

RAPHA AND "CODEPENDENCY"

"Codependency" is among the many aberrations promoted by psychologists in recent years, and for the Christian community, it is definitely one of the worst. In reviewing Rapha's position on this matter, we will first consider Pat Springle's book, *Codependency*, then review the 12-step workbook Rapha has designed for its counselees.

The foreword to *Codependency* promises to offer "biblical principles for healing and hope," noting that "without such biblical solutions, people are left with empty promises and broken hopes." The book promises to the reader "a new identity, new motivations, and a new independence from the bondage of pleasing others" (xi). One wonders whether this "independence" includes deliverance from pleasing *God*, but only further study will answer that question. The goals are lofty, and the concept of "codependency" seems to sustain a huge burden in the whole process of helping people change. Melodie Beatty's popular book, *Codependent No More*, is cited as "insightful" (3) without any warning as to its theologically unsound--even New Age--contents. We must begin with strong concerns about "codependency" and its place in the Christian church. Many in the church have been lured and deceived by this unbiblical idea.

Definitions: What is "Codependency"?

Springle informs us that codependency is usually defined as "an inordinate and unhealthy compulsion to rescue and take care of people" (3). Specific characteristics include "rescuing, caretaking, and controlling" plus "hurt, anger, guilt, and loneliness" (3). According to the author, codependent persons "feel that they are responsible for making other people both happy and successful." They "can accurately analyze everyone else's problems, but they can't see their own." To them, "everything is either wonderful or awful." Codependents "can't say no to any need, or they feel very guilty if they do." Furthermore, they lack objectivity, demonstrate a "warped sense of responsibility" and are "easily controlled" as well as controlling of others (11).

"Codependency" was originally used to describe the families of alcoholics. The author defines the term today as "a compulsion to control and rescue others by fixing their problems." He claims that "at the root of codependency is a relationship with a dysfunctional person which results in an unmet need for love and security" (23). In order to know whether *you* are "codependent," the author states his "rule of thumb" this way:

"If you are in a relationship with someone who is addicted, abusive, neglectful, or condemning, and if you feel that you are responsible for making him happy, then you are most probably codependent." (24)

Such a broad definition reaches out its claws to include a huge portion of the population. There is no attempt at this point to consider the biblical responsibilities present in a variety of human relationships. Neither is there a distinction between "making him happy" by catering to sin, versus "making him happy" through sacrificial, loving concern for his welfare. But there is more to come as we unpack definitions.

Lack of Objectivity. The author believes that the "codependent" wears the "glasses of codependency," being unable to view reality objectively. He blames families:

"If the environment of their families has been steeped in deception and denial, then they, too, will probably be deceived and lack objectivity. Children believe their parents are god-like." (31)

The author claims that the "codependent" has a fear of reality that is partially a fear of losing his own identity:

"Strangely, that [fear] leaves him clinging to a dysfunctional person who brings him pain, abuse, and neglect, instead of turning to reality, going through the healing process, and experiencing love, freedom, and strength." (32)

Supposedly, the "codependent" views reality in black-and-white terms, and tends to exaggerate (33). He distorts the truth and may also believe the distortions of others (35). He may selectively filter information, seeing what he wants to see (37), defend the offender (37), or redefine the pain of "repressed emotions" in purely physiological terms (37). He might make an acute pronouncement of having understood his life's problems (38), succumb to peer pressure (38), or keep extremely busy to avoid feelings (38). He may "exchange" emotions--for example, by defining worry as love--or he may euphemistically describe anger as *frustration* (39). Much of this has a familiar biblical ring, being a description of *sin*, including *lying to oneself*. Some of it may well be related to other factors; for example, being extremely busy *might* result from a genuine desire to serve God. It seems that the psychologists are the ones who wear the "glasses

of codependency," seeing their "disorder" wherever they wish to see it.

Warped Sense of Responsibility. Here the author discusses the individual's responsibility in the lives of others:

"For the codependent, taking care of others becomes a consuming lifestyle...he believes that doing anything for himself is 'selfish....' The codependent--the rescuer--lacks objectivity about what the dependent person really needs.... Dysfunctional people need to learn to solve their own problems. They don't need to be rescued all the time.... Rescuing is an attempt to meet the codependent's need for identity." (47)

To be sure, it is possible to care for others out of ungodly motives, and it is possible to "help" in such a manner as to become an accomplice to another person's sin. However, the codependency literature makes sweeping judgments about motives in helping others. Only the Holy Spirit, using the powerful Word of God, is fit for such a task (Hebrews 4:12).

But making others happy is only one side of the codependent coin:

"In addition to assuming the responsibility of making others happy, codependents expect others to make *them* happy." (48)

Codependent literature tends to make it a crime for one person to bring happiness to another. Rather, the ultimate goal is evidently to *make oneself happy*. Little is said, ever, about living to please and glorify God. This is the true goal of Christian life (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Springle notes the possibility that a child may take on responsibility for a parent:

"When a child in a dysfunctional family takes responsibility for his parents' happiness, he effectually becomes a parent to his parents." (48)

There is *sin* on the part of parents when a child is forced into an adult family position. This happens, for example, when one parent demands that a child fill the position of the spouse. Biblically, children are to obey and honor their parents, but it is sin to force them to *be* parents.

The "helping" scenario is not the only possibility for the "codependent." Evidently one has a choice between two extreme positions:

"A codependent feels like he is either a savior or a Judas; one who rescues or one who betrays, one who helps or one who fails to help." (49)

It seems that one may be tagged "codependent" if he helps others or if he fails to help others. There is no escape! Such a widespread net captures all of humanity.

Here is how the author further describes these opposite extremes:

"A person with a savior complex thinks he is indispensable. He believes that whatever he is doing is absolutely the most important thing in the world! Nobody else's role even comes close. But in the Judas mode, the outlook is quite different. The mood is one of failure and despair." (50)

What is actually described here is a type of sinful pride where the individual attempts to assume the prerogatives of God. "Codependency" is hardly a helpful description. Meanwhile, the author seems to overlook the possibility that a believer might have a real calling from the Lord in some kind of ministry. It would be sinful to view himself as *indispensable* to God's purpose, but he may indeed be passionate about what he is doing. Psychologists are ill-equipped to discern the difference.

Springle describes the results of this "warped responsibility." One result is that others are prevented from developing responsibility, and another is that "codependents neglect themselves" (50). His advice? "Do things for yourself!" (53) The codependent may deeply resent his "savior" role, may make threats yet continue to rescue, lack objectivity about helping others, and take himself too seriously (54). The author concludes that:

"A person's self-worth and value is serious, but codependent behavior is not the solution. It is part of the problem." (54)

Doing things for oneself fails to address the sinful issues of the heart described here. It also bypasses true biblical responsibilities to those immersed in sin (see Galatians 6:1-5). The emphasis on self-worth runs throughout the Rapa literature,

but it's far from being biblically grounded. It is psychologists who have a "warped sense of responsibility." The person who contributes to another person's sin needs biblical instruction in sorting out responsibilities, not "codependent" psychobabble.

Control. The "codependent" is described as a person with a lust for control:

"Paradoxically, he wants to be in absolute control of his own life so that he won't fail, and he wants to control the behavior of others so that they will add to, and not subtract from, his ability to perform well and please people.... Skillful use of praise and condemnation manipulate the codependent as artfully as a marionette manipulates a puppet." (59)

Supposedly, "codependents" are motivated by both guilt (60) and comparison to others in a destructive, manipulative manner (61). Explaining further:

"Codependents define themselves by what they do, how they look, and how well they accomplish tasks in life. They don't perceive of failure as an option. They have to be right. They have to be in control of their lives." (63)

This control extends even to the "codependent's" relationship with God:

"The obsessive-compulsive's relationship with God is highly controlled, too. It is often rigid and ritualistic, with good activities, but little spontaneity and warmth." (64)

We cannot help but wonder: *How do they know this?* How does the psychologist expect to penetrate another person's heart deeply enough to make such judgments (Jeremiah 17:10)?

Yet all the while, control is evidently just beyond the grasp of the "codependent":

"The paradox for the codependent is that while he is trying to control others, he is still being controlled by them." (65)

Biblically, we're seeing *idolatry* at this juncture. The person who worships an idol--the creation rather than the Creator--becomes quickly *enslaved* to the idol and also *like* the idol he hoped would serve him (Psalm 115).

But Rapha's bottom line is apparently not proper worship of the Creator, who alone is *worthy* to be praised. Rather it is the worth of one's own *self*:

"We need to take our controls off of other people. We need to let them make their own decisions and live with the consequences. We need to get our self-worth from something other than their approval of us. We need to cut the strings." (65)

Indeed we may need to "cut the strings," but our purpose in doing so is to recognize the sovereignty of our Almighty God, who works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

Hurt and Anger. Springle places a heavy emphasis on hurt and anger as characteristic of the "codependent" person:

"At the core of a codependent's heart are hurt and anger--results of abuse, manipulation, and/or neglect experienced in a dysfunctional relationship." (82)

Basically, the author sees the "codependent" as a *victim* of the sins of others who have failed to meet his needs:

"Hurt and anger go hand-in-glove. Hurt is the result of not being loved, not being valued. It comes from feeling abandoned, used, and condemned. Anger is the reaction toward the source of the hurt. These painful emotions are not only products of the codependent's past, they are a part of his reality every day. The need to have a sense of worth leads him to try to rescue the one who has hurt him, but inevitably, he gets hurt again and again. And sooner or later, he gets angry." (72)

He buys into a Freudian mentality, rather than a biblical perspective, in considering the individual's *response* to being sinned against:

"The pain and anger within a codependent's soul are deep and black.... Elaborate defense mechanisms are thus erected to block pain and to control anger.... These layers of defense mechanisms need to be peeled away to expose our pain and anger so that these issues can be dealt with." (73)

The flawed Rapa view of self-worth is highlighted in connection with the "codependent's" hurt and anger:

"Some of us hurt so deeply that we believe we are totally worthless. We think we cannot possibly be worthy of someone else's love." (75)

"Believing that we are inherently bad people, who are unworthy of love, leads to self-condemnation, and ultimately, to self-hatred." (76)

The author believes that a "codependent" will often excuse the offender but blame himself (77). He may also become disproportionately angry (79), or express his anger toward those who had nothing to do with the original offense (78). His anger and hurt may be used to manipulate others:

"Hurt and anger are powerful emotions. They affect us deeply and can be used to affect others, too. They can be powerful forces of manipulation to get others to care about us and dance to our tune.... The codependent is a product of manipulation, neglect, and abuse, but he can use these powerful forces on others as well." (80, 81)

Springle stresses the possibility of denying one's emotions. He describes "numbness" as:

"I don't want to feel this way, so I won't.... Our pain is too great, so we block it out.... We have superficial emotions and superficial relationships." (74)

Some, however, "hurt so badly we can hardly stand it," feeling "crushed, hopelessly crushed," but putting up "a facade of competence and happiness" (75).

