

Biblical Counseling 201
Class Eight – May 13, 2018 - *Counseling Co-Dependency*

- I. **Discuss** 9:05-9:15
Discuss your answers to case study from last week (page 3) about which I wrote an email.
- II. **Examples and Definitions of What is Called Co-Dependency** 9:15-9:40
- A. **Examples**
1. **The fearful daughter** whose angry father so harshly rebuked/beat her older brother that she avoided saying anything that might upset him. She continues as a 45 year old, always making peace, though it keeps her husband and oldest daughter from hearing how they affect the people around them negatively.
 2. The **controlling son** who kept his siblings quiet during the day so their dad who slept in the daytime would not wake up and lash out at their mom. He continues trying to control all he can by working compulsively and by avoiding having children, much to his wife's chagrin.
 3. The **"insecure" man** who needs constant reassurance by his wife (or vice versa) because his mother constantly gave and withheld favor based on her mood. Her control through emotional withdrawal and "punishment" is said to *cause* him to need reassurance and to fear taking risks.
 4. **The flirtatious or seductive woman** who tries to get noticed and admired by men while also keeping away from committed relationships *because* she got more positive feedback for her beauty than for anything else. She feels the need to be noticed and complimented.
- B. **Socially or psychologically or in common use**, "codependency" is when a person behaves in a certain "*dependent*" way out of a felt need to control their environment or relationships. In the socially common use of the term, a "co-dependent" person lacks the internal stability and appropriate autonomy which makes people free from feeling the "need" to manipulate others or to give into the manipulation by others. This makes it hard for them to form healthy interdependent back-and-forth relationships. This lack of internal stability often shows up when the person was not well nurtured (e.g., neglect) or was controlled in unhealthy ways (e.g., abuse) while growing up. It often shows up in homes where substance abuse was an issue, a pattern that often repeats.
- C. **Spiritually, we refer to codependency** only because it is a handle that is in common use in our society describing so many different behavior, attitude and belief patterns that we do well to recognize the patterns and be prepared with a biblical response.
1. In biblical counseling, we hope to be compassionate for the suffering that people have endured at the hands of those who were responsible to raise and love them. Do not miss this on your way to helping them see the real issue at hand.
 2. However, when addressing "codependency," we are addressing idolatry. Each example of codependency cited, as well as any others we will encounter, ultimately has as its core problem, ***a lack of confidence in Christ. More specifically, a lack of confidence in the sufficiency of Christ to meet their needs, to love faithfully, to sovereignly direct the affairs of their life in a way that brings Him glory and will ultimately be seen as victory*** (2 Cor. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:13; Romans 8:28-29).

3. In each case, the “codependent” person is “dependent” on things like the following to avoid loneliness, failure or rejection (negative, avoidance-based motivation) or to make their life feel safe, happy, connected, etc. (positive, goal-based motivation).
 - a. Avoiding conflict or keeping others happy in order to purchase acceptance. *I won't indicate my thoughts or feelings so that they will stay attached to me.*
 - b. Dominating the environment, conversation, decisions, etc. *I want you to dress or act this way or this is the only reasonable option after all I have done.*
 - c. Pulling from others their approval, attention *I won't talk with you because you didn't come to my piano recital or send me a birthday remembrance...*
 - d. Performing or acquiescing to the controlling demands of others out of fear. *I try to do things well enough that I won't be criticized.*
4. Idolatry has two directions:
 - a. Codependency shows when a person treats as “little gods” the people whose favor they think they “need,” or behaves certain ways to avoid their displeasure.
 - b. Codependency shows when the codependent person does what they do to please themselves (*I'll pressure my kids to perform so that I am pleased or I'll pursue this kind of career to get a certain type of attention*). They are not living a Heb. 11:6/2 Cor. 5:9 life (living to please Christ).
5. Another term for co-dependency is “man-pleaser.” That is to say, he is more fearful of man than of God. Since the “beginning of wisdom” is the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7) and since each time a godly man encounters the Lord in His majesty, he falls down (Daniel in chapter 9, Isaiah in chapter 6, John in Rev. 1), we are pursuing foolishness when we instead fall down before man.
6. Edward Welch has written, *When Man is Big and God is Small*, and Brad Bigney has written *Gospel Treason*. The titles say it all – My view of man is that he is someone to fear. My view of God is so limited, that I think He is someone to consider later. Similarly, anything I put in front of God is really treasonous to God (James 4:4-5).
7. Codependency is only important insofar as it inhibits trust in/obedience to the Lord.

