

Peace at Any Price—Is It Worth the Cost? (or) Codependency—What Does the Bible Say?

Have you been thinking: “If I’m serving my loved one as I think the Bible says I should, why am I feeling so frustrated? So trapped? What am I doing wrong?” Check the following that best describe how you have been feeling:

- Like I’m always walking on egg shells
- Fearful of displeasing a person and/or being intimidated
- Like I’m doing everything to keep the peace, yet I keep feeling “crazy” or overwhelmed
- Resentful, yet I’ve been doing everything I can to make this person happy
- Angry, defeated, hurt, or bitter in the face of trying to keep harmony
- Drained, trying to keep peace in the face of disagreement
- Unappreciated, although I try hard not to ask for much
- Like I have insufficient time to do priorities I believe God has planned for me
- Ensnared, closed in, imprisoned
- Trying to serve sacrificially, but I feel like it’s never done well enough
- Like I need to remind some people of all the reasons they need my help
- Confused, wondering why others are not helping like I do
- Increasingly controlled by worry and/or fear
- Like my life is out of control
- Hurt
- Misunderstood/stifled, so I keep silent
- Responsible when he/she is resentful, irate or miserable
- Like I can never do well enough to gain this person’s approval
- Like I can’t stay on top of everything
- Desiring to be “safe,” yet constantly being disappointed or overwhelmed
- Criticized/belittled
- Overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility
- Easily controlled
- Wanting to control others
- Seeking to gain love, acceptance, and a sense of worth
- Striving to please people and win their approval or appreciation
- Having a hard time knowing how to ask for help or how to say “no”
- Wanting to feel needed
- Wanting to do things perfectly
- Having volatile and unstable relationships
- Seeing myself as denying self
- Having great concern for the well-being of another person
- Been covertly escaping/avoiding your loved one (fearing more put downs?)?
- Considered going on strike, leaving, or being aggressive/assertive, or
- Kept the status quo because of fear?
- Thought maybe God doesn’t want me to have good things?
- Been thinking I must keep my thinking to myself and not express my thoughts openly?
- Thought communication is best if indirect?
- Been thinking, “What about me?”
- Experienced depression, bitterness and harbored anger (because he/she didn’t “get it” or because you can’t do things well enough)?
- Become increasingly silent and immobile?
- Been tempted to fantasize about having an affair—real or fantasized, with someone who “understands”—or getting sick, so your significant will realize all you’re doing?

Look up and write a summary of each of the following Scriptures. Also, fill in the blanks.

- I. The general rule is, we are to _____ our family, neighbors, and even our enemies. Galatians 5:13
- II. We often say that we desire to have a peaceful, loving home and relationships, and we are willing to serve others sacrificially. So, we often wonder, "Why am I so unhappy, stressed, and frustrated? What is the problem?" Complete the following statement:
 - A. I'm doing all this serving, doing, etc. for the sake of _____

THEN (after you've answered the question above), look up the following Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 10:31

2 Corinthians 5:9

- B. God says we are to do all this serving, doing, etc. for the sake of _____.
1 Corinthians 9:23

- C. This study will help us understand the issues in our own lives and/or how to assist others struggling with this problem. We usually see a *cycle of resentment* grow: the "enabling" behavior has led to feelings of being:

dependent and hopeless → anger, feeling suffocated, resentment →
increased lashing out → increased confusion, resentment, role reversal
or
unappreciated → anger, resentment → role reversal



- III. Read and highlight the booklet "When We Love {it's not really love!} Too Much":
<http://web001.rbc.org/pdf/discovery-series/when-we-love-too-much-escaping-the-control-of-codependency.pdf>

- A. Have you been the:
 - 1. Caretaker?
 - 2. Rescuer?
 - 3. Pleaser?
 - 4. Helpless Victim?
 - 5. Intimidator?
- B. What have been your fears?
- C. How have you been unloving?
- D. How have you applied the concepts in the section of the booklet, "Admitting the Truth"?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- E. Despair, Doubt, and/or Disappointment: how did you apply this section?

IV. What are common motivations and answers when people experience this thinking? You have consistently served, thus fulfilling the command to “bear one another’s burdens.”