Like many of today's psychologists, Springle buys into the very dangerous "repressed memory" syndrome which has devastated so many families:

"When a person begins to get in touch with the pain of his past, he will often remember events that have long been buried in his mind and heart. The hurt and anger that these memories evoke are painful, and some people may interpret this pain as going backward. But it is progress." (81)

Such excursions into the past rest on shaky ground both biblically and scientifically. There is no guarantee that the "memories"

recovered in this manner are entirely accurate. They may in fact be false. Real memories of being sinned against do not require the intervention of a prolonged psychological process in order to be brought to conscious awareness. Such genuine memories should be handled according to biblical principles about responding to the sins of others. Beware of false accusations, which seem to be legion in our times. Serious accusations against others need clear confirmation. "Memories" arising only in the process of psychological counseling quite often fail to meet biblical standards for bringing charges against others.

Certainly, hurt and anger can be real responses to real sin. Child abuse does exist, and it is a serious issue -- a *sin* issue. What is needed here, however, is not psychobabble about self-worth, Freudian defense mechanisms, or lengthy journeys into the psyche to "discover" facts about the past. Biblical principles are needed about trials, God's sovereignty and purposes, reconciliation, and confronting the sins of others. Such biblical principles are lacking in the Rapha literature. What we find instead is an unbiblical focus on self.

Guilt. The author teaches that "codependents" feel guilty "for just about everything," and "often such guilt produces feelings of worthlessness and shame" (87):

"The codependent gets his worth--his identity--from what he does for other people. He rescues, he helps, he enables, but no matter how much he does for others, it's never enough."
(87)

The author sees the "codependent" as desperately attempting to earn love and acceptance, but fearing he'll never receive it and haunted by shame for not measuring up (87). He sees the "codependent" as "squeezed," on the one side by his desire for worth and acceptance, on the other side by guilt for "feeling selfish" and having fun (95). He explains that the "guilt" he's describing lacks objectivity and the possibility of forgiveness:

"It is the painful, gnawing perception that you are worthless, unacceptable, and can never do enough to be acceptable, no matter how hard you try." (87)

"Dysfunctional" (ungodly!) families, according to the author, magnify personal wrongs while withholding forgiveness and love (88). This is claimed to foster the development of "codependent" behavior:

"Guilt crushes a person. It crushes his dreams, his desires, and his personality. If your worth comes only from helping others, then you can't say no to anything or anyone. All of us have done things that are wrong, but a codependent attaches greater weight to those wrongs than he does to forgiveness." (88)

"The crushing effects of guilt, shame, worthlessness, self-hatred, and self-condemnation take a heavy toll." (89)

Springle sees the "codependent" person as motivated largely by this "guilt" and also motivating others through the use of "guilt":

"Motivation by guilt is usually associated with the desire to avoid condemnation and the desire to perform, or measure up to standards set by someone else or ourselves. We perform with a sense of urgency and desperation because we think we have to, not because we want to." (90)

"Guilt motivation can be a more subtle, but just as painful, form of manipulation." (91)

"The law of sowing and reaping takes effect in the area of guilt just as it does in every other part of life. Like begets like, and if guilt has been used to motivate and manipulate you, you will probably use it on others." (97)

According to Springle, "guilt" is confused with commitment:

"In businesses, churches, and community organizations, codependents usually equate their guilt-motivated drive with commitment." (92)

Like many other psychologists, this author expresses contempt for living one's life according to a standard involving "shoulds":

"Codependents live by *should's* and *ought's*, not by the confidence of security and significance." (91)

"It is a curious fact...that guilt motivated people are attracted to the rigidity and demanding environment of guilt-producing organizations. They feel more comfortable with rules, formulas, high expectations, and should's and ought's." (92)

It is confusing at best to use the term "guilt" for what is being described here. *Guilt* is defined in terms of God's eternal standards of holiness. Guilt is not a *feeling*, but a *fact* determined in accordance with God's laws. We are all guilty and in need of a Savior. God's laws necessarily include "shoulds" and "oughts" although psychologists despise such obligations. Yet they impose equally authoritative "shoulds," implying that a person *should* seek his own security, significance, and self-worth. Springle misuses the term guilt and creates confusion. Believers struggling with conviction of sin need to consider whether they are applying *God's* standards or their own, then respond according to biblical principles.

Springle notes that the "codependent's" response to "guilt" often involves a "morbid introspection" resulting in self-condemnation (94). It often involves comparison with standards developed by self or one's "dysfunctional" relatives (94). Some may refuse to think about life, while others focus inward (93). However, such "morbid introspection" is exactly what results from psychotherapy in all too many cases. It is *encouraged* by psychotherapy, along with other unbiblical practices.

Loneliness. The author makes a rather broad statement about the loneliness he believes is experienced by the "codependent":

"Codependents spend their lives giving, helping, and serving others. From the outside, they may appear to be the most social people in the world, but inside they are lonely...thinking they have been abandoned by both people and God, they feel empty and companionless." (101)

Meanwhile, both resentment and "low self-worth" build up:

"As the codependent gives and gives, a destructive sense of *entitlement* grows within him.... Although we are desperate for intimacy, we don't feel lovable, and we're afraid of losing what little warmth we already have.... Many of us are so crushed and have such a low sense of value that we can't even accept genuine love and affirmation." (102)

Even God, supposedly, is distant from the "codependent" who is a Christian:

"The unconditional love, forgiveness, and acceptance of God is the message codependents need, but instead, most feel distant from Him. They feel that He, too, doesn't approve of

them, and that they can't do enough to please Him no matter how hard they try." (103)

The author believes that "codependent" Christians either see God as distant, or become extremely feeling-oriented in their religion (104).

Furthermore, "codependents" are said to have a faulty view of authority:

"Codependents tend to view authority the same way they view the addicted or abusive people in their lives, especially if those people are parents." (104)

They may be "intensely loyal" to these persons, seeing them as capable of no wrong. Their opinions are often valued too highly (105). (There is a biblical term for this: idolatry.)

The author also says that "codependents" develop "facades" to shield their emotions, for example, the appearance of being cheerful or calm or tough: "We are so busy making other people feel good that we don't even know what we feel!" (106):

"We offer to help with a friendly smile even when we're so angry with that person we could spit nails.... We develop elaborate and usually unconscious facades to avoid the truth and to keep people from knowing how much we hurt and how angry we really are. These facades may protect us from the risks of intimacy, but they leave us lonely." (107)

Loneliness is genuinely experienced by many persons--probably all of us at times. The focus of the "codependent" literature, however, is on generating self-worth and exploring internal feelings. This is not a biblical focus, and it doesn't lead to biblical solutions.

Conclusions. The "characteristics of codependency" are described in such a broad manner that hardly anyone is left out! All of us lack objectivity at times; sin has impacted every aspect of human beings. All of us have some "warped" sense of responsibility, again due to the impact of sin. All of us make some unbiblical attempts at control; the desire for autonomy is at the very root of man's sin. All of us at times are controlled by, or rather enslaved to, something or someone other than God; this is the result of idolatry (Psalm 115). All of us are guilty in the light of God's standards, and we have God-given consciences (Romans 2). Hurt, anger, and loneliness are common human

responses to living in a sinful world. The term "codependency" is a blanket that seems to cover all of humanity. It is a convenient, simplistic label that claims to explain much but actually explain *nothing* in genuinely biblical terms. It is also downright dangerous in its encouragement to focus on self, self, self. Rapha authors *assume* the value of generating feelings of *self-worth*. The Bible, however, focuses on the praise and glory of God, who alone is *worthy* of such praise.

What Causes "Codependency"?

Basically, this author sees "codependency" as *caused by* unmet needs for love, acceptance, and worth, and the "dysfunctional" family:

"A deep hurt--an unmet need for love and acceptance--either numbs the codependent or drives him to accomplish goals so he can please people and win their approval. Codependent emotions and actions are designed to blunt pain and gain a desperately needed sense of worth." (13)

Springle says that God designed the family to meet the needs just described. However:

"Dysfunctional families...wreck this plan and produce the pain, numbness, drive, and defense mechanisms characterized by codependency." (13)

The author also claims that family relationships shape the individual's concepts of both God and self (13). He does describe some of the biblical responsibilities for various family members (14). Scripture does not teach us that failure in these areas actually *causes* the children of that family to adopt sinful lifestyles, but Springle thinks otherwise:

"Tragically, the painful consequences of dysfunctional families do not end with the children. The law of sowing and reaping indicates that these consequences will be duplicated in generation after generation (Exodus 20:5) until either the original offense is diluted, or until someone has the insight and courage necessary to change the course of his family's history." (19)

Sin is not "diluted." There is nothing here about the power of God to bring godly changes within individual hearts. Nor is anything said about the distinction between Christian and unbeliever, whose basic orientations differ radically from one

another. People do reap consequences for their sins, and sometimes those consequences impact the lives of others. However, the "law of sowing and reaping" is not a law *above God* and His power. Springle's statement adds confusion, not wisdom, to the basic issue of growth in godly living.

Note carefully the author's view of *Christian* families in particular:

"It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the family in a person's development. A child can grow up in a home where the parents are Christians, but are too strict, critical, or neglectful (all types of dysfunctional attributes can exist in Christian families). The result will be a hurting, guilt-ridden, driven, overly responsible, or completely passive person; that is, a codependent. On the other hand, a child can be nurtured and protected in a home where the parents aren't believers. The warmth, affection, attention, and strength in this family will be much more likely to produce a stable and secure child than in a codependent, Christian household." (19)

The author explains that although this sounds like heresy, "children don't care a lot about theology" (19). But although children may lack theological precision, good theology is critical to the making of a *godly* family. Christians continue to struggle with sin in varying degrees, so at times even a Christian family may be ungodly in significant ways. However, we must take serious issue with Springle in the thought that a non-Christian family can truly provide a godly environment.

