The Christian Codependence Recovery Workbook Leader Guide
by Stephanie Tucker

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I’m so thrilled that you are stepping out in faith to begin a ministry of encouragement to those who have been in bondage to codependence. If you are a leader, there’s a good chance you relate with what people will be going through as they approach this material. You probably know firsthand that this process can be pretty tough initially. It can be hard to see the painful realities and twisted distortions that we created to survive. It can be exceedingly difficult to face the very things we’ve tried to hide from. But then, how precious to know that through it all, God has loved us all along. How amazing and exciting when we get to see who God really is, what He intended and who He created us to be! Is there anything better?

I want to encourage you to cling to the Lord with all your heart and allow Him to minister and teach your own heart every bit as much as anyone you’ll be leading in a group. Rely on prayer over your own words, God’s Spirit over efforts of human comfort, and the power of God’s love as the true transformer, not a written process or book! Let God move, change and deal with people according to His timing and His will. You will be blessed in the process, I guarantee it!

If I can support you personally, please write to me or e-mail me. I’ll be praying that God will use you in a mighty way, but that you get a deeper revelation of Him through it.

Many blessings to you!
In His Grace,

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Leading a group through codependence recovery is an important and much-needed resource in the church and recovery arena. That’s because codependence can so often be overlooked and misunderstood, posing itself as “Christianity” and genuine “love.” This workbook process seeks to untangle distortions that can occur when we mistake God’s love for codependence. The workbook doesn’t just address “what’s wrong”, it addresses the truth of how God designed us to be in relationship with Him and others. The challenge is that truly “getting that” is a process that must move from the head and heart. No human being or human process is capable of making that occur, that process must be initiated by the Spirit of the Living God.

Assessing the Problem

Codependence can get confusing because so much of the codependent’s behavior is wrapped around “good stuff.” Getting beyond that and becoming in touch with the inward pain and brokenness of the codependent’s heart is truly what recovery is all about. A typical codependent is usually very shame-based on the inside and is motivated by the needs of others in a toxic way. The reason for this is normally rooted early in life, making it much more difficult to recognize. This means that while the codependent is often seeing all the events of “today” as the problem, it is normally everything that happened for many years before “today” that has contributed.

To deal with that challenge, this workbook approach isn’t just about resolving current circumstances. In fact, there may not be a “quick fix” or instant zap to the current relationship crisis. Instead, this workbook will guide participants through a dramatic, Spirit-led self confrontation process that asks the participant to evaluate both the current and past systems of love, family, relationship skills, boundaries, etc. The reason? Quite simply, it’s a method of understanding the problem in order to properly apply the remedy. By seeing “cause” and “effect,” a clearer picture begins to form.

The goal becomes not just to see problems, but to see them in light of God’s truth. To not just hurt, but to feel pain that draws on the comfort of Jesus and the resources and aid He provides in healing that person. It’s a process that asks participants to be real, vulnerable and honest. It’s a process that can, if applied, set them free.

Your role as a group leader is to lay the foundation of the process and direct the people in your group as they individually pursue this. You are providing infrastructure, prayer and guidance, but allowing God to do what only He can do - get inside and deal with hearts!

Group Formats:

This process works best as a small group, with not more than ten participants. If you
have more, consider having one part of the session for teaching, and then breaking into smaller group discussions. Two hours is a good time frame for the workshops, adjusting as needed. Anything more than two hours might be overwhelming.

Make prayer a priority, devoting as much time as necessary at the beginning and end of a group. This process will be most effective when led by a person who has been through it and can offer a personal testimony.

In forming a new group, it’s most important that an emotionally and spiritually safe environment is established. As a recovery leader, your job will be to help create that environment and any group rules that could aid and protect the participants. Please use your own discretion, but here are some common examples:

- No profanity
- Keep shares to “I” - do not focus on another person’s issues
- Do not offer advice
- No cross talk or interruption when someone is sharing
- If a person needs to express emotion, let them, don’t interrupt what the Holy Spirit is dealing with.
- Do not encourage chronic negative complaints about the process that might affect others - speak to a group leader instead

**Breaking up the workbook into workshops**

If you need to keep the workshop to a shorter format, you can do this process in 12 weeks, focusing on one chapter per week. However, this is often not enough time and some chapters can be overwhelming. Also, the application points can sometimes be totally neglected when approaching a chapter a week, and those are the heart of the entire process.

