

# My Way or The Highway... Or The High Way

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I grew up in a family that had four kids, and as anyone that's grown up with siblings around will immediately understand, things weren't always peaceful. Actually, hardly ever. Whether it was about bicycles, television, meal time, mowing the yard, making up beds, the best route to school, what clothes were cool, or who to listen to on the record player or, in later years, the 8-track, Elvis or Merle Haggard, it seems that my elder siblings were incapable of seeing things the way they should have. We had some wild times. What one of us wanted the other three wouldn't want. If two were for it two would be against it. And if by chance three of us were together the fourth would be a hold out. And on those very rare occasions when all four of us were in sync we couldn't get it past Mom and Dad.

Aside from the fact that the battle over Elvis and Merle would make a good Saturday Night Live skit on the one hand and fodder for the best of child psychologists on the other, all other Saucier sibling experiences can be explained. The other three just didn't appreciate being in the presence of greatness...

- Maybe there's more to it than that.
- Maybe it's just that we all wanted our way.
- Maybe the one thing that most of us are instinctively and deeply committed to is getting our way.
  - Maybe when Frank and Elvis used to croon, "I did it my way," they were revealing the dysfunction of life they both endured and inflicted on their families far more than they were entertaining us.
  - Maybe when Burger King adopted "Have It Your Way" as their hook several years ago they were tapping into a marketing ploy that's far more powerful than even they assumed.
- Maybe what we're really talking about is control...
- Maybe we never really get past it...without help...

## I. "My Way or The Highway" Living...

### James 4:1-1-2a

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup>You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.

Let me add an additional reading from the NASB of the same two verses. You'll notice the addition of the word "so" in two places in verse two. It translates the substance of these words more accurately:

**James 4:1-2a (NASB)**

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup>You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.

- When you can't understand why your wife thinks you need a new double oven, microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher, ceiling fans, door knobs, drawer pulls, paint, carpet, hardwood flooring...what do you do?
- When things don't go your way at work do you feel slighted?
- When discussions/arguments arise, do you want to have the last word?

Most of us haven't gone so far as to kill anyone, at least not in the physical sense; but that doesn't mean that we're strangers to the "wars" that are often waged when people are challenged to get along together when getting along is hard to do...because we aren't strangers to it at all.

Most of us, maybe all of us, have the potential to unleash a little monster that lives inside us that, once released, grows exponentially, and carries with it the power to destroy and maim when it doesn't get its way.

So...because other people don't always see things our, and because we don't always get our way, James says we wage war on each other.

James lists two major driving forces that although they are similar they are distinct from each other that are behind the wars that we wage against each other when disagreements arise...

**1. Lust—*hedone***

This word is normally understood as a sexual issue, but that isn't the usage here. It's more the notion of being fully committed to your own agenda, regardless of who you have to hurt to pull it off.

**2. Passion**

This is a word that describes the limitless extent to which we will sometimes go in order to sate our appetites. It's wanting something to the extreme. It's being blinded by the unbridled pursuit of personal desire.

"My Way or The Highway" living is a lifestyle that depends on a person's willingness to make choices that are designed to allow personal desire and selfish passion to make all the rules—rules that are slanted severely in our favor—in order to

control life's outcome where we always come out on top. I can't think of anything that less like Jesus...

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Would you agree or disagree that our need to control the direction and destination of our own lives, which can only occur if we can control other people to some degree, is at the heart of "My Way or the Highway" living?
2. What would it be worth to you if you could live and work in an environment where people knew how to get along with each other in fairness and equity?
3. Obviously it won't ever happen perfectly, but what are some possible thoughts that come to mind that you could do that would engender that kind of attitude in your home or work place?

## **II. "My Way or The Highway" Limitations...**

### **James 4:2b-3**

You do not have, because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup>When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

### **1. A Distorted View of Prayer**

It won't explain every occasion that our prayers aren't answered the way we want them to be, but it goes a long way in explaining a lot of it...

- We want our way as kids when we play...
- We want our way as adults when we pray...
  - A. A primary limitation of "My Way" lifestyle is the absence of genuine prayer.
    1. There's something instinctive that makes it hard to ask God for anything when you know you've blown him off.
    2. Maybe it's shame or guilt...but I don't think there's a lot of prayer surrounding a man's life when he's wearing the crown of his own kingdom.
  - B. It may be hard, but some of us are up to it.
    1. It's hard to ask God to bless you at the expense of someone else.
    2. It's hard even for a hedonist to ask God to bless selfishness.
      - i. I remember my high school coach leading us in prayer before every game...and he always prayed that we'd win.

