

CHAD HOWSE'S

12 VIRTUES OF MANLINESS

AMBITION

A man in a dark suit is seen from behind, looking out over a blurred city skyline at night. The city lights are visible in the background, creating a bokeh effect. The man's silhouette is dark against the lighter, out-of-focus background.

THE BEAUTY OF AMBITION

Ambition, I have come to believe, is the most primal and sacred fundament of our being. To feel ambition and to act upon it is to embrace the unique calling of our souls. Not to act upon that ambition is to turn our backs on ourselves and on the reason for our existence. ~ Steven Pressfield, *Turning Pro*

Our ambitions are who *we are*. They're our souls telling us what we desire most. But without the courage to pursue what we aspire to have and to be, we aren't truly ambitious. We're unlike others in that we *dream* of greater things, but our actions are no different than the man who dreams of nothing.

"Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world." **Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe**

When many think of ambitions, they think of the man trying to change who he is, or where he is. We think of transformation. We think of the man working harder, getting up earlier and grinding in an effort to change.

However, to be ambitious doesn't mean we're running from where we come from or who we are. Rather, we're reaching our potential. We're actually becoming what we are capable of becoming. We have the courage to reach for something greater instead of hiding behind the fear, often disguised as comfort or satisfaction, that keeps so many from pursuing what they truly want their lives to be.

"Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly." ~ St. Francis de Sales

Being ambitious is being who and what we are, and being that perfectly.

If our ambitions are who we are. If they're our soul calling out to us. Then why are so few truly ambitious people?

We've all met people who talk as if they're going to accomplish the world. They talk about the car they'll have, the wife they'll have, the LIFE they'll create. Yet they sleep in until noon. They drink with friends at every opportunity. They complain about where they are in life as if they have no control over what they do or how they think.

They talk about ambition, but they don't *live it*. And I point a finger in saying this. What I should notice is the three others pointing back at me. I've been this guy, and **I still fall back into that trap of having big dreams, but not doing the work needed to live these dreams.** The difference: today, I'll have a lazy day in a week, or a lazy morning. I catch myself not living in a way that **DESERVES** the successes I want, and I change it immediately. In the past it wasn't so.

Back to the question: why are so few truly ambitious?

AMBITION

AMBITION, BY DEFINITION, REQUIRES HARD WORK.

Without work, the feeling propelling us to greener pastures isn't ambition. It's nothing more than an intangible desire we have with no intention of creating the reality of this desire. **Ambition asks us to face our fears.** To think and live outside of the box. It often even asks for us to live alone. To say no to love, friendships, and only focus on our one mission.

The ambitious road isn't easy. We can't see the end of the tunnel when we take our first step, yet we keep on walking. Though we're surrounded by darkness and uncertainty, we pick up our feet and start running. Though we stumble, fall, and fail, we keep moving forward.

Few "embrace the unique calling of our souls", as Pressfield puts it, because it's scary. We have to give up so much in an attempt to become great.

Bartering for Success

To accomplish something *Legendary*, we must give something of similar value. This is our barter for greatness. We can't reach it unless we're willing to give something in return.

Effort, both our highest quality and quantity, is a requirement for most ambitious endeavors.

Every person listening to what their souls are telling them, yelling at them to reach for and attempt to achieve, must be willing to give effort in return for their success. There is no way around this. If you think there is, you're setting yourself up for failure.

But we often need to give more than just effort to succeed.

We need to have the right mindset. We have to commit fully. No surrender, no quitting. **We have to let go of our doubts, and pay attention only to the voice that tells us to push forward.** The voice that acknowledges success as a foregone conclusion. If we do this, we will one day (rarely a time in the future under our control) achieve this.

"Those who think they can, and those who think they can't, are both usually right." ~ Confucius

With effort, and the right mindset, we're on the right track. But we may still need to give more.

THE SACRIFICE

I'm speaking from my own experience. What I've seen in my own life. What's worked for me, what I've seen work for others. There is no ONE path that we must all take. But I do think that if we want something bad enough, **if we're going to follow our ambition to**

the gates of hell or heaven, we need to be willing to drop it all and forge forward in our quest.

The tricky part is finding balance, where balance may be a hindrance.

