

SERIES: “i Worldview”
“i-Surrender” - James 4:10

One day a woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist to the electric coffeepot he had in his hand. It seemed that he was being electrocuted. So - intending to jolt him away from the deadly current - she whacked him with a plank that had been left by the back door, breaking his arm in two places.

She later she found out that - up until that moment - he had been happily listening to his iPod.

Launched by Apple Computers in 2001 the iPod is a personal entertainment center. In this little box you can store your entire musical library and play any song on demand. What used to be stored on hundreds of CDs, and LPs... or 8 tracks now can be carried in your shirt pocket. In the latest iPods, you can store and play several movies or TV shows. Since its inception, 390 have been sold.

It all began with iMac in 1998, with a little “i” in the name. It continued with iPods, iTunes, iPhones and iPads. The little “i” in iMac stood for the internet, and it just stuck with the other Apple products.

In James chapter 4, the apostle is talking to us about humility, and maintaining a little “i” view of ourselves versus a big “I” approach to life and possessions. In fact, that’s the focus of this entire sermon series:

- i- Surrender
- i- Serve
- i- Give
- i- Live

We need to focus not so much upon ourselves and what we want... as upon God and what He wants.

Now, that’s not as simple as it may sound. That kind of humility doesn’t come naturally to us.

Several years ago the New York Telephone Company made a detailed study of telephone conversations to find out which word is the most frequently used. Can you guess which word that was? It was a personal pronoun "I." "I.." "I." I was used 3900 times in 500 telephone conversations.

We like ourselves. We like to look at ourselves. If you go into the lobby of a big building, you’ll sometimes find the walls filled with mirrors. They often do that because they’ve discovered that people complain less about waiting for slow elevators when they’re occupied looking at themselves.

We like to talk about ourselves. One of the surest ways of starting a conversation with someone is to ask them about themselves. In fact one of the main things this world encourages us to do - is to center attention on ourselves

- Socrates said, "Know yourself."
- The psychiatrist says: "Express yourself"
- Many Counselors will say: "Love yourself."
- The hedonist says: "Enjoy Yourself."
- The waiter will tell you: "Indulge yourself."

- The Personnel manager advises you: "Assert yourself."
- The health aid companies will advertise: "Take care of yourself."
- Leisure time industries will tell you: "Pamper yourselves."

Only Jesus says: "Deny yourself"... deny yourself ... deny yourself. So how do we do that? How do I surrender my pride? How do I deny myself?

Well, first – James tells us there's a way to KNOW if your pride has taken over. There's a red flag you can watch for that tells us "I'M IN CHARGE HERE" - not God. And whenever we see this red flag in our lives we'll know that something's wrong. What's that red flag? James puts it this way: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" (James 4:1a) "You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel." (4:2b)

That sign/red flag - is anger, quarreling, fighting to get one's own way. Essentially, James is telling us that when those emotions take over - it means WE have taken over. Our pride has been offended... and we've forgotten God.

Our Old Testament account today illustrates this. There was this 17 year old boy that God wanted to honor. In fact, God gave this young man a couple of visions. And in those visions, God showed this boy he would become a great man. Why – even his family would bow down to him and honor him. His name was Joseph. Well, Joseph made the mistake of telling his brother about these dreams. And his brothers were not happy. In fact, they were offended. They didn't much like him anyway. He'd done a few things that rubbed them the wrong way. And to make matters worse: Joseph was their daddy's favorite baby boy. Frankly, his brothers hated him.

So one day, they got Joseph off by himself. And they beat the tar out of him, threw him in a pit, and when they saw a caravan of slave traders coming down the road they sold him into slavery. For the next 17 years or so - Joseph was either held in slavery or in prison.

How would you deal with it if someone did that to you... would you be angry? I might be. But how did Joseph respond? Well, after their Father Jacob died... that's what his brothers were worried about. While in Egypt, Joseph had become a very important man. God had raised him up to become the 2nd most important man in that land and he had in his hands the power of life and death. With their father dead, the other brothers decided they needed to move quickly to heal the wounds they had created... or they wouldn't live to see the new year.

"So they (his brothers) sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?'"

Joseph had the power... he had the opportunity... to exact his just revenge. But he refused to do that. Because he was a humble man, Joseph had long since learned to make himself into a little "I".

Because of his meekness and his humility – God lifted Joseph up and gave him a great inheritance. But first Joseph had to surrender to God. He had to transform himself into a SMALL “I” and allow God to be the big ‘I’. He had to put aside his anger toward his brothers and trust God to do what was best. And he did this because He trusted in God’s promise to Him.

God continued to fulfill His promises and reward humility and servanthood. In Philippians 2 we read: “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Gospel)

God is telling us too, that if we let Him be in control; if we look to Him for our total satisfaction in life; if we come to Him and humble ourselves before Him... He will make all things work together for good in our lives, according to His purpose. But we must first humble ourselves before Him. We must first sacrifice our will to His. And when we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up.

* It goes beyond simply believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (though that is the most important part of becoming God’s child).

* You also must acknowledge that you’ve messed up. You’ve sinned. And you must admit to God that there isn’t a thing you can do to fix that. But He can. (Acts 3:19)

* Then you must be willing to make Him the master of your life. You must accept Him as the owner of your entire life. Romans 10:9 says, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

* And finally, you must be willing to die to your past, and rise up to a new life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Romans 6:1-7)

John the Baptist to his followers, “He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease.” O Lord, help me to always be the little “I” in your relationship with me. In Jesus, amen.