It’s best that you get comfortable with each chapter and the application points that will be assigned. Some chapters would be best broken into two weeks. We’ll be reviewing each chapter in this leader guide and you should decide for yourself how to break it down.

**Setting Expectations**

It’s important to explain to the group initially that this process must be led by the Holy Spirit in order to be effective. This is not merely an intellectual or educational process. It furthermore is imperative that each application point be worked through in order to see results. The results are not about the process itself—and that must be emphasized. It’s about encountering God intimately and allowing Him access into the inner-most places of our hearts. Some ministries call this “inner healing.”

**About The Participant’s Needs**

This process doesn’t replace the need to get professional help or to see a pastor/counselor. If you become aware of situations that pose imminent threat to a person’s safety or health, please have an emergency plan in place. Remember that this process could bring up painful memories, so at any point, be sure to have referrals to offer if the needs are beyond your group’s capabilities.
The purpose of Chapter 1 is to help participants get a base-line understanding of codependence through both an emotional and spiritual perspective. Codependence stands independently of a relationship, but people with codependence are extremely susceptible to enter into unhealthy relationship dynamics where they attempt to balance imbalanced relationships. Thus, their codependence perpetuates the cycle of enabling.

In leading a group, it’s important that the participant(s) can learn to see the patterns in their own life. Keep in mind that in the beginning they will be overwhelmed and even possibly angry and confused. That’s why as you work with the group, it’s a good idea to lay out recovery and healing objectives, and point them towards the solution principles from the very beginning. The only reason they are asking for help is because the pain of their lifestyle has gotten difficult enough to want help. And where the pain has become intense enough, you can begin to instill hope as the main motivator to continue.

Application homework:
Writing a life story (Page 6) - Writing out the story is a must—it is foundational to the rest of the process. The story should focus on the painful events and memories more than the positive events, simply because this process is for healing wounds. To be effective, the story should begin from the earliest memories all the way to the current circumstances.

Why do this? So much of codependence revolves around the inability to speak, feel or express personal thoughts and opinions. Oftentimes, people who struggle with codependence repressed and hid their feelings and needs to the point they didn’t even know how to explain their inward reality. Therefore, in this process it is mandatory that we begin to sort through life experiences with a filter of truth. Some people struggle tremendously with this project because it lacks structure. They will want to know “exactly” how to write their stories. As a leader, please understand that the purpose of this project is to simply to “break up the soil” in order to sift, sort and deal with each thing that is expressed. Therefore, the only purpose of this is for what they will gain by seeing their own story in black and white. Some people will request to skip this project, I suggest encouraging them to try their best, and just write out what they can recollect, focusing on how they felt more than simply presenting facts. This is only the first project in a series of projects that will assist in this way.

About codependence questions (Page 15) - These are basic questions about relating to the role of codependence. You may use these as discussion points in groups.
Chapter 2
Family Systems

The family system is the most influential place where we learn how to love, how to be responsible and how to give and receive in relationships. It’s also where we often form our initial sense of identity, and learn specifically how to function in our gender roles. It should be obvious how this area can distort participants perception of God’s intent for the family system, if they have been exposed to dysfunction and even chaos.

This chapter is a basic sifting process to understand how families function, and to correlate that with God’s truth. While we may not be able to offer remedies for a family crisis immediately, what we can immediately offer is the truth of God’s family system. As children of God, that family system can supersede anything negative or toxic that has occurred, and can heal and transform us despite any of our earthly circumstances directly changing. How so? We learn to depend on our perfect Father and perfect Spouse to make up for what is lacking. And based on that relationship, we will find the wisdom to deal with the relationship challenges.

This chapter can be extremely overwhelming and painful. It’s an area where participants are often the most fragile and hurt. Be sensitive to people’s past dysfunction, but firm in the truth of God’s solution, even though it may not be popular. We need to be loving, but remember, that in fact the truth will set people free, not keep them in bondage.

Group note:
Chapter 2 is long and packed with important information about God’s heart and purpose for the family. It is recommended that you break this chapter into more than one week.

Application Homework:

Answering questions about Mother/Wife; Father/husband (pages 31-32; 37-38) Emphasize the importance of this application assignment. It is the beginning of a discovery process that may offer some important insight.