III. Biblical Episodes of Codependency and its Opposite

9:45-10:00

- A. *Lot with wicked men of Sodom* – (Gen 19) Offers his daughters to the immoral men to keep them from harming his visitors
- B. *Abraham/Hagar and Jacob/Bilhah/Zilpah* – (Gen. 16/30) These men went into these women who were not their wives in response to their wives' telling them to do so.
- C. *Joseph's whole family* – (Gen. 37, ff.) Favoritism/resentment/attempted murder
- D. *Samson telling Delilah because of her pressure* – (Judges 16) He wanted peace
- E. *Peter* (Matthew 16:13-23, John 18:17-27) In Matthew, Jesus foretold his death and Peter pressured the Lord to discount his message. In John, Peter denies he knew Jesus.
- F. *Pilate* (Mark 15:15) He releases Jesus to the crowd to please them.
- G. (OPPOSITE) *Abram with Isaac* – (Gen. 22) Abraham trusts God enough to offer his only son as a sacrifice, rather than trying to manipulate his way out of it
- H. (OPPOSITE) *Joseph* – (Gen. 50:20) Mistreatment by his brothers and Potiphar's wife.
- I. (OPPOSITE) *Abigail* – (1 Sam. 25) Tells her husband Nabal what she did to protect family
- J. (OPPOSITE) *Jesus* – (John 19:10) Response to Pilate when he said, “I have the power of life and death over you” and Jesus said, “You'd have no power unless my Father gave it.”
- K. (OPPOSITE) *Peter and John* (Acts 4:19-20) They told the rulers, elders, scribes and high priest that they had to obey God rather than men.

IV. Response to Codependency

10:00-10:25

- A. Help CE identify the **behavior pattern of control or avoidance currently**. (If something happened 25 years ago and is not affecting current attitudes or behaviors, I don't see why it would need counseling. If they just want to tell a story that helps you know their history, but it is not being "played out" in the present, take it as you would a friend. Just listen, empathize, and when appropriate, move on.)
- B. Although you may see it easily, be sure **the counselee sees** the behavior/attitude as a sin problem. If they do not, they will not work to change it. They may *appear* to see it as a problem because they are trying to please you (codependency strikes again).
- C. Help CE find **other places** this pattern shows up. Codependency as a pattern does not just show up in one relationship. Where else do they manipulate, avoid, control or otherwise adapt behavior from faith-filled, obedient behavior to something else in order to control their relationships or environment?
- D. Help CE identify the **goal of these behaviors**. This is central because it is the goal of their CD behavior that they need to repent of **often even more** than the behavior. It is generally helpful if it is tied to earlier life stories where a person can see how what they do now is a continuation of something they learned to protect themselves or to satisfy someone else in whom they put their trust/confidence/sense of well-being.
- E. Lead them in creative Bible study and homework that helps them understand the majesty, supremacy, love and sovereignty of God. Since what is often past pain may have understandably tempted them to control things, there has to be a "backward fall" into the arms of God as they take the risk of letting go of the device they have trusted. Larry Crabb's "Cliff of Safety" description in the book *Marriage Builder* is very good here. If you don't know what I mean, I will be including it in our "Common Tools" class.
- F. Lead them in studies and homework on the sufficiency of Christ to meet their needs, the completeness of his forgiveness, and the idea that they are now a new creature who lives not for themselves but for Him (2 Cor. 5:15-17).
- G. Lead them in repentance from the thing they were trusting through confession and acknowledgement of the sufficiency of Christ and to trusting in the Lord.
- H. Help them carve out specific, planned behaviors in response to the situations they will certainly face where codependent responses would have been the former pattern, and where a truthful, gracious, God-trusting response is now called for.

V. Homework

10:25-10:30

- A. Memorize Proverbs 29:25.
- B. Design some homework and instruction you would want to take someone through for IV. (above) E. and F. Please use the homework assignment sheet attached to this set of notes on page 4. Share with your table next week. **If we complete the notes by 10:10am today, we will make this a table exercise instead.**

If this is hard for you, do not worry. I'd rather you try at the level of your understanding than let your fear of inadequacy control you and keep you from being stretched. If you are not sure at all what we are looking for, find someone in this class you can call, and ask them to help you get it. There are quite a few folks here who have more experience, and they can help clarify it for you.

Assignment	Name/s	Date	Session #
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1. Pray *specifically* for the counseling process at least 3-4x this week

- Pray for yourself that God would help you see what He wants you to see about yourself - and where you need to trust, repent, change and grow.
- Pray for your counselor to have wisdom and insight – to know where to work/what to do.
- Pray for your spouse (if marriage counseling) to be encouraged in the process and to see the changes being made in your life.
- Pray with your kids
- Pray together as a couple – Husband: you initiate the prayer time.
- Set up a journal to jot down things you are learning, specific prayers and Bible passages being read. Homework (unless it is to be turned in) should be done in this journal. Record principles you are learning and can apply to your life now. Unless otherwise indicated, be ready to share.

2. Attend: Sunday Worship Small Group Other _____

3. Bible Reading: _____

Read the scripture passage(s) at least _____ different times (don't sit down and read it all in one sitting). Record the day/time you read.

4. Memorize word perfect and be ready to explain how it relates: _____

5. Read _____ Listen to or Watch: _____

- If chapter/s or article, underline the _____ most important sentences to you and be prepared to share those at next meeting (as well as to explain why).
- Listen to or watch _____.
- Write a 75-100 word summary of the reading, CD or DVD in your journal and share at the next meeting how it applies to your life.

6. Other: _____

Charges/Materials:
Next Meeting: