

Battling Independence And Contrarianism

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[0 : 00] Okay, I want to talk to you this morning about battling independence and contrarianism. Okay, battling independence and contrarianism. First little caveat here, please don't listen to this and think of the person that you think of when you think of independence and contrarianism.

Think of yourself, okay? There's a tendency in all of us to try to find independence or to be a contrarian. Again, sometimes just for contrarian's sake, but sometimes for other reasons. And it's not going to help us if we're thinking about other people. We need to ask ourselves, is this about me? Where do I need to grow in this? And with that too, I will say, being a new church plant and being the first church plant of the church that sent us, it's fairly typical that the people who would gravitate towards a church plant, especially the first ones when you've never seen a church plant before, would be the ones who would maybe have a tendency to be a little bit more independent, a little bit more contrarian.

And I think that was the case with this group of people. There's a good side of that, right? Because it's the kind of pioneering kind of people that would say yes. And then there's a bad side of that that keeps us knitted together in a way that is fruitful for the kingdom.

Okay? And so I think this is an important thing for us to talk about and to realize that if there is independence in us and there is this kind of contrarianism in us, that it's not helpful.

[1 : 37] It's not helpful in any sense of church, but especially on the front end of a church plant, the first year of a church plant, God really wants us to be united. And we're going to see that here in a second as we look at different scriptures about this.

So I'm going to read through a bunch of these scriptures. I'll comment on a few, but I really, in many ways, just want you to let the word of God sink into your heart and hear kind of this theme throughout scripture on unity and agreement and having one mind, having the same mind.

And let that just sink into our hearts and just ask the question, hey, am I helping with this? You know, when we do premarital counseling with couples and sometimes marriage counseling, one of the topics we'll talk about is oneness.

And we'll often ask the question, does this particular thing promote our oneness or detract from our oneness? And it's actually a good thing to actually ask in the context of church as well, because God wants us to be one.

God wants us to have one mind, to be like-minded. And there are things that we can do or say that promote oneness. And there are things that we can do or say that detract from our oneness.

[2 : 43] And so I'm going to look at some scriptures here. I'm going to start in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10. And Paul makes an appeal here. He says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

Okay. I think it's important to realize that if we don't have agreement and we're not united in the same mind and the same judgment, what ends up happening is there are divisions among us. And a lot of times independence and contrarianism is really a root for division. And so Paul's given this appeal. Now he's given this appeal because number one, he knows that this was happening there, but he also knows that this is human nature as well.

Okay. And so he's appealing. And sometimes we have to make this appeal. And I'm making this appeal this morning, that we are conscious of this, that we think of this, that we all agree that there be no divisions among you, that we be united in the same mind in the same judgment.

Philippians chapter one, verse 27 says something similar. It says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. So whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

[4 : 16] And again, this is why it's so important because when we are standing firm in one spirit and we have one mind, it causes us to strive side by side for the sake of the gospel, for the faith of the gospel.

And really what ends up happening is if we don't have that, it hinders our gospel witness. It hinders gospel advance because we end up being focused on the wrong things.

Philippians chapter two, one to four says, if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. So he's saying, you know, if there's any kind of encouragement, if there's anything good in Christ, complete this by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[5 : 25] Now listen, that doesn't happen naturally. That takes work. Like you're not going to, you're not going to get there by hoping or just thinking that's just going to happen by natural church osmosis, so to speak.

It takes effort. Okay. We have to have intentionality to be of the same mind, have the same love, be in full accord and one mind.

Now I don't know about you, but when I hear that, I think, wow, that's a pretty strong language in agreement. I mean, same mind, one mind, same love, full accord. You know what I think of that thing?

I think it's not even possible. Which brings us to another point. We need the spirit of God to do that. We can't be dependent on our own rationale and our own efforts alone.

We must depend on the Holy Spirit to make us one. To pray what Jesus prayed. That we would be one just as him and the Father are one. That we would have the intentionality, not just in our own hearts and minds, but intentionality to say, God, we need your spirit to make us one.

[6 : 29] We need your spirit to help us to have one mind. Because that's impossible apart from him. There's no way. But if we are all centered on the right things, if we're all focused on Christ, and we are living by the spirit, we'll have this one mind.

We'll have the fellowship of the spirit. Philippians chapter 2, again in Philippians, 19 to 20 in the CSB says, Now I hope that the Lord Jesus sent Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be encouraged by news about you.

For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests. That same kind of concept, like-mindedness. 1 Peter 3, verse 8 says, All of you have unity of mind.

2 Corinthians 13, 11, Brothers, agree with one another. Romans 12, 16, Live in harmony with one another. The good thing about this verse is it takes away that kind of concept that creeps in that says the only way to have unity is with uniformity.

