

The Most Excellent Way

The Christian Solution to Chemical Dependency
“Becoming GOD-Dependent”

GOD’S WAY BIBLE STUDIES

Contents

- 1 • Living God’s Way — “The Upward Path”**
- 2 • Changing “Self” God’s Way**
- 3 • Choices: God’s Way or Man’s Way**
- 4 • Solving Personal Problems God’s Way or Man’s Way**

Encouragement from God’s Word to help make the
right choices to insure spiritual growth *God’s Way*.

(800) 548-8854

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We hope
the Biblical
way to
please God
contained in
these pages
will be used
to help new
believers focus on
their Lord Jesus
Christ, and
motivate them to
grow up in Him.
May your
discussions be
edifying for all.

All Scripture is from the New
International Version of the
Bible

1 • LIVING GOD’S WAY

“The Upward Path”

- **Biblical Understanding, Hope and Change**
God’s Way Affects Thoughts, Attitudes, Words
and Actions:

Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

*[Jesus said:] “Enter through the narrow gate.
For wide is the gate and broad is the road
that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.
But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life,
and only a few find it.”*

Luke 9:23 NIV

*Then [Jesus] said to them all:
“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and
take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

- **Victory Over Life-Controlling Sins:**
Alcohol/Drug Addiction, Compulsive/Obsessive
Behavior, “Codependency” . . .
Live God’s Way by *putting off* self-centeredness
and following God’s Word in spite of your
***feelings*:**

Psalms 1:1-3 NIV

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he
meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit
in season and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.”*

1

CONFESS SPECIFIC, RECOGNIZED SINS

Psalms 51:1-6 NIV

*Have mercy on me,
O God, according to
your unfailing love;
according to your great
compassion blot out my
transgressions.*

*Wash away all my iniquity and
cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my
transgressions, and my
sin is always before me.
Against you, you only,
have I sinned and done
what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right
when you speak and justified
when you judge.
Surely you desire truth in
the inner parts; you teach
me wisdom in the inmost place.*

Psalms 51:17 NIV

*The sacrifices of God are
a broken spirit; a broken and
contrite heart, O God,
you will not despise.*

2

REPENT

Proverbs 9:6 NIV

*Leave your simple ways
and you will live; walk in the
way of understanding.*

Proverbs 28:13 NIV

*He who conceals his sins
does not prosper, but
whoever confesses and
renounces them finds mercy.*

Acts 26:20 NIV

*First to those in Damascus,
then to those in Jerusalem
and in all Judea, and to the
Gentiles also, I preached
that they should repent
and turn to God and
prove their repentance
by their deeds.*

II Corinthians 7:9-11 NIV

*Yet now I am happy, not
because you were made
sorry, but because your
sorrow led you to repentance.
For you became sorrowful
as God intended and so
were not harmed in any way
by us. Godly sorrow brings
repentance that leads
to salvation and leaves no
regret, but worldly sorrow
brings death. See what this
godly sorrow has produced
in you: what earnestness,
what eagerness to clear
yourselves, what indignation,
what alarm, at longing,
what concern, what readiness
to see justice done. At every
point you have proved yourselves
to be innocent in this matter.*

3

IN FAITH, PRAY FOR WISDOM IN ALL MATTERS

James 1:5-8 NIV

*If any of you lacks wisdom,
he should ask God, who gives
generously to all without finding
fault, and it will be given to him.*

*But when he asks, he must
believe and not doubt, because he
who doubts is like a wave of the sea,
blown and tossed by the wind.
That man should not think he will
receive anything from the Lord;
He is a double-minded man,
unstable in all he does.*

Psalms 51:6 NKJV

*Behold, You desire truth in the
inward parts, and in the hidden part
You will make me to know wisdom.*

James 3:17 NKJV

*But the wisdom that is from above
is first pure, then peaceable,
gentle, willing to yield, full of
mercy and good fruits, without
partiality and without hypocrisy.*

Psalms 9:10 NKJV

*And those who know Your name
will put their trust in You; for You,
LORD, have not forsaken
those who seek You.*

Isaiah 55:6 NKJV

*Seek the LORD while He may
be found, call upon Him
while He is near....*

Matthew 6:33-34 NKJV

*But seek first the kingdom of God
and His righteousness, and all these
things shall be added to you.
Therefore do not worry about
tomorrow, for tomorrow will
worry about its own things.
Sufficient for the day is
its own trouble.*

4

COMMIT YOUR WAYS TO GOD, AND DENY SELF TO FOLLOW JESUS

Proverbs 3:5-8 NIV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Matthew 22:37 NIV

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

II Corinthians 5:9 NIV

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

Colossians 3:17 NIV

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 9:23-24 NIV

Then [Jesus] said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.”

5

BE OBEDIENT TO THE WORD BECAUSE YOU LOVE THE LORD

Matthew 12:50 NKJV

Jesus said: “For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

John 14:15 NIV

Jesus said: “If you love Me, you will obey what I command.”

John 14:23 NKJV

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

1 John 2:15-17 NIV

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

I John 5:21 NIV

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

6

SUBMIT TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD’S WORD

Ephesians 5:18-20 NIV

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16 NIV

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, . . .

Hebrews 4:12-13 NKJV

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Romans 8:5-7 NKJV

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7

JUDGE YOURSELF BIBLICALLY

Matthew 7:5 NIV

You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

1 Corinthians 11:28

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1 Corinthians 11:31

But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?

Galatians 6:4

Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.

8

TREAT OTHERS BETTER THAN YOURSELF, AS JESUS DID

1 Corinthians 10:24

Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

Philippians 2:3-8 NIV

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Proverbs 3:27-28 NIV

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow” — when you now have it with you.

