(I added this opening paragraph it was not in the original message) There is an old story about a navy warship that was heading through the fog one night when a distant light appeared directly in their heading. As they continued, it got brighter and the captain walked to the helm to assess the situation. About that time a voice comes over the radio and says, calling the vessel traveling eighteen knots on a 220 heading, you need to adjust your course 30 degrees.” The captain got on the radio and responded, “This is the vessel on the 220 heading. You adjust your course 30 degrees!” Negative, Captain, you adjust now.” Came the reply. I am an admiral in the US navy said the commander. Who am I speaking to?” “I am an ensign (or like a private)in the US coast guard. The captain said, “then I suggest you adjust your course now.” “No sir. I suggest you adjust yours immediately.” “Son we are a US Navy Warship.” Well sir we are a lighthouse I think you should change course. Some people are pretty impressed with themselves; they are the captain of their own ship. But the truth is friends some things in life are just bigger than we are. Obviously God is bigger than we are, in some ways you could say God is a lighthouse, and a lighthouse is immovable. So the question we want to look at today is, are you going to be focused on God or are you going to be focused on yourself. In other words are you going to be God-centered or self-centered. Let me ask you a tough question, do you think you are pretty big stuff, that you are pretty important, do you feel like you are in charge of your own world? Or let me ask it this way, do you think you are God? Well most people would quickly respond, NO! I don’t think I’m God. And yet if you follow a lot of those people around, they spend the bulk of their time acting as if they are. They live as if they are the center of the universe and that everything and everyone exist to serve them and their purposes. They have this idea in their head that they are more deserving than everyone else. All of their efforts go into building their own little kingdom, whether that’s their household, a company, or their relationships. Now in its worst form it’s referred to as narcissism which is marked by extreme selfishness or an overestimation of one’s talents or importance. These people probably need more professional help because narcissism is usually considered a severe personality disorder. But what we are talking about today is what most of us struggle with at times and that’s called self-centeredness.

People who achieve an extraordinary level of fame or reputation while still alive are often referred to as, ‘a legend in their own time.’ And yet I’m sure you know of people who are ‘a legend in their own mind.’ Guys it’s easy to spot pride. Okay… so let me say that again.. It’s easy to spot pride… in other people. It’s been said that pride is the disease that makes everyone sick accept the one who has it. I’m sure we all know people who are too proud to ask for advice even though we know they desperately need it. We often see people who cling to their ways; even when their ways are bad, all because they’re too proud to change. We all know people who are always one-upping others, people who love to go on and on about all their accomplishments. Guys listen… Pride has a way of distorting how we see ourselves while humility on the other hand offers a realistic perspective. The writer of Proverbs said in Prov. 16:18NIV. Well guys we are in a series of 5 messages called I Quit. In other words as we start a new year and think about New Year’s Resolutions, what are some of the things in our life that we need to let go of… some things we need to stop doing… some things in our life that we need to Quit? Well so far, we have talked about how important it is to Quit Hiding, to Quit Cynicism, to Quit Making Excuses, to Quit Complaining & to Quit Worry. Today we are going to finish up this series by talking about one of the more serious issues we all struggle with and that is Pride. And yet when ***you*** think of the word pride, does it strike you as a positive or a negative? Certainly, there are many positive types of pride. For instance, it’s good to “take pride in our work.” Our children need to hear us say, “I’m proud of you.” And nearly everyone wants to live in a neighborhood where people display “pride of ownership.” So all of these expressions communicate a positive kind of pride or dignity, respect and honor… traits that we all want to embrace. And yet I think we also understand that pride isn’t always positive, it can also be defined as conceit, arrogance, or superiority. This kind of pride is based on self-centeredness, and it is destructive. And it’s especially destructive to relationships. The great writer and apologist C.S. Lewis once said this about pride: “The point is that each person’s pride is in competition with everyone else’s pride. It is because I wanted to be the big noise at the party that I am so annoyed at someone else being the big noise.” What you want to understand is that Pride is essentially competitive, its competitive by its very nature, while the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, it finds pleasure in having more than the next guy. Now friends this may or may not come as a surprise to you, but pride is at the top of the chart. Seriously if we could rid ourselves of all pride all of the other issues in our life would go away. Prov. 6:16-19NLT. (Haughty eyes is pride) So why does God have so much to say about this issue? Because, ultimately, a