Family questions (Page 44) - You may use these as discussion point in groups.
This chapter offers a basic assessment process of the functions within the soul: thinking, feeling and doing. Most people with codependence have a lot of emotional troubles. Some have emotionally “checked out” and are desensitized altogether. Others are consumed with anger.

While helpful, the chapter is not intended to treat each emotion on the spot as some sort of “biblical magic potion.” Rather, it’s to provide a basic understanding of the roots that drive our emotions to help gain sanity over them in a given situation. It’s most important for people to begin to learn that emotions stem directly from thoughts, which stem directly from beliefs. Therefore, as we embrace God’s dramatic solutions and truths, emotions can and will be stabilized.

Now, keep in mind, that at this point, people are operating on an “old system” of thinking and feeling. Therefore, they should not expect dramatic results immediately. We are going to continually challenge belief systems throughout this process, and as we do so, hopefully participants will come more in tune with their true emotions and the reasons behind them.

**Group note:**

Questions about medication and psychological diagnosis might be asked. As a Christian counselor, I personally feel medication should usually (with some exceptions) be used temporarily, with the long-term goal of complete abstinence. I also believe that the symptoms of mental disorders are real, but the difference between the Christian approach versus the secular approach is that we are seeking a spiritual remedy. With that said, the only person that should direct a person off medication should be a psychiatrist or doctor. Please use discretion in this area! Never, ever advise someone to stop taking medication, it could put them in an extremely dangerous situation!

**Application Homework:**

**Inventory emotions** - Encourage the participants to have a notebook to begin writing their emotional inventories on a daily basis - including anger, fear, shame, loneliness, etc.(refer to the application point under each emotions).

“I think, I feel, I act” (Page 62)- This application project is a very helpful tool to begin to understand emotions and seek to remove the “irrational” out of the equation. This doesn’t mean that people will find emotional healing at this point, but emotions will suddenly not feel so “out of control.” Participants often say they use this tool ongoing after completion of the workshop.
Chapter 4 provides but a brief definition of God’s love, followed by the countless ways it gets misunderstood or misappropriated in our own lives. Like the previous chapters, this chapter is still intended to be used as a sifting and sorting process to understand what’s dysfunctional and harmful, and what God actually intended love to be.

Most everyone who struggles with codependence has a warped love system based on performance and efforts. In fact, that could be even one way to define codependence. It’s amazing how we can go through life with these faulty belief systems, and be completely unaware of how harmful they may be. That’s why examples are used in this chapter to seek to expose some of the general misconceptions.

For people who haven’t had a true encounter with God’s love, they may have a difficult time grasping these concepts at this point. This is where knowledge must give way to experience. Participants can only understand God’s love through an actual one-on-one encounter with Him. If participants have not experienced that yet, it doesn’t mean that they are not a Christian, but it means they have not yet partook of the fullness of God’s peace and love.

Above all else, as the guide, prayer is the most important ingredient. Only the Holy Spirit can allow the walls to be torn down, and the outpouring of God’s love to manifest in a person’s life. If there are “plugs” in the their systems, the following chapters will begin to systematically address that.

Group note:
This chapter is very detailed, but covers extremely important concepts that cut at the very heart of codependence. It is recommended that this chapter be broken into at least two weeks.

Application Homework:

Assessing God’s Love (Page 66) - This is critical in laying a foundation to addressing distortions in love. It’s amazing what people discover when they begin to write this down. Remember, the two parts to deliverance are finding the problem and applying the remedy.

God’s Love Meditation Points (Page 67-70) - These are small descriptions of God’s love and how that principle can get diluted in our lives.
Loving Improperly Meditation Points (Page 75-79) - These are entire systems that we build in our lives when we try to love without the resources of God.

Giving and Receiving Meditation point (Page 81-82) - The entire mechanism of “giving” and “receiving” in a codependent’s relationship is often distorted.

Writing a personal love system (Page 82) - After evaluating this material, the participants are asked to identify their own love system and how that is playing out in their lives today.

End of Chapter Questions (Page 86) - Recommend that participants read Song of Solomon and answer these questions.
Understanding surrender is perhaps the most challenging and confrontational issue in our lives. In dealing with control issues, the participants are asked to assess their own system of operation. They need to begin to understand and assess how they both have been controlled and have controlled others; how they both depend on others and create dependencies. And then the ultimate challenge, to prepare to let go of the reigns and ask God to “take control.”

