

Co-Dependent No More

Co-dependency (one form of relationship addiction) touches many of our lives to one degree or another. The codependent person bases their identity and personal value on their ability to perform and please others rather than on their identity in Christ. Some characteristics of codependency include these:

1. **lack of objectivity** -we avoid our own pain by pleasing others so they will love us. We are too busy rescuing or withdrawing to have time to acknowledge the truth about ourselves
2. **a warped sense of responsibility** - we play the roles of Saviour or betrayer, rescuing to earn a sense of value or withdrawing to avoid the pain of rejection and failure
3. **controlled/controlling** - we act almost like puppets, doing whatever others want us to do, or we try to control our own lives so we can avoid failure and we try to control others so they will contribute to our success and our ability to win approval.
4. **guilt and shame** - when we fail we experience intense pangs of guilt or shame. We are driven to do better or more, to analyze every thought, action, or relationship to see if we can improve and be more pleasing.
5. **loneliness** - We try hard to please so others will love us. But even when they love us we still live in fear that we might do something they may not like and end up being rejected. So we never experience security and settledness in relationships.

Just trying harder to be successful and to please people isn't the answer. We need a bold new plan to expose and attack the root of our need: our identity and sense of worth. God has many wonderful things to say about our value and the purpose of our lives. We need to base our value and identity around this truth rather than on the opinions of others. What does God say about who we are and why He created us?

For God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will ... In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1)

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love & of self-discipline. (2 Tim. 1)

Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13)

So, from God's perspective these things are true about me:

1. **I am a loved person.** I do not have to earn love. Jesus loves and values me.
2. **I am a chosen person.** I have nothing to prove or accomplish in order to be chosen, wanted and accepted. God has already chosen me.
3. **I am a forgiven person.** There is no sin too great or bad that God will not forgive and restore me.
4. **I am a person of love and power and wisdom.** God lives in me to bless me with new life and gives me what I need to make healthy & wise choices.

God is loving and kind and welcoming to us as we are and God is committed to walking with us while we learn how to live well. Life will become satisfying as we learn to relax and live in God's accepting love. We don't have to "perform" for God to hold onto His love. Self worth is not tied into particular successes or failures. Many times we learn and grow as healthy people through our mistakes.

We need to learn let go of impossible expectations that we put on others. People cannot love us enough or touch us deeply enough to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. They weren't created that way. Only God has what we need for true satisfaction. We need to learn that we have only limited responsibility for the happiness of others. We need to have our own desires and dreams and learn to let others make their own decisions and live their own dreams. We need to let others make mistakes so they can learn. We need to trust that God is active in all of our lives and continue giving ourselves and our relationships to Him.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What aspects of co-dependency do I battle with?
2. What am I doing live a new and healthy identity from God?
3. How does having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ make a difference in how I relate to others?
4. What does it mean to me that I only have limited responsibility for the happiness of others?
5. What does a healthy relationship with others look like?
6. How can I deal with mistakes and failures in a healthy way?