

## **“The Cure of the ‘I’ Problem”**

**Text: James 4:6, 10**

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Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church ([www.pbpc.org](http://www.pbpc.org))

Oakland, California

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### **PRAY!**

We're in a series on “Breaking Free” from the habits, hurts, and hang-ups that mess up your life. The question we have been asking is, How do I get God's power in my life? How do I get the power to make the changes I want to make?

James 4:6, *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

- Grace is the power to change. The Bible says the key to power in your life is humility. The key barrier to power in your life is pride. When I'm full of pride I can't change. When I'm full of humility, I do get the power to change.

There are two kinds of pride talked about in the Bible.

- The good pride is self-respect, dignity, satisfaction in a job well done, joy in seeing others succeed, those kinds of things.
- The bad pride is what we all know about: conceit, arrogance, egotism (someone said egotism is the only kind of disease that when you've got it, it makes everyone else sick), attitude of superiority.
  - Mohammed Ali and the stewardess
  - Jesus constantly battled the pride of the religious leaders.

How many of you would say I know somebody or I've met somebody or I work with somebody that has an ego problem? On the other hand, how many of you would say, “I'm truly a humble person.”?

- Pride is easy to see in other people; it's hard to see in ourselves.

### **The Bible says pride causes all kinds of problems in our life.**

#### **1. It prevents me from growing.**

- A. When I think I have it altogether I don't have any motivation to keep learning and growing and developing and changing.
- B. Proverbs 26:12, *“There is more hope for a fool than for those who are wise in their own eyes.”* He's talking about the denial of pride, that I have any weaknesses. Pride keeps me from getting help.
  1. If I've got marriage problems and I won't talk to anyone about them, that's pride.
  2. When I've got financial problems and I don't want to get help with them, that's pride.
  3. When I'm not cutting it as a parent, when I'm not making it at work and I don't want anybody to know about it, that's pride and it keeps me from growing.

## **2. Pride poisons my relationships.**

- A. The root of all conflict and disharmony is pride. When we act out of pride we tend to be demanding, unsympathetic – I’m going to have it my way, my way is the right way. We become obnoxious and rude. Pride destroys relationships.
- B. Proverbs 13:10, *“Pride only breeds quarrels.”* When my pride is in competition with your pride, there’s a clash. The root of so many marriage and family problems is plain old pride. I don’t want to admit that you may be partially right.
  - 1. The father who got angry and tells the son, “Get out of the house and don’t come back!” and then he’s too prideful to go and admit “I was wrong! I’m sorry!” The hardest thing in the world to admit. Pride results in damaged relationships.
- C. The key to reconciliations is simply to swallow your pride.

## **3. Pride produces stress and anxiety -- unnecessary stress and anxiety.**

- A. I worry too much about my image, “How do I look?” We’re in a culture that is very interested in status and position and image.
- B. Proverbs 29:25, *“It’s dangerous to be concerned with what others think.”*
  - 1. Anthony Campolo in a recent book says this, “Pride often destroys those that we love the most. The pride of parents can lead to the destruction of children. People who are out to prove that they are better than others often use their children to achieve this end.”
  - 2. Eastern Washington illustration
- C. Sports, beauty pageants for teenage girls, even for children, see parents nurturing the desire to achieve success through their children. It causes stress in my life.

**HOW TO BE HUMBLE AND HAPPY.** They go hand in hand. If you want to change something in your life it starts with humility.

### **1. I admit my weaknesses honestly.**

- A. Proverbs 28:13, *“Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy.”* That’s what God says. If I don’t admit my weaknesses, I can’t work on my weaknesses.
- B. Some of you heard about the teenage boy who admitted to his sister, “I’m guilty of the sin of vanity.” His older sister said, “How could you be guilty of the sin of vanity?” He said, “Every time I see a mirror, I look into it and think ‘What a hunk!’” She said, “That’s not sin. That’s just ignorance.”
- C. You and I have weaknesses, faults and failures. Some of you say, “When I confess to God, I can’t think of anything to confess!” Just start guessing! You’re bound to hit something. Ask God and he’ll show

you. I don't have it together and neither do you. None of us is perfect. We're all growing.