Surrender at this point is where all change and healing will begin. It’s possible a person can read this and not be impacted by it or see the need for true surrender. Many people will claim complete surrender, even though it hasn’t actually occurred. If participants are in denial, it’s okay to allow them to proceed to the next chapter where they are asked to confront a variety of situations. Continue to remember your primary role is to guide and to pray.

Above all else, this chapter clearly draws the line, am I trusting in “self,” another person or God? The answer will determine the outcome from here on out.

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**Group note:**
This chapter is long and contains important concepts about control and surrender. If possible, extend this chapter to two weeks.

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**Application Homework:**

**Trusting God” Questions (Page 93)** - I am amazed by the impact this set of questions often has on people. This is a good area of discussion for groups. Most people discover they don’t trust God fully.

**Identifying Control & Dependency Questions (Page 94)** - After seeing their tendency to not trust in God, these questions seek to explore who or what they are trusting in. This revelation can be quite important.

**Assessing Control Issues Questions (Page 102)** - A codependent’s ability to recognize control is the beginning to being able to change. This sets the stage for learning how to surrender to God,
and being able to identify the contamination that takes place when we do not.

**End of Chapter questions (Page 107)** - These are questions that go right to the heart. These would be recommended for group discussion.
While the previous chapters have been diagnostic, this chapter is where everything begins to be brought together. Exposing denial and understanding why it’s so important to see the impact of life events is very important, yet very difficult. The entire point of this chapter is to prepare the participants to write inventory lists. Questions may arise in this chapter about exactly what to write and how to write it. Some people will be scared of not getting it “just right,” and feel they might miss out if they “do it wrong.” Others may minimize it so much, they can barely come up with anything.

As a group leader, you can begin to see what’s going on inside someone’s heart as they face this assignment. Someone who is in touch and very connected with the issues in their life may approach this with tenacity. Other people who are still out of touch, disconnected or hiding in denial, may have a difficult time, and may even begin to question the purpose behind it.

Remind the participants above anything this must be a Holy Spirit-led project, not a human project. At the end of the day, what matters is that they bring God into it, and ask Him to show them the things that need to be exposed. Also, remind them that if they can’t get to something right now, it’s okay. God knows and He will choose to reveal it to them when they are ready. ENCOURAGE THEM THAT THIS CHAPTER IS ABOUT WHAT’S IN THEIR HEART - AND THAT MATTERS MORE THEN THE FORMAL PROCESS!

Group note:

While the chapter itself is short, the process it contains and the inventory sheets will draw a lot of questions. Consider this in part of your group.

Application Homework:

Inventory tables (Pages 119-123)- Each table has a specific purpose. Review the directions of each inventory sheet.

“Violations” - This is all about the ways others hurt them - this should cover and deal with all resentments they harbor for the violator.
“Sinful/Immoral” - This is all about listing their own sin issues. This inventory sheet should be unrestricted and comprehensive. It doesn’t need to include minor issues, but anything major should be written in this section.

“Unmet Needs/Losses” - This should focus on neglect and loss in childhood and adulthood. The immediate circumstances should be included too. For example, if there is an absent husband in the equation, the loss of that needs to be addressed. Also encourage participants to list lost dreams and hopes.

“Love Skills” - Some people have a difficult time understanding the purpose behind this chart. For now, what they want to list is how they have engaged in relationships in unhealthy ways.

“Traumatic Events” - Major episodes such as death or divorce can have a dramatic affect on a person’s life. This needs to be recognized and will need to be dealt with more dramatically.

Other notes:
When people get overwhelmed, I sometimes recommend that they take their lists and put them into a time line. This helps them see the progression of these important events. I also recommend that they fill out lists one relationship at a time, beginning with the earliest memories. For example, begin with mom and dad, and then work through each relationship issue from there.
Chapter 7
Exposing Shame

Now that lists have been written and the “laundry lists” have been revealed, it may appear to be a big pile of junk that the participants want to dispose of quickly. The purpose of understanding these lists is two-fold:

• By confronting the realities of these things, the participants can begin to understand how dangerous and deadly sin/shame is in their own lives so they don’t continue to minimize or deny/
• By seeing the realities of shame, we can prepare the person’s heart to receive the remedy.