My number one priority is success in my business (more specifically, perfecting my craft). Through this success, I will be equipped to take care of my future wife and family – whom will be of more important to me, but not necessarily a greater priority. I'll also be able to take care of my parents, who are definitely of greater *importance*, yet, still can't be a greater priority.

In finding success in my business, and wherever this path takes me – or I take *IT* – I will create the freedom I want in my life. **But to create this freedom, I first need to ignore freedom all-together.** I need to bind myself, my hours, my energy, to perfecting my craft. I'm not binding myself to making more money. But to becoming the best I can possibly be at what I do. From there, any financial reward is welcome, but that's not the focus of the journey, nor is it the destination.

In finding success in my craft, I will have the freedom to hang out with friends. To enjoy their company, the pints, the laughs, the relationships that make life so unique and enjoyable. But before that success comes, I can only use the time with my friends as a reward for work well done. This is where I recharge my batteries so the quality of my work can be where it needs to be – or at least on the right path. **I'm completely in the moment when I'm there, but I can't be there every time the opportunity arises.**

Relationships are so important in life. In the end, they're going to be more important than my craft, but they can't always be a higher priority.

MY AMBITIOUS BARTER

As I write this, I'm sitting in a coffee shop in Bern, Switzerland. I'm here because a great friend of mine is about to get married to an even greater lady. This morning, I was up at 4 am, desperately searching for a place to work. An internet connection and a cup of coffee.

My barter for success; for the dream that will on day be my ambitions reality. My barter is that until that day comes, perfecting my craft will always be my #1 priority. It will be what I give the most time and energy to. It will consume my thoughts and my hours.

I'll have to say no to beer with my friends. I'll have to say no to a date with a beautiful girl, if my work is incomplete. I'll have to sit alone, eyes staring at a pen, pad, computer screen, or book, at work. But there's freedom in the struggle. Every day we work we're breaking down barriers. I'm in the moment, enjoying the journey as much – if not more – than I'll enjoy the destination.

In return for my success, I'll give my maximal effort, both in the highest quality and quantity I can give. I'll say no when I need to say no. I'll be strong enough to resist

distractions. To turn off the TV. To turn off my phone. To disappear for days and get lost in the lines of a book I'm writing, the emails I'm answering, the programs I'm creating.

This is my barter. My craft, my work, and my mission is first. Everything else is second when it comes to time and effort.

YOUR AMBITIOUS BARTER

To accomplish anything, we have to give something great, to get something greater.

If you want to build your dream body, you have to sacrifice your favorite junk foods. You have to enjoy the pain of intense training. You have to do stuff you might not want to do. But it will be worth it in the end.

Have the courage to embrace the unique calling of your soul. Enjoy the people around you. Always be in the moment, whether you're working, laughing, or training. Once you acknowledge what you want in life, give it your all. Do it for your wife, your kids, your family. Create the life you're meant to have. Be the man you're meant to be.

Task.

Write down your greatest dreams – no limitations. What do you aspire to have, to be, to have in your life? What are your ambitions?

Write down what you're willing to give up to achieve these?

Both your true dream, and a *big* barter are required. Often, the bigger the goal, the bigger the sacrifice.

Some sacrifices may include:

- Strict budgetting of finances.
- A 7 day a week work schedule of 12+ hours a day.
- Identifying earlier on than most if a relationship is right. If it's wrong, it can be toxic to your success.
- Learning to say no, and say it a lot.
- Figuring out a strict routine – not leaving your energy levels or ability to focus to chance.
- Recharging your batteries on weekends. Not getting drunk then having to struggle to get back into a routine.
- Going above and beyond what you've done before. Pushing boundaries. Actively getting out of your comfort zone.
- Facing your fears at every opportunity.
- Loneliness.

Some will agree with this, some won't. Here's where I stand: I think it's important to be comfortable and focused with long periods of alone time. This is where our thoughts are the clearest, where our best work is done.

AMBITION

Many cringe at being alone. They fiend for people. For laughter with others, drinks, companionship. It's my feeling that we can't be truly comfortable with others until we're comfortable being completely alone.

The flip side to this is that relationships – with friends or a companion – make life special. They give it meaning. So don't completely become a hermit forever, but learn to love being alone. Give that time to perfecting your craft, training your body, and strengthening your mind. **Have the courage to let go of the relationships that aren't beneficial, and give more to those that are.**