- ii. I always thought it was pretty presumptuous to ask God to help my team win...although that was the only way we'd win.
  - iii. I always thought it was a silly prayer...
3. James says, *ask all you want...he's not going to answer...*
  4. God isn't impressed by hedonism any more than are most of us are.
  5. And he's on record for saying that he doesn't answer selfish prayers...
    - i. If you're where you are through taking advantage of other people, God says, *don't give me the credit...I had nothing to do with it.*
    - ii. *I'm not into helping people stick it to other people...*

## 2. Spiritual Infidelity

### James 4:4-6a

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? <sup>6</sup>But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

#### A. Unfaithfulness Toward God

##### Isaiah 54:5

Your Maker is your husband.

##### Jeremiah 3:14

"Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband."

##### 2 Corinthians 11:2

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ.

#### B. Unwarranted Attraction to the Baser Things of Life

### BEWARE OF THE HEART'S ATTRACTION FOR STRANGE AFFECTION

When, as a result of "My Way or the Highway" living, we fail to pray in earnest, we then slowly begin to lose our affection for God. Following that the predictable fallout is that we, whose hearts long for a love that fascinates us endlessly, begin our search for something else to fascinate us that we can love. Therefore, as the heart gradually progresses in its journey away from intimacy with God, any affinity we might have had for the manner of living and personal lifestyle choices that relate to him begin to erode

as well...and we can find ourselves drawn toward a lifestyle that exists in total contradistinction to everything he stands for.

### **ILLUSTRATION**

I know people, and you do too, that have, through their own warped decisions gotten bitter at God and now live a life that they would have considered unthinkable just a few years back.

I know a couple that raised their children on foreign soil as missionaries. One of those kids was preparing for vocational ministry. Through a series of events that I won't go into, the parents ended up in divorce court, she hooked up with a loser, and the husband and father now lives his life as a confirmed homosexual. And the son that was preparing for a life of vocational ministry no longer believes that God even exists.

### **A WARNING**

#### **James 4:4b, 6b**

<sup>4b</sup>Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

<sup>6b</sup>God opposes the proud...

#### **Numbers 22:31-33**

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

<sup>32</sup>The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. <sup>33</sup>The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now."

#### **Hebrews 12:5-6**

Do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup>because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

- These are words that belong to the battlefield.
- It's as though we, who are irritated, upset, or mad because things haven't gone our way, declare war on God (v. 4).
- Be forewarned, if we're looking for a fight God won't disappoint us (v. 6):

### **DISCUSSION**

1. Can you imagine it ever being your own experience that you would turn your back on everything you've believed in and valued as right and holy and opt for a life that is the antithesis of everything you thought was sacred?
2. Are you capable of having an affair, divorcing your wife, and deserting your children because you have fallen victim to the lure of strange affection?

3. Are you capable of moving so far away from where you are now that you would no longer pray, read the Bible, value worship, or believe in God?

**IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME...**

#### **IV. The “High Way” Lifestyle...**

Is there a solution? Sure there is. We just read about it in verse 6. The answer to the dilemma is humility:

##### **James 4:6b**

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

If you and I want to be humble we can be. As is the case with so many other things in life, humility has a lot more to do with obedience than it does with anything else... You can be humble...if you will. Here’s how to get started:

##### 1. Submission

##### **James 4:7a**

Submit yourselves, then, to God (constantly...)

##### 2. Resistance

##### **James 4:7b**

Resist the devil (consistently...)

##### 3. Repentance

##### **James 4:8**

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (continually...)

##### 4. Humility

##### **James 4:10a**

Humble yourselves before the Lord (habitually...)

##### 5. Victory

##### **James 4:7b,10**

<sup>7b</sup>He (Satan) will flee from you (eventually...)

<sup>10b</sup>And he (God) will lift you up (ultimately...)

#### **QUOTE**

“It is God’s nature to make something out of nothing, that is why he cannot make anything out of him who is not yet nothing” (Martin Luther).

#### **QUOTE**

“For those who would learn God’s ways humility is the first thing, humility is the second thing, and humility is the third” (Saint Augustine).

Remember, you can do this if you will do this. Any Christian can.