9

DWELL ON GOOD THOUGHTS ... SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE INSTEAD OF THINGS OF THE EARTH

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Philippians 4:8-9 NIV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable —if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me— put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 3:2 NIV

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

10

LEARN TO LOVE GOD'S WAY

John 3:16 NIV

*[Jesus said:] "For God so
loved the world that He gave
His one and only Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall
not perish but
have eternal life.*

John 15:17 NIV

*[Jesus said:] This is my command:
Love each other.*

Romans 5:8 NIV

*But God demonstrates His
own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.*

I John 4:11 NIV

*Dear friends, since God
so loved us, we also ought
to love one another.*

I John 4:19 NIV

*We love because He
first loved us.*

I Corinthians 13:4-8a NIV

*Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy,
it does not boast,
it is not proud.
It is not rude,
it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but
rejoices with the truth.
It always protects,
always trusts,
always hopes,
always perseveres.
Love never fails.*

11

BE COMPASSIONATE, KIND, HUMBLE, GENTLE, AND PATIENT

Psalms 40:1 NKJV

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NKJV

*Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and
God of all comfort,
⁴who comforts us in all our
tribulation, that we may be able
to comfort those who are in
any trouble, with the comfort
with which we ourselves are
comforted by God.*

*⁵For as the sufferings of Christ
abound in us, so our consolation
also abounds through Christ.*

Colossians 3:12 NIV

*Therefore, as God's chosen
people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with
compassion, kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience.*

~

READ: Luke 10:25-37

**"Jesus' Parable of the
Good Samaritan"**

12

CONTINUALLY SHOW DEEDS APPROPRIATE TO REPENTANCE

Acts 26:20b NIV

*... I preached that they should
repent and turn to God and prove
their repentance by their deeds.*

Hebrews 13:16 NKJV

*But do not forget to do good and
to share, for with such
sacrifices God is well pleased.*

1 Peter 3:10-12 NKJV

(Psalm 34:12-16)

*He who would love life and see
good days, let him refrain his
tongue from evil, and his lips
from speaking deceit. Let him turn
away from evil and do good; let
him seek peace and pursue it. For
the eyes of the LORD are on the
righteous, and His ears are open to
their prayers; But the face of the
LORD is against those who do evil.*

Revelation 2:5 NIV

*Jesus said: "Remember the height
from which you have fallen!
Repent and do the things you did at
first. If you do not repent,
I will come to you and remove
your lampstand from its place.*

Revelation 3:3 NIV

*Jesus said: "Remember, therefore,
what you have received and heard;
obey it, and repent. But if you do
not wake up, I will come like a
thief, and you will not know at
what time I will come to you."*

Revelation 3:19 NIV

*Jesus said:
"Those whom I love I rebuke and
discipline. So be earnest,
and repent."*

13

PRACTICE FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION, AND RETURN A BLESSING FOR ANY EVIL YOU RECEIVE FROM OTHERS

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

Jesus said: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

Matthew 6:14 NIV

Jesus said: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Ephesians 4:32 NIV

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13 NIV

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Romans 12:17-21 NIV

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 Peter 3:8-9 NIV

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

14

COUNT ALL TRIALS AS JOY SINCE GOD USES YOUR TRIALS TO DEVELOP CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER IN YOU

Romans 5:3-5 NIV

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

Romans 8:28-29 NIV

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

James 1:2-4 NIV

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

15

LIVE DAILY IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH YOUR CALLING IN CHRIST

Ephesians 4:1 NIV

*As a prisoner for the Lord,
then, I urge you to live a life
worthy of the calling you
have received.*

Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV

*Be imitators of God, therefore,
as dearly loved children and live
a life of love, just as Christ
loved us and gave himself up
for us as a fragrant offering
and sacrifice to God.*

1 John 2:6 NIV

*Whoever claims to live in Him
must walk as Jesus did.*

3 John 11 NKJV

*Beloved, do not imitate what is
evil, but what is good. He who does
good is of God, but he who does
evil has not seen God.*

Philippians 2:1-4 NKJV

*Therefore if there is any
consolation in Christ,
if any comfort of love,
if any fellowship of the Spirit,
if any affection and mercy,
²fulfill my joy by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being of one accord, of one mind.
³Let nothing be done through
selfish ambition or conceit, but in
lowliness of mind let each esteem
others better than himself.
⁴Let each of you look out not only
for his own interests, but also for
the interests of others.*

16

DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING OR DISPUTING

Philippians 2:14-15 NIV

*Do everything without
complaining or arguing, so that
you may become blameless and
pure, children of God without
fault in a crooked and depraved
generation, in which you shine
like stars in the universe.*

Colossians 3:14 NKJV

*But above all these things put
on love, which is the bond of
perfection.*

Matthew 5:43-48 NKJV

*Jesus said: "You have heard that
it was said, 'You shall love your
neighbor and hate your enemy.'*

*⁴⁴But I say to you, love your
enemies, bless those who curse
you, and pray for those who
spitefully use you and persecute
you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons
of your Father in heaven;
for He makes His sun rise on
the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the just
and on the unjust.*

*⁴⁶For if you love those who love
you, what reward have you?
Do not even the tax collectors do
the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet
your brethren only, what do you
do more than others? Do not
even the tax collectors do so?*

*⁴⁸Therefore you shall be perfect,
just as your Father
in heaven is perfect.*

17

WORK HEARTILY AS UNTO THE LORD

Matthew 16:24-27 NKJV

*Then Jesus said to His disciples,
"If anyone desires to come after
Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross,
and follow Me.*

*²⁵For whoever desires to save his
life will lose it, but whoever loses
his life for My sake will find it.*

*²⁶For what profit is it to a man
if he gains the whole world,
and loses his own soul?*

*Or what will a man give in
exchange for his soul?*

*²⁷For the Son of Man will come in
the glory of His Father with His
angels, and then He will reward
each according to his works.*

Ephesians 6:7 NIV

*Serve wholeheartedly, as if you
were serving the Lord, not men . . .*

Colossians 3:23-24 NIV

*Whatever you do,
work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord,
Not for men, since you know that
you will receive an inheritance
from the Lord as a reward.
It is the Lord Christ
you are serving.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV

*All Scripture is given
by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine,
for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness,
that the man of God may be
complete, thoroughly equipped
for every good work.*

18

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:15 NIV
Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Colossians 3:9-10 NIV
Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

1 Corinthians 13:5-6 NIV
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 NKJV
*Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.
²But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

⁵*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.*

⁶*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

19

PRAY UNCEASINGLY ABOUT EVERYTHING

Philippians 4:6-7 NIV
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIV
Pray continually . . .