A. Check the distorted goals, concepts, and rules you have been believing (Notice how many are associated with escape or denial, overcompensation, and distorted ways of coping with stress):

1. ___ Peace (i.e., avoidance of conflict) is possible if I work hard enough
2. ___ God needs me to get through to my spouse, to save my spouse
3. ___ Peace with man is more important than obedience to the command to confront
4. ___ Love covers sin and appeases problems; confrontation is mean, unkind, uncaring
5. ___ Suffering in silence is Christ-like
6. ___ My security is from trying to salvage others or from being sure they don’t leave me
7. ___ I fear rejection
8. ___ I tend toward self-pity and martyr-like suffering
9. ___ If I don’t protect myself, no one else will
10. ___ My desire for security gives me a fervor to keep everything going smoothly, to not “drop any of the balls” I keep trying to juggle
11. ___ It’s not okay to talk about my problems.
12. ___ Thoughts and emotions should not be expressed openly; they should be kept to myself.
13. ___ It is good to have one person act as a messenger between two others.
14. ___ Be strong. Be good. Be right. And be perfect.
15. ___ Make “us” proud beyond realistic expectations.
16. ___ It’s not okay to be playful or authentic.

B. As a result of the above learned “rules,” we may appear to deny self. We find that sometimes people feel suffocated by our caretaking. Sometimes, when we examine our motives, we can realize that we really want our loved one to give us attention and/or approval. Sometimes, we can struggle with asking for help, saying “no,” and wanting assurance. When we look closely, we realize we are yearning to change others, to control intimate relationships. We may find it difficult to trust God and love people. We may wonder why we are so resentful and angry. We may be driven by perfectionism and experience volatility and instability in our relationships, as well as have high expectations from others (especially family members). We may have feelings of extreme discomfort when we are not in a relationship, and we may frequently feel depressed.

C. You have consistently served, thus fulfilling the command to “bear one another’s burdens.” However, have you: (check all that apply and write a summary of each Scripture)

___ Prevented others from bearing their own load?
Galatians 6:2, 5

___ Neglected the biblical balance between Galatians 6:2 and 5?

___ Kept others from having the blessing of serving you?
Galatians 5:13
(John 13:14-17)

___ Prevented others from experiencing the consequences of their own wrong choices?
(Have you been a “rescuer”?)
Galatians 6:7-8
Proverbs 19:19

___ Neglected the directive to counsel/“put in the mind”/admonish the idle/unruly?
Have you spoken the truth in love (which requires speaking!!)
Ephesians 4:15

- Confess to the Lord any of the above that you have checked.
- Ask Him to change you, to develop godly fruit with pure, Christ-centered motives.
- Thank Him that He has promised to transform you!!

V. Roots: We tend to believe root lies. Let's pray for the courage to have God expose them, seek and apply His ways, and enjoy His transformation in us. Seeking peace, love, security and approval from man are some of man's carnal means of finding fulfillment. These lies usually have partial truth, which has made them believable, but they are incomplete, incapable of attaining God's goals and His glory. **Read** the following questions, concepts and verses.

Write what God shows you.

A. How are we to show love? What is love?

1. God says a "prudent man" conceals dishonor and covers a multitude of sins, which we are to do in some situations.

1 Peter 4:8

Proverbs 12:16; 17:9; 19:11

2. Unfortunately, we have taken the covering over of others' sins to the extreme. We have often extended this to believing that not covering the loved one's sin is sinful—that confronting him/her is imprudent, mean, or unloving, since it may upset the composure of the loved one. Peace will be broken.

3. However, this second assumption is where the distortion has set in. What is wrong? It is only half right! What do we often forget? Love doesn't always cover—it also _____.

Matthew 10:34-40

Acts 20:31 (last part of vs.)

Romans 15:14 (last part of vs.)

1 Corinthians 4:14 (second ½ of vs.)

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (note how we handle people differently)

B. We can tend to think we must "save" our loved one from problems; instead, we must remember: "There's **one Savior**, and ***it's not you (me)!!!***"

1 John 4:14

Philippians 3:20

Luke 19:10

C. We tend to trust in SELF and in _____--we're not sure God is able or is willing to handle this situation, so God "needs me" to take over. Instead, we are to trust in _____ and His power, love, sovereignty, etc. We have a "trust disorder!!"