Well, there's no such thing as a harmony that has uniformity, that it's not a harmony anymore. And it's just everybody singing the same. The beauty of a harmony is the fact that different people are singing in different ways, and it sounds good together.

[7 : 44] There's unity, but it's without uniformity. And we can have unity without uniformity. I'm not in any way advocating, nor do I believe as the scriptures advocating that we all have to be the same, and we have to have all the same ideas, but we can take those ideas, work them together, live in agreement, and have one mind, and work in harmony with one another.

And we have to ask ourselves sometimes, Does this belief, does what I'm about to say, does what I'm about to challenge, does what I'm about to introduce into the conversation, is this harmony or is this out of tune?

Right? Is this going to flow together well? Is this going to keep us all singing the same thing in the same direction, and it's going to be pleasant and give grace to the hearers?

Or is this going to sound bad? Is this going to not be harmonious? Is it going to, you know, sometimes if you have a group of people trying to sing in harmony, and then one person gets to their part, and they're just way off, you can stop the whole song sometimes.

And everyone's kind of like, oh, okay, I don't know where to go from there. And that can happen in church sometimes. We can be buzzing along, just doing our thing. There's harmony, there's cohesion, and then all of a sudden someone throws something out there, and you're just like, whoa.

[9 : 02] And the song stops. And we stop moving forward. So we've got to ask ourselves, Am I living in harmony with one another? It doesn't mean you have to be exactly the same.

Well, I thought you said we have to be one mind. Yes. You have to take all these scriptures together and interpret them. You can't just take one alone, take them together. There has to be a way to be of one mind, while there's still certain differences where they harmonize together.

Okay? And that's what we have to ask ourselves. Is this harmonious? Is this belief? Is this way of doing things? Is this what I'm about to say? Romans 14.19 says, Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

It's so easy to be so, and especially knowing how you're gifted. Sometimes it can be so easy to just be so kind of myopic and tunnel vision on what is true or what is right, and we can miss what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Now, I'm not saying you compromise what is true or what is right, but sometimes we can do that at the expense of people. We can do that at the expense of thinking of the harmony, of only thinking of ourselves and not thinking of how we function together.

[10 : 17] And he says, Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. And so we have to ask the question, Is this going to bring peace among us? Is this going to be a mutual upbuilding?

Sometimes it might only build us up. It might only be interesting to us. It might only be good for us or maybe even one other person. Maybe if I say this in front of a large group of people, maybe this won't be upbuilding.

Maybe this won't be helpful. We got to ask those questions sometimes, and we have to pursue that. It has to be pursued. It's really a mentality, kind of a focus of how we even do church together. Ephesians chapter 4, 1 to 6 says, I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

Verse 3, Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit. Just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

[11 : 20] One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all. There's a lot of ones in there. I think he's trying to make a point.

He's trying to make a point of how we should be one. We should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Let me ask you the question. When it comes to the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, what is your disposition?

What is your attitude when it comes to that? Are you eager? Is it an afterthought or a forethought? Is it an intention or is it off the radar? Are you eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace?

We need to be eager. It needs to be something that we are looking forward to, that we are pressing into. Not an afterthought. Not something we don't think about very often.

It needs to be something that we're eager for. One of the reasons we need to be eager for it is because the devil wants to disunify us. And the devil is into aborting things. He loves to abort things before they can get traction and really get started.

[12 : 26] He loves to do this with churches. He loves to do this with babies. He loves to do this with all kinds of things. We're not unaware of his schemes. And so we need to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Knowing that the devil does not want this church to even get off the ground. We're not even a year into it. Of course the devil would love to abort it before we could even get there.

So you have to be aware of that. We have to be aware of the devil's schemes and not say, Oh, it's no big deal. I'd have to think about it. No, you do have to think about it. You do have to be eager.

You do have to think about what we say, how we do things, who the audience is.

We have to be considering those things. Very important. So those are, I mean, just a kind of a cluster of verses. Talking about agreement, oneness of mind, eagerness in this area, pursuing it. There's quite a bit of things there that is definitely a theme in the Scriptures that we are to pursue. And I just, before I get into some roots of what can cause this, I just want you to ask the question again, What is your disposition towards this?

[13 : 30] How eager or uneager are you at this? Have you been burned in the past by things that have caused you to just say, Well, it's not the big deal. I'm just kind of looking after myself because

when I tried to do this in the past, I got burned or it went really horribly.

And listen, that's true. Many of us have experienced that where it's gone really poorly. When we actually tried to aim for these noble things that the Scriptures say. And the worst thing that could happen when we would get so burnt out on that, that we would stop being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

We have to. We must. And it's a worthy cause. And I think it's just important for us to say that out loud. This is a worthy cause. And not think, Well, I'm tired. I'm burnt out.

