

Is Interpersonal Apprehension Hindering You From Experiencing The Love Of Jesus?

We periodically address the *relational prison of co-dependency* because so many are clogged by emotional fear rather than impelled by the love of Jesus. (We know this because you've told us it's so!) You can't allow yourself to live in this bondage, especially if you're a grandparent or someone who would shepherd our Father's children. Souls are at stake both in this generation and the next!

You're risking too much when you give in to your fear. *Co-dependency* occurs when there is ongoing fear to confront or speak correction to someone who is habitually creating apprehension in a relationship.

In our book *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* we discuss how demonic strongholds and/or unconfessed sin strangle relationships by producing apprehension. If you refuse to confront those who are negatively impacting your thoughts, emotions and actions, you'll stay imprisoned in fear. You'll be unable to deepen and prosper that relationship because of your refusal to confront that which is a barrier to you both.

Are you overcome by debilitating fear when you know you need to confront someone who *habitually* causes you apprehension? Then you are co-dependent. You do all you can to make sure nothing sets off the dominant person you so fear to agitate. If others are significantly involved in this relational situation (such as children or those in your extended spiritual family), you as a co-dependent person may try to convince them to refrain from confronting the dominant individual. Everyone has to dance around the dominant person, who may or may not be oblivious to the apprehension he/she is causing in the lives of so many!

Followers of Jesus who *should* confront have often been indoctrinated into believing that confrontation is unloving because it may prompt negative emotions. Or, they fear the demonic counterattack of facing down the strongholds that are controlling and influencing both the dominant and the co-dependent persons. Demonic strongholds are relationship destroyers. Also, our Lord Jesus commands that we confront a brother or sister who's sinning, to "*go and show him his fault*" so that repentance and restoration can take place (Matthew 18:15-17).

Wherever apprehension exists, the love of Jesus is hindered!

Co-dependent relationships look like gears meshed together (see the diagram on the next page). The motion of the gears is driven by the unconfronted, destructive behavior of the *dominant person*. The *co-dependent person* fears the emotional tension that may come from confrontation and even offer excuses and defend the dominant person.

Affected by the co-dependent person's fear and denial are the *significant others*, their children or people who are in close relationship with them. They may want to confront or admonish the dominant person who is producing the habitual apprehension, but they too are fearful of the emotional whiplash that confrontation may generate. This tangled web hinders *everyone* from experiencing the love of Jesus.

