

LOVE IS A COMMAND

The following summarizes a 49-page critique of Love is a Choice, by Drs. Frank Minirth and Paul Meier, founding psychiatrists of the Minirth-Meier Clinics.

This book is primarily about **codependency**. Relying heavily on the speculations of Sigmund Freud, an enemy of the gospel, the authors see man as a **victim** rather than a **sinner**. The book is endorsed by John Bradshaw and its teachings often resemble his theories, which deny every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

Codependency is viewed as a *disease* which is *epidemic, chronic and progressive, and multi-generational*. The authors believe that a person must struggle with this "illness" throughout life, never becoming totally free of it. They describe it in terms such as "loss of self," "lost child within," and "lost childhood." They believe that each person has a "love hunger" or "narcissism" which *must be satisfied*. They teach that the codependent has an obsession to repeat the family pain of his childhood and that he is locked into certain rigid family roles. Following is the "cycle" they describe for the codependent: (1) pain, "love hunger," low self-esteem; (2) addiction to an agent or relationship; (3) pain relief; (4) consequences and relationships pain; (5) guilt and shame; (6) back to #1! The codependent supposedly lacks a "sense of self," lacks "boundaries," and is a "master of denial and repression." **Abuse by others is seen as the cause of sinful behavior in adult life, because one's "love tank" has not been filled.**

Codependent relationships are described as being characterized by intense bonding, "enmeshment," excessive dependence, and intense anger. Biblically, such behaviors/attitudes reflect a fear of man, a trusting in the flesh, and a form of idolatry. Another significant problem here is the pathologizing of self-sacrifice, something that Christ *commands*.

Anger, shame and other emotions are stressed in this system. The authors recommend ventilation, misusing Ephesians 4:26, and they believe that a person "needs" to have his emotions validated. They see "repressed" anger, along with "false guilt," as being

responsible for **depression**. They hold to a psychologized view of guilt as a *feeling* rather than a transgression of God's laws.

Stressing "denial" of emotions, they embrace as fact--and as mandatory--the grief process model developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. They believe the "losses" of one's childhood must be grieved according to this model--ignoring passages such as Philippians 3:8ff.

The Freudian "unconscious" is equated with the biblical term "heart." The authors state, without documentation, that only *twenty percent* of our decisions are made on the conscious level. This surely dilutes responsibility before God for personal sin! Jeremiah 17:9 is misused in support of their theories. One of the things their theories do is what God expressly reserves for Himself, using His powerful Word: the judging of the thoughts and motives of another person's heart. (Jeremiah 17:10, Hebrews 4:12)

Man's relationship to God is seen as being determined by a person's transference of his relationship to his earthly father. They note that the AA founders coined the phrase, "God as you understand Him" to get around the bitterness arising from "dysfunctional" father-child relationships. The authors believe that dealing with one's codependency is a *prerequisite to salvation, as well as to properly understanding and applying God's Word*. They also teach (based on Carl Jung) that a person must "leave home emotionally" in order to establish a deep relationship with the Lord. In all of this, they place unnecessary stumbling blocks in the path of the believer!

Self-love, self-worth, and self-parenting form the basis for much of this book. The authors stress the formulation of new "I" messages, substituting one form of deception for another and promoting high views of self. They stress individual "rights," including the "right" to pursue happiness. They divide the inner man so that the "parent within" cares for the "child within." This usurps the place of God the Father and creates a division within the inner man that contradicts Scripture. Caring for self ahead of others is emphasized, in opposition of Christ's clear commands (Luke 9:23, 24; Philippians 2:3).

Forgiveness is given last place in the authors' system of "recovery." It is based on selfish motivations, showing no concern for the other real persons involved. Unbiblical techniques are

utilized, such as writing letters that won't be mailed and carrying on imaginary conversations (even with dead persons). These are forms of ventilation for the sake of self, not biblical methods for achieving reconciliation with others who have sinned. Much stress is placed on the role of *emotions* in forgiveness; the authors attack "emotional dishonesty" and emphasize "emotional integrity," despite biblical *commands* to forgive regardless of one's feelings. (See Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13.)

Marital relationships receive much coverage in this book. The Freudian determinism of the authors is evident in their belief that one's "codependent radar" dooms the person to a particular choice of spouse. Their views on submission of wife to husband, separation/divorce, and "leaving home" stretch Scripture and its clear standards. They recommend temporary cessation of sexual involvement between husband and wife during therapy.

Counseling relationships are viewed in a manner that defies New Testament "love one another" commands as well as the actual practices of the apostle Paul (Acts 20:31, 2 Corinthians 11:22ff). They believe the relationship must be "guarded" and that pastors, who are generally not trained to deal with codependency, are particularly vulnerable.

Summary and Conclusion: The very title of this book, Love is a Choice, reflects its unbiblical teachings. Biblically, love is never a "choice" for the Christian, but a **command** that God gives:

"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: **Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**"

1 John 4:19-21

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