I tried that. It didn't work. I tried that. And I was a part of a church split. I tried that. And I got really hurt. Yes. I know how you feel.

That's happened. But to be eager in this thing. To say, Yes, those things have happened. But as far as this church, we are going to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

We're going to be eager in this.

[14:37] Amen? Okay. I want to look at kind of 10 different roots, I think, of independence and contrarianism. Okay? 10 possible roots of what can kind of cause these things to crop up.

All right? So let's start with the first one. First one. Unbelief. Okay? Genesis 3. 1. Classic tactic of the enemy right from the beginning. The serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

And he said to the woman. And this is... Just know this is a constant tactic of the enemy. Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?

And this is what often I think ends up happening when it comes to unity, when it comes to being of one mind. Is... Did God really say that? I mean... Do we really need to be of one mind?

Do we really need to be in full accord? Do we... I mean... Did God really say that? And my answer to you is, Yes, He did. We just read it. Said it a few times. Said it many times.

[15:38] And it's easy to say, Well, but we're so different. And there's so much... There's such an eclectic nature of people in general, much less the church. Surely God didn't really mean that.

Surely God didn't really say that. But oh yes, He did. He did. And so it's good to just... I think that's one that really goes under the radar.

We kind of read these verses and think, Well, that's not... Surely it can't mean that because that would be impossible. So it must not mean that. When in actuality it does mean that, and we're just in unbelief.

We're reading through the scriptures with human eyes and lenses and past experiences and saying, Surely God couldn't really mean that. Surely God didn't really say that because it's not possible.

And so we read these verses and we kind of just go to the next verse. You know? It happens. I know it happens. We have to be watch out for that.

[16:37] Do you have faith that it's possible to be of one mind? Do you have faith that it's possible to be in full accord? One accord. Do you have faith in that? And if you don't, we need to repent. We need to believe and trust God.

Okay? You wanted to do a church plant and not have faith? You're out of your mind. There's no way. We need faith. And one of the things we have to believe is that God can build his church, that God can keep us together, that God can unify an eclectic group of people, a motley crew from all different walks of life and different church backgrounds and different ages.

You know you hear these voices sometimes. I don't fit in. I don't have a place. I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm not like them. I don't fit in with that person. I'm not close to that person.

They're close. I'm not. They do these things. I don't do those things. It's all these voices. You're going to listen to them? You're going to listen to the voice of God. You'll listen to the word of God and say, no, this is possible.

And yes, although in some areas it looks like the cards are stacked against us, God is for us. What cards really can be stacked against us?

[17:47] Right? God is for us. Who can be against us? I'm not going to have more faith in the devil's ability to screw things up than God's ability to keep things together. Really at its core, unbelief is not a lack of faith.

It's just faith in the wrong direction. It's faith in the wrong things. It's actually believing that the devil has more power to disrupt than God has power to unify. And that's just unacceptable for anyone who believes that Jesus is who he says he is.

Okay? Number two, ignorance I think is a root. I think sometimes we don't realize. I think sometimes we just kind of pan it off and say, you know, yeah, I have some different views on things or I have some different thoughts or I like to challenge things or I like to discuss things and talk about things. But again, I'm not saying those things are bad. We'll get into more of this more. But we're not conscious of the fact that a house divided against itself cannot stand. And we don't think about the fact that this can be very disruptive.

Independence and contrarianism are divisive by nature. Okay? They divide us. And we have to be careful while we let these things suddenly come in and just think, oh, it's not a big deal.

[18:53] I really actually do think it does become a big deal. And I don't think, I really believe this is something we need to hear as a church is that we need to be careful of these things.

And again, don't think of the person who's not, someone sitting next to you in the room. Think of yourself. Okay? Independence and contrarianism are divisive.

Mark 3:25. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. Period. Period. Number three, root. This is a big one.

It's very easy and often happens that we can find our identity in being different. Okay? And so, but the problem is if your identity is in being different, then you're not free to be the same.

Essentially, you're not free to be one. If your identity is in being different, you're actually subconsciously hindering unity because your identity cannot handle being the same or to be one.

[19:57] You always have to identify yourself as different. You almost, there's like this, an identity in being different causes a need for contrarianism because otherwise I lose my identity.

If you agree with me, if we're one, I'm no longer secure because I feel like I'm just lost in the crowd. Whereas me being different, being a contrarian, can end up making me feel a sense of worth.

So it's finding your identity in something other than the person and the work of Jesus. And what ends up happening is that you actually create this unintentional, maybe subconscious friction with each other to have to be our own dog, to have to be different, to have to have different ideas, to have to always be the one who pushes against or always be the one who has these ideas of things. I think this is, we as a church identify as a charismatic church. We believe in the power and the work and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But one of the extreme bad sections of the charismatic world can be that when the gospel isn't centered in a charismatic belief system, we have to come up with new revelation in order to find identity.