Matthew 26:41 NKJV
Jesus said: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Luke 6:27-28 NKJV
Jesus said: "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 NKJV
Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

20

REJOICE ALWAYS, GIVING THANKS IN ALL THINGS

1 Thessalonians 5:16 NIV
Be joyful always . . .

Philippians 4:4 NIV
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

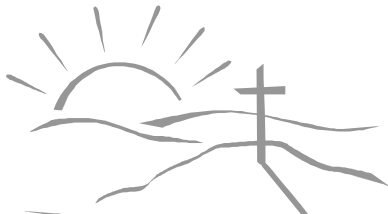
1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV
Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 5:11-12 NKJV
But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.

Psalms 9:1-2 NKJV
I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

Psalms 32:11 NKJV
Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Psalms 33:1-5 NKJV
*Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.
²Praise the LORD with the harp; Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
³Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.
⁴For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.*



It's ALL about JESUS...

Who loved you and gave Himself for you!

21

EXPERIENCE CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT WORKING IN YOU:

II Corinthians 3:18 NIV

*And we, who with unveiled faces
all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into His
likeness with ever-increasing
glory, which comes from
the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness
and self-control.
Against such things
there is no law.*

22

EXPERIENCE VICTORIOUS LIVING, BEING FILLED WITH GOD'S PEACE AND JOY:

John 10:10 NIV

*Jesus said: "The thief comes only
to steal and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have
life, and have it to the full."*

John 14:27 NIV

*Jesus said: "Peace I leave with
you; My peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world
gives. Do not let your hearts be
troubled and do not be afraid."*

John 15:11 NIV

*Jesus said: "I have told you this
so that My joy may be in you and
that your joy may be complete."*

Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV

*"The LORD bless you and keep
you; the LORD make His face
shine upon you, and be gracious
to you; The LORD lift up His
countenance upon you,
And give you peace."*

CONTINUE ON GOD'S UPWARD PATH ...

- Walking *in* Christ will be evidenced by specific and measurable steps of obedience to God's Word.
- The Upward Steps highlight Biblical living, and are not the end of the "Upward Path" — nor is life lived in a rigid sequence.
- God's Holy Spirit sanctifies and disciples each person individually and intimately. He gives the power to overcome every sin and every problem of life.
- We pray you will stay on His "narrow road" and experience His peace and joy in all circumstances!

**And may the Lord richly
bless you as you grow in
the most excellent way ...
JESUS!**

2 • CHANGING “SELF” GOD’S WAY

- As a Believer in Jesus Christ, you will face constant temptations to be self-centered. Self-centeredness leads to *thoughts, words, and actions* that are devastating to your walk with the Lord. Because self-satisfying thoughts, words, and actions characterized your old life apart from Christ, these sins must be confessed and overcome if you are to mature as a child of God. As a “new creation” you have the indwelling Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, to enable you to understand the Word of God and His power to live God’s way.
- We hope this study will help you to understand God’s plan for your life. We pray you will no longer lean on your own understanding, but rather choose God’s way.

*Matthew 5:6 ~ Jesus said:
“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.”*

- We encourage you to “honestly examine yourself in the light of God’s Word” so that you will mature spiritually, and will gain the peace that surpasses understanding.

*Matthew 6:33 KJV ~ Jesus said:
“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

- Be filled with “His righteousness” and receive “the kingdom of God” in your present and *eternal* life!

*Proverbs 28:13
He who conceals his sins does not prosper,
but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*



May God richly bless you as you seek to die to “self” and live for Him!

I. GOD’S VIEW OF MAN’S WAY

- **Proverbs 11:2** ~ *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*
- **Proverbs 14:12** ~ *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*
- **Proverbs 30:32** ~ *“If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth!”*
- **Isaiah 5:20-21** ~ *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.*
- **Matthew 23:12** ~ *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*
- **Luke 9:24** ~ *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.*
- **I Corinthians 1:20** ~ *Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*
- **I Corinthians 1:25** ~ *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.*
- **I Corinthians 1:27** ~ *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*
- **I Corinthians 10:12** ~ *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*
- **II Timothy 3:2, 6-7** ~ *People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, . . . They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.*
- **James 4:6** ~ *But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*
- **II Peter 2:1-3** ~ *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

II. GOD’S VIEW OF “SELF”

A. No one hates himself; rather, he loves, cherishes, and nourishes himself:

- *Matthew 22:39 ~ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*
- *Ephesians 5:29 ~ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—*

B. Man’s problem is that he pays too much attention to self, not too little:

- *Luke 9:24 ~ [Jesus said:] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*
- *Philippians 2:19–21 ~ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*
- *II Timothy 3:1-5 ~ But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

C. A proper view of self comes from an understanding of who you are in Christ:

- *Romans 8:14-17 ~ Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, <“Abba,”> Father.” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*
- *Ephesians 1:3-14 ~ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
⁴For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love ⁵He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—
⁶To the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.
⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace
⁸That He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
⁹And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ,
¹⁰To be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
¹¹In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will,
¹²In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.
¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of His glory.*

- ***Colossians 2:9-12** ~ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In Him you were also circumcised, in the **putting off of the sinful nature**, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.*
- ***I Peter 2:9-10** ~ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

D. As a child of God you have the assurance that your Heavenly Father, out of His grace and mercy, is actively involved in your life:

- ***Philippians 1:6** ~ Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*
- ***Philippians 2:13** ~ For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*
- ***II Peter 1:3-4** ~ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

E. You have His assurance in spite of your natural inadequacies:

- ***Psalms 62:9** ~ Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.*
- ***Isaiah 64:6** ~ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*
- ***John 15:4** ~ Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.*
- ***II Corinthians 3:5** ~ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.*

F. While you are totally inadequate to live God’s way in your own strength, God has chosen you to be a testimony of His power to the world:

