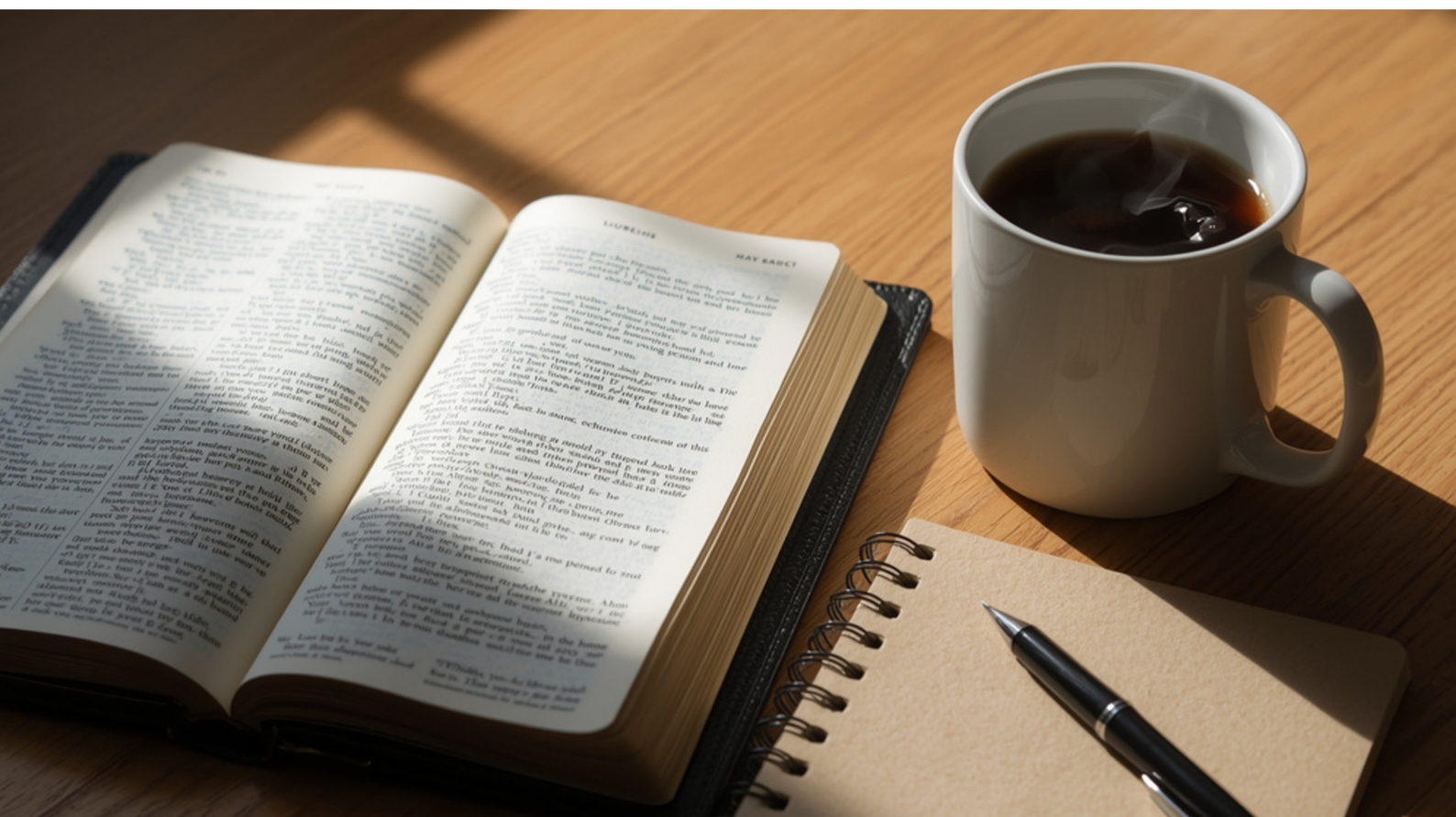
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## WHY THESE QUESTIONS MATTER

What is ambition? In this guide, ambition means the desire to grow in influence, responsibility, or impact. Scripture doesn't condemn this desire. What matters is the source (does it come from God's calling or self-promotion?) and the aim (will it serve God's kingdom or build your kingdom?). Godly ambition pursues greater capacity to serve, not greater status to protect.

Ambition creates tension for many Christian professionals. You want to grow, lead, and make an impact. At the same time, you do not want success to pull you away from God. Too often, ambition gets labeled as pride, selfishness, or a lack of faith. Scripture does not support that conclusion. God regularly calls people to responsibility, influence, and leadership. The issue is not whether you pursue growth. The issue is why you pursue it and how you hold it.