And so I always have to be hearing some new thing from God. I always have to have this new revelation in a scripture that nobody else has ever had for all of time and space. And yet I do. And that makes me somewhat special when really there's nothing more special, nothing more unique, nothing more grounding and identifying than the person and the work of Jesus.

[21:31] And if you do not found yourself on the gospel of Jesus, and I'm not talking about whether you're a Christian or not, I'm talking about believing the gospel in all areas of our life. Okay?

Because I'm speaking to Christians, but we have pockets of unbelief in the gospel where we subtly are pulled into finding our identity and being something other than in Christ.

So we say, I have to be different because that's what makes me feel valid. It makes me feel like I bring value instead of just finding our value in the person and work of Jesus. Okay?

And so, watch out for that. Watch out for that. If you start to feel uncomfortable even sometimes, sometimes you can almost sense it that someone comes into a conversation and they're coming in thinking I'm for sure going to be contrarian in this and they find out, oh, we actually agree on this and then almost like causes them to feel a little unsettled.

Like, oh, in that case, well, what about this? You know, it's like, wait a second, like we agree on this. This is good, isn't it? But no, you just literally just stole the person's identity. You just pulled it out right from underneath them and now they're freaking out.

Okay? That's why we must have our identity rooted in the gospel. Okay? 1 Corinthians 11, there's two schools of thought on this verse, whether Paul was being sarcastic or facetious about this.

[22:51] I tend to think he was because of the context, but you can pick for yourself, but I think it's a good example of this. 1 Corinthians 11, 17 and 19, he says, in the following instructions, I do not commend you because when you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse.

For in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you and I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

Some say, well, he's saying yes, that as actually, he's not being facetious, that these distinctions and factions need to be there for it to be recognized who's right, but I think there's a good chance he could be being facetious here and saying, this is actually what the problem I have with you guys. You guys have divisions and it's almost like you must have them in order to prove that you are approved by God. You must have them to say that, hey, I'm legit here and I have to distinguish myself because I'm not finding my identity in the person and work of Jesus. Beware of that. Beware of that. Number four, I think a root of independence and contrarianism is a loose tongue. A loose tongue.

[24 : 01] Now, I mean this in a very specific way. Okay? Let me look at some of the verses. Proverbs 15, 2 says, The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

Proverbs 12, 18 says, There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. And then Ephesians 4, 29 says, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

Sometimes, you might have thoughts about something. You're wondering about something. Maybe, you're finding your beliefs challenged by something and you want a sounding board on that. And, especially when we feel comfortable with a group of people, it's easy to just think it doesn't matter who that sounding board is. I'm saying that it does matter. Sometimes, being a sounding board to the wrong people doesn't benefit or give grace to those who hear.

It's not, it's not, it's like, hey, that's a perfectly fine conversation. Like, we can wonder and doubt things and have questions about things. We have to have the freedom to be able to do that. But we have to think that sometimes having that conversation with the wrong person can really wig them out and not help, and that really does not be helping them.

[25 : 20] Okay? And so, we have to make sure that before we, you know, vent about something or throw out this new thought we're having about something or disagree about something or think, you know, hey, I think we're going the wrong direction and give our opinion on something.

We have to think, is this going to build up the church? Is this putting us in the right direction? Is this good for building up? And is it as fits the occasion? Or is this the wrong place in time for this? Is it giving grace to those who hear? This might not be helpful. Okay? That's a really important question to ask. And I think sometimes when you're tending towards an individualistic independence or you tend to have more of a contrarian mindset, you could just say things, again, especially if it's found in your identity, you just say things or give opinions and you're not thinking of who it's affecting.

There might be someone who's weak in faith that you're putting doubts in their mind that they really don't need it and are not going to be helpful to. You might be saying things that you say it to the right person, you can go back and forth on it, you have a good conversation and there's mutual upbuilding and this is a good conversation.

Whereas others, it's just like, oh my gosh, that really scared me. Like, what if that is true? What if that's right? Whereas two other people could have that conversation and they come out of it and it's like, oh, there's good clarity and there's good, there's no fear.

[26 : 40] Someone else gets really anxious about it. Someone else starts believing things because they're not as grounded in the scriptures or they're not as grounded in their faith. Starts believing things they shouldn't believe. We have to be careful of what we say and who we say it to.

Especially when it comes to opinions. Everybody's got opinions. All right? I have strong opinions. So who, I'd be a fool, especially because you guys know me, if I'd say, hey, no more strong opinions.