The Enemy’s power over our lives lies in shame. It’s his secret weapon: he knows that when it is in operation, it will destroy us from the inside out. God’s grace and forgiveness has the complete opposite effect, it inwardly exposes and disposes of the shame, thus allows us to be connected to God, self and others. Grace begins to heal and restore us.

There aren’t even words to describe the importance of recognizing not just shame itself, but the message shame imposes. Challenge your participants to trust in God in facing shame, knowing it has no power as it is brought in His marvelous light.

Group notes:
Understanding the impact of shame is critical. This chapter deals with three areas, and I recommend that you take your time through it rather than rush the process. The area of abuse and the cycle of abuse can be an entire group discussion.

Please don’t be alarmed if participation drops in this workshop. That’s because this subject is uncomfortable. Don’t allow that to confuse the purpose of the chapter—even though uncomfortable, this exposure is the access point of their eventual freedom. Trust God to deal with the individual needs being expressed in the group.

Application Homework:

Please note: This chapter is not heavy in homework. The participants can use this time to continue to work on their inventory lists, changing or updating as the Holy Spirit reveals more.
Identifying shame questions (Page 127) - After writing the lists, this is asking the participants to reveal their own sense of shame.

Measuring up to standards questions (Page 131) - Asks the participants to key in on where they personally struggle in this area.

Guilt questions (page 134) - The participants are asked to get in touch with the feelings of guilt and unforgiveness.

Abuse and victim questions (Page 138) - It’s important that the participants write out other ways they have discovered abuse in their life, and add that to the violations sheet. They should also recognize if they are subject to being a chronic victim.
The gift of repentance and brokenness prepare our hearts to understand how desperately we need to be forgiven. Whether or not a person has arrived at this point is beyond our ability control as a group leader. However, we might be able to recognize a heart that is broken from sin, thus desires to repent, and one that is still filled with self efforts and pride. Our only part in seeing this is that we continue to pray for that person.

Sometimes, people will continue to blame others. Remind them this chapter is only about their own sin issues, and you’ll deal with how they’ve been hurt in the next chapter. You may deal with others who feel they are unworthy of forgiveness. Remind them that the blood of Jesus was shed on their behalf, whether or not they choose to accept it.

The goal throughout this process is truly to help the participants see their primary “blockage” from receiving forgiveness. At one point, this transaction takes place between the participant and God, and we could actually interfere if we continue to overly push the point. Practice prayer above anything else in these situations.

Group notes:
This chapter introduces solution and has some important application points. The application points could take much longer then the workshop allows. This is a process the participants can continue to use on an ongoing basis.

Application Homework:

Anger at God questions (Page 141) - Please note that often God is the target for blame and anger when a participant is a victim of painful situations. This is an extremely dangerous belief system, but very common, sometime consciously and other times unconsciously. If we recall, Chapter 3 taught us that anger is actually an expression of other pain. Therefore, anger towards God is usually rooted in hurt. God knows this.

If anger towards God is discovered, sharing those feeling is important in the form of a letter to God. It’s not that God needs to be forgiven, but rather that the participants become aware of that anger and begins to process through it. The participants ultimately need to repent, but at this point, simply need to get in touch with the feeling itself. Then, God can show up!
**Truth Statements (Page 144)** Truth statements are ways we begin to acknowledge and “own” things that we may have been trying to cover over or forget. It’s important to use this process on those issues that still hurt — the pain the participants may still feel towards something is an indicator that it hasn’t been properly dealt with.

**Initiate healing (Page 145)** - Letter writing is an important project for healing. In fact, it is the most recommended tool of any in the forgiveness process. The letters don’t necessarily have to be given or discussed with any of recipients (besides God).

**Writing letters of forgiveness to others** - Using the list of their own sins, the participants should focus on those issues that really “sting” when they look at them. If an issue doesn’t feel bothersome, it may have been dealt with already or it’s not ready to come up yet. Don’t recommend that they give people these letters; they need time, clarity and perspective before discerning God’s will accurately. Rather, this letter writing is merely for emotionally “processing”.

**Write a letter to God** - this letter should be open and honest, stating those issues that have been heavy. It will also be a reminder that when we ask God to forgive us, He will. Therefore, that letter can remain the “evidence” from here on out.