- ***I Corinthians 1:26-31** ~ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, So that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”*

G. God gives you a purpose for living by conforming you into the image of Christ:

- **Matthew 5:16** ~ *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*
- **Romans 8:28-29** ~ *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
- **II Corinthians 5:17-20** ~ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*
- **Ephesians 2:10** ~ *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

H. God's view concerning “self” emphasizes the need for change in accordance with His Word. Instead of a preoccupation with self in its varied forms, God's plan focuses on a denial of self in order to please Him and be a blessing to others:

- **Ecclesiastes 7:20** ~ *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*
- **Luke 9:23-24** ~ *Then He said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”*
- **Romans 1:20-21** ~ *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*
- **Romans 3:9-18** ~ *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.*
 - ¹⁰*As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;*
 - ¹¹*There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.*
 - ¹²*All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*
 - ¹³*Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.*
 - ¹⁴*Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.*
 - ¹⁵*Their feet are swift to shed blood;*
 - ¹⁶*Ruin and misery mark their ways,*
 - ¹⁷*And the way of peace they do not know.*
 - ¹⁸*There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*
- **Romans 12:1-12** ~ *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

²*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

³*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

⁴*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,*

⁵*So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

⁶*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

⁷*If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;*

⁸*If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

⁹*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

¹⁰*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

¹¹*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

¹²*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

- ***I Corinthians 2:14*** ~ *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
- ***I Corinthians 3:19*** ~ *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; . . .*
- ***I Corinthians 3:20*** ~ *And again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.”*
- ***II Corinthians 5:17*** ~ ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!***
- ***Galatians 2:20*** ~ *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*
- ***Ephesians 5:8-10*** ~ ***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.***
- ***Philippians 3:8-9*** ~ *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*
- ***Philippians 3:12-14*** ~ *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*
- ***Hebrews 13:20-21*** ~ ***May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

III. MAN’S PREOCCUPATION WITH “SELF”

- A. Self-belittlement, self-exaltation, and self-pity all indicate a preoccupation with self. Inordinate attention to self is the exact opposite of God’s commands to love Him and others.**
- B. A self-focus also prohibits the development of a Christ-like servant attitude in you. If you try to save your life by focusing on self, you will reap the consequence; instead of saving your life, you will lose it:**
- *Matthew 10:34-39 ~ [Jesus said:] “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—‘A man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”*
 - *Matthew 22:37-39 ~ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*
 - *Luke 9:23-24 ~ Then He said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.*

IV. MAN’S VIEW OF “SELF”

- A. The wisdom of this world teaches that many of your problems stem from a “bad self-image” or “low self-esteem.” The natural man’s wisdom also states that you must learn to love yourself before you can love others, that you must raise your self-esteem, that your “perceived” needs must be met so you can help others, that you must forgive yourself before you can find peace, that you are of infinite worth because of “the god within” you, or that you must “get in touch” with yourself and your feelings before finding fulfillment in living. All of these views are in error, since they conflict with the truth of God’s Word.**
- B. Here are some of man’s mistaken explanations for a poor or low “self-esteem” — circle the ones that apply to you:**

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Poor surroundings | • Minimal education | • Nagging spouse |
| • Unfulfilling work | • No respect from others | • Abused as a child |
| • Physical handicaps | • Inability to communicate | • Poor relationships |
| • Belittlement by others | • Misunderstood | • No friends |
| • Rejection by parents | • Slow to learn | • I have a disease . . . |
| • Lack of money | • No job opportunities | • I am a victim of . . . |

C. Here are some of man’s futile ways of building up “self” for “high self-esteem” and for gaining “rights.” Circle the ways you have followed:

- Accept myself as I am
- Don’t get mad, get even
- If I feel like it, I do it
- Do whatever it takes to get what I want or think I need
- Learn to love myself
- Discover the “god” within
- Listen to my “child within”
- Forgive myself
- Get in touch with myself
- Pursue self-actualization
- Assert myself
- Talk about my accomplishments
- Be my own person
- Rationalize
- Blameshift
- Set my own boundaries
- Give myself permission to . . .
- Practice visualization
- Consult the stars

V. MAN’S VIEWPOINTS ABOUT “SELF” BEING TAUGHT TODAY:

A. Man’s Way: “You have to love yourself before you can love others.”

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *John 15:12-13 ~ [Jesus said:] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*
- *I John 4:7 ~ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

B. Man’s Way: “You are created in God’s image, which makes you inherently worthy of God’s grace.”

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *Romans 5:8 ~ But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- *Romans 5:10 ~ For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!*
- *I Corinthians 1:26-31 ~ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”*

- C. Man’s Way: “Without good ‘self-esteem,’ you cannot solve problems, relate to others effectively, and grow spiritually.”**

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *II Corinthians 3:5-6 ~ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*
- *Philippians 4:13 ~ I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.*
- *James 4:6 ~ But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

- D. Man’s Way: “The most serious *sin* in the world is the one in which a person says he is unworthy. The need for self-worth is the greatest of all human needs in the world today.”**

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *Jeremiah 9:23-24 ~ This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.*
- *Luke 17:10 ~ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.”*

- E. Man’s Way: “In order to accomplish anything of significance, positive thinking about one’s self is a necessity.”**

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *John 15:4-5 ~ [Jesus said:] “Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”*
- *Philippians 3:7-14 ~ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.
I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ
⁹And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.
¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death,
¹¹And so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,
¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

F. Man’s Way: “We should not talk of sin, hell, or eternal separation from God; we should only build up people.”

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *Ezekiel 33:8 ~ When I [the LORD] say to the wicked, “O wicked man, you will surely die,” and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.*
- *Luke 3:7 ~ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”*
- *Luke 12:5 ~ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him.*

G. Man’s Way: “You must learn to forgive yourself in order to find peace and fulfillment in life.”

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *John 16:33 ~ [Jesus said:] “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*
- *I Corinthians 1:18-20 ~ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*
- *I Corinthians 2:14 ~ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

H. Man’s Way: “God wants us all to feel good about ourselves; after all, Jesus possessed the greatest self-esteem in the history of mankind.”