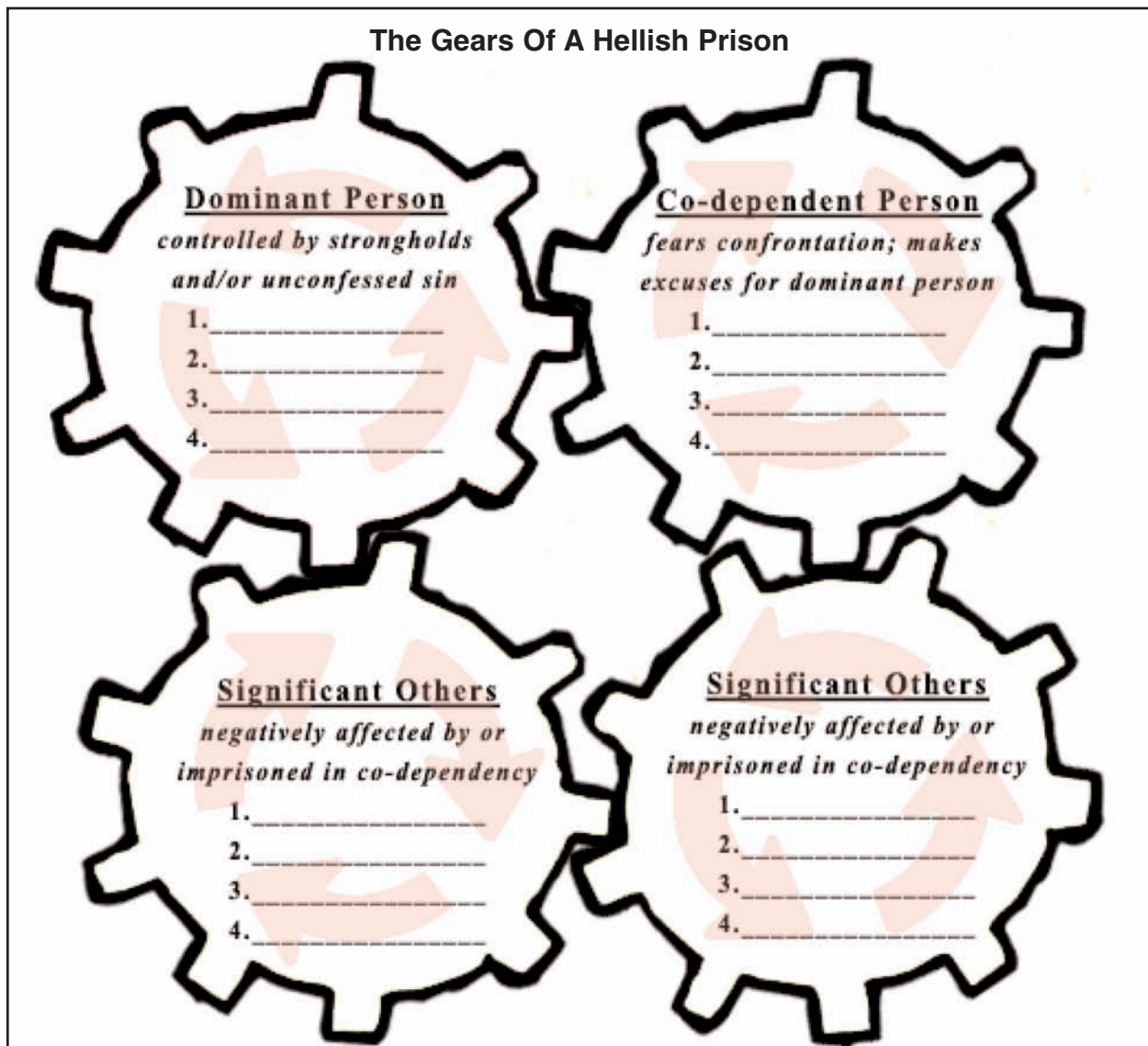
So, is the prison of co-dependency worth it? NO!!!

To stop the gears from turning, everyone involved must *confront the reality* of the situation, *repent* of their part in it, and be willing to do *whatever is needed* to stop the gears from turning. Only then can these relationships reflect the love of Jesus.

Directions

If you or people you know are living in ongoing apprehension, use the diagram below to help illuminate what each person is doing to keep the co-dependency going. Have each person **identify the gear** that represents them. Then have them **list what they do** to keep the gears turning (ie., "I immediately change the subject."). Be persistent about making sure each person indicates EVERYTHING they do. This is the only way you can disengage the gears, and each person can experience the love of Jesus.

Continue to use this as a follow-up tool to help each person move away from their destructive habits. Our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds*, and our booklet *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* can help. For free download, go to: <http://www.restorationministries.org/html/booksCD.html>



Help Others Stop Their Co-dependency!

One of the key factors in stopping co-dependency is the role of the person who is providing *outside intervention*. This person must be absolutely resolute in his or her purpose to keep these ungodly relationships from continuing to hurt each other. In **Segment 8, Lesson 48** of our series *Discussing How To Restore The Early Church* we compare the role of wise elders who shepherd to the radar operator on a ship who guides an aircraft safely down to the flight deck. The same principles for the shepherd apply to anyone who is attempting to intervene in co-dependent relationships.

In **Illustration 1**, below, the radar operator is aboard the ship and has a *glideslope* inscribed on his radar scope. The glideslope is designed to provide the aircraft (here, a helicopter) guidance for a safe descent and landing on the ship. Failure to land safely on the ship can ruin a pilot's day!

As the aircraft intercepts the glideslope, the radar operator gives the pilot instructions to begin his descent. As the aircraft descends down the glideslope, the pilot may have reduced too much power and ended up below the glideslope. The radar operator radios, "Below glideslope". His words are like a rebuke, or *putting up a stop sign*. If the pilot doesn't do something to correct the situation, the aircraft will crash into the sea. Wisely the pilot corrects by adding power to get back on glideslope. At the same time the operator is watching his radar to ensure the aircraft has *taken corrective action*. When the pilot is back on the glideslope, the radar operator *affirms* by radioing "on glideslope".