Not to mention, that'd be lame. No one wants to be a brown people who don't have strong opinions. I actually enjoy strong opinions most of the time. Okay? But, I have to, I know this about myself and you need to know this about yourself that just because you have a strong opinion doesn't mean everybody needs to hear it.

Sometimes it's not beneficial. We should be sometimes thinking, is this going to be helpful? Is this going to be helpful? 1 Corinthians 6.12 in the CSB says, everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial.

Okay? Sometimes it's not beneficial. And Proverbs 21.23 says, whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble. And so sometimes we vent out loud, we give opinions out loud,

we say things that we haven't even really figured out ourselves yet.

[27 : 55] And sometimes that's okay because you need the help of someone else to figure it out. But sometimes if you haven't figured out yourself, it's not helpful to bring it up to other people. and sometimes we have to think too, you know, whether it's a church, sometimes it's your job, sometimes it's in your marriage, it can be in multiple different things.

Sometimes you have opinion about things going in a different direction and it's not the direction that whoever's leading is taking the people. Okay? Whether it's your family with your parents in a marriage with your husband in a church with the elders and leaders of the church, sometimes it's like, well, you have an opinion, but what they're doing isn't wrong, so maybe that opinion isn't helpful.

And I've been in churches where that's been the case where I'm just thinking, you know what, this isn't the way I would do it. But if I bring this up, it could cause unnecessarily, they've made a decision, I don't want to have unnecessary division here.

Now, if they're inviting it or they're asking for it or it's in the right, again, it's using discernment to say, when do I say these things? Sometimes by saying those things, it's like, this is actually going to shake things up in a way that shouldn't.

Sometimes we need to shake things up in the way that they should, but there's a time and a place for that and we need to be thinking about that, right? That's why James 1.19, he says, you know, let every person be slow to speak.

[29 : 13] It's just thinking about what we say. I got to say that this group of people has a lot of strong opinions and has a lot to say about a lot of things. Sometimes I'm surprised that I didn't think that things could be said about that said thing and then there's a lot of things.

And again, part of me loves that, but part of that is not helpful. It's not helpful. And I hope you understand where I'm coming from that. And I think trying to lead in a fatherly way or just say, let's just be a little slower to speak sometimes and think about that a little bit more and think, I want to, for the mutual up in this church and think, yes, I have an opinion about everything or you have an opinion about everything, but is it always beneficial to say it or is it always best to do it in this context or this people?

We got to ask the question. Number five, a root of independence or contrarianism is thinking of yourself more highly than you ought. Okay, Romans 12, 3 says, for by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Okay, we got to watch out for pride and we got to have self-awareness to know like, hey, am I thinking of myself more highly than I ought?

Am I thinking of my opinion more highly than I ought? Am I thinking about even who I am and what I know and how I know it? Am I thinking of it with sober judgment?

[30 : 44] Or am I just thinking I know better? Am I just exalting my gifting above other people's gifting? Am I thinking because am I thinking because I'm a teacher, I see things clearer?

Am I thinking because I'm more prophetic, I clearly see things better than other people? Am I thinking because I'm pastoral that I understand people better than other people?

Now, that's part of the nature of those gifts, right? Like, you do understand certain things better.

That's why, that's what having the gift is. But sometimes we can exalt things over other people.

We can not look at ourselves with sober judgment. We cannot respect people who have been in the arena, so to speak, as Roosevelt said, you know, not with those cold and timid souls that have never known victory or defeat, not armchair theologians and armchair critics who are constantly giving opinions about everything but have never actually been in the arena and done said thing or have done very little of it.

It's like the, the amount of like parenting influencers online now who are so authoritative with what they have and yet they're, they're talking about parenting and they have one child and their oldest is three and they're the expert on parenting.

[31 : 58] You just got to think, you know, I just don't know if you're really looking at yourself with sober judgment. You may have a little more to learn about parenting because your oldest is three and you have one child and, you know, you read some posts on Instagram.

I like, that's just not enough for me. I think maybe a little more experience, maybe a little more child rearing before you start saying you're the expert on parenting and you throw out all the things that

have been taught in the scriptures or the ways things have been done and you say, well, that's all bad.

You know, and so we have to look at ourselves with sober judgment and just say, okay, am I thinking of myself more highly than I ought? Am I thinking that what I think in my opinion is so important that I'm willing to sacrifice the greater unity when it's not appropriate?

And there is a place where it's appropriate to share those things and there is things that God gives us and ways that God gives us that is helpful. But if we're not thinking of ourselves, if we're thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought, we start to become independent, start to think, well, I don't need other people.