The fundamental problem in the area of causes is the Freudian determinism of the author. Unmet needs and "dysfunctional" (ungodly) families are blamed as the culprits that cause "codependent" (sinful) behaviors and attitudes in later life. This is profoundly unbiblical and dilutes personal responsibility before God. Godly parents, following scriptural admonitions in the raising of their children, can have a wonderful influence. Nevertheless, we dare not lose sight of individual responsibility before God.

"Christian Codependents"

The author attributes to "codependency" an enormous power to distort the joyous gospel message:

"Through the distorted glasses of codependency...this phenomenal message is often seen as oppressive, condemning, and guilt-inducing. Freedom is turned to bondage, forgiveness to guilt, hope to despair, love to condemnation, joy to pessimism, and divine strength to self-sufficiency." (111)

Again, Springle looks at the "warped sense of responsibility" in the "codependent" person, who believes his self-worth is grounded in performance. Like many psychologists, he disparages "shoulds" and oughts." Yet the psychologist imposes just as many "shoulds" as any theology: You *should* "get in touch" with your feelings, you *should* relive the hurts of your past, you *should* go into psychotherapy, and many more. *This psychological "legalism" substitutes for the legalism that is condemned by psychotherapists!*

Moving right along, this author sees a profound misunderstanding of God's grace in the "codependent" Christian:

"The codependent Christian divorces grace--the source of perspective and power--from the high moral and ethical expectations of the Bible." (112)

To be sure, this erroneous understanding of the faith does exist. Roman Catholicism is built on it. But it ought to be labeled bad theology rather than "codependent," a popular label that apparently serves to cover a multitude of sins!

Springle goes on to see grave misunderstanding of biblical exhortations in the "codependent's" mind:

"There are many commands in the Scriptures that the codependent Christian misinterprets and applies in his savior mode to gain a sense of worth." (112)

These generally concern self-denial, service to others, forgiveness, and endurance of persecution:

"The codependent Christian believes that he is expected to perform these commands (and all the others) perfectly, with feelings of love, peace, and joy at all times. In the Christian life, he surmises, there is absolutely no room for hurt and anger." (113)

Christians may indeed struggle in their ongoing sanctification. They may wrestle with sinful anger, bitterness, and such. The

attitude described here, however, is not "codependency" but a fundamental misunderstanding of the work of Christ in justification and sanctification. The answer lies in sound doctrine and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, not in the erroneous theories and methods of psychotherapy.

The author goes on to discuss the believer's "denial of emotions" and defense of God, just as he might defend *any other* offender:

"He...tries to deny the hurt and anger that he perceives that God has caused. And he tries to make sure that God doesn't get any blame for his calamity. In the codependent's eyes, the Savior needs a savior." (113)

This is horrendous theology. The blaming of God is *sin*, and "defending" God cannot be placed in the same basket as defending any other "offender." Again, proper theology is needed in order to grow in understanding of God's sovereignty and purposes for our trials, as well as His holiness, justice, righteousness, and mercy. This isn't to offer simplistic answers (as psychologists accuse). It takes time, good preaching and teaching, and other mature believers to learn and apply sound doctrine. Still, it is good theology, not "codependent" psychobabble, that brings about biblical solutions.

The author claims to look to Scripture for the truths needed to combat "codependency." He says that "they speak powerfully to the root needs of codependents: the needs for love, acceptance, worth, and value" (116). However, he assumes here that Scripture affirms his definition of the problem in terms of such "needs," but it does not! Scriptures affirming such "needs" are nowhere to be found. Scripture *does* tell us of God's love and acceptance of the Christian based on Christ's glorious work of redemption. We desperately need what He has done in order to be reconciled to God and to enter into eternal glory. But Scripture doesn't affirm "needs" as defined by modern psychology, and certainly it does not confirm the "need" for worth and value that is so heavily promoted by Rapha and numerous others today.

Springle has blame to heap on the church for promotion of "codependency":

"Instead of helping codependents with their warped perspectives, both society and the Christian culture usually *reinforce* codependency by valuing codependent behavior. In some Christian circles, the obsessive-compulsive drive of

codependency is equated with a deep commitment to Christ!" (118-119)

The author responds that "the Christian who is told to deny himself should also be told that he is greatly valued, deeply loved, and accepted" (119). However, the true Christian, by *definition*, already *has* been told of God's great love and sacrifice on his behalf (see Romans 8:35-39, for example). He may need additional instruction in these biblical truths. Meanwhile, this author makes sweeping judgments of the *heart* in equating "the obsessive-compulsive drive of codependency" with "deep commitment to Christ." Only God knows and can judge the motives of the heart in this manner. "Codependency" teachings all too often discourage genuine commitment to Christ and sacrificial love for others.

Springle also criticizes the manner in which the "codependent" offers forgiveness to others:

"We gloss over the offenses of others (even though they may have hurt us deeply) and we 'forgive and forget.' But this seemingly godly response actually is codependent behavior because it is designed to cover up our pain and excuse the offender. True forgiveness recognizes the truth in all of its pain and ugliness, seeks to help the person see the underlying problem that caused the offense, and then perseveres in the relationship. That is a far cry from the denial and quick-fix tendency of codependent forgiveness." (119)

When another person is overtaken in a sin, it is indeed biblical to confront him in love, persevere in the relationship, and restore him (Galatians 6:1). *Sometimes* it is right to cover an offense in love. The "codependent" literature focuses too heavily on covering up one's own pain, rather than developing a truly biblical view of responding to another person's sin in love. People do need instruction in resolving conflicts and restoring others who sin, but "codependent" teachings only muddy the waters.

Rapha's Solutions

The solutions offered by Springle are a mixture of truth and error. Three basic categories are offered: self-worth, belonging, and friendship. The security-significance tune plays again!

Self-Worth. Rapha literature revolves around this concept! Without the assumption that it's right to build self-worth, most Rapha books would self-destruct.

Springle describes "biblical identity." From Ephesians 1, he lists these qualities: chosen to be declared holy and blameless, adopted, forgiven (130), and sealed (131). All of these are true, but that doesn't establish our "worth." Rather, it all speaks of *God's* glory and mercy! Read on in Ephesians 1, and you'll see the phrase (more than once!) "to the praise of *His* glory."

The author blames "codependency" for a distorted Christian identity, regardless of an individual's knowledge of the Scriptures:

"For many of us, the truth of who we are in Christ is not new. We have known it for years. We can quote passage after passage, but the Scriptures haven't penetrated past our denial-ridden, codependent Christian facade." (134)

According to Springle, "codependency" determines an individual's understanding of God's truth:

"Some passages of Scripture play havoc on the codependent. Interpreted through his distorted vision, they produce more guilt and pain instead of freedom and joyful obedience." (135)

"Codependency" also supposedly determines the person's view of *God*, who may be seen as harsh and condemning, or neglectful:

"In codependent, dysfunctional families, the children grow up with a distorted view of God." (133)

Rapha's "solution" to such distortions is a new identity for the "codependent":

"The codependent needs a new identity, a strong sense of being loved and accepted by God and by His people. Then denying his own desires will make sense. Until then, he will only be feeding his own codependent habits of rescuing and serving to gain approval." (135)

This type of analysis places the power of "codependency" above the regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit. It is that Spirit, using God's powerful Word (Hebrews 4:12), who enables the

believer to discern the things of God, to know *Him* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Holy Spirit needs no psychotherapeutic assistance!

Belonging. More of the same unbiblical reasoning is applied to the "codependent's" experience of Christ's Lordship:

"The lordship of Christ can be frightening for a codependent. Through the lenses of over-responsibility, perfectionism, repressed emotions, and guilt motivation, the beauty of an intimate relationship with Christ is distorted. Instead of a sense of belonging, trust, and affirmation, the codependent perceives the Christian message as one of more demands, more condemnation, and more guilt." (141)

Following are several "codependent" perspectives the author lists:

God is mean and wants to "use us" rather than considering our best interests (142).

God demands too much, more than we can do (142).

"I'm already trying as hard as I can, what more can I do?" (142). Anger at God is directed toward others.

"I don't want to lose control of my life." (142)

"God will make me weird" (if I take a stand for Christ) (143).

Worth is gained by serving God (143).

"If God loves me, He won't ask me to do anything hard." (143)

The author believes that codependents read the Scriptures selectively, picking out only soothing passages and overlooking those "that seem to feed their guilt motivation" (143). This is *different* from what the same author expressed earlier (see quote from page 135 in previous section) about "codependent" reading of Scripture!

Scripture often refers to Christians as bondservants of Christ. The apostle Paul described himself in this manner. Springle describes a "bondservant" as one who chooses to serve rather than being forced (144):

"The biblical picture of being a bondservant...is based on a sense of belonging, a sense of being loved, and responding to

the Master in affection and obedience because His character elicits both love and respect." (145)

True, the believer serves joyfully, out of love for the Savior. However, nowhere does Scripture ever distinguish the "codependent Christian" as one who serves the Lord out of motives that differ from those of other believers. Springle, however, describes two motivations for service: to gain worth, or "appreciation for God's grace and your worth in Him" (146). Seeking self-worth is the constant agenda in Rapha literature:

"Any time a person tries to get his security and value from someone or something other than the Lord, it is idolatry. When we attempt to control other people or to secure power and approval by serving, we are putting ourselves in God's place." (145)

It is idolatry when someone *worships and serves* the creation instead of the Creator, not when someone seeks his own "security and value" from someone other than the Lord. Seeking self-worth ahead of God's glory is one form of idolatry, serving self instead of serving God.

Friendship. Springle recommends finding a friend who can show you how to find *self-worth* from your relationship with God:

"We need to see someone model what it means to gain our self-worth from the Lord and experience the freedom and motivation of the Christian life." (151)

The motivation for friendship is focused on *self*, on worth and also identity:

"Throughout the Scriptures, our identity is explained in terms of who we are. What we do is a response to that identity." (155)

The author cites 1 Peter 2:9 here. That passage does identify believers as chosen by God to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people belonging to God. However, the purpose of that calling is to *declare His praises*, not to build self-worth or personal identity. Certain things are true of the believer because of Christ's completed work on the cross, but Scripture is always centered on God--*His* work, *His* glory--not our "identity."