**Confess/share** - It is only recommended that participants share with someone who is spiritually mature and would understand the nature of this process. Sharing with the wrong person would be catastrophic to healing. Sharing with the right person is very powerful and begins to remove the power the shame has had. In my groups, I spend one week doing one-on-ones with people to allow them the opportunity to share their lists.

**Dealing with Guilt questions (Page 147)** - False guilt can mask itself as the voice of God — when actually it’s the voice of Satan. Being able to identify this is remarkable.

**Dealing with Failure questions (Page 148)** - It’s important to see if failure has driven codependence issues, and to understand that failure is a part of growth.
Usually, a “forgiven” person is a “forgiving” person. If the “dots” begin to connect, the people who have just dealt with their own sin issues begin to understand how undeserved forgiveness was for them, and are more prepared to begin to forgive others.

People get hung up on forgiving in a variety of ways. They are oftentimes filled with bitterness and feel that forgiveness is not deserved. At other times, they have discounted and minimized another person’s sin against them so much, they actually lived their life as if that sin was “okay.”

This chapter is for the participants to get in touch with the reality of how another person’s sin affected them. Letter writing is an extremely effective tool when someone gets “stuck” along this process. But letter writing also helps participants to emotionally connect, and ultimately grieve a variety of losses.

This chapter brings the most potential for breakthroughs because the root of bitterness is so powerful. If a person truly encounters the power behind this chapter, it will be life-changing. Once forgiveness takes place, it opens the doorway to being able to embrace God’s authentic design for a person’s life—a doorway that was previously blocked.

Group notes:
This chapter is very homework heavy. It’s a process they will continue to work on for a lifetime! I would encourage you to split this chapter up as time permits and review the homework assignment as needed.

Application Homework:

Resentment questions (Page 152) - The participants should re-visit their violation page and include any other resentments that may have come up. It might be beneficial to keep a separate resentment list of people that need to be forgiven in the process that will be laid out in this chapter simply to keep it organized.

Unforgiving spirit questions (Page 155) - It’s important for the participants to identify if the contamination of unforgiveness is rooted in their heart. It’s not a small thing—it’s toxic.
Applying Forgiveness (Page 156 - worksheet on 161)

*Process Feelings* - These questions should help the participant to see if their heart is prepared to deal with the violator/violation. It’s important to note that this process alone could take time.

*Acknowledge the Truth* - This is once again making truth statements and bringing the act into the light. From there, the sinful deed itself can be renounced. THIS IS CRITICAL! We are clearly drawing a distinct line that what happened wasn’t right or acceptable. Sin is awful—that doesn’t change. People who start to minimize sin (“it wasn’t that bad” actually open the door of allowance which can lead to even more pain and devastation. The ultimate truth statement is what God has to say to the participant.

*Forgiveness* - Letter writing is once again recommended as a critical method to dealing with pain and unforgiveness. This letter doesn’t need to be given to anyone unless God directs. It’s important that the participants get very specific about both the nature of the sin and the pain it inflicted. This is difficult. But in that confession, God can move in a miraculous way. The prayer of renunciation is foundational to this process.

Grieving a Loss (Page 160) - There are most likely at least a few major losses that should be pursued in this process, but this process may take time. This should be dealt with on an individual basis. The steps to grieving are fairly clear and writing a letter of goodbye to the person or dream that was lost is important.

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**A special note for group leaders:**

I strongly encourage that before you go to Chapter 10, you spend one session in group prayer. I describe this process as a funeral, and all the “junk” we just revealed is ready to be buried. I also emphasize a little bit about spiritual warfare, which is namely exposing the “true Enemy - Satan.”

People should bring their lists with to the prayer session, and be ready to get release from them. The prayer itself can vary as God moves in you. I use the prayer to acknowledge the spiritual needs and the spiritual warfare taking place. I also use it to emphasize the hurts in our hearts and the need for us to both give and receive forgiveness. I pray against the tactics of the Enemy, and claim multiple truths about God. I pray that all doors and avenues where Satan had access would be closed in the name of Jesus, and specially renounce the sin. I also declare God’s love, providence, protection and security from here on out. You may also continue to pray for each other, laying hands on someone who might need to be especially encouraged. The prayer session isn’t stated in the workbook exactly, but when doing this in a group setting, I wouldn’t go without it!

