

iLife, Part 3 - iBelieve: More Than Meets the 'I'

iPod – released by Apple in 2001, world's most popular media player
hundreds of accessories – NY Times calls this the “iPod ecosystem”

iLife – our thoughts about ourselves, others and God create our life!

Mark 12:29-31 (KJV) And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Mark 12:29-31 (NLT) Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

iSearch: I Can't Believe My 'I' (self – “If I am, why don't I?”)

iLove: Seeing 'I' to 'I' (others – “What do they owe me?”)

iBelieve: More Than Meets the 'I' (relationship with God)

Jesus taught that our relationship with GOD is not right unless the relationships between SELF and OTHERS are right. Why? Because loving people is the visible evidence that we love an invisible God.

Today we're going to look at the lives of two incredible men, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Each of them are given commendation by the Word of God itself, so in each of their lives we know there was MORE THAN MEETS THE 'I' (it was not just them).

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Meekness is not weakness – it is “power under control.”

Luke 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

They were just ordinary people ... but God is always looking for ordinary people to play significant roles in His unfolding story of redemption!

Given that God is supremely confident in Himself, He is free to choose the LEAST among us to accomplish amazing God-sized stuff. We humans always try to partner with the brightest and most powerful, but God simply looks for people who are willing to take Him at His Word.

That's why, when God wanted to deliver His people from the grip of the most powerful man and the most powerful empire of the ancient world, He choose a stuttering shepherd with low self-esteem, an aging man on the run from past mistakes – MOSES.

Exodus 2:1-2 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

NOTICE ALL THE FIRST PERSON PRONOUNS IN THIS PART:

Exodus 2:7-9 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

GOD HAS A PLAN! “I have seen ... I have heard ... I'm concerned ... I'm coming down ... I'm going to do something about it!” Moses breathes a sigh of relief, because even Pharaoh and Egypt can't stop Jehovah!

Exodus 2:10-11 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

HIS PLAN IS “YOU GO!” (and Moses doesn't like that plan!) But God isn't thinking that MOSES is actually going to do the delivering. He isn't counting on Moses' skill or power to break the chains of bondage that held His people captive. GOD WAS GOING TO DO ALL THE WORK. He just wanted a leader with skin on to speak on His behalf!

I COULD DO IT ALL MYSELF (**CAPITAL 'I'**) BUT I'VE CHOSEN YOU, A REGULAR GUY WHO WILL JUST DO WHAT I TELL HIM (**SMALL 'I'**).

YOU ARE NOT THE STAR OF YOUR LIFE STORY. RATHER, YOUR LIFE IS JUST A “BIT PART” ON ONE PAGE OF GOD’S STORY!

God doesn't waste any time trying to build Moses' self esteem; He just says "I WILL BE WITH YOU" – because God and anybody else makes an overwhelmingly powerful team!

AND THEN ... MOSES ASKS GOD FOR SOME I.D. (!)

Exodus 2:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

I AM the center of everything. I AM running the show.
I AM the same every day, forever. I AM the owner of everything.
I AM the Lord. I AM the Creator and Sustainer of Life.
I AM the Savior. I AM more than enough.
I AM inexhaustible and immeasurable. I AM God.

So in a heartbeat, Moses knew two important facts. He knew God's name ... and he knew his own. For if God's name is "I AM" then Moses' name must be "I AM NOT." Because there can only be one "I AM."

I AM NOT the center of everything. I AM NOT in control.
I AM NOT the solution. I AM NOT all-powerful.
I AM NOT calling the shots. I AM NOT the owner of anything.
I AM NOT the Lord. I AM NOT running anything.
I AM NOT the head of anything. I AM NOT in charge of anything.
I AM NOT the maker. I AM NOT the savior.
I AM NOT holding it all together. I AM NOT all-knowing.
I AM NOT God.

God is more massive than our wildest imagination, bigger than the biggest words we have to describe Him. God is constant. He blinks and your lifetime comes and goes. To Him one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. All of human history could be written on His fingernail, with plenty of room left over for more.

And God is doing quite well today, thank you. He has no dilemmas, no quandaries, no counselors, no shortages, no rivals, no fears, no cracks, no worries. He is self-existent, self-contained, self-perpetuated, self-powered, and self-aware. In other words, He is God and He knows it!

He is timeless, ageless, changeless, always. After an eternity of being God, He shows no signs of wear and tear. He has no needs. His accounts are in the black. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the hills those cows are standing on. He holds the patent on everything.

God does whatever He wants. His purposes are a sure thing. There's no stopping Him, no containing Him, no refuting Him, no cutting Him off at the pass, no short-circuiting His agenda. God is in control! Nothing is hidden from Him. He wrestles with no mysteries. He doesn't need to wait for a polygraph to decipher the truth. He's never known what it is to have a teacher, a role model, an advisor, a therapist, a loan officer or a doctor.

God's rule and reign are unrivaled in history and eternity. He sits on an everlasting throne. His Kingdom has no end. Little gods abound, but He alone made the heavens and the earth. God has never feared a power struggle or a hostile takeover. He doesn't have to watch His back. He has no equal, no peer, no competition.

It makes perfect sense that His name should be “I AM” – and even more sense that my name should be “I AM NOT.”

I am tiny, miniscule, transient, microscopic. A momentary and infinitesimal blip on the timeline of the universe. A collection of dust particles held together by the breath of God. The sum of my days is like a vapor, and my accumulated life's efforts like chaff in the wind.

Among humans, even the richest of the rich owns nothing. The strongest of the strong can be felled in one faltering heartbeat. We are fleeting mortals. Frail flesh. Little specks. "You're making me feel small!" No, just helping you embrace the reality that you ARE small.

BUT ... GOD LOVES ME AND MADE ME IN HIS IMAGE!

I AM NOT ... but I am a child of God.
I AM NOT ... but God has invited me to be part of His story.
I AM NOT ... but I know I AM.

John 1:19-20 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, **I am not** the Christ.

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes **I am not** worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

John 1:29-30 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is **preferred before me: for he was before me.**

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.