prideful person is saying, "I don't need God. I can do it on my own." Guys attempting to "go it alone" will only lead us down a path of self-destruction. No one knows that better than God-He has seen pride destroy lives all throughout history. For instance even before God created mankind, Satan, who was originally an archangel, was thrown out of **heaven** because of his desire to be equal with God. Then all throughout history we see Israel repeatedly reject all of the prophets that God had sent to warn of their evil acts. And then even in the New Testament we see the Pharisees, filled with self-righteousness, deny the work of Christ, even as He stood before them. Friends pride is devastating because of its deceptiveness. C.S. Lewis also said, "A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you're looking down, you can't see something that's above you." And of course, we can all be guilty of pointing out the pride in someone else… while oblivious to the stranglehold that it might have in our own lives. Listen guys pride will cost you… it will cost you friendships, intimacy, respect, lost opportunities, rest, peace of mind, wisdom, and even money. It’s hard to imagine the stakes could be much higher. Paul said in Romans 12:3NLT. Listen pride becomes sinful when it begins to take your focus off of Christ and put it on to yourself. It’s sinful when it causes a feeling of superiority over other people or when it begins to inflate who you are and what you have done. Pride is sinful when you refuse to admit wrong doing or refuse to admit to imperfections in our life. Pastor and author John Ortberg tells the story about a CEO of a Fortune 500 company who pulled into a service station to get gas. He went inside to pay, and when he came out he noticed his wife engaged in a deep conversation with the service station attendant. It turned out she used to date this man back in HS. The CEO got in the car, and as the two of them drove down the road the CEO was feeling pretty good about himself. So he finally says to his wife, “I bet I know what you are thinking… You’re glad you married me, the CEO of a fortune 500 company, instead of a service station attendant.” His wife said, “No.. actually I was thinking if I’d married him, he’d be the CEO of a fortune 500 company and you would be a service station attendant.” We all know of people who are arrogant or boastful, or who think more highly of themselves than they should. Pride can be like an itch that constantly needs scratched. So then how can we recognize the presence of pride in our life? Most often pride is revealed in our attitudes and our interactions with others. A prideful person can’t handle criticism and absolutely hates giving an apology. In fact, here are 5 signs pride might be a problem for you. #1 You Often Compare Yourself to Others. ‘Man, I am glad I’m not as bad off as he is.’ Pride compels you to point out people you think you are superior to. ‘I may not be in the best shape, but I’m in better shape than he is.’ ‘I may not be a PHD, but I’m certainly smarter than she is.’ You point out people who in your mind assure that you are brighter, richer, faster or more attractive. I heard one counselor call it ‘comparrogance’ it’s the arrogance born of comparison. Another sign of pride, #2 Your Self-Worth is Determined by Your Latest Performance. This one is a challenge for those of us driven by results, which would include me. I’m addicted to progress. So one sure sign of pride is that your opinion of yourself rises and falls with how you perform or what others say about you. Your identity should be found in Christ but when pride gets in the way your identity is found in what you do. As Tim Keller put it, “When work is your identity, success goes to your head, and failure goes to your heart.” A third sign of pride is #3 You Can’t Celebrate Someone Else’s Success. You have a hard time celebrating the accomplishments of someone else because someone else’s success threatens the attention being on you. #4 You Squeeze Gifted People Out of Your Life. Pride does not make room for the gifting of others. So you drift towards people who are not quite as talented as you are. And if there **is** someone in your circle more talented than you, you are never happy for them but instead find yourself envious and critical of them behind their backs. Proud people always feel a need to be the most talented or skilled. And then #5 You Want Some Say in Everything. Proud people are controlling people. You always want to add your little bit of knowledge, insight, or even share a better story than what they just shared. You don’t like it if the other person gets the spotlight and you get overlooked. You are also known as a bit of a know-it-all. Listen guys I will say it again… not only will pride hurt our relationship with God but it has the potential to hurt all of our relationships. For instance, I think it is the #1 reason for divorce. A wall of pride grows so thick you can no longer get a couple to work on their hurts. I have often said God can heal any marriage as long as both are willing to work at it but many times pride will prevent that from happening. We also see families broken apart, friendships destroyed, jobs lost, all because someone won’t admit their wrong, or won’t apologize or won’t compromise on petty issues, or won’t admit their need for help all because of their pride. And unfortunately churches are full of people who are at odds with one another because their pride will not allow them to make the confessions necessary for reconciliation. Guys I hope you can see why pride is the granddaddy of all sins. Okay so how do you tame this raging beast of pride in our life? Well Humility is the key… nothing kills pride like humility does. Only humility can get you out of what pride got you into. In fact as much as God hates pride… he loves humility. So how do you become more humble? 