Isaiah 2:22

Jeremiah 17:5-9

D. Who is to be our security? _____ What has displaced God as our source of security?

Philippians 4:19

1 Corinthians 10:13

II Thessalonians 3:3

E. What is more important to God than peace? _____

Matthew 10:34-38

F. Where do we place our trust for protection (protection of the family and me)?

Psalm 18:2-3

G. We are not to depend on self/man's approval, but to trust in _____ approval.

John 12:42-43

See "Trust in God, not Man" Study

H. Fear of man and fear of rejection fall short of the mandate to fear and trust God. They often motivate us to serve others with wrong motives—motives that are self-serving.
1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

I. When we start to feel self-pity, where is our focus? _____
Proverbs 29:25

What does God say about our suffering?
Colossians 1:24

Philippians 3:8-11

J. Victim mentality is also indicative of self-focus. When we suffer, we can begin to see ourselves as victims in a situation that's out of control. Instead, God wants us to learn to trust Him—to know that He is working in this situation for my good!--so I can glorify Him and have a closer relationship with the Lord.
Genesis 50:19

Jeremiah 29:11

VI. What is the biblical balance between:

1 Peter 4:8 and Matthew 5:23-25a

Proverbs 17:9 and Matthew 18:15-18

Galatians 6:2 and Galatians 6:5

VII. When a believer's focus is on man, he is double minded, unstable in all his ways and dishonoring to the Lord.

James 1:8

VIII. Soil: Distorted roots have a distorted view of the soil. Let's consider our view of the Lord.

Attribute(s) or name(s) of God I have not seen clearly and/or believed	Distortions produced in my life because of column 1	How does my fuller view of God change my thinking and behavior?	Specific put ons with which to replace (put off) my former distorted thinking/behavior

IX. Highlight the most important concepts to you:

- We are to seek God’s biblical balance. It is often difficult to maintain equilibrium. Our tendency to cover sin and do for others is often out of balance with God’s direction to confront sin and make sure each person carries the load God has called each to carry.
- When we are out of balance, we must ask ourselves if it is because we love the Lord and this person or because we want to protect ourselves and our homes from a flare-up. If it is the latter, is this desire for love, security, peace, approval and protection more important than the Lord—and obedience to the whole counsel of the Lord? If so, we have placed pleasing man and/or self ahead of pleasing God. This occurs when we replace God and wage our own personal crusade to take control of our lives.
- We aren’t naturally inclined to be honest with ourselves long enough for the kind of struggle that is necessary to break loose from a way of life and view of God that is lodged firmly in our hearts. When we can no longer deny that our system of managing life is breaking down and making things worse, we gradually lose hope in our old ways and are reminded to seek God’s ways.
 - The pain of despair can increase our willingness to hope in what God wants us to hope for—the growth of our own character and a stronger sense of His calling in our lives.
 - Surrendering to the hope that we can become more like Jesus Christ gives us more reason to give up our false gods rather than give up on life.
 - We often think or say to the Lord, “Where were You?” or “Why didn’t You protect me?” or “Why have You allowed so much pain and hurt in my life?” God can use anything to bring about His good purposes.
- Our lives often fall short of our expectations, yet most of us would rather keep busy (or sleep, etc.) and pretend these disappointments don’t exist.
- On God’s path, we can also open ourselves to receiving and giving love. Our walls of self-protection begin to crumble and we begin to let people in.
 - Rather than just doing things for others, we can also allow others to do things for us.
 - Instead of clinging to others out of over-dependency, we can free them without reluctance.
 - We can learn to give to others for God’s glory and for their sake.
 - Instead of trying to make others change for our good, we can learn what it means to invite them to change for God’s good.
 - Instead of always being in charge, we can learn to be flexible and considerate of others’ thoughts and opinions.
 - Instead of rescuing others, we can allow them to take responsibility for their choices.
 - Instead of always adapting ourselves to what pleases others, we also begin to express ourselves and stand against what is destructive.

When we put the Lord first and focus on Him, seeking to bring Him glory **no matter what the cost**, we begin to relate differently to others—with freedom in the Lord and His plan for us (Jer. 29:11).

- Some will not like these changes in us. We will have given the Lord the power we’ve allowed them to have over us.
- Some will attack us with words or try to make us feel guilty. This is not, however, a time to fall back to our old ways.
- Instead, this is a time to speak the truth in love. It will be a time for us to show our new conviction that God alone is worthy of our deepest hope and confidence (Ps. 56:4). This will free us to live for Him, glorifying Him with lives yielded to Him.