The Bible shows that the same action can come from very different motives. One person seeks God's direction and serves faithfully. Another uses spiritual language to justify personal gain. From the outside, their work may look identical, but God sees the difference.

Without intentional reflection, ambition can quietly shift from a godly calling to personal control. Ego grows fastest when life moves quickly and affirmation comes easily.

The questions I propose in this guide act as guardrails. They will help you test your motives, surrender your plans, and steward influence with humility. They are not meant to shame you or talk you out of growth. They are meant to help you pursue excellence with integrity, clarity, and peace, while staying aligned with God's purposes for your life.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

This process might feel uncomfortable. That's normal.

You might discover:

- Motives you didn't know were there
- Desires you've been afraid to admit
- Fears you've been covering with spiritual language

This is not failure. This is faithfulness. God already knows what's in your heart. These questions simply help you see what He sees—so He can shape you more into the image of Christ.

With this in mind, I pray you find this this guide brings clarity, conviction, and deeper surrender to Christ.

*Ruth Rancy*





## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide works well as three separate devotionals over several days, or as a single extended time of reflection.

Eliminate distractions and set aside a special for this devotion. Invite the Holy Spirit into this process. You cannot discern God's will through self-examination alone. As you work through these questions, ask the Spirit to 'search you and know your heart' (Psalm 139:23). He is the one who convicts, clarifies, and leads you into truth (John 16:13). Trust that God wants to reveal what needs to change more than you want to discover it.

Read slowly and honestly. Do not rush the Scripture or the examples. Read each passage with openness. Let the words surface reactions, resistance, or discomfort. Those responses often point to areas God wants to shape.

Journal your answers in full sentences. Avoid short or polished responses. Write what is true, not what sounds spiritual. If your answer surprises you, stay with it. Clarity comes through honesty.

Pause for prayer before moving on. Use the prayer prompts as starting points. Add your own words. If you feel tension or uncertainty, name it before God rather than trying to resolve it yourself.

Return to these questions regularly. Ambition and calling evolve with seasons, roles, and responsibility. Revisit this guide when new opportunities arise, when success increases, or when frustration sets in. These questions help you stay grounded as God grows your influence.



### **QUESTION 1. TEST**

What is truly driving this desire or opportunity?

Before you ask God to bless an opportunity, Scripture calls you to examine your motives (2 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 139:23–24). Ambition itself is not the problem. The problem begins when ambition shifts from obedience to self-promotion, even when it uses spiritual language.

The story of king Saul offers a clear warning. In 1 Samuel 15, God gave Saul a direct command. Saul partially obeyed, then kept the best spoils and claimed he did it for God. On the surface, his explanation sounded faithful. Underneath, Saul was preserving status, control, and legacy. When confronted, he defended himself instead of examining his heart. His actions revealed that approval mattered more to him than obedience.

This same tension shows up in modern professional life. Opportunities often look good, sound noble, and even appear aligned with faith. Testing your motives helps you discern whether your pursuit flows from worship or from the need to be seen, validated, or admired.

Scripture sharpens this test. Colossians 3:23 calls you to work wholeheartedly for the Lord, not for people's approval. James 4:3 warns that some prayers go unanswered because they are rooted in self-focused desire. These verses invite honesty. They push you beyond surface intentions and into heart-level truth.

## Prayer prompt

*God, search my heart. Show me if I am seeking Your approval or man's applause. [Name the specific opportunity or desire you're examining.] Reveal what I cannot see on my own.*

## Journaling activity

*Take time to write without editing yourself. Allow clarity to emerge through honesty rather than justification.*

## Reflection prompts

1. What first drew you to this opportunity initially?

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2. Would you still pursue it if no one ever knew?

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3. Describe what faithful obedience would look like if recognition never came.

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## QUESTION 2. SURRENDER

Have you truly placed this desire in God's hands?

Testing your motives is only the first step. The deeper question is whether you are willing to release control. Ambition rooted in calling remains open-handed. Ambition driven by ego tightens its grip when challenged.

King Saul's story continues in 1 Samuel 15:20–21. When confronted by Samuel, Saul did not pause to repent. He defended his actions, explained his reasoning, and shifted responsibility. His words revealed that he wanted God's approval without yielding his own plans. Surrender would have required admitting he was wrong and trusting God with the outcome. Instead, Saul clung to what he wanted to protect. God's response was sobering: 'Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king' (1 Samuel 15:23). Saul's partial obedience revealed total disobedience.