I'm the end all, be all. I'm the guru. I'm the one who gets this. They don't get this. We become independent and sometimes we can almost be combative, combative, is that how you say it? [33 : 14] And contrarian with people because it's like, I know better. And we need sometimes a good dose of humility to realize we don't always know better. Number six, important one, an incorrect view of authority.

Okay? So the question is, what is authority for? Two great verses on this in 2 Corinthians. Chapter 10, verse 8, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, Paul and the apostles speaking here, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. Then it says in chapter 13, verse 10, for this reason I write these things while I'm away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Authority is for building up. Authority is for protection. Authority is for thinking of the best and the well-being of the person who are under your care. All right? Now, because we have had so much bad authority, we tend to throw out authority or think it's not for building up.

And because we have a... Honestly, Gina and I were talking about this this morning. Can you imagine how much health would be brought to the church if everybody who went to a church where the pastor or pastors was not qualified according to the biblical qualifications of an elder?

[34 : 43] I mean, it's really simple, straightforward. There's nothing complicated here. Imagine if all the people who are part of churches with unqualified elders just left those churches. Think of how that would change the church. It would drastically change the health of the church because these people get a voice because people go to their churches and then they have these warped views of authority and they say, well, no, that's not what authority is for.

Really, it's just because you're at a church that clearly didn't meet the qualifications of an elder and everybody kept going there and everybody kept talking about it as if this is okay or it's not okay but we're working with it.

It's just like, no. If this church or any church has elders, leaders, apostles who are not qualified according to the very specific, very simple qualifications of an elder, leave.

Leave quickly and go find a church that has them. Like that's, it doesn't make any sense where we have these issues with authority because the people just weren't clearly qualified.

Why do we even give them a voice? Why do we even try to do church that way? It was never meant to be done that way. So we have this incorrect view of authority and so we end up being independent because we end up thinking, I'm on my own.

[35 : 55] I can't trust any authority. Right? This happens in multiple levels. All right? The proliferation of divorce or maybe even if you've lost parents and you grew up with bad parents or only one parent, divorced parents, you end up thinking subconsciously, I'm on my own.

I can't trust authority. Authority's not for me. Authority doesn't build me up. Authority doesn't protect me. I have to be my own dog. I have to be independent. I have by nature need to be a contrarian because no one's looking after me but myself.

And it shapes our way of thinking of authority. Okay? You see this even, but really a parent is supposed to build up their kids and protect their kids and take the weight of decision making and a lot of things off their kids and give them the freedom to be kids and to do their job.

Parent does their job. Kid does their job. Same thing in a marriage. You oftentimes have wives who are strung out and anxious about things that they're not even, they don't need to decide because they have a godly husband.

They should just be trusting that, hey, that doesn't mean they can't give input. That doesn't mean they don't have conversations. I'm talking about being quiet and barefoot in the kitchen. I'm talking about where, why are you stressing about something when you have good godly authority in your

life?

[37 : 18] You have good godly authority in your life. Let that authority be there to build you up. Let that authority be there to free you to be a wife and to be a woman and to be feminine and to do what you're best at doing.

In the same way with shepherd shepherd and sheep in a church. Listen, if you have elders, apostles, elders, and they are above reproach, they meet the qualification of an elder in the same way, there should be a level of freedom to just say, I don't have to be independent and making sure I'm doing the job of an elder for the elder.

I don't need to be those things because that's the benefit of being under good authority as they are there to build me up. They are there to protect me. And then people always just end up saying, well, yeah, but if I don't do that, they're going to go back.

And that's the same thing a spouse will say. If I don't do that, then my husband will go bad. If I don't do that, you know, this family's, all these things, we end up thinking that. But who, the Bible doesn't say that.

Where's the trust? Where's the fact that God has set up authority? That these are God's delegated authorities and is it not just a lack of trust in Him? Then I get it. You've had bad experiences. But let's ask the question.

[38 : 35] Did not those bad experiences come because that authority wasn't qualified? That it wandered away from God's ways and God's set statutes that He had?

We have to ask ourselves, is that eroded our trust in good godly authority? And if someone's above reproach and they meet qualifications, there should be a level of, oh, oh, I can trust.

Should happen in the church, should happen in marriage, should happen with our parents. We should be able to say that God has put authority in the earth to build up. Do you believe that? Do you believe that God has given you authority?

Or do you believe that God, or you believe that authority is something that should always, you should always be skeptical of? That authority is something not to be trusted? That authority is inherently evil? These are the kind of things that sink in.

And it's the total opposite of what God always wanted. And it erodes trust with each other. It causes division. Whereas really, authority is given to cause us to be unified and of one mind.

[39 : 36] Authority is given us to help us be in agreement in one spirit, to build us up together. Good authority will hear things from people and make good godly decisions and lead in a godly, humble way.

