

WHERE ARE YOU WITH CODEPENDENCY?

Where Is Your Focus?

We can learn a lot about ourselves by noticing where our attention remains focused. What we focus on routinely becomes our foreground (the center of our attention) and everything else becomes a fuzzy background. Sadly, with codependency, others have become our foreground, God has become the background, and self is nowhere to be found. This cannot be God's intent.

The Great Commandment states, first of all, that I am to love God with everything I've got. Christ is to be my foreground and everything else the background. Secondly, it states that I am to love others as I love myself. If I'm codependent, I typically love others way more than I love myself. But if others, or if I, become the center of my attention instead of Christ, the whole picture is out of focus. I can't see reality. As a believer, nothing works well in my life if Christ is background. "For from him and through him and for him are all things..." (Romans 11:36 NIV)

When Christ is the center of attention, it is much easier to let God be God. We don't have to compulsively fix, rescue, or control others – He is capable of doing that by himself. But, by His grace, He may wish to partner with us to accomplish His purposes in others' lives. So, how do we cooperate with Him but not play the savior role? It starts by accepting our identity in Christ.

Where Is Your Identity and Value Found?

When we accept that we are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 13:5) and that He is in us (Rom. 8:10-11), our identity and value issues are resolved. We have become God's children (John 1:12), Jesus' friends (John 15:15) and those who have been chosen by Christ (John 15:16). It all of a sudden becomes clear to us that our only ability to help others comes through His empowerment, not through the unnecessary sacrifice of ourselves. We are His coworkers (2 Cor. 6:1), and we possess the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:6), but we are not asked to be a "savior" to others.

And since others already have a savior, we can gladly surrender them to God's sovereign control. We no longer need to fix, rescue, or control others and neither should we allow them to control us. Jesus had boundaries and we can have boundaries. Further, we are free to start paying more attention to ourselves and our responsibilities, to seek change in our own lives. We can spend our time praying for ourselves and others – not taking matters into our own hands.

Where Do You Go from Here?

1. Realize that codependency isn't a life sentence – just an adaptive coping mechanism, and you can change that.
2. Admit that your motivation for helping got mixed up early in your life, but that wasn't your fault, and you can adopt a new motivation.
3. Understand that your attraction to the needy is often an unhealthy need to be needed, and you don't have to be like the moth flying straight into a burning candle.
4. Stop the vicious cycle in your relationships – don't keep doing what you've always done. Don't enable others and, by all means, don't lose your identity in fixing others.
5. Grieve the losses you have encountered in your codependent relationships.
6. Model yourself after Jesus who cared for others but set personal boundaries with them.
7. Provide logical consequences for those who do not respect your personal boundaries.

Where Do You Find Support, Encouragement, and Accountability?

1. In Christ – become very intentional and disciplined about personal spiritual growth.
2. In Support Groups – become part of recovery ministries like Celebrate Recovery, etc.
3. In Professional Helpers – find Professional Counselors or Professional Christian Life Coaches who specialize in the fields of recovery and codependency.