**Please contact me directly if you want to see the webinar version of our prayer session. I do not have any written material, but it will give you an idea of we set them up.**
Chapter 10
Embracing Authentic Identity

After having gone through such a dramatic process, this chapter is usually exceedingly welcomed! This chapter basically says “that might have gotten screwed up, but let’s make it work from here on out! God made you for a reason, and He defines your worth and purpose!”

When participants finally begin to see themselves as precious children of God who are loved deeply, it can ground and transform them immediately. If they have gone through life identifying themselves as unworthy, unlovable, and undeserving, finding the label marked “valuable, precious, loved and significant” is truly an amazing gift.

But identity is more than just the spiritual, it is also some of the practical ways every human being is gifted. It’s important for people who have “lost themselves” to their codependence mentalities their entire life to take this process very seriously, yet also recognize it will be life-long.

If the participants can learn to see their identity and potential through God’s eyes, it can alter the way they see life altogether. Not only is the corrupt removed, but the precious truths of God can take root, grow and prosper in their hearts. That allows them the freedom to be who God intended they would be all along.

Group notes:

There are several application points in this lesson that could be extended to a workshop format. Depending on your group’s interest and involvement, you may want to consider doing some of the gifting tests right in your own group. This chapter is about hope and life!

Application Homework:

Identity Questions (Page 170) - These target those specific areas where the participant is vulnerable to losing identity. It’s important to see this in black and white.

Claiming Scripture (Page 175) - While there isn’t a “step-by-step” process a person can do to actually get scripture into the heart, this offers an overview. The process itself must be
initiated through faith and the power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But by learning to use these practical applications, God has the opportunity to move in a mighty way. God’s truths are real—it’s just a matter of aligning our heads and hearts to it.

**Spiritual gifts questions (Page 177)** - Spiritual inventory tests are fairly accessible on the internet. I recommend that you find a test and provide it to your group, and then go over each spiritual gift. The issue then becomes how God desires to use this gift in ministry and beyond.

**Vocational questions (Page 178)** - I am amazed how many people live in their vocations completely separated from their skills, giftedness and passion. Discovering this can be key to embarking on a spiritual journey to find true calling and purpose.

**Personality questions (Page 179)** - Learning a bit about personality is helpful, although it can be an entire book in and of itself! I would suggest keeping this simple in your group. You can search for online Christian personality tests that offer general summaries or use the Myers Briggs personality assessment. There isn’t necessarily any “solution” in discovering our personality, it’s more a matter of learning to accept and understand that personality is sometimes how God made us, and not something we need to change.

**Vision questions (Page 181)** - I believe that in recovery we need a vision to carry us through the changes and the challenges that lie ahead. Early in my own recovery, I had a vision for this ministry and wrote it down. It seemed ridiculous. People laughed at it! And then, year after year, God orchestrated circumstances that would begin to bring that vision to fruition. The faithfulness of God is astounding! Encourage people (and yourself) that if “vision” doesn’t happen right now, to simply keep praying and ask God for direction.
Almost every person that enters into recovery wants to learn about boundaries immediately! It seems the most tangible method of “getting a grip” over the insanity of codependence. But in truth, learning healthy boundaries can’t solve all the dysfunction that led to an unhealthy boundary system in the first place. This makes boundaries a “symptom” rather than a “cause” of codependence. And so, as the root issues are resolved, boundaries have a way of naturally becoming healthy.

As we establish our identity on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, and learn to understand our preciousness, we become less vulnerable to letting people run over us. As God deals with our hearts, we also come to discover the ways we ourselves are violators of boundaries through controlling tendencies.

Ultimately, we learn the method by which God dealt with boundary violations, and apply that to our own circumstances. Learning to respect God, self and others is entirely possible, but not necessarily easy to do in the practical circumstances. Therefore, assure participants that boundaries are a direct by-product of recovery and growth, and therefore give it time!

This chapter challenges participants to both assess and understand their own boundary systems, and learn how to protect their lives through them. Learning to see God, ourselves and other accurately, as well as our own rights and responsibilities as Christians is a critical lesson to obtain.

Group notes:
This chapter is quite long and intensive, but extremely valuable. I would remind participants that this process will need to be continually sought after and practiced long after this workshop ends! In reality, we have to make daily decisions regarding boundaries.