CONTRADICTS God’s Way:

- *Philippians 2:3-8 ~ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

I. What is your way? Explain:

VI. OVERCOMING “SELF” GOD’S WAY

A. You can quickly overcome self-belittlement, self-exaltation, or self-pity. This is possible when you realize that a preoccupation with self is sin:

- *Matthew 23:12 ~ For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*
- *Luke 9:23 ~ Then He said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*
- *Romans 14:7-8 ~ “For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*
- *II Corinthians 5:15 ~ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*
- *Galatians 2:20 ~ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

B. You must confess your focus on “self” and immediately begin to live in accordance with God’s Word:

- *Psalms 51:10 ~ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- *Philippians 3:12-14 ~ Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*
- *I John 5:1 ~ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His child as well.*

VII. GOD’S WAY FOR CONTENTMENT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Your contentment in all circumstances is dependent on your obedient response to God in your *thoughts, words and actions*:

- *Genesis 4:7 ~ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*
- *Psalms 119:165 ~ Great peace have they who love Your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*
- *Isaiah 26:3 ~ You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.*

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

- **Luke 11:28** ~ He [Jesus] replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”
- **John 15:10-11** ~ [Jesus said:] If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
- **II Corinthians 4:7** ~ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.
- **II Corinthians 4:16-18** ~ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
- **Philippians 4:6-11** ~ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

B. By obeying the Lord in your daily walk, you show your love for the Lord Jesus Christ:

- **John 14:15** ~ [Jesus said:] “If you love Me, you will obey what I command.”
- **John 14:21** ~ [Jesus said:] “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.”
- **John 14:23-24** ~ Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and I will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent Me.”
- **I John 2:4-5** ~ The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: . . .

C. You demonstrate Christ’s Lordship in your life when you obey Him:

- **Matthew 7:21** ~ [Jesus said:] “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

D. God is delighted and pleased in your obedience of faith: .

- *I Samuel 15:22 ~ But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*
- *Hebrews 11:6 ~ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*

E. God is not interested in your vows of loyalty:

- *Proverbs 20:6 ~ Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*
- *Matthew 7:21 ~ (See above)*
- *I John 2:4 ~ The man who says, “I know Him,” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

F. God is not interested in excuses:

- Example: *I Samuel 15:24 ~ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’S command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.*

G. God is not interested in good, but meaningless, actions:

- *Psalms 40:6 ~ Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but my ears You have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not require.*
- *Psalms 51:16-16 ~ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*
- *Jeremiah 6:20 ~ What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please Me.*

VIII. GOD’S WAY IS YOUR HOPE

A. Be thankful to God because you are fearfully and wonderfully made:

- *Psalms 119:73 ~ Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn Your commands.*
- *Psalms 139:13-14 ~ For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

B. Even though you might have physical deformities or a chronic affliction, God’s plans is to use them for your good and His glory:

- *II Corinthians 12:7-10 ~ To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is*

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **Ephesians 5:20** ~ Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **I Thessalonians 5:18** ~ Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- **Romans 5:3** ~ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; Perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
- **Romans 8:28** ~ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.
- **I Corinthians 10:13** ~ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.
- **II Corinthians 12:9-10** ~ But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

C. God loves you with perfect love regardless of any weaknesses and “limitations” you may have, even though you do not merit, do not deserve, and cannot earn, His love:

- **Isaiah 53:6** ~ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- **Luke 15:4-7** ~ [Jesus said:] “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”
- **Romans 5:8** ~ But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **I John 4:10** ~ This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
- **Philippians 2:12-16** ~ Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

- **Colossians 3:2-15** ~ Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.
⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.
⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.
⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.
⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices
¹⁰And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.
¹¹Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.
¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
- **Hebrews 12:1-2** ~ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- **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.

IX. GOD'S WAY IS YOUR FREEDOM

A. You have been freed from the power of all sins:

- **Romans 6:6** ~ For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—
- **Romans 6:12-13** ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.
- **Romans 12:21** ~ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- **Colossians 3:2-17** ~ Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.
⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.
⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

⁸*But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

⁹*Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices*

¹⁰*And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

¹¹*Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

¹²*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

¹³*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

¹⁴*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

¹⁵*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

¹⁶*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

¹⁷*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

B. You have been freed of all sins, including envy, jealousy, covetousness and greed, which result from focus on self. You can be content in any circumstance and can have the attitude of Christ developed within you:

- *Philippians 2:5 ~ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

REMEMBER:

C. Your Heavenly Father is the Sovereign God of the universe and He has your best interests at heart:

- *Jeremiah 29:11 ~ “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*
- *Matthew 6:7-8 ~ [Jesus said:] “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”*
- *Romans 8:28 ~ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

D. God will accomplish His purposes in your life:

- *Isaiah 46:9-11 ~ Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill My purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.*
- *Romans 8:29 ~ For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*
- *Philippians 1:6 ~ Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

- **Philippians 2:13** ~ *For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

E. He promises to meet every need that you will ever have:

- **Psalms 34:10** ~ *The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*
- **Psalms 34:15-18** ~ *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their cry; The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*
- **Psalms 37:23-25** ~ *If the LORD delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm; Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.*
- **Matthew 6:33-34** ~ *[Jesus said:] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*
- **Philippians 4:19** ~ *And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

F. God promises to equip you fully for every good work:

- **I Corinthians 12:7** ~ *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*
- **II Timothy 3:16-17** ~ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
- **I Peter 4:10-11** ~ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully ministering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

G. God promises to be with you through every circumstance of your life:

- **Psalms 23:1-6** ~ *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
³He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*
- **Psalms 121:1-8** ~ *I lift up my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from?
²My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

³*He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber;*

⁴*Indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

⁵*The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand;*

⁶*The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*

⁷*The LORD will keep you from all harm—He will watch over your life;*

⁸*the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

- ***II Timothy 4:18 ~ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***
- ***I John 5:18 ~ We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.***