But sometimes we channel that into things and we don't let authority actually fight for us. We think, I have to fight for myself. I have to fight for myself. And then good authority is aborted.

The benefit of good authority is good authority should be fighting for you. Fighting for your best, fighting for unity, fighting for us to go in the same direction. And when everybody thinks I cannot trust authority, I have to be my own authority and I have to be skeptical of authority at every place, otherwise it's going to go bad, it causes division.

It's an unhealthy independence and contrarianism. Number seven, a root can be ignoring fruit and spiritual gifts. Hebrews 13, 7 says, remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God, consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Okay? Matthew 11, 19 in the NIV says, wisdom is proved right by her deeds. All right? And so, ask the question. It goes back to what I was saying about the Instagram parenting influencer.

[40 : 49] All right? What have they done? What is their track record? You know? Have they, how have they led in the past? What is the fruit of their leadership? What is the fruit of their parenting?

What is the fruit of their family life? What is the fruit of their discipleship? What is the fruit of their decision making? What is the fruit of their church life? What is the fruit? And ask that question.

Then we need to look at ourselves and say, what's the fruit of my life? Do I have fruit in the area that I'm saying? I mean, when I was a young man in my 20s, early married, just starting to have kids, I had a whole lot of thoughts on parenting.

I had a lot of them. And I thought that I was right. But you know what? I would have been a fool to be talking a lot about them. I had two kids and they were like one in a few months. But I made a commitment.

I'm going to give this a good 20 years and then I'm going to be vocal about it. Should there be fruit? And if there's not, well then I should probably shut up because I need to defer to someone who

knows what they're doing.

[41 : 55] But if these things are true and they were proved true over 20, 30 years, well, that gives me a lot more authority to say them. Now, certain things have authority to say them just because they're true.

That doesn't mean that you can't confront someone's parenting because you don't have kids or because your kids are young. But again, when it comes to all kinds of things, you just got to ask yourself, is this the best time to speak up?

Do I have authority in this area? Do I have clout? Have I built trust? Is there fruit in my life? Wisdom is proved true by your actions. If you're saying something that's wise but there's no action behind it, there's no fruit, I haven't seen in your life.

The opposite is true as well. If you see fruit, if you see the outcome of a leader's life, if you see what's there, you should give clout to that. You know, if you have a faithful leader who's been a leader for 30, 40, 50, 60 years and it's like there's a lot of fruit behind them, you should say, you know what?

I'm going to listen to them when they talk about leadership. I'm going to listen to this person because of how they've done family or how they do work or business or whatever it may be.

[43 : 04] But I think a lot of times we ignore fruit or we ignore spiritual gifts. And we just think only what I have is important. 1 Corinthians 12, 21 says that I cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. Because you are the body of Christ and each one of them a part of it. Okay? Each part is necessary. I can't say, well, you know what? My gifting, I see things more clearly but I don't really need you.

We have to recognize. If you recognize someone as a teacher, you say, what is a teacher for? If you recognize someone gifted prophetically, you say, what is a prophet for? If you recognize someone is gifted apostolic, you say, what is an apostolic gifting for?

If you recognize someone as a gift of administration, you say, what is that gift for? And then receive the benefit of it. When you say, only what I think, my independent, I have marked a corner of this, when actuality, nobody does, we need those other gifts.

What does that other gift that I don't have have to say about how we do life together as a church that I need? I've said before, I was talking one time to an evangelist, very gifted evangelist, and I was talking about, he was talking about evangelism, I was really appreciating it because I don't think that's like a strong gift of mine.

[44 : 18] And I was talking to him more about how the church thinks bigger picture, more church planting and apostolic thinking. And I got done saying what I was saying and he says to me, that's a load of crap.

And I was like, wow, well, tell me how you really feel. Like, you can't, you can't just say that that's a load of crap. Like, you need me and I need you. You need me and I need you.

We're part of the body. You can't just say because you're an evangelist and you're so hell-bent and winning souls, praise God you are, that the church now isn't important, how it's shaped isn't important.

What are we going to do with all those souls that get saved? My gifting serves your gifting. Your gifting serves my gifting. We need each other. Stop thinking so highly of yourself and ignoring the fact that I have one gifting, you have another and they're both necessary.

Very important. Number eight. Got three more here. Number eight, overreacting. Overreaction can cause a root of independence or contrarianism.

[45 : 22] Okay, what do I mean by this? Well, you, maybe your own parenting, like I was saying, sometimes you were not parented well. They were distant from you, they weren't there for you and so, I'm on my own, I gotta do things.

Maybe even like a belief, you know, one thing that I think has more impact on some people than they realize is in the 70s, there was a movement called the shepherding movement and in the shepherding movement, people took way too much authority.

