

## Co-dependency

**1 Corinthians 1:12-13 HCSB** What I am saying is this: each of you says, "I'm with Paul," or "I'm with Apollos," or "I'm with Cephas," or "I'm with Christ." (13) Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?

The Corinthians were not dedicating themselves to following Christ and Christ alone. At this point in time, much of the New Covenant had not yet been written and they were falling into the error of being attracted by the personalities of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas rather than being attracted by the truth these men spoke.

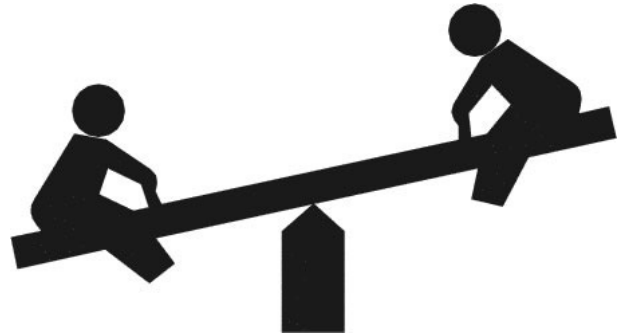
This is a very common error. Congregations begin following a dynamic pastor rather than following the Scriptures. Lovers allow their attraction to each other to override even their common sense. Mothers develop dependency in their children rather than independence out of their twisted desire to be needed.

Even though it's not chemically based, this is yet another type of addiction – addiction to a relationship. Here is how it usually works, whether it's two individuals, a group and an individual, or even two groups of people.

A is perceived as emotionally weak and needy.

B is perceived as emotionally strong and yet is actually weak due to the need to be needed.

As a matter of fact, both A and B are in denial. The relationship will ebb and wane because codependency is characterized by highs and lows as the pair negotiate their unbalanced relationship. It's rather like going up and down on a seesaw. First they'll suffocate each other with saccharine sweetness and everyone thinks they're the ideal relationship. Soon however they need to distance themselves because no relationship can be that claustrophobic and survive. This constant ebb and flow, constriction and expansion, produces a destructive pattern that soon bleeds all the real joy and meaning out of the relationship.



I caution you.

- **Isaiah 2:22 HCSB** Put no more trust in man, who has only the breath in his nostrils. What is he really worth?

### Are you co-dependent?

- Do you feel a loss of personal identity?
- Do you violate your conscience?
- Do you have difficulty establishing other healthy, intimate relationships?
- Do you struggle with low self-worth?
- Do you control or manipulate?
- Are you controlled or manipulated?
- Do you have difficulty setting boundaries in the relationship?
- Do you become jealous or possessive?
- Do you fear abandonment?
- Do you experience extreme ups and downs?
- Do you have a false sense of security (i.e. based on the other person's love)?
- Do you have another addiction besides this one?
- Do you feel trapped in the relationship?

God wants you to be totally dependent on Him. He is the only one who will never fail you. He is the only one with the strength, patience, and wisdom to actually put up with you full time! He's the one with the answers. Every time you put a human in that place you are committing the sin of idolatry.

### **How do I grow out of co-dependence?**

#### **Confess the sin of co-dependence.**

- [James 5:16 HCSB](#) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful.

Admit it to yourself, to God, and to a trustworthy person who will help you with accountability in your attempts to repent of the sin.

#### **Accept personal responsibility for your part in the relationship.**

- [Proverbs 28:13 HCSB](#) The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.

Admit how your past experiences and reactions have brought you to this point. Own the pain that you have caused yourself and others through your jealousy, enviousness, selfishness, and obsessiveness. Take a good honest look at the ways in which your co-dependency has weakened your relationship with God and say "I did that."

#### **Face the fact that you'll have pain regardless of what you choose.**

- [Matthew 16:24-25 HCSB](#) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it.

If you leave the relationship, it will hurt. If you stay in the relationship, it will hurt. When the intensity of the high part of the cycle fades, you'll be left with emotional withdrawal. At least if you leave the relationship or change the relationship you have some hope of future healing. Trust me - co-dependency is just as terrible an addiction as drugs, alcohol, or gambling. You are going to need the help of a faithful friend to get through this.

- [Proverbs 17:17 HCSB](#) A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.

As you face the fear and pain of a changing relationship and a new personal identity, I want you to keep in mind God's good promise to those who follow Him.

- [Isaiah 41:10 HCSB](#) Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with My righteous right hand.

**Confront your co-dependent relationship.** Acknowledge your role and stop relating to each other within those patterns. Admit that those patterns are destructive and replace them with constructive behaviors. Write out a game plan and stick to it. Be prepared for the natural pain of withdrawal. It's common to all addictions. While undergoing that pain focus on God's sovereign purpose in your life and how He is bringing you through this to a new, better place.

- [Philippians 1:6 HCSB](#) I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

**Move your focus from the other person.** Start focusing on where Christ wants you to be, what Christ wants you to do, what in you is attractive to Jesus. Quit trying to solve the other person's problems and start solving your own.

- [Luke 6:41 HCSB](#) "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye?"
- [Matthew 7:5 HCSB](#) Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.
- [Galatians 6:4-5 HCSB](#) But each person should examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in respect to someone else.  
(5) For each person will have to carry his own load.

### **Prepare yourself to leave some things in order to heal.**

**Leave behind childish, dependent thinking** "I can't live without them." Instead, acknowledge both the good they bring and your ability to move on through the power of the Holy Spirit if the need arose.

**Leave behind your need to be dependent on a human.** Transfer your dependence onto the Lord.

**Leave behind your need to be needed.** Instead, focus on making each person in your life strong enough to surpass you. Truly serve them instead of keeping them on your sick, twisted leash.

**Leave behind your fantasy relationships** ("This person is my all-in-all"). Instead, nurture several healthy, balanced relationships. Acknowledge your place in the entire body of Christ rather than with this one individual cell in the body.

- [1 Corinthians 12:12 HCSB](#) For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body--so also is Christ.

Releasing someone is not to stop loving them, but is instead loving them enough to stop leaning on them.

Releasing someone is not to stop caring for them, but is instead caring for them enough to stop controlling them.

Releasing someone is not to turn away from them, but is instead turning toward Christ, and trusting Him to control both of you.

### **Establish safe, healthy boundaries and stick to them.**

- [Job 27:6 HCSB](#) I will cling to my righteousness and never let it go. My conscience will not accuse *me* as long as I live!

### **Make emotional maturity a priority in your life.**

- [Colossians 1:28-29 HCSB](#) We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (29) I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

Form friendships that allow you to be free to learn, to grow, and be mature. Guard yourself against any relationship that could trigger your tendency to co-dependency. Build relationships with trustworthy, mature Christians who will join you in your goal of becoming more Christ-like.