The author cites affirmation and encouragement as reasons to find a friend, someone who believes in you and accepts you (156-

57). Scripture never encourages this sort of self-centered motivation for choosing friends. On the contrary, God's Word urges us to love others as God has loved us, esteeming others ahead of self (Philippians 2:3ff).

Honesty is yet another reason the author gives for finding friends (157):

"Most of us have repressed deep hurts and anger for years. These emotions surface from time to time, but not in healthy, constructive ways.... We need a friend who will let us express our emotions and thoughts in a safe environment, without fear of being ridiculed for feeling and thinking the way we do." (157)

It should be clear that selfish motivations prevail in this counsel.

The type of "friend" this author suggests is either a support group that discusses codependency, or a professional counselor (159). He believes that a pastor may *help you find* such a "friend," but he bypasses the pastor's biblical role and responsibilities. He says all this *in spite of* his recommendation that you observe this "friend" in a variety of everyday life situations, something that is taboo in the world of "professional" counseling! We do need godly admonition and edification from more mature believers, but *in the body of Christ*, not in the office of a "professional" therapist operating outside the church. Mature believers are to model godly living, not self-worth. This author has mutilated the biblical model of believers relating to one another in the body of Christ.

"New responses." In addition to self-worth, belonging, and friendship, Rapha suggests three "new responses" to life: the identification of "codependent" behaviors, detachment, and decision.

Identification of "codependent" behaviors. Springle counsels the reader to "identify the behaviors, feelings, thoughts, words, and actions that have become the habits of codependency" (161). This replaces *biblical* self-examination, based on *God's standards*, with *psychological* self-examination, based on *psychology's standards*! Yet the author claims a biblical standard for identifying the psychological "disorder" of "codependency":

"As we learn more about our identity in Christ, and as we see the patterns of codependency in our lives, we will be able to

identify many of the specific codependent things we say and do." (162)

However, Springle warns that "dysfunctional behavior destroys objectivity" (163). He grossly underestimates the power of God to reveal truth through His Word when he claims that "codependents" have a difficult time knowing reality. This is supposedly due to the influence of emotions:

"Identifying codependent behavior may seem like a very cognitive exercise, but it usually elicits a flood of emotions as we realize how deeply we have been affected."
(166)

Again, God's powerful Word takes a back seat to the powers of "codependency."

Finally, the author sees identification of "codependent" behavior as the "way of escape" God promises to provide in 1 Corinthians 10:13 (166). He is certainly reading his psychological theories onto Scripture here! This is a serious misunderstanding of that passage, which concerns God's provision for His people when they are tempted to *sin* against His commands. This Scripture has nothing at all to do with "codependency," but rather encompasses all varieties of human sin.

Identification of "codependent" behavior is nowhere prescribed by Scripture. Rather, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and we are exhorted to examine and live our lives according to the standards of God's infallible Word.

Detach. Springle explains why he believes the "codependent" needs to detach:

"Codependents are trained to react, not respond. We instinctively rescue, withdraw, or attack. We feel the compassion of a rescuer, and we feel anger, hurt, and self-pity. This instinct is deeply ingrained in us, but it needs to be changed. We need to detach; to separate ourselves from that codependent reaction system, and think, feel, and reflect." (174)

He notes that the term "detach" is being used here in a manner that differs from some other psychologists:

"Some psychologists use *detach* to describe the act of isolating oneself from others in a negative, harmful way. In

contrast, codependent literature uses the word to describe a positive healthy action: stepping back to obtain objectivity about a person or situation." (175)

Springle believes detachment is important in order to "see the contrast between codependent reactions and healthy reactions," to consider the options (178). Often it is wise to take time to consider how to respond to a specific situation, and in some cases temporary withdrawal of normal fellowship is appropriate (see 1 Corinthians 5). However, what must be considered is *biblical* options, *not options dictated by psychological teachings*. The purpose for such restraint is to respond in a manner that honors God and benefits others, to do what is right in the eyes of God.

Springle, however, clearly puts a higher premium on detaching from others rather than loving them:

"It is best to detach calmly and with a loving attitude, but that isn't always possible. It may seem harsh or selfish to put such a premium on detachment, but being controlled by someone and pleasing him above all else is *not* a good thing. It is idolatry. If you have the choice either to detach in anger or in love, by all means do it in love. But by *all* means, detach." (180)

The author proceeds to quote Melodie Beatty, whose best selling books on "codependency" are anything but biblical. (One of her chapters in *Codependent No More* is about "having a love affair with yourself"!) Real *biblical* love is sacrificed on the altar of psychology.

The same reversal of biblical truth can be observed when the author says that "anger can actually be used constructively in the process of detaching" because "it is a strong motivation to develop your independence and identity" (180).

In considering when to "detach," the author recommends consideration of what a "normal" person would do:

"It is true that 'normal' people, like all of us, are sinners who are prone to selfishness and pride, but for our purposes we are using *normal* to mean simply non-codependent and independent." (181)

However, he ought to consider what a *biblical* response would be! Rapha's standards here are man-made rather than godly, relying on

what a sinful "non-codependent" man might do instead of what God commands in His Word.

Springle warns that conflict is to be expected when you stop "playing a codependent role in your family" (182). Also to be expected is initial fear and awkwardness.

The author hedges on the question of divorce as a means of "detachment." He avoids giving an answer to this "sticky, emotion-charged issue," but definitely does recommend (contrary to Scripture) temporary separation. He recommends consultation with a pastor or "*competent, qualified Christian counselor*" (putting them on the same level!) before making a decision concerning divorce (182-83). Meanwhile, divorce is an issue that Scripture sufficiently addresses in a variety of passages. There are *biblical* standards for the believer to follow, standards nowhere grounded in the modern notion of "codependency." In fact, following those scriptural admonitions is likely to bring about the label of "codependency" from today's psychologists.

Detachment isn't expected to bring perfect calm at first, but it supposedly brings the ability to think clearly and objectively about "codependent" feelings and behaviors (183). The author does recommend, quite rightly, becoming attached to the Lord and depending increasingly on Him (183). This final counsel is certainly true, but it is mingled with a great deal of error about how, when, and why we are to "detach" from other people.

Decisions, decisions. This involves having the courage to actually change our actions after having identified them and detached (189). The author admits that the really crucial question is "Lord, what do You want me to do?," but quickly adds that:

"This question...is confusing for the codependent because in his mindset, he usually assumes that the Lord wants him to rescue and control others." (191)

Nevertheless:

"Seeking the Lord's direction is still valid for codependents, but our mindset needs to change. That's what detaching is all about." (191)

The critical point for Springle is gaining security and worth from God instead of from other people. Scripture, however, never focuses our attention on such goals. Rather, we are called to

focus on *God's* glory. Christ has already secured our eternal redemption.

Another problem is that doing something with the "wrong motive," for this author, is a greater concern than whether the actual act is biblically right. In other words, he seems to discourage obedience to God's commands if that obedience grows out of *what psychology defines as* the "wrong motive." It is codependent literature, however, that emphasizes the biblically wrong motives of seeking one's own security and significance ahead of God and others. A further problem here is that we hardly know our own hearts well enough to always discern our motives. Sometimes it is necessary to obey the commands of God in faith, trusting Him to convict and change our hearts when motives are wrong.

Responsibility is certainly an important biblical concept. Springle addresses it:

"Codependents normally take responsibility for others but not for themselves.... A vital part of healthy living is recognizing our limitations and setting realistic limits in our relationships with others." (192)

"Codependent behavior has very few limits. We feel responsible for everyone and everything." (193)

The author's key question is:

"What is a rescuing, compulsive, codependent reaction to others' needs, and what is a healthy, independent, loving response?" (193)

He answers, first, with an emphasis on assigning decision making to the appropriate persons:

"Just as you are seeking to make your own independent decisions, give other people the freedom to make their own choices.... Calmly and clearly let people know what the consequences of their decisions will be." (194)

The bottom line, however, is once again centered on self. The author asks: "What would you enjoy? What have you withheld from yourself because you deem yourself as unworthy?" He claims that this *isn't* "prosperity theology or blatant hedonism" (194). It is most difficult, however, to draw the line. His statement seems

arbitrary, designed to comply with "codependent" literature rather than Scripture.

Biblically, it is indeed important to sort out our responsibilities *before God*. However, Scripture fails to draw to hard black lines prescribed by "codependency" teachings. More often, responsibilities are mutual in nature. All believers are called to restore the person caught in sin (Galatians 6:1); that person remains responsible for his actions, but others are commanded to help him. The individual emphasis of "codependency" is alien to the scriptural view of believers as the *one body* of Christ. Responsibilities to others are more extensive than psychologists want to admit. Of course, the believer is not to contribute to another person's sin, but rather is called to come alongside and help him overcome that sin. The "codependent" call to "detach" and "decide" is one that hinders that process.

"Emerging" From the "Codependent" Life

Springle begins this section with a chapter that is based on the five stages of grief developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who the author admits "does not come from an orthodox Christian perspective (and her most recent book has a New Age slant)" (203). Nevertheless, he believes that "effectively dealing with traumatic difficulties includes five stages: denial, bargaining, anger, grief, and acceptance" (203). He insists that these "stages" must be passed through in this order, although a person may pass quickly through some and more slowly through others. However, repentance is not included in this process, and biblical standards are absent. We must therefore proceed with discernment and caution.

First, "**denial**" involves "unconscious defense mechanisms," numbing of feelings, and the like (204). The Freudian, psychological concept of "denial" is an unbiblical idea that destroys personal responsibility.

The second stage is "**bargaining**," with the goal "to get other people to change by offering some change in ourselves" (206):

"Bargaining is an expression of hope; hope that the other person will change and give us the love and worth that we need. But it is a false hope." (206)

The author warns here against "believing the best" about a person who has been manipulative and irresponsible for a long period of

time. In this context, he considers "believing the best" to be "naive and foolish...the haven of denial" (206):

"We need to abandon the vain hope that the other person will change and give us what we need." The author calls this "an act of worship to the Lord." (207)

We do indeed need to place our trust in the Lord rather than in other people. He alone is to be worshipped. The "bargaining" attitude Springle describes is problematic because of the idolatry involved, along with the focus on selfish desires. At the same time, "codependent" teaching fails to provide biblical principles about helping others in their struggles with sin.