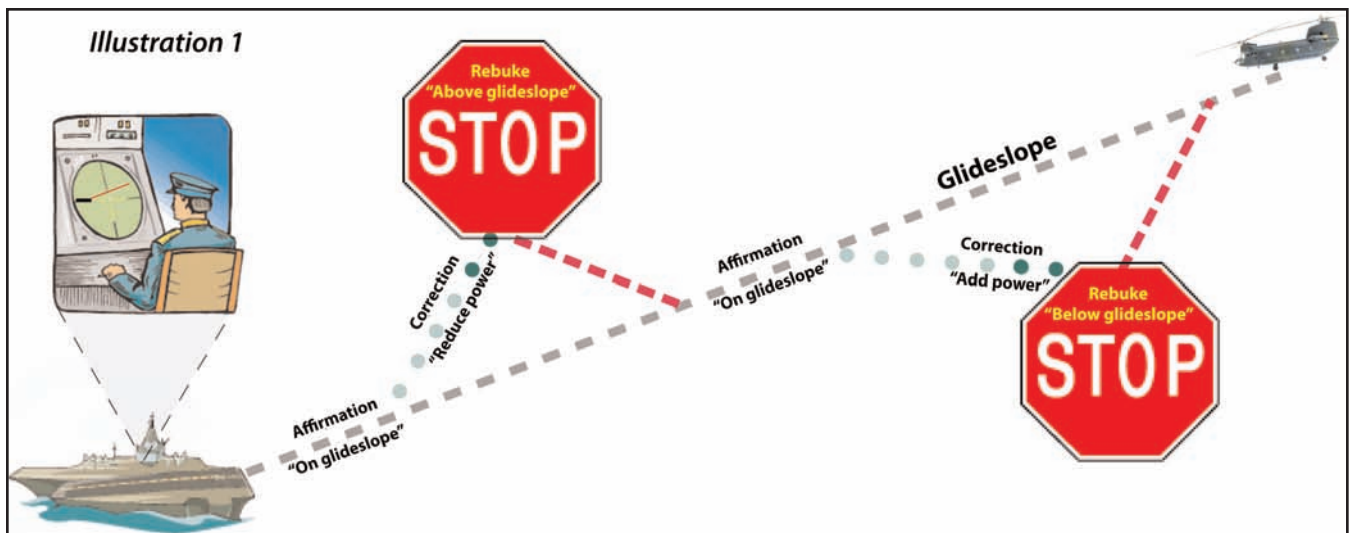
This same *rebuke and correction* are needed if the aircraft goes above glideslope. The aircraft may not crash into the sea, but it will miss the flight deck all together.

In **Illustration 2** on the next page, the principles of the glideslope show you how to effectively stop the gears of co-dependency. Remember, our Father's goal for all of His people is to be *conformed to the image of His Son Jesus*. The entire goal of sanctification (*confession & repentance*) is **ever-increasing Christ-likeness**.

God's Word counsels us to "*Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not bear sin because of him*" (Leviticus 19:17; see also Proverbs 15:31, Galatians 2:11). Please remember this: the heartfelt intensity of your method of rebuke **MUST STOP** the gears from turning if there is to be any hope of change. **A Rebuke Is Like A Stop Sign — It Must Make People Stop Their Destructive Ways.**

It takes the courage of love to confront co-dependency. Since more people are involved, it's much harder than confronting just one person. You may find that you have to confront in order to keep *yourself* from becoming another gear in the hellish mess, thereby developing cold love yourself. So make sure you safeguard your own heart in purity of spirit as you seek to intervene.

Co-dependency is recognized when there are **ongoing apprehension** and feelings of **cold love** in the relationships. When you begin to intervene, those who are entangled will often try to get you to take sides or to empathize with their emotional pain. Don't! You must be totally impartial or you'll lose your credibility with the others, and your efforts to reconcile will be to no avail.