X. CHANGING YOUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND ACTIONS GOD’S WAY

A. You must take the focus off yourself in daily situations and relationships:

- ***Luke 9:23-24 ~ Then He said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.***
- ***John 3:30 ~ He must become greater; I must become less.***
- ***John 12:24-26 ~ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me.***
- ***Romans 12:3 ~ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.***
- ***Romans 14:7-8 ~ For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.***
- ***II Corinthians 5:15 ~ And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.***

B. You must follow God’s commandments:

- ***Matthew 22:37-39 ~ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”***

C. Instead of sinning through self-belittlement, self-exaltation, or self-pity, you must regard others as more important than yourself and be a servant to God and others — no matter how you may feel:

- ***Matthew 20:26-28 ~ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.***

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

- **Luke 4:8 ~ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”**
- **John 13:3-9, 12-17 ~ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God;**
*⁴So He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist.
⁵After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.
⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”
⁷Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”
⁸“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”
⁹“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” ...
¹²When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” He asked them.
¹³“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.
¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.
¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.
¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*
- **Romans 15:1-3 ~ We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please Himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on Me.”**
- **I Corinthians 9:19 ~ Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.**
- **I Corinthians 10:24 ~ Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.**
- **I Corinthians 10:32-33 ~ Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.**
- **Philippians 2:3-8 ~ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!**
- **Colossians 3:23-24 ~ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.**
- **I Peter 4:10 ~ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.**

D. You are to *put off* the sins of envy, jealousy, covetousness, and greed, which characterized your life apart from Jesus Christ. Rather you are to delight yourself in the Lord, commit your ways to Him, and wait patiently for Him:

- ***Psalms 37:1-9*** ~ Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong;
*²For like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.
³Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
⁴Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.
⁵Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:
⁶He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.
⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
⁸Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.
⁹For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.*

E. Instead of being jealous and having selfish ambition, you are to be pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, and unwavering without hypocrisy:

- ***James 3:13-17*** ~ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

F. Acknowledge that you have been bought with the precious sacrifice of Jesus Christ and are not your own:

- ***I Corinthians 6:19-20*** ~ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.
- ***I Peter 1:17-19*** ~ Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

G. Acknowledge that you are God’s possession and a steward (managing servant) of all that the Lord has provided for you. As the Lord’s servant, you have the privilege and responsibility to be faithful with all that He has placed in your care:

- ***Matthew 25:14-30*** ~ Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven:
“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.
¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. I
¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.

¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

²¹ His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²² The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

²³ His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²⁴ Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ 'His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?'

²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

- **Luke 16:10-12 ~ [Jesus said:]** “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”
- **I Corinthians 4:1-2 ~** So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.
- **I Peter 4:10 ~** Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

H. As a servant of the Lord, you should not seek to be served:

- **Mark 10:42-45 ~** Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

I. You should not seek to receive credit from men:

- **Colossians 3:23 ~** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, . . .

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

- *I Thessalonians 2:4-6 ~ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, . . .*

J. Seek to please only the Lord and you will be blessing to others as well:

- *I Corinthians 10:31 ~ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*
- *II Corinthians 5:9 ~ So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*
- *Hebrews 13:20-21 ~ May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

XI. LIVE GOD’S WAY (ACTIONS)

A. Examine (judge) yourself continually in a biblical manner:

- *Matthew 7:5 ~ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*
- *I Corinthians 11:31-32 ~ But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

B. Do not compare yourself with others to determine whose approval you ultimately seek:

- *I Corinthians 10:12 ~ So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*
- *Galatians 6:3-4 ~ If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, . . .*
- *II Corinthians 5:9 ~ So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*
- *Galatians 1:10 ~ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*
- *Colossians 3:23-24 ~ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*
- *I Thessalonians 2:4 ~ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.*

C. Love God and others without hypocrisy (play-acting, pretending):

- *Romans 12:9 ~ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

D. Demonstrate the fruits of Christ’s life in your thoughts, speech, and actions:

- *Matthew 5:16 ~ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*
- *Galatians 5:22-23 ~ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*
- *Ephesians 5:1-2 ~ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*



*May the Lord richly bless you as you surrender your thoughts,
words and actions to His perfect will for your life.*

3 • “CHOICES”

God’s Way or Man’s Way

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
ISAIAH 55:8-9 NIV*

1. APPROACHING LIFE

A. GOD’S WAY:

PROVERBS 30:5-6 NIV — “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”

COLOSSIANS 2:8 NIV — “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

HEBREWS 4:12 NIV — “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

PROVERBS 14:12 NIV — “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

I CORINTHIANS 2:14 NIV — “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

2. THE HUMAN HEART

A. GOD’S WAY:

JEREMIAH 17:9 NIV — “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

ROMANS 3:23 NIV — “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .”

PROVERBS 3:5 NIV — “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; . . .”

PROVERBS 28:26 NIV — “He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

The world says, “Mankind is basically good.” They say, “I’m OK, you’re OK.”

3. TRUST AND DEPENDENCE

A. GOD'S WAY:

MATTHEW 6:33 NIV — “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

PROVERBS 3:5-6 NIV — “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

B. MAN'S WAY:

Some say, “If I don't take care of myself, no one else will.” Self-reliance is supposed to be a goal for life.

4. FREEDOM

A. GOD'S WAY:

ROMANS 6:16 NIV — “Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

LUKE 9:23-24 NIV — “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”

ROMANS 13:1 NIV — “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

HEBREWS 13:17 NIV — “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

I CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 NIV — “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. ”

ROMANS 12:1 NIV — “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

PSALMS 24:1 NIV — “The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

B. MAN'S WAY:

We're told everyone must protect and guard their rights and that each man is born to live free (i.e., freedom of expression, free speech). It is said we only live under authority because of our common social contract.

5. DEALING WITH MY PROBLEMS

A. GOD'S WAY:

I CORINTHIANS 10:13 NIV — “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

B. MAN'S WAY:

We sometimes think, “No one can really understand my problems;” and we may believe that each problem and set of circumstances are unique.

6. LOVE

A. GOD'S WAY:

- 1) Our focus in marriage is to put the interests of our spouse above our own and to reflect Christ in our marriage relationship.