**2. I evaluate my strengths realistically.**

- A. Pride is based on a false evaluation of ourselves. Humility is based on truth and realism. When you know the truth, it will set you free.
- B. Romans 12:3 (Phillips) *“Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your own importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities.”* Circle “sane”. Be realistic in your evaluation.
- C. The fact is you have strengths. You got them from God. You have talents. You are very talented in some areas. I'm very talented in some areas: but I'm also very weak in some areas, too. Humility is not denying your strength, it's being honest about your weaknesses and being realistic about your strengths. It says to have a sane evaluation of them.
  - 1. American restaurant in China.
- D. When you are full of pride, go make a list of all the things you don't know how to do. Evaluate your strengths realistically.

**3. Enjoy my successes gratefully.** Attitude of gratitude.

- A. 1 Corinthians 4:7 (Living Bible), *“What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you have accomplished something on your own?”*
- B. Everything you have comes from God. You don't have anything that wasn't from God. “I built this business with my own two hands!” Where did you get your hands? “I thought up this idea!” Where did you get your mind? All your time, energy, talent – where did it come from? It's all from God. How many of you chose the genes and chromosomes of your DNA? Designer genes? You didn't choose those! How many of you chose where you're going to be born? You didn't choose your parents. These things are all out of your control.
- C. Everything you have is a gift of God. What you do with what you have is your gift back to God. You realize in your success that it all comes from God. Attitude of gratitude.

**4. Serve others unselfishly.**

- A. Philippians 2:3-5, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Look not to your own interests, but also the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.”*
- B. Humility is getting the focus off my needs, my desires, my hurts, my wants, and focusing on what other people need.
- C. Our model for this – serving others unselfishly – is Jesus Christ. Can you imagine Jesus Christ traveling down the streets of Jerusalem, on a Camelac with a bumper sticker that says, ‘I'm Number one!’? Can you see Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee saying “We're cool! We're

cool!” No. Jesus was the most emotionally healthy person who ever lived. He didn’t have to prove anything. Because He didn’t have to prove anything He was then set free to serve others. Insecure people can’t serve others; they’re too worried about their own needs. And prideful people only think of themselves. So we are called to focus on the needs of others.

### **5. Humble myself voluntarily.**

- A. James 4:10, *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.”* Humility is a choice. It’s something you do. You take action. Never once in the Bible does it say to ask God for humility. Instead it says “humble yourselves.” It’s a way of choosing the way I think, act, and respond to others, the things I say. It’s a choice.
- B. Then there is the promise. He says if you humble yourself God will lift you up. That’s a paradox. God is saying that the way up is down. The more I humble myself, the more God lifts me up. The more I’m honest about my weaknesses and grateful about the successes and recognizing where the source is, the more God lifts me up.

Proverbs 6 lists seven things that God hates - the number one thing God hates is pride. He hates it. He can’t stand it. Why? Because it refuses to be helped. It says, “I’m God. I am my own god and I don’t need anybody else to tell me what it’s all about! I run my own life.” You weren’t made to live that way. The worst thing about pride is that it cuts off all of the wonderful things that God wants to give you to do in your life.

### **PRAYER**

**Father, thank You for your Word. Thank You that you point out to us how to be happy and healthy and whole, not by having it all together but by being honest with You. Lord, I pray that many here would begin growing and admit that they have areas that they need to grow in. I pray that many relationships can be restored and built up strong as both sides begin to admit pride. Lord, we know that pride can destroy families or businesses or churches. Let there be reconciliations and a humble attitude and to say those words, “I’m sorry. I was wrong.” Lord, let there be great release from stress and tension as people quit putting their trust in substitutes that produce status and position and image. What counts is a relationship with You, feeling love and giving love. We thank You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.**