The third stage to be considered is **anger**:

"When we give up, when we stop bargaining and look the truth in the face, we may become very angry with the one who has lied to us, used us, and hurt us so deeply.... All anger is not wrong, nor is all anger right. Some of it is good and wholesome, but much of it is sin.... It isn't wrong to feel angry when it is a natural response to some type of pain in our environment." (207)

The author rightly acknowledges that anger is wrong when it prompts either revenge or withdrawal, citing James 1:19-20 and Ephesians 4:26-27 (207):

"*Destructive anger* is based on the desire to harm another person. It consists of outbursts, rage, seething, and revenge. *Constructive anger* is the result of being harmed by another." (208)

Rage is listed as one of the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5. However, the above definition of "constructive anger" is not found in Scripture. It is possible to be righteously angry about sin when a believer is truly focused on God's glory and honor. Springle's definition focuses more on the glory and honor of *self*. His definition should be compared with the picture painted in 1 Peter, where the Christian is called to patiently respond to harm with an attitude centered on glorifying God.

Springle's analysis of "codependent" anger is one that emphasizes a Freudian view of repressed emotions and "defense mechanisms":

"Codependents have difficulty with anger because present offenses are complicated and compounded by a backlog of repressed anger at past offenses." (208)

The author recommends a long period of "honest reflection and honest expression of repressed emotions" in order to be able to obey the command of Ephesians 4:26-27 to not let the sun go down on your anger (209). Nowhere does Scripture present such a prerequisite to obeying the Word of God! Yet Springle presses on in asserting the difficulty of the "codependent" in expression of anger:

"Many codependents stop their progress at this phase of the process because they have developed an aversion to expressing anger--especially about the one who has offended them the most." (210)

The author goes on to list a number of reasons for this aversion, including:

"They have been taught by some Bible teachers that their parents or spouse is their authority, and that they must unconditionally submit to them. In a dysfunctional family, this submission is used to manipulate, condemn, and use the codependent." (210)

There is little (if any) attempt here to see these behaviors as *sin*. Authority ordained by God can indeed be abused by sinful humans, including governments, parents, and husbands. This doesn't excuse the citizen, the child, or the wife from a godly submission, so long as the one in authority doesn't command what God forbids (or forbid what God commands). The Christian must at times endure persecution *for the cause of Christ*--though certainly not for the cause of building "self-worth."

The author believes that "constructive anger" can move into "destructive [sinful!] anger" but states, nevertheless, that:

"At the heart of this constructive anger and pain is a sense of stability that is based on objectivity. Even though it can be tremendously painful to express these emotions, you are still likely to experience a sense of satisfaction in knowing why you've struggled so much for so long. After your anger is spent, however, you will likely feel a sense of loss." (211)

Ventilation of emotion is never cited as a biblical value. Nevertheless, Springle moves on from expression of anger to a stage of **grief**.

He asks how long we ought to grieve, answering that "there are no formulas for grieving...we grieve by giving ourselves the freedom to feel loss for as long as it takes" (212). He insists, however, that this "grieving" process must be completed before acceptance can occur.

This final stage, **acceptance**, is claimed to bring peace and calm (212):

"Codependency is a deep wound that requires a lot of attention for a while. Even the emotional bandaging and medication seem to hurt, but if it is well-treated, scar tissue will gradually form as the healing process continues. Though the scar may remain, the pain will gradually be replaced by healing and health. This process isn't pleasant, but it is essential if the wound is to heal." (214)

The medical analogy used here is not appropriate. Scripture does not condone the prolonged self-indulgence of these last two "stages" promoted by Springle, although we are called to comfort and encourage *others*. The Bible does *not* view people as primarily *wounded* by the sins of others, and thus in need of "healing." Rather we are exhorted to respond to the sins of others in a godly manner that honors the Lord and testifies of His goodness. The entire process (denial, bargaining, anger, grief, acceptance) advocated here is an unbiblical sequence that distracts believers from living God-centered lives.

Relating to Others: Lordship or Love? The question to be addressed here is: "How do I relate to the one who has hurt, neglected, used, and condemned me?" The author poses it in terms of "idolatry or independence," whether that other person is allowed to determine our behavior, or whether we make our own decisions, including the decision to unconditionally love that other person (217):

"Most of us have erroneously defined love in the context of codependency. We have thought of love as rescuing, worrying, feeling guilty, being compliant to manipulation, and pitying that other person whom we care for." (217)

Springle's response, typical of Rapha literature, is one that again puts the emphasis on self:

"Once we have trusted Christ, and accepted His payment for our sins, our identity is secure in Him.... Turn from that idolatry [seeking love and acceptance from another person] by getting your significance and worth from Christ alone." (219)

Biblically, turning from idolatry involves giving glory and honor to God, not seeking increased significance and worth *from* God. Rapha literature regularly turns the biblical view on its head, centering on self rather than God.

The author then discusses how to relate to others who have been destructive in the past. For example:

"Set limits. Decide what you can live with for right now. Decide on the extent of your communication and contact with that person.... The relationship has been on his or her terms for perhaps your whole life, but it can be on your terms now." (220)

How about God's terms? Over and over, the emphasis is on *self* rather than on *God*: His Word, His authority, His standards, His glory, His worth.

Springle also says to "base your life on what is *really* real, not on what a dysfunctional person believes and says is real" (220). However, care must be taken to define what is "really real" according to God's revelation, not our own sinful hearts or the standards of other sinful men.

As for communication with others, the author says this:

"Do you tell that person all about codependency and how messed up you've been because of your relationship with him? Do you describe your dark thoughts, your bitterness, hatred, and fear? The principle here is: express yourself fully to God, and express yourself appropriately to the other person." (220)

He holds out little hope for the other individual to change:

"Realistic expectations are vital to your relationship. He or she may change, but it is foolish to expect resolution and reconciliation very soon, if ever." (222)

There's no consideration here of specific *biblical* principles and passages concerning reconciliation, nor of whether the other

person is a Christian. These are critical considerations! The Bible holds out much hope for change in others, although certainly our confidence and trust is to be placed in God rather than man.

Forgiveness is always a key issue in relationships with others. The author distinguishes excusing from forgiving, stating that the latter "acknowledges the reality of the offense, the full weight of the wrong, and the consequences of the wrong...then chooses to not hold that offense against the person" (222). However, it doesn't necessarily involve trusting the person in the future:

"Forgiveness does not imply that you have to trust the one you have forgiven.... If a person has proven over the course of months or years that he is untrustworthy, then he can be forgiven, but he should not be trusted." (223)

Springle also distinguishes understanding (of another person's painful background) from forgiveness (223).

There is not sufficient space here to present a full biblical picture of forgiveness. (See *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, by Dr. Jay Adams, and Discernment's publication, "Forgiving Who?") There is some truth in what Springle says. Forgiveness certainly acknowledges the full reality of the offense, and it differs from merely understanding a person's background. However, *granting* biblical forgiveness, as distinguished from maintaining a forgiving *spirit* at all times, involves repentance on the part of the other person. The offense is not to be *remembered* any more, although the one who forgives ought to be available to help the other overcome sinful patterns. It is questionable whether a sin can truly be remembered no more while refusing to trust the person in the future. Springle's view of forgiveness needs serious revision before it can be considered fully biblical.

Three Stages of Growth. Psychology continually insists that individuals jump through numerous hoops in order to grow in godly living. Besides the five stages of "emerging" from "codependency," Springle advocates three basic stages of growth: "rules-oriented, adolescence, and relationship-oriented" (247). The "codependent" is supposedly stuck in the first of these three:

"Codependents are almost universally in the rules-oriented stage until they begin to identify their codependent behavior, detach to reflect, and decide to make their own choices." (247)

The author lists the characteristics of each "stage" (248-9). The "rules-oriented" stage isn't focused on obedience to God's laws, but rather lists the qualities of "codependency" described earlier, along with a general rigid adherence to some type of "do's and don'ts" system. The "adolescent" stage includes awkwardness, confusion, and *rebellion*, with the latter not recognized as *sin*. The "relationship-oriented" stage, the author's goal, includes good qualities such as enjoying the Lord, but also "freedom to be one's self, no comparison" and "freedom to let people be themselves." This is highly ambiguous, in that there is no godly standard. The goal of our sanctification is to be conformed to the image of Christ, not simply "freedom to be oneself, no comparison."

The author urges the "codependent" to move from being "rules-oriented" to the rebellious stage of adolescence, but he sees this advance as anything but easy:

"Many codependents and others in the rules-oriented stage define 'maturity' as the upper end of the rules stage; that is, being able to live by rules as effectively as possible. The idea of struggling with adolescent issues is seen as immaturity, rebellion, and sin, not progress." (250)

"If we look into the adolescent swamp and decide not to go through it, the effects will be far more devastating than anything we fear in adolescence. Our guilt motivation will become hardened." (251)

Rebellion is sin! The author sees *sin* as an essential part of growth. This is not found anywhere in Scripture! Although the believer is set free from the curse of the law and is not justified by doing works of that law, God's commands remain the rule for his life. This type of analysis, condemning a "rules-oriented" approach per se, obscures that important truth.

Nevertheless, the author believes that a person passing through the "adolescent" stage ought to be affirmed and not told that they are "carnal"... "unless they are choosing a pattern of sin" (252). But the line is hard to draw. Rebellion is at the root and heart of sin, and engaging in a rebellious attitude is itself a "pattern of sin." Springle chooses words that blur this, however:

"Most codependents have drawn the line much too near a rigid, rules-dominated lifestyle all of their lives. Any change will seem like abject rebellion to some of them. They need

to be affirmed and encouraged in the process, not bludgeoned back into rigidity by callused condemnation." (252)

Certainly, we don't "bludgeon" other Christians using "callused condemnation." In the book of Galatians (also Romans), the apostle Paul drives home the point that no one is justified before God by performing works of the law. However, when "codependent" literature rejects a "rules-dominated lifestyle" so emphatically, without equal emphasis on the importance of leading a godly life by the power of the indwelling Spirit, it is misleading and unbiblical. The sinful, rebellious heart of man must be sufficiently taken into account, and justification must be distinguished from sanctification. Good works do have a proper place in the Christian life, but not as the ground for justification and entrance into eternal life. The emphasis is slanted here in such a way as to subtly encourage rebellion.