EPHESIANS 5:22-24 NIV — “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

EPHESIANS 5:25-33 NIV — “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

- 2) Biblical love is giving, not getting:

JOHN 3:16 NIV — “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

I CORINTHIANS 13:4-8a NIV — “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

B. MAN'S WAY:

Marriage is often viewed as a social convenience. People seek to find a spouse who can meet their own needs. Loving another depends on a reciprocal love from that person — “what’s in it for me?”

7. MY ENEMY IS SUCCESSFUL

A. GOD'S WAY:

- 1) Rejoice in any situation.

ROMANS 12:14-15 NIV — “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”

I THESSALONIANS 5:16 NIV — “Be joyful always . . .”

- 2) Love and pray for those who you think or know are your enemies.

MATTHEW 5:44 NIV — “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .”

B. MAN' WAY:

Enemies are to be hated and their success is to be envied. We try to discredit our adversaries and to win over them.

8. I HAVE HURT SOMEONE

A. GOD'S WAY:

MATTHEW 5:23-24 NIV — “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

ROMANS 12:18 NIV — “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

JAMES 5:16 NIV — “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

B. MAN'S WAY:

We seek to justify our actions and give excuses for our behavior, or blame people and things for our behavior. Some even enjoy hurting others.

9. PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS

A. GOD'S WAY:

- 1) Conflicts and problems are for your good and for your spiritual growth. They help you to see what is within yourself.

MATTHEW 15:18-20 NIV — “But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”

- 2) Rejoice that God uses conflicts to bring you to maturity.

ROMANS 5:3-5 NIV— “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

JAMES 1:2-4 NIV — “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

B. MAN’S WAY

- 1) We avoid problems and do everything we can to get out of them.
- 2) We look for excuses or shift blame to others.
- 3) We fail to admit we even have problems, or say our problems are someone else’s fault.
- 4) We lie to protect ourselves.

10. LEADERSHIP

A. GOD’S WAY:

Be willing to be a servant — the best leader is the one who serves. God gives more grace to the humble.

MATTHEW 20:26-28 NIV — “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, And whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

We are told to assert ourselves. Learn to take charge and give orders. These are the keys to success.

11. SEX

A. GOD’S WAY:

You and your spouse belong to the Lord; you must seek to meet your spouse's best interests and to bless your spouse. Sex is to be reserved for marriage only.

I CORINTHIANS 7:4 NIV — “The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.”

I THESSALONIANS 4:3 NIV — “It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality . . .”

HEBREWS 13:4 NIV — “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

We seek lovers to satisfy ourselves. It's our spouse's duty to meet our desires. “After all, my spouse belongs to me.” If he/she does not meet our needs, we justify finding someone else, i.e., adultery.

12. ANGER: PERSONAL RIGHTS

A. GOD’S WAY:

Your response to difficulties is to put off anger, forgive, and return a blessing.

ROMANS 12:14 NIV — “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”

EPHESIANS 4:31-32 NIV — “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

We retaliate in order to get even. We protect our rights and won't let them be violated.

13. I’VE BEEN OFFENDED OR HURT

A. GOD’S WAY

1) Examine yourself.

MATTHEW 7:5 NIV — “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

2) Die to self.

LUKE 9:23-24 NIV — “Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.’”

3) Do not judge others by your standards — be a blessing instead.

LUKE 6:27-28 NIV — “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

LUKE 6:36-38 NIV — “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

JOHN 7:24 NIV — “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”

ROMANS 14:1-13 NIV — “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone

The Most Excellent Way ~ “Becoming GOD-Dependent”

and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.”

JAMES 4:11-12 NIV — “Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”

I PETER 3:8-9 NIV — “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

- 4) Consider others as more important than yourself.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4 NIV — “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

“The best defense is a good offense.” We all must defend ourselves. We’re told we should not let our “self esteem” be destroyed by letting others discredit us.

14. MY ENEMY NEEDS HELP

A. GOD’S WAY:

- 1) Love your enemies and meet their needs.

MATTHEW 5:43-48 NIV— Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

LUKE 6:35 NIV — “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

- 2) In fact, go beyond what is expected.

MATTHEW 5:38 NIV — “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one

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who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

We say our enemy deserves it when they get in trouble. We show little patience for incompetence and want to say, “Get rid of those people.”

15. I WANT “THINGS”

A. GOD’S WAY:

- 1) Fix your hope on God, not riches.

I TIMOTHY 6:17 NIV — “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

- 2) All riches are God’s; give to Him and those in need.

PSALMS 24:1 NIV — “The earth is the LORD’S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

PROVERBS 3:9-10 NIV — “Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

LUKE 12:33 NIV — “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

II CORINTHIANS 9:6-12 NIV — “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: ‘He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.’ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

A. MAN’S WAY:

We learn we can’t have too much money. “Get it while the getting’s good.” “You deserve the best.” For example, most people cheat on their taxes.

16. MY RESPONSIBILITY

A. GOD’S WAY:

Be obedient to God’s word and do your responsibilities heartily as unto the Lord, regardless of your feelings — God blesses obedience.

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GENESIS 4:6-7 NIV — “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’”

I SAMUEL 15:22 NIV — “But Samuel replied: ‘Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.’”

JOHN 14:15 NIV — “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

JAMES 1:22 NIV — “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

JAMES 4:17 NIV — “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.”

B. MAN’S WAY:

People say, “If it feels good, do it.” “Don't worry; I'll take care of it eventually.” We can always find an excuse when we “don't feel like it.”



“The Most Excellent Way” is God’s Way!

4 • “Solving Personal Problems God’s Way or Man’s Way”

*“Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him,
and to our God, for He will freely pardon.
'For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD.
'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher
than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.'”*
ISAIAH 55:6-9 NIV

1. LIFE

A. God’s Way: Heart Transformation

JOHN 10:9 NIV — Jesus said: “I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life . . . to the full.”

ROMANS 11:33-36 NIV — “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?’ ‘Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?’ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.”

B. Man’s Way:

PROVERBS 14:12 NIV — “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

CORINTHIANS 3:19-20 NIV — “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’; and again, ‘The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.’”