Application Homework:

Define boundary systems (Page 186) - It’s important for participants to see if they are more prone to let intrusive things into their life, or overly protecting themselves and keeping everything out.
Most codependents have at least initially had an open boundary system.

**Understanding our rights (Page 190)** - These questions key in on understanding rights. It’s normally an area that has been very skewed through codependence.

**Write a boundary (page 197)** - There isn’t a magic science to this, but this is a general suggestion to begin to see the basic mechanism of a boundary.
Chapter 12
Balancing Priorities and Principles

As people go through the process of healing, there may be a variety of emotions and issues that have been exposed. It’s important to encourage participants to understand that the process of recovery is life-long. The mind-set of the codependent especially is to fix it all “right away.” This is impossible. Rather, it’s the process of walking by grace, where we can see the things that need to be changed, but rely on God’s grace to transform us moment by moment. This is a “marathon race”, not a “sprint.”

The biggest gift of recovery is moving from a system of self effort, to a system controlled by the Spirit. Through that, everything else falls under alignment. We realize, as we arrive here, that this life is impossible without a total reliance and an intimate relationship with our Lord.

The relationship challenges people face may still be real, but learning to place God first sets things in its proper perspective, teaching us to depend on Him, not people, to get our deepest needs met. And above all else, we come to understand that encountering God is the goal - the biggest ambition and fulfillment of our life because it is the purpose of our life.

A House that Grace Built - I’m thrilled to be able to offer a second book that helps pick up on how we actually are called to live a lifestyle of God-dependency. This book was made available in August of 2012. It includes a 350-page book along with a 200-page workbook. It’s a step-by-step process on dealing with relational issues that have arisen, and learning how to love, be intimate and connect as God ordained. If you are interested in learning about this, please contact me personally. I recommend training in order to lead that group, and will offer such training on a regular basis.

Group notes:
There are some golden nuggets of practical application points that shouldn’t be overlooked in this chapter. Because this is the last chapter, they can sometimes get overlooked. I suggest that you offer time to review the application projects in this lesson and have time to discuss the results.

Application Homework:

Relationship principle questions (Page 206) - Identifying where the participants are struggling is important, but it’s not surprising if they struggle with them all! It’s okay - there’s always a beginning point to any journey.
Priorities questions (Page 207) - I don’t have words to describe how important this set of application points is to the codependent. Writing down daily activities and priorities in journal format will help the participants to gain perspective on what they are doing, and what is motivating them. Then, the big area of growth occurs when they can actually learn to say “no” to things that aren’t necessarily being initiated by God.

God’s Love Letter (Page 210) - Participants should fill in the blanks with those issues that have been most revealed in this process. Once complete, reading this prayer out loud can be effective, but the most important thing about this application point is that they truly feel God’s tenderness, love and involvement in their life—deep on the inside of their heart, not just in the head.

Letter to God (Page 212) - Again, letter writing is such an effective tool. Pouring our heart to God is a giant step in drawing close to Him in relationship.

Testimonies
If time permits, allow each participate the opportunity to share their own testimony. It is helpful and encouraging for everyone in the group (and you!) to hear how God worked in their heart.
Overcoming the “stereotype”- Sometimes, church people don’t receive anything that sounds remotely secular. The term “codependence” can often fit in this category. As the author, I understand this and struggled with it at one point myself. Personally, I don’t defend nor try to sell the terminology. But at the same time, when you are trying to form a group, you may want title it “relationship issues,” or something to that effect. It should be quite obvious that this process is far from a secular approach and in fact applies to almost every single person that ever lived, breathed and walked! The truth is, we are all codependent!

Ongoing support - After running a workshop, you may want to form an ongoing group for those people who have graduated. This could be an hour-long support-group format that allows people to stay connected and discuss growth.

Addicted spouses - Very often, people in this group have a spouse under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Sometimes in the course of this information God reveals new ways of handling that relationship. More resources might be needed for that person dealing with this. Find a list of recovery-oriented people in your church that can assist you. Also, New Life Spirit Recovery is a resource center — you can call us for advice and we can refer as needed (714-841-1906).
As we are brought back into alignment with God, He wants to teach us how live this life through Him. And what a different way to live indeed! The lifestyle of grace and redemption helps us embrace God’s heart and His plans for our relationships!

He gives what we lack. He restores what was broken He completes what He began

Join the Journey