The "Emerging Codependent's" Relationship With God

It is in this area that we encounter the greatest mixture of biblical truth and psychological error. Springle covers three basic areas: the reality of God, enjoying the Lord, and waiting on Him. In each case there is some good biblical material, but it is blended with the erroneous views of psychotherapy.

The reality of God is what the author calls "the mystical issue," as opposed to the "cognitive and relational issues of codependency" (228). He defines the term "mysticism" here as the experience of God's presence and power, rather than the emotional, passive extremes exhibited by some groups (229). He believes that the Scriptures were written to a group who assumed God's supernatural activity in events of the material world, but says that Western culture puts religion in a compartment and fails to see God's direct involvement in everyday affairs. This latter view he calls "rationalism," as opposed to "mysticism" (229). The development of this "rationalism," he says, has been encouraged by humanism, materialism, and prosperity theology (230). "Codependents," he claims, are either "self-sufficient rationalists [practical atheists] or hypermystical irrationalists" (230). The latter "tends to feel close to God, but often demonstrates an overdependence on feelings, impressions, and signs from God" (231). In contrast to either the "rationalist" or "hypermystic" is what Springle terms "the biblical blend," which "combines the desire and discipline of the rationalist with the intimacy and faith of the hypermystic" (232). He believes that between the extremes of passivity (expecting God to do everything) and living as if God were absent... "is a proper biblical balance

of our responsibility and God's empowerment; our part and God's part" (229). Citing Philippians 2:12-13, he talks about "God's part" in contrast to "our part." He says that the apostle Paul "realized that our best efforts cannot accomplish the work of the kingdom of God, yet we play an integral part in God's purposes on earth" (232).

Much of this section is generally good, but it would be better to state clearly that we work *because* God works. It's not an equal partnership! The author does say that:

"It is His power *which mightily works within* us to enable us to experience the unconditional love of God, the forgiveness that only God can give, and the strength to do His will even in the most difficult circumstances" (233).

He also says rightly that "we are not left to our own devices to try to change our lives" (234). However, there is confusion. God doesn't merely do "part" while we perform a different "part" of our sanctification. God is intimately involved in the *whole* of our lives. He is sovereign; we are responsible. These parallel biblical truths present us with a mystery behind our finite minds. Springle's analysis implies that perhaps there is some "part" that man must do *apart* from God.

In place of both the "rationalism" and "hypermysticism" described by Springle, we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and are exhorted to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). We have God's eternal, trustworthy Word, in contrast to the feeling-oriented mystical approach. The excesses rightly opposed by Springle are clearly covered by scriptural exhortations, without resort to "codependency" teachings.

Enjoying the Lord. Happily, the author cites the Shorter Version of the Westminster Catechism, which states that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" (238). Pointing to David's life as revealed in the Psalms (239-240), Springle says that:

"Enjoying the Lord is not reserved for the hypermystics or the people who aren't in touch with the real hurts and pains of life." (238)

However, a wrong view of God can hinder a strong relationship with Him. The author notes that we have lost *reverence*, and a knowledge

of the *awesome* nature of God, in the face of humanism and modern technology (240). There's much truth to this analysis, but Springle notes hindrances particularly applicable to the "codependent":

"Many of us have also lost the picture of intimacy with God, and have settled for the structure of the Christian life. We live by commands and rules...knowing very little of the warmth and intimacy that is ours to experience." (241)

That situation is very serious in the author's eyes:

"An inaccurate view of God leaves us alone, blinded, weak, driven, numb, or some combination of these--a far cry from enjoying the Lord and living a strong, intimate, secure, and honest Christian life." (242)

People do indeed have inaccurate views of God due to the impact of sin. Due to God's eternal, infinite nature, our understanding of Him will always fall short of full comprehensibility. Scripture does point us, meanwhile, toward a close, intimate fellowship with Him. A couple of brief comments are in order concerning Springle's perspective.

The problem of inaccurate views of God has a solution in *His Word*. Unbelievers have an inaccurate view of God because they are spiritually dead in sin; they worship the creation instead of the Creator, holding down the truth about God. Believers have the Scripture as well as the indwelling Holy Spirit. Teachings about "codependency" fail to add clarity to our view of God.

In fact, "codependent" literature greatly confuses the whole matter. Rapha's writings assume that parents largely determine a child's view of God. There is no scriptural support for this, and it denies the fact of God's sovereign ability to reveal Himself accurately to His children. Jesus stated that His own sheep *hear His voice* and *know Him* (John 10:14, 16, 27). He didn't list psychotherapy as a necessary prerequisite for that knowledge!

Waiting on the Lord. The author begins to describe the impact of "discovering" codependency. He claims that the "joy of discovery" is often followed by despair. Such vacillation between joy and despair, he claims, is characteristic of the "codependent" lifestyle (255). The author's advice, in summary, is that "emotional growth" is a slow and painful process that involves waiting on the Lord. This "waiting on the Lord" may mean that "the light of objectivity reveals more wounds and hurts in us"

(260). This continuing revelation of "wounds and hurts" is compared to peeling the layers of an onion:

"Increased objectivity eventually brings healing, but it also brings more pain for awhile" (260).

The general focus here is on looking for additional "wounds and hurts" inside, rather than conviction of sin and growth in holiness. This unbiblical emphasis is a grave concern about the philosophy of the recovery movement!

Concluding Comments

The final section of the book is a set of exercises "designed to help you analyze how your family has shaped your view of God and affected both your self-concept and your relationships with others" (263). Relationships with your father, your mother, and God are explored, along with your father's and mother's influence on your perception of God. An analysis of your family makes it complete. It is *assumed* that these parent-child relationships have a significant impact on an individual's perception of God, but, as indicated earlier, such an assumption has no scriptural foundation.

Rapha heavily promotes the 12-step program originally developed by Alcoholics Anonymous, but now adapted to every variety of sin. Springle's book on "codependency" is accompanied by a workbook where these twelve steps are applied to this particular "disorder." We now move along to an analysis of these steps.

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Twelve Steps Down the Wrong Road

In the introduction, the author describes a "functional" family as one where each person has a "strong sense of 'self', or identity," and where it's OK to trust, feel, talk. Each person is "special" and loved even when he makes mistakes (xi). The "dysfunctional" family is characterized by at least one individual who is abusive or has some other type of "disorder." The "self" of each person is "underdeveloped," and it's *not* OK to "trust, feel, talk." Specific "roles" in this family include the enabler, the hero, the scapegoat, the lost child, and the mascot (xii).

The author emphasizes the *necessity* of "honest, affirming relationships" in order to "experience significant growth and health," both with God and with other people (xv). Ephesians 4:13-15 is cited as proof (xv). Four components for effective change are emphasized. The cognitive involves an understanding of *self* and application of biblical truths. The relational involves the development of affirming relationships with other people. The spiritual involves growth in understanding of God, and greater acceptance of others. Finally, the temporal components means that "recovery is a process" (xvi). Note how *recovery* is substituted for biblical *sanctification* in this entire scheme.

The workbooks proceeds to go through each of the twelve steps as applied to "codependency." Much of the material repeats what Springle has outlined in his book. However, each step includes a lengthy section of Scriptures and questions to facilitate self-analysis. We might fill a 10-volume set responding to the use (sometimes *misuse*) of Scripture in this workbook, so only a few examples will be provided! One example per step should suffice to demonstrate that this author has imposed his psychological presuppositions onto Scripture.

Step 1. We admit that our needs to be needed and our compulsions to rescue others have made our lives unmanageable. Galatians 6:4-5.

In view of the "highly controlling" nature of "codependency" in certain aspects of life, this charge seems strange. However, Springle says that:

"We focus our overresponsibility on those aspects of our lives, but fail to see the superficiality, the chaos and the pain in other areas" (1).

Scripture: In **Matthew 23:25-28**, our Lord denounces the scribes and Pharisees as "white-washed tombs," seeming "clean" on the outside but unclean in the heart. Springle says that:

"As codependents, we usually deny the hurt inside...Christ dealt strongly with the Pharisees, who looked like they were stable and mature on the outside, but who had not dealt with the painful realities on the inside of their lives" (7).

Nothing in the context suggests that Christ referred to the *hurt* inside these men, or that He would define them as "codependents" in the modern sense of that term. Rather, He specifically addressed the *sin* underlying an outwardly righteous exterior. He saw these religious leaders as *sinners*, not as "codependent" *victims*.

The Galatians passage cited with the step lends no support to the call to admit "powerlessness." These verses are set in a context which mandates the restoration of fellow believers who fall into sin.

It is true that man is powerless to secure his own salvation, that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners in a state of helplessness (Romans 5:6, 8). This step, however, encourages an admission of powerlessness unaccompanied by *repentance*. It is thus inappropriate for an *unbeliever* who needs salvation before he can even begin to progress in sanctification. It is equally erroneous for *believers*, because Christ has already broken the power of sin in their lives (Romans 6:1-14). Helplessness is not an option!

Step 2. We increasingly believe that Jesus Christ can restore us to spiritual, emotional and relational health. Philippians 2:13.

It is unfortunate that medical terminology is employed to describe a condition that is fundamentally rooted in *sin*. This is one major error that permeates 12-step literature.

The chapter on step 2 is partly centered on "understanding" our relationship with God based on a detailed analysis of our

childhood relationships with parents. This is a recurring theme in Rapha literature. Springle says that:

"Our view of God, our self-concepts and our abilities to relate to others are primarily shaped by our parental relationships. If our parents were loving and supportive, we will probably believe that God is loving and strong. If, however, our parents, were harsh and demanding, we will probably believe that God is impossible to please" (15).

This is an erroneous assumption that has no basis in Scripture, but rather is founded on Freud, who *hated* God and wanted to "explain" religious belief on the basis of his ludicrous theories.

Another emphasis is on "belief systems" (39-40). This portion is transparently grounded in atheist Albert Ellis' Rational-Emotive-Behavior Therapy. The "false beliefs" listed (all covered in the critique of the *Search for Significance* workbook) are self-focused. The primary "lie" the author cites is "that our self-worth = performance + others' opinions" (39).

Scripture: One section (35-37) focuses on better understanding God through a look at Psalm 139. It's excellent to study this psalm, of course, but the study questions are often focused on self rather than God. For example: "How does your perception of your appearance affect your self-image?" (37). Psalm 139, however, is centered on the majesty and faithfulness of God.