They abused authority in the sense that they were telling people to do a whole lot of things the Bible doesn't tell that authority is supposed to be telling people to do. Well, there was a correction of that. But what ended up happening is there was a huge backlash to that where people just threw out authority altogether.

Some of those people were your parents. Okay? Some of those people maybe were yourself. And you grew up thinking, oh, because this was abuse so bad, we have to go way the opposite way. And then you maybe even grew up in a home where there was authority and leadership and church organization was always met with skepticism. Special revelation was exalted to an unhealthy place. [46 : 31] And what ends up happening is you start to view things through your lack. Well, okay, I wasn't parented well, taught well, disciplined well, I wasn't led well.

And so, this is what we all need when it's really you're majorly just reacting to what you didn't get. Instead of looking at what the church is presently that you're in and saying, what do we need? Am I responding to Jesus and the church that I'm in or am I reacting to my upbringing and what I didn't have and responding in too far the other way? Happens all the time.

Got to ask ourselves that question. Number nine, a sense of super spirituality can cause independence and contrarianism. 1 Corinthians 1, 10 through 13 hits this great.

He says, I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus, Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

[47 : 33] He said, my brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household who inform me there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this. One of you says, I follow Paul. Another, I follow Apollos.

Another, I follow Cephas. Still another, much more spiritual, I follow Christ. Christ. And then he says, is Christ divided?

Is Christ divided? And we can almost become like, yeah, you know, I don't follow Calvin. I don't follow this group or movement. I don't follow, whatever.

Pick your thing. I follow Christ. Well, aren't you spiritual? Aren't you? And what we can end up doing is separating from the body of Christ and exalting ourselves over the other people because he says, is Christ divided?

Is Christ divided so that you're the special people and then all these other people are not? And we can end up having a super spiritual alley where it just says, you know, I don't prescribe to that line of thinking.

[48 : 32] I just follow Christ. Oh, really? Oh, really? Good for you. I'm sure you have no defilement of all, of any purpose or disunifying factor in there.

We've got to just ask ourselves, come on, let's be real. We don't want to be super spiritual weirdos, okay? We have to realize we need each other and that, yes, we all follow Christ. You don't have the market cornered on Christ and if you really believe those other people are Christ followers as well, don't act like you're following Christ in a way that other people don't because it causes division. It causes us not to be close to one another, to be one mind. And lastly, number 10, drawing people to yourself. Okay, this is for sure a disunifying way of being independent and contrary to one another.

Acts 20, 29 to 30, Paul expresses this in his last address to the Ephesian elders. He says, I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. And I say this as someone who's planting this church, who will be one who will plant other churches.

[49 : 45] My role here won't be as prominent as it is now down the road. I will have less of a role at some point in time. I hope I always have some role. Again, not by any show of force, but because of relationship, mutual respect, and trust.

But someday, I won't have the same influence that I have. I won't have the same authority in this group of people that maybe I did at one point in time because there will be elders risen up here and this church will grow and mature on its own.

But one thing I get concerned about is that if we don't build a foundation of unity and oneness in this church, that after I do leave in a sense, that if there's people who have in them a tendency to draw people to themselves, it will disrupt things in an unhealthy manner.

If there's people who say, well, yeah, I know we do things this way and I know Josh has led this way apostolically in this way, but you know, I really think that's a bunch of crap as that one guy said and I'm just waiting for him to kind of not be around as much and I'm going to try and shape things in this way, that could be very divisive and that's not the way to go into a church.

Now, does that mean you can't ever challenge what Josh says? Absolutely not. It's ridiculous. You know that that's not true because we've had many of them, okay? And so, and there's a lot of healthiness to that.

[51 : 02] Praise God. It has to be. I'm not talking about some weird CEO apostolic leadership stuff. That's a joke. You guys know we're not talking about that. I'm talking about that God puts leadership in place to bring about a certain direction, a certain unified way forward and it makes sense for us to say, hey, I want to draw people unto Jesus when he's building and not draw people to myself because if I'm independent in that way and I think my way is the highway or my way is so important, I can unconsciously draw people to myself in such a way where everybody else is maybe going in the same direction that causes these splinters that break things off in an unhealthy way.

We've got to ask ourselves that. Is that happening? Do I have a tendency for that to happen? Do I have subtle thoughts of that happening in my heart? I, with all my heart, want this church to be a healthy church.

I want it to have good foundation. I want us to be one mind, one accord and regardless of my influence down the road and involvement down the road, I would love for this church to be in unity and oneness and to last for a long time.

But that doesn't happen by accident. We've got to be intentional. We've got to be eager. We have to fight for together, so to speak. And close with Romans 15, 5-6.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[52 : 34] Amen? Amen. Amen.