

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

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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

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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!