Philippians 2:13 states that *God* is at work in the Christian to will and to do *His* good pleasure. There is a superficial resemblance to step 2 as stated by Rapha. However, Scripture emphasizes that God is *already at work* in the believer. Note the statement in Philippians 1:6; God *will* complete the work He has begun at the time of a person's salvation. The twelve steps are always dependent on *man's* initiation and *man's* continuing to "work the program." Scripture, on the contrary, emphasizes God's sovereign initiative and His power working to cause the believer to persevere. It is on the basis of that divine work that believers are given exhortations.

Step 3. We make a decision to turn our lives over to God through Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:2.

This chapter begins with a repetition of the author's teaching concerning "should's" and "ought's," which he wishes to discard due to the "codependent's" "warped sense of responsibility" (43-44). He believes that the "codependent" turns the freedom of our faith into slavery. Fortunately, he acknowledges that this is no excuse to disobey God or to throw out the Bible (44). However, he also says that the codependent "tries to make sure that God doesn't get any blame for his calamity...in the codependent's eyes, the Savior needs a savior" (44). What is

needed here is a good theological understanding of both human responsibility and God's sovereignty, not more "codependent" psychobabble.

There are some excellent Scriptures here about the work of Christ (44-53), which the reader is asked to paraphrase. A study of these passages, *minus the psychological teachings about "codependency,"* would indeed be helpful.

Another section concerns *trusting* in Christ. Here the author rightly notes the error of trusting in self for new life, rather than in the completed work of Christ (56). He also notes correctly that there are many biblical "facts" of what is *already* true of the believer, in addition to "promises" that we know God will fulfill (57-58). This distinction is indeed an important key to understanding and applying God's Word.

Scripture: Interestingly, there is no exegesis of the key Scripture, Romans 12:2, which does *not* equate to the third AA step but rather is an exhortation to the person who is *already* a believer. The equation of Step 3 and Romans 12:2 is merely assumed without any proof or analysis. This step is a substitute for the biblical concepts of regeneration, faith, and repentance, grounded in the work of the Holy Spirit, not the *decision of man* (John 1:12-13).

Step 4. We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Lamentations 3:40.

In this chapter, the author refers to his "identify-detach-decide" process. He says that "dysfunctional behavior destroys objectivity" (61), and that "an objective review of the past enables us to confront our age-old enemy: denial" (62). The "codependent" lack of objectivity is traced to early childhood environment and fear of reality because one's own identity might be lost (63). It would be more accurate, biblically, to note that *sin* impacts every aspect of man, including his thought processes.

A number of areas from Springle's book are covered in this lengthy chapter. In addition to the lack of objectivity already mentioned, he covers the warped sense of responsibility (including the "chronic savior" and "chronic Judas" patterns), controlling others and being controlled, "obsessive-compulsive" self-control, hurt and anger, guilt (*not* biblically defined), loneliness and abandonment, detachment from others. Questions for self-analysis are offered in each of these areas. There is again a highly subjective focus on *self*, and on the standards established by psychology rather than God's holy standards. There is little (if any) focus on having transgressed God's laws as revealed in Scripture.

Scripture: In his section regarding "guilt," the author cites 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 to distinguish between "positive and negative guilt." This passage, however, discerns between *godly and ungodly repentance*, both of which are human responses to *real*

guilt as defined by God's standards. The author misconstrues these verses and squeezes them into his preconceived "codependent" mold.

There is certainly a place for self-examination as indicated in Lamentations. This should be done according to *biblical* standards, which are generally absent from 12-step programs. However, nowhere does Scripture require a new believer to engage in a one-time extensive catalogue of past sins as required by this step. The Holy Spirit convicts and sanctifies according to His timing. The believer actively obeys and grows in godliness as the result of God's work in him. The 12-step "moral inventory" can all too easily become a works righteousness program.

Step 5. We admit to God, to ourselves and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs. James 5:16a.

The author says that confession to God must be supplemented by admission of our wrongs to another person, because in that process we will lose our sense of isolation, our unwillingness to forgive, our inflated pride, and our sense of denial (105). He notes that we are forgiven because of Christ's death on the cross, not because of our confession. "Confession is a means for us to *experience* our forgiveness, not obtain it" (105). He rightly mentions the importance of repentance, which is a turning away from sin and toward God, not merely feeling sorry that we've been caught (105).

The major problem with this step, as it is worded, is that confession is made to *uninvolved parties*. Biblically, confession should be made to--and need *only* be made to--those actually sinned against. It is not intended to be the psychological "catharsis" promoted by this step.

Several good statements are made about confession:

"All sin is against God" (108).

"Confession recognizes the full scope of sin" (109).

"Confession involves accepting your forgiveness in Christ" rather than doing self-imposed penance (109).

"True confession involves repentance" (109).

"True confession may involve restitution" (109).

Scripture: The author describes the purpose of this step in clearly self-oriented terms:

"It should be remembered that this step is for you. Regardless of whom we choose to share ourselves with, it is imperative to realize that our purpose in taking this step is NOT to please the listener, but to gain healing for ourselves" (111).

However, this is *not* the purpose of confession as stated in Scripture! Springle takes James 5:16 out of its context, where physical illness is involved, the *elders* of the church are called in (not a 12-step group!), and sin *may* be involved in the onset of the illness. If it is, it should be confessed and it will be forgiven. This verse is not a proof-text for broad confessions of sin to various parties not involved in the offense, such as a "support group" or 12-step meeting.

Step 6. We commit ourselves to God, desiring that He remove patterns of sin from our lives. 1 Peter 5:6-7.

The discussion of this step revolves around our *motivations* for obeying God's commands. The author believes that obedience to God is frightening to a "codependent," who turns the Christian message into a message of demands and condemnation (121). He describes what is essential a distinction between legalism, antinomianism (turning God's grace into a license for sin), and biblical reverence for God (122). He perceives a Christian "bond-servant" as one who freely chooses to obey, out of both love and respect (122).

Springle speaks about idolatry, which is a valid biblical topic to consider, but here is his unbiblical definition:

"Any time a person tries to get his security and value from someone or something other than the Lord, it is idolatry" (123).

Idolatry involves the worship and service of the creation instead of the Creator. It certainly involves seeking to gain something *from* the particular idol. Rapha goes astray, however, in assuming that it is *legitimate* for a believer to focus on his own security and value rather than the glory of God.

The author says that there are two primary motivations for service:

"One is to gain a sense of worth. That is idolatry. The other motivation...is serving out of appreciation for God's grace and your worth in Him" (123).

If the words "and your worth in Him" were omitted, this would be a good biblical statement!

Several improper motivations for obedience are listed:

1. "Someone may find out" (129).
2. "God will be angry with me" (130).
3. "I couldn't approve of myself if I didn't obey" (130).
4. "I'll obey to be blessed" (131).

He also lists what he consider proper motivations (131):

1. The love of Christ motivates us to obey Him.
2. Sin is destructive.
3. The Father will discipline us.
4. His commands for us are good.
5. We will receive rewards.
6. Obedience is an opportunity to honor God.

Fortunately, Springle admits that "the Lord never said pleasant emotions were a prerequisite for following Him" (131). He also rightly notes that "Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin so that we can respond to Him in obedience" (131).

There is a heavy focus on the human will in obeying God:

"Obedience is largely an act of one's will. It is possible for us to detach, to feel, to think and to consider our options, but them to be immobilized and not make any decisions at all" (132).

The author recommends "making independent choices" after we "detach and become objective...able to admit how we feel" (132). He also recommends "realistic limits in our relationships with others" in opposition to the "codependent" habit of setting very few limits (133). Furthermore, he advises the "codependent" to "stop controlling others" and to give them the freedom to make their own choices, letting them know the consequences (133). Finally, he lists enjoyment of life as the fourth component of "emotional and relational health," a condition where we experience God's unconditional love rather than being driven to please others (134). He asks this question:

"What would you enjoy? What have you withheld from yourself because you deem yourself as unworthy?" (134).

He adds that:

"The encouragement for a guilt-ridden, overly responsible person to relax and have some fun is meant to give balance and health to his life, not hedonism" (134).

But note the irony of such a conclusion to a chapter that proposed to address the "removal of sin patterns" from our lives! The focus remains on self, self, self.

The topic of obedience is one that requires a great emphasis on the new heart that the Holy Spirit creates in the believer at regeneration. Apart from regeneration, no man is either able or willing to obey the commands of God (Romans 8:7-8). The Christian has no need to address his "codependency" in order to obey God. Nor is it so purely a matter of human will. The will is *renewed* at the time of regeneration, radically reoriented toward loving God with one's entire being.

The passage in 1 Peter concerns humility, not seeking after self-worth!

Step 7. We humbly ask God to renew our minds so that our codependent patterns can be transformed into patterns of righteousness. Romans 12:2.

This chapter begins with a discussion of "renewing our minds," but bases it on the theories of atheist Albert Ellis. The author says that "beliefs can play a powerful role in shaping our behavior," and he shows a chart indicating that beliefs leads to thoughts, then emotions, and finally actions (137). The specific "false beliefs" all revolve around building self-worth, and are summarized by this one "lie" the author emphasizes:

"Our self-worth = performance + others' opinions" (138).

Springle reviews some of the material from *Search for Significance* concerning justification, reconciliation, propitiation, and regeneration (140). Much of what he says is theologically accurate, but the emphasis is continually placed on *feelings* and on self-worth, rather than on God's glory.

In the section about the "performance trap" (141-148), the author insists that self-worth is not to be based on our own performance, or works. Even if we are "feeling very good about ourselves because we are winning the performance game...we can't afford to mistake this pride for positive self-worth" (144). It's true that we are not justified (made right with God) by our own works. Many Scriptures testify that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Justification must not be confused with sanctification, our continuing growth in godly living. However, the author substitutes *building self-worth* for being put into a right relationship with God. The Bible says we are not *justified* by our own works, while Springle says we do not *build self-worth or feel good about ourselves* by our own works. The focus of the basic problem is thus completely unbiblical. Man's fundamental need is not self-worth, but reconciliation with God! Although the author discusses reconciliation and cites appropriate passages of Scripture, the driving force behind his arguments continues to be *self-worth*.

