

Putting the Lord First . . .

When God gave us His Ten Commandments, He began with these words, “*You shall have no other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:3). He knew that if we would make our relationship with Him our top priority, He would bless our lives, and, through our other relationships, we would be a blessing to others. The primary problem with codependency is that it violates the heart of God’s first commandment. In a codependent relationship, you allow someone else to take the place that God alone should have in your heart. . . . You allow another person to be your “god.” If you have a misplaced dependency, you will have neither *peace with God* nor the *peace of God*. But if you put the Lord first, living each day dependent on Him, you will have God’s peace, even when others are not peaceful toward you. This is one reason God says to us,

“You shall have no other gods before me.”
(Exodus 20:3)

Q: “How can I know whether I’m an enabler?”

You are an enabler if you perpetuate another’s destructive behavior by protecting that person from painful consequences that could actually serve as a motivation for change.

- The enabling parent allows the teenager’s drug habit to continue with no repercussions.
- The enabling wife calls her husband’s boss to say that he has the flu when in fact he has a hangover.

Ask yourself, “How many lies have I told to protect the reputation of the one with the destructive habit?”

“Whoever says to the wicked, ‘You are in the right,’ will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations.”
(Proverbs 24:24)

Q: “Why do I keep getting into codependent relationships? I’m now wondering whether it is possible for me ever to break free and stay free.”

When two people are in a codependent relationship, each has a history of feeling both abandoned and controlled. First, recognize how afraid you are of being abandoned, and then realize how you resent being controlled. Your relationship is intense and unstable, full of conflict and chaos, with repeated cycles of “come close” and “go away.” You are caught in the destructive ups and downs of codependency and feel that you cannot get off the unrelenting roller coaster. But this is not true, because . . .

“With God all things are possible.”
(Matthew 19:26)

Codependency and the Five Stages of Childhood Development

1. The Helpless Stage

If your parents did not meet your needs as a baby, you may have grown into a needy adult who feels “empty” inside—as if there is a hole in your heart.

2. The Pushing Away Stage

If your parents did not allow separation as a toddler, you may have grown into an adult who manipulates others in order to gain some sense of control.

3. The Conflict Stage

If you did not learn healthy conflict resolution skills as a young child, you may have grown into an adult who lacks problem solving skills in your adult relationships.

4. The Independent Stage

If your parents stifled your assertiveness as a young adolescent, you may have grown into a needy, unassertive adult who is dependent on others to validate you.

5. The Sharing Stage

As an adolescent, if you did not see a healthy give-and-take between your parents or see ways of sacrificially helping others, you may have grown into a self-focused adult who forms unequal relationships in order to feel some sense of significance.

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Galatians 6:1–5

Get on the Road to Interdependent Relationships

Built within little, immature children is the ability to grow to maturity. Why should it be any less for immature adults? They too can move from their immaturity and develop mature relationships.

- **Make it your goal** to develop an intimate relationship with God and to form interdependent relationships with significant people in your life. (Hebrews 10:25)
- **Make a plan** to move toward maturity in your relationships. (James 1:4)
- **Make a vow** to be a person of integrity in thought, word, and deed. (1 Peter 1:13–15)
- **Make a new job description.** (Job 27:6)
—My job is to take care of myself and to be responsible for myself without hurting, punishing, attacking, getting even, or lying to myself or to others.
- **Make a new commitment** to yourself. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
—I will let go of the “old,” self-centered me because I am growing into a “new,” Christ-centered me.

*“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
(Isaiah 41:10)*

Confront Your Own Codependency

- **Confront** the fact that you are codependent.¹ (James 5:16)
- **Confront** your “secondary addictions.”² (Proverbs 18:15)
—Recognize that, in an effort to numb the emotional pain of the relationship, codependency often leads to other addictions.
- **Confront** your current codependent relationship.³ (Psalm 51:6)
- **Confront** your codependent conflicts.⁴ (2 Timothy 2:23)
- **Confront** your codependent responses.⁵ (1 Peter 3:9, 15–16)
- **Confront** your need to build mature, non-codependent relationships. (Hebrews 6:1)

Find the Road to Freedom

You can “travel the road to recovery” by *releasing* your desire to control or to change the person you love.

Recognize that you are overly dependent on a person and instead place your dependency on God. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Examine your patterns of codependent thinking. (Psalm 51:6)

Let go of your “super responsible” mentality. (Exodus 18:17–18)

Extend forgiveness to those who have caused you pain. (Colossians 3:13)

Appropriate your identity in Christ. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Set healthy boundaries. (Proverbs 27:12)

Exchange your emotional focus for spiritual focus. (John 16:33)

Related Topics . . .

- Alcohol & Drug Abuse:
Breaking Free and Staying Free
- Conflict Resolution:
Solving People Problems
- Manipulation:
Severing the Strings of Control
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value
- Victimization:
Victory Over the Victim Mentality

1. For this section see Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, and Paul Meier, *Love Is a Choice* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 180–84.
2. For this section see Pia Melody, Andrea Wells Miller, and J. Keith Miller, *Facing Love Addiction: Giving Yourself the Power to Change the Way You Love* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 78–79.
3. For this section see Melody, Miller, and Miller, *Facing Love Addiction*, 196–98.
4. For this section see Melody, Miller, and Miller, *Facing Love Addiction*, 90–92.
5. For this section see Melody, Miller, and Miller, *Facing Love Addiction*, 90–92.

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Codependency:

Moving from Bondage to Balance.

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