1 Peter 5:5-6NLT. Notice he says to clothe yourselves with humility. So this is something we have to do, like putting on a coat. So you have to cultivate humility in your life. In other words, you learn the ways of the humble and you make it the way you respond to the good and to the bad things in your life. Now as we saw in the passage God opposes pride, but He shows favor to the humble. Therefore, decide to humble your selves and God will lift you up at the proper time. Now just as pride can be misunderstood I think humility is often misunderstood. Regardless what some people believe humility and weakness are not synonymous. In fact, true humility is strength of character. Paul says in Phil. 4:13NIV. Paul was humble, but he was anything but weak, he was bold, he was confident, he was courageous, but at the same time he always understood the source of his strength was God. Also, humility is not the same as low self-esteem. Being humble doesn’t mean you think you are a looser or insignificant; again it simply means you know where your strength comes from. I also think it’s an important distinction that we are talking about humility not humiliation. Some people think they have this gift of keeping people humble when in fact all they are doing is humiliating that person… friends that’s not a ‘God Thing’. I’ve seen it done in public where a parent is embarrassing or humiliating one of their kids, or a man or woman is critical or humiliates their spouse, interestingly enough… it’s caused by pride. You see while humility enhances our humanity and makes us more like Christ, humiliation diminishes our humanity and often causes us to forget that we are made in the image of God. So, whenever someone tries to degrade you or put you down… just remember who you are in Christ. I John 3:1NIV. Listen we were made by God and he doesn’t make junk. Ephesians 2:10NLT. Steve you say that God doesn’t make junk but what if we have a deformity or a handicap? Listen guys this body we live in is not who we are… it’s no more than a temporary home. One day my soul and spirit are going to live in perfection with Christ for all eternity… no longer saddled with all these earthly limitations. John 15:5NLT. So again humility is understanding I am nothing without Christ… but my strength and my identity are found in Him. So being humble doesn’t mean you think less of yourself it just means you think of yourself less. A little girl was eating a lot of cotton candy when her father asked, ‘how can a little girl eat so much cotton candy?’ She said, ‘well I’m much bigger on the inside than I am on the outside’. Pride leads us to pretend to be bigger on the outside than we are on the inside. While healthy humility helps us to be a bigger person on the inside which will then impact our actions on the outside. Another thing that fosters humility is gratitude. When you recognize all that God has done in your life it takes you off the throne of your life and puts God in His rightful place. So how do we make sure we don’t lose that gratitude? First express your thankfulness on a regular basis. When you pray offer prayers of gratitude. Second, fall more in love with the Giver than you do with His gifts. And then third, never claim full credit for your story but acknowledge the role of grace and providence in youir life. So what are you grateful for? Here’s a better question to ask… What should you be grateful for? Another thing I want to say about humility is that it goes hand in hand with love. Listen it’s no great mystery that the Bible places great emphasis on love. The word ‘love’ appears hundreds of times throughout Scripture. Guys you cannot show God’s love without humility. When we have humbled ourselves before God, we are able to show His love to others by humbling ourselves before them… by esteeming them better than ourselves. Listen without first humbling ourselves before Him, we are merely showing our own love which is flawed and full of sin. And the last thing I will say about humility is that is comes from wisdom or the mind of Christ. Listen to this passage in James 3:13-18NLT. Friends if you are wise and understand God’s ways then prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. Let me close by saying one more thing about pride, probably the greatest example of pride is thinking we can do significant things without God. It’s the attitude that says, ‘I don’t need God, I’m managing quite well by myself.’ Listen friends pride is the primary barrier to salvation. You see God has already provided for the forgiveness of our sins through the death of his son on the cross. And so the only way we can be saved is by putting our faith and our trust in Him. Salvation is not something that we can earn; it’s a free gift from God. And yet pride makes it difficult for many of us to accept this free gift. Our pride drives us to think we can somehow earn it by doing enough good deeds that the Heavenly Father will then owe us eternal life. But that’s not the way it works, God requires us to humble ourselves and repent of our sins and depend only on His love and in his grace. And so today can I encourage you to swallow any pride you might have and admit that you need God’s help. Salvation