This struggle feels familiar. Many believers pray for direction while quietly hoping God agrees with a decision already made. True surrender asks a harder question: *Am I seeking God's will, or am I asking Him to endorse mine?*

Scripture speaks clearly to this posture. Proverbs 16:9 reminds us that "the heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps". Matthew 6:33 calls us to seek God's kingdom first, trusting Him to handle the outcomes we cannot control. Surrender shifts ambition from striving to trust.

Here's the good news: Even when your motives are mixed, God's grace is sufficient. Surrender isn't about achieving perfect purity before you move forward. It's about honest dependence—bringing your messy ambitions to God and trusting Him to refine them as you walk in obedience. Jesus doesn't require perfection. He requires proximity.

## Prayer prompt

God, I surrender [name it specifically] to You. Give me the courage to obey even if Your answer isn't what I want. Help me trust Your goodness when I don't understand Your timing.

## Journaling activity

*Write honestly about where you feel resistance. Surrender often begins where fear of loss feels strongest.*

## Reflection prompts

1. Have you already decided this is what you want, or are you truly asking God?

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2. What would it feel like to hear God say “not yet” or “no” to this?

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3. Are you willing to trust God’s timing even if it means waiting or walking away?

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### QUESTION 3. STEWARDSHIP

How will you carry what God places in your hands?

Calling does not end when God opens a door. It begins there. The final test of godly ambition is stewardship. This question shifts the focus from getting the opportunity to managing it in a way that honors God and serves others.

Scripture shows a clear contrast between Saul and David. Saul's leadership became centered on self-preservation. He feared losing position, influence, and approval. His decisions flowed from protecting himself. David, by contrast, carried a shepherd's heart. Long before public recognition, Long before public recognition, he faithfully cared for sheep in the fields and he learned to steward what was entrusted to him. He saw leadership as responsibility, not entitlement.

This distinction matters for ambitious believers. Influence can be used to build platforms or to build people. Stewardship asks whether your growth creates space for others to thrive or simply secures your own success.

God speaks plainly about this responsibility. First Peter 4:10 calls every believer to use what they have received to serve others faithfully. Luke 12:48 reminds us that increased responsibility brings increased accountability. However, this isn't a burden that you should fear. Instead, it's a privilege that you should steward. God entrusts influence to those He also equips. When you lead from dependence on Him, accountability becomes evidence of His trust, not proof of His suspicion.

Prayer prompt

*God, help me see [this opportunity] as a responsibility, not a reward. Show me how to steward it for Your kingdom. Who do You want me to serve through this influence?*



## Journaling activity

*Write with specificity. Name people, practices, and boundaries that will help you remain faithful as responsibility grows.*

### Reflection prompts

1. Who specifically will benefit from this besides you?

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2. How could this influence be used to serve others and glorify God?

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3. What accountability will you put in place to stay focused on stewardship?

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## NEXT STEPS

Discernment does not end with reflection. Godly ambition grows through ongoing practice, prayer, and wise counsel. What God revealed to you through these questions deserves space to shape your next decisions.

Review your journal entries regularly. Look for patterns, not perfection. Pay attention to moments of clarity, resistance, or conviction. Ask God what obedience looks like in this current season, then pray for strength to obey.

Choose one concrete action. This may be a conversation you need to have, a boundary you need to set, or a pause you need to honor. Small steps of obedience build spiritual strength and protect your motives over time.

Redefine success. In God's economy, success isn't measured by titles, salaries, or LinkedIn endorsements. Faithfulness is the metric. You are successful when you steward what God entrusts, whether that's leading a team of 200 or mentoring one junior colleague with humility and wisdom. Ambition aligned with God's purposes aims for greater faithfulness, not just greater visibility.

Stay connected to a community of believers. Ambition becomes distorted in isolation and pride grows fastest in secret. Share what God is stirring in you with someone who knows you well and follows Jesus faithfully. Invite prayer and honest feedback as you move forward.



## LAST WORDS

If you would like help discerning your leadership calling with biblical perspective, I offer free 30-minute clarity calls. These conversations are designed to help you process ambition, faith, and next steps with wisdom and prayer. Book your free call at [info@realfaithjourney.com](mailto:info@realfaithjourney.com).

Follow along for continued encouragement and teaching on Instagram at [@knowninggod\\_thebook](https://www.instagram.com/knowninggod_thebook).