



The Language of Letting Go

Codependency has probably trailed humanity through the B.C. years right up to “those generally wretched times of the twentieth century.” People have worried themselves sick about other people. They have tried to help in ways that didn’t help. They have worn sackcloth because they think they didn’t deserve silk. These and many more habits are self defeating. Time for a change.

John 15:1-8 ‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

For Personal Study

On the surface, codependency messages sound like Christian teaching.

“Codependents always put others first before taking care of themselves” – aren’t Christians to put others first?

“Codependents give themselves away” – Shouldn’t Christians do the same? “Codependents martyr themselves” – Christianity honors its martyrs.

These statements have a familiar ring. How can we distinguish between codependent behaviors which is unhealthy to all parties involved and mature faith, which is healthy?

Codependency says:

- I have little or no value.
- Other persons and situations have all the value.
- I must please other people regardless of the cost to my person or my values.

- I am to place myself to be used by others without protest.
- I must give myself away. If I claim rights for myself, I am selfish.

A codependent’s sense of self-worth is tied up in helping others; Christianity says that a person has worth simply because he is a human being created by God. One’s self worth is separate from the work one does or the service one renders.

Codependents have difficulty living balanced lives; they do for others at the neglect of their own well-being and health. Christian faith calls for balanced living and taking care of oneself.

Codependents are driven by their inner compulsions. Christians are God-directed and can be free from compulsiveness, knowing that God brings the ultimate results.

Codependent helping is joyless; Christian service brings joy.

Codependents take on burdens they were never meant to bear.

Have you done your child’s homework lately? Have you cleaned up someone else’s mess? Have you lied to cover up an addiction (yours or someone else’s)? These are examples of burdens that you are not meant to bear. Sometimes it’s hard to unload someone else’s burden, but a balanced, healthy life is not possible, if you are carrying burdens that belong to someone else.

Resources:

[A Passionate Life](#), Mike Breen & Walt Kallestad, 2005.

[Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to say NO to Take Control of Your Life](#), Henry Cloud, & John Townsend, 1995.

[Escape from Codependent Christianity](#), Dr. Jim Richards, 2004.

[Love is a Choice: The Definitive Book on Letting Go of Unhealthy Relationships](#), Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, & Paul Meier, 2003.

[Celebrate Recovery: Leader’s Guide](#), John Baker, 1998.

Readings & Questions

Monday, October 23

Luke 18:9 -14

Right now, considering your attitude toward others, who are you most like – the tax collector or the Phari-see? How are you humble before God?

Tuesday, October 24

Matthew 11:28 – 30

What does Jesus mean by taking up his “yoke”? Is Jesus’ yoke resting lightly on you or are you struggling to get out from under it? Why? How does taking up his way lead to rest?

Wednesday, October 25

Matthew 19:26

With God nothing is impossible – what burden are you carrying that you think is impossible? Should you be carrying that burden?

Thursday, October 26

Romans 7:14 – 20

In what areas of your life is the spirit willing, but the flesh weak - work habits, marriage, children?

Friday, October 27

1 John 1:5-7

What does it mean to “walk in darkness”? How can we “walk in the light”?

The Balanced Life ...for Families

Discussion Starters

- What is a healthy friendship?
- Have you ever been in an unhealthy friendship? What did you do about it? What is your relationship with that person now?
- What if *you* were the friend always messing up, and Jesus was the one you went to for help...how would he handle things? (would he judge? keep rescuing? get you to stand on your own? get you help? set acceptable limits or boundaries on everyone's behavior?)

Some Tips For Parents

- How can you help your children have healthy relationships?
- Let them talk about their feelings; help them put words to their negative feelings, but don't try to cheer them up or “talk them out of it.”
- To develop a sense of personal responsibility, let them experience the logical, age-appropriate consequences of their behavior.
- As they grow, give them more choices and more control.
- Teach them to delay gratification — “first something healthy to eat, then candy!”
- It's ok to tell them NO sometimes—teach them that the world doesn't revolve around them.

“Abide in me...and bear much fruit”

John 15:5

TEENS...

Helping others is a good thing, but sometimes friends seem to get themselves in the same trouble over and over again. Do you have a friend like that? Are you always there to pick up the pieces? Does your friend depend on that? Is their need to be rescued so strong that *you* end up feeling used or manipulated? Perhaps it is time to take a good look at your relationship. By rescuing after *so many* unnecessary “disasters,” you are in a way helping this person keep making bad choices. What would Jesus do if he were you? Do you remember the Awareness Wheel from last week? Could using that help you plan and have a talk with your friend? Ideally you won't have to end the friendship, but you may need to define what's expected and acceptable from both of you (sometimes this is called “setting boundaries”).

That being said, now consider what would happen if *you* were the one making the bad choices and *Jesus* was your friend. Actually, that's a lot like how many of us operate: We do something stupid, we ask God to help us out of it, we get out of it, and then we do it again!

Just like a vine that needs to be pruned in order to grow fruit, we need to learn from our mistakes and use that knowledge to help ourselves and others. If we don't move forward and be fruitful, then what's the point? And for that we need to live in and through Jesus' love.