

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**

I 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 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and ²³birds 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!