

I. **We are commanded not to do anything out of selfish ambition or empty conceit.**

- A. To operate out of selfish ambition is to be concerned excessively or exclusively with **oneself**. This is not how God wants us to operate.
- B. To operate out of selfish ambition is to be seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for **others**. This is not how God wants us to operate.
- C. To operate out of empty conceit is to have a **boast** about oneself with no evidence to back up one's **boast**. This is not how God wants us to operate.
- D. To operate out of empty conceit is to have a **boast** about oneself based on fixed **false beliefs** about self. This is not how God wants us to operate.

II. **When operating out of selfish ambition or empty conceit in the church, we may see:**

- A. People doing ministry at the local church according to their goals and lacking **ambition** for God's agenda for the church and people.
- B. People believing that the local church is for their personal fulfillment and their personal ministry, resulting in believing that what they do and what they feel about the church and people has more **importance** than their character development and relationship to people at that local church.
- C. People having such a **high view** of themselves, resulting in believing that their money, ministry, materials, or mindset are irreplaceable at the church and must not be ignored or denied.
- D. People having such a **high view** of themselves that when things are not going their way or they feel hurt in any way, it will lead to:
 - 1. **Drifting away** – falling to the background of the church, becoming unnoticeable, becoming lax and lazy in one's commitments to their ministry and connection to the people of the church, and having low attendance at the church; they may not leave the church, but they are on the fringes

2. **Walking away** – leaving the church abruptly, leaving the church with accusations and allegations toward the people and leadership of the church, or leaving the church with a commitment to tearing down the church and its leadership on the way out

“I think that happens a lot today for some believers. Rather than fostering a Christianity lived out in the church, some Christians unintentionally replace the church and encourage detachment. That’s not biblical Christianity. And it’s certainly not gnarly.

“An individualized faith makes us ‘lax and slow’ regarding the local church. We’re like choir members who don’t see any real point in actually standing together and singing the same music. Instead we mill about, occasionally forming duets or trios, but the power and passion of the entire ensemble is never heard. And the cause of Christ suffers for it. Joshua Harris calls it ‘dating the church.’ Donald Whitney calls those who do it ‘spiritual hitchhikers;’ they want ‘all the benefits but no responsibility; all take and no give; no accountability, just a free ride.’ They’re really just drifting.

“As a pastor, I’ve seen my share of spiritual hitchhikers. My heart always goes out to them. Bundled with dreams but lacking Christ’s ambition for the church, they’re ever traveling, never building.

“It’s not that their lives don’t bear fruit. Trees can bear fruit under all kinds of conditions. My neighbor once planted a fig tree in the only small patch of dirt available on our shared driveway. It spit figs on my car like an old trucker with a good dip. Trees and Christians share that similarity—they can bear fruit in almost any space. But the most fruitful Christian life is one spent loving the local church.”

– Dave Harvey, *Rescuing Ambition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 160-161.