COLOSSIANS 2:8 NIV — “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

2. WHO IS MAN?

A. God’s View of Man:

1) **SINNER OR SAINT**

ROMANS 5:12 NIV — “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

ROMANS 5:19 NIV — “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

II CORINTHIANS 5:17-18, 21 — “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

B. World’s View of Man:

- 1) Man is driven by instincts, i.e., instinctively does things: fight, seek food, seek gratification, run away. (Sounds like an animal.) Flies into a rage; takes out anger on others; drinks or uses.
- 2) Man's behavior is conditioned or programmed — victim of environment.
- 3) Man is intrinsically good; has everything necessary within self to solve problems.
- 4) Man believes world is getting better — someday: perfect peace, no wars, one world government.

3. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF OUR PROBLEMS?

A. God’s View:

1) MAN’S REBELLION

ROMANS 1:20-21 NIV — For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

2) MAN’S UNBELIEF

JOHN 3:16-18 NIV — “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

3) MAN’S DISOBEDIENCE

EPHESIANS 2:1-2 NIV — “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

EPHESIANS 5:6 NIV — “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.”

TITUS 3:3 NIV — “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”

B. World’s View of Man

- 1) Man’s instincts are thwarted by society, family and upbringing.
- 2) Man is wrongly influenced by his environment and circumstances.
- 3) Man’s mind is blocked by negative thinking or influences.
- 4) If you’re poor, you’re a victim of your race, your parents or the wealthy.

4. WHAT IS THE CURE?

A. God’s Way:

1) **BE SAVED THROUGH FAITH AND . . .**

EPHESIANS 2:8 NIV — “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

2) **. . . LOVING OBEDIENCE TO GOD**

ROMANS 6:16-19 NIV — “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them to slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”

3) **THEN, BE MATURED IN CHRIST**

EPHESIANS 4:13-15 NIV — “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

B. Man’s Way:

- 1) Follow your instincts.
- 2) Be reconditioned, “reprogrammed” (remove defects) — self-help books/motivational seminars/“recovery” programs.
- 3) Release the full potential within self.
- 4) We are gods — one with the universe — spiritually connected to the material earth (New Age paganism).

5. TECHNIQUES FOR CHANGE

A. God’s Way:

1) **LISTEN**

PROVERBS 18:2, 13, 17 NIV — “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. . . He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame . . . The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”

2) **REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT — IN LOVE!**

II TIMOTHY 4:2 NIV — “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

3) **ENCOURAGE**

HEBREWS 3:13 NIV — “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

4) **ADMONISH**

ROMANS 15:14 NIV — “I myself am convinced . . . that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”

COLOSSIANS 1:28 NIV — “We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”

5) **STIMULATE**

HEBREWS 10:24 NIV — “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward Love and good deeds.”

6) **STRENGTHEN**

HEBREWS 12:12 NIV — “Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.”

7) **RESTORE**

GALATIANS 6:1-2, 5 NIV — “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted . . . Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

8) **TEACH**

ROMANS 6:17-18 NIV — “But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

COLOSSIANS 3:16 NIV — “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

9) **TRAIN**

II TIMOTHY 2:2 NIV — “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

B. Man's Way:

- 1) Psychoanalysis (interpretation of irrational thoughts, analysis of dreams); hypnosis therapy psychodrama therapy; resocialization; personality testing and analysis
- 2) Manipulation of behavior by use of positive and negative stimuli; train to respond to reward and punishment.
- 3) Reflection of thoughts and feelings; no presentation of answers — draw answer out of counselee's own inner resources; positive thinking.

6. TERMINOLOGY FOR CHANGE

A. God's Words:

1) **SIN**

ROMANS 3:23 NIV — “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. . .”

2) PUT OFF OLD SELF & PUT ON NEW SELF

EPHESIANS 4:22-24 NIV — “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

3) DENY SELF

LUKE 9:23-25 NIV — “Then he [Jesus] said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?’”

4) SELF-EXAMINATION

MATTHEW 7:1-5 NIV — “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

5) GODLINESS

1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8 NIV — “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

6) DOING THE WORD

JAMES 1:22-25 NIV — “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”

B. Man’s Words:

- 1) **MAN'S INSTINCTS:** Ego, id, drives, libido, conscious/subconscious, neurosis/psychosis, phobia, mania, catharsis, self-actualization, free association . . .
- 2) **MAN'S BEHAVIOR:** Stimulus, conditioning, automatic response, positive/negative reinforcement, self-fulfillment, self-improvement.
- 3) **MAN'S THOUGHTS:** Inner potential, inherent goodness, self-assertion, self-esteem, self-worth . . .

7. FOCUS FOR CHANGE

A. God’s Way:

- 1) **SELF-DENIAL** — (LUKE 9:23-24 above)

2) **PLEASING GOD**

II CORINTHIANS 5:9 NIV — “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

COLOSSIANS 1:10 NIV — “And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God . . .”

3) **BLESS OTHERS**

I PETER 3:8-9 NIV — “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

4) **MINISTERING TO OTHERS**

I PETER 4:10 NIV — “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

5) **SERVING OTHERS**

MATTHEW 20:25 NIV — “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

B. Man's Way:

1) **LIBERATE SELF**

Contradicts God’s Word: *EZEKIEL 18:20-21 NIV — “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

Contradicts God’s Word: *PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4 NIV — “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

2) **IMPROVE SELF ~ “Self” is all important!**

Contradicts God’s Word: *JOHN 15:4-5 NIV — Jesus said: “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Contradicts God’s Word: *ROMANS 1:18-32 NIV — “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*

¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

²⁰For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools
²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,

³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

³¹they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

³²Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

Contradicts God's Word: JAMES 4:10 NIV — “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

3) ELEVATE SELF

Contradicts God's Word: PSALMS 62:9 NIV — “Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.”

Contradicts God's Word: ROMANS 3:10 NIV — “As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.’ ‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’ ‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

Contradicts God's Word: ROMANS 3:23 NIV — “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .”

Contradicts God's Word: ROMANS 7:18 NIV — “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”



“The Most Excellent Way” is GOD's Way!