Self-blame is another issue addressed in this chapter (156-161). Here the author recognizes some important biblical truths about propitiation as involving the removal of God's righteous wrath. He is to be commended here, because propitiation is a concept rejected by many modern people. But again, Springle views the goal of understanding propitiation as self-worth!

Finally, *shame* (161-170), which "often results from instances of neglect or abuse" (164), is another culprit that prevents the development of self-worth. The author discusses regeneration and the new self in Christ. A study of the passages he cites, minus the psychobabble, would indeed be helpful to the believer's

growth. Unfortunately, *self-worth* is once more the primary goal, as we can see in one of the author's closing comments:

"What is the basis of your self-worth? Are you living by scriptural truths or by false beliefs?" (167).

Scripture: The continual focus on self can be seen in the author's recommendation that the reader carry a "truth card" with the following written on it (168):

I am deeply loved by God (1 John 4:9-10).
I am completely forgiven, and am fully pleasing to God (Romans 5:1).
I am totally accepted by God (Colossians 1:21-22).
I am a new creation--complete in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Yes, these statements are true of every Christian. However, the author insists on restating these passages so that each sentence begins with "I." This reorients the emphasis, seen in context, on *God's* gracious acts of love, designed to *give Him glory*, not to *give man self-worth*.

The passage in Romans 12 has nothing to do with "codependent patterns." Springle imposes this alien concept on the text. The believer is commanded to *be transformed* as he offers himself to God as a living sacrifice and God renews his mind. That transformation is based on the work that God has *already* begun in His mercy (12:1). God isn't waiting passively for man to ask Him to work. Furthermore, offering oneself as a living sacrifice is precisely what "codependents" are normally counseled *not* to do.

Step 8. We make a list of all persons who have hurt us and choose to forgive them; we also make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all. Luke 6:31.

The original 12 steps of AA, non-Christian as they are, did not begin with making a list of *those who have hurt us*. The victim mentality that has overtaken psychology seems to necessitate such a list, placed *before* any consideration of those we have hurt (sinned against).

"Typically, a person will apply the truth of God's love, forgiveness and acceptance only as deeply as he has experienced the reality of pain in his life" (173).

Where in Scripture can we find even a hint of such a teaching? Instead of this psychologized teaching, we are told to forgive others *as God in Christ has already forgiven us* (Ephesians 4:32).

Much space is devoted here to forgiveness. Important as that is biblically, it is built on the foundation of *self* in this psychologized version:

"Those of us who have been hurt deeply do need to forgive those who have hurt us. Forgiveness is often the foundation for further growth, but that forgiveness is based on an honest appraisal of the depth of pain caused by the offense and a deep experience of the forgiveness of Christ" (173).

The author sees forgiveness as perhaps a rather lengthy procedure, because:

"It may take a lot of time for us to uncover our repressed emotions. Our forgiveness of others may follow the progress of our objectivity about their offenses" (173).

This type of error is mixed with some good teaching, for example:

"There is nothing that anyone can do to me...that can compare with what Christ has forgiven me for" (184).

True enough, but *seeking* forgiveness from others is placed *after* this long process of considering the offenses against us. The author explains that:

"Step 4 has prepared us for this step by enabling us to see *what* we've done wrong. Now we need to know *whom* we have wronged" (188).

However, these two are inseparable! In addition, the author postpones the reconciliation process by stating that "we are not yet ready to make amends with these people" (188). He believes that *motivations* for making amends must be examined prior to any action being taken (190). His motivations include release from our "relational past" and freedom from the control of others who have hurt us, as well as self-forgiveness (190). These are *not* biblical motivations!

One of the problems with the 12-step process here is that human effort--making detailed written lists and such--replaces the critical work of the Holy Spirit in bringing conviction of sin.

Scripture: Luke 6:31 comes within a passage that instructs the Christian on responding to his enemies in a Christ-like manner, particularly when persecuted for the cause of Christ. This *does not* involve making "a list of all persons who have hurt us"! Such thought is foreign to the text.

Step 9. We make direct amends to people where possible, except when doing so will injure them or others. Matthew 5:23-24.

The author clearly equates "amends" with biblical restitution. *Restitution* is a return to the rightful owner of something that has been taken away. *Amends* is something given or

done to make up for an injury. Certainly we can agree that the repentant person ought to make *restitution* where that is appropriate to the offense. The concept of amends, as utilized by 12-step programs, does a double duty, substituting for biblical restitution *and* seeking forgiveness from others. Since the 12-step program is not and never has been Christ-centered, it is no wonder that this counterfeit would be offered.

The Scripture cited in Matthew 5 is one that requires the worshiper to *be reconciled*, a concept far broader than the process envisioned in the 12 steps. It is also far more urgent than the take-your-own-sweet-time attitude so evident throughout the program.

One serious concern about this step is the phrase "except when to doing so will injure them or others." This is highly subjective, like the concept of "amends" in contrast to restitution. There is no clear biblical standard for making the decision that another person will be injured. It is interesting, too, how the concealment of sin in this step is in sharp contrast to the open "confession" advocated by the program in step 5 and at meetings. Such exposure may very well injure others, and needlessly so! Biblical restitution *might* involve some harm to others and yet be necessary. The focus and the standard here are not well grounded in God's commands, but rather revolve around what *feels* best. There are many cautions in the workbook, but they are inadequate to address the issues involved.

Step 10. We continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, promptly admit it. 1 Corinthians 10:12.

"Codependency" quickly becomes an explanation (excuse) for sin and a seared conscience:

"Our codependency often diminishes our ability to recognize real instances of wrongdoing in our lives. Some of us have dulled consciences, and fail to recognize when we hurt someone or sin in some other way. Most of us, however, have overly active consciences. We are morbidly introspective, often reliving and condemning many of the things we've said and done. Our self-worth plummets, and as it does, our sense of guilt rises" (201).

Notice how the consequences of "codependency" are placed above the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart, even though the author, on the same page, acknowledges that conviction is the Spirit's work. Note again the focus on "self-worth," which supposedly decreases as our *sense* of guilt increases. Guilt has been transformed into a *feeling* rather than actual transgression of God's law: "Perhaps no emotion is more destructive than guilt" (201). This is highly confusing at *best*, and clearly

unscriptural. To wipe out one's sense of guilt is to sear the conscience!

It is important, in considering the matter of guilt (biblically defined) to distinguish between our justification and sanctification. What we need here is sound theology, not psychological confusion where "guilt" is a feeling in one sentence, but a fact in another. (Sometimes the author uses the term properly!)

The author makes a number of distinctions between guilt and conviction. These two are not opposites! True conviction brings about a knowledge of actual guilt. The usual emphasis on *self* is present. Guilt, the author claims, prompts concern about our loss of self-esteem, while conviction brings concern about loss of communion with God (202). The latter is certainly the preferred response to one's own sin. However, nowhere in Scripture do we see this particular function of guilt. The author has to redefine the term to come to his erroneous conclusion. Later on the page, Springle tells us--correctly--that the remedy for guilt is trust in Christ's work on the cross (202). Here he uses the term guilt in its proper biblical sense! Confusion is rampant in this guilt-conviction comparison.

The Rational-Emotive Therapy of Albert Ellis emerges again, as identification of "false beliefs" is once again a focus (205-206). Once more, feelings about self (good or bad) come to the forefront of the discussion.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13, a familiar passage intended both to warn and encourage, is misconstrued as addressing "codependent" behaviors. The "way of escape" envisioned by Springle is not an escape from *sin*, but rather his identify-detach-decide process to change "codependent" behavior. He reads his own theories onto the Scripture here! Nevertheless, this introduces a 15-day worksheet section for identifying your "codependent" behavior, detaching from other people, and then responding.

Step 11. We seek to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation and obedience, praying for wisdom and power to carry out His will. James 1:5-6.

The original AA step has been radically reworded in an attempt to better conform to the truth of the Christian faith. "Our relationship with Jesus Christ" has been substituted for "our conscious contract with God." Obedience has been added to meditation, and in this we can rejoice.

Prayer is the first subject to be addressed (241-251). Generally, this section offers some good biblical principles and relevant Scriptures about prayer.

Meditation (252-253) is rightly focused on knowing God's Word, rather than the New Age practice of emptying the mind. This section of Scriptures and questions is good. The emphasis on

obedience (253-254), grounded in the commands of God revealed in Scripture, is also good.

This chapter does not contain a focus on "codependency" to the extent that previous chapters have done so. However, when truth and error are so thoroughly mixed, extreme caution and discernment are absolutely critical!

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening, we try to carry the message of Christ's grace and power to others who struggle with codependency, and to practice these principles in every aspect of our lives. Galatians 6:1.

This step is traditionally the 12-step counterfeit for evangelism. Note that even here, the focus is on reaching "others who struggle with codependency," rather than the proper evangelistic appeal to those who are dead in sin and need Christ.

The author begins with a relevant question:

"Is recovery from codependency really just narcissism? Is it just an excuse to justify self-indulgent preoccupation? When we commit ourselves to the principles of recovery, are we really just condoning selfishness?" (255).

The answer to these questions ought to be a resounding YES, but Springle insists otherwise:

"No. Codependency is a real problem for millions of people, resulting from the neglect, anger, denial, addictions, and deep wounds prevalent in so many families today. And yes, as we become more aware of the deep hurts that stem from these family disorders, we will become more self-absorbed...for awhile" (255).

Unfortunately, the author underestimates the sin in the human heart, which includes a natural inclination to focus on *self*, to love *self* more than God and others. Part of the error arises from viewing "codependency" as a "disease" that requires temporary treatment, rather than a pattern of sin that requires repentance and sanctification.

"Genuine recovery from codependency doesn't make us self-indulgent and obnoxious. Far from that, the process of growing in our new identities and healthy relationships provides strength and godly character. This enables us to love and give and serve without so many of the twisted motives and deceptions common to codependency" (256).

The author *assumes* that embracing his psychological message would inevitably bring more people to Christ:

"If individuals became honest about their needs and if they experienced--genuinely experienced--the life-changing love and power of God in their hearts and relationships, needy people the world over would flock to Christ. They would experience deep healing from their pain. They would repent from the sins of bitterness. Relationships would be restored. An awakening would break out as God's Spirit worked in countless lives" (257).

Evangelism is very, very important, but this isn't what Scripture teaches about *why* unbelievers fail to come to Christ. The "message" that is carried is one that revolves around "codependency" and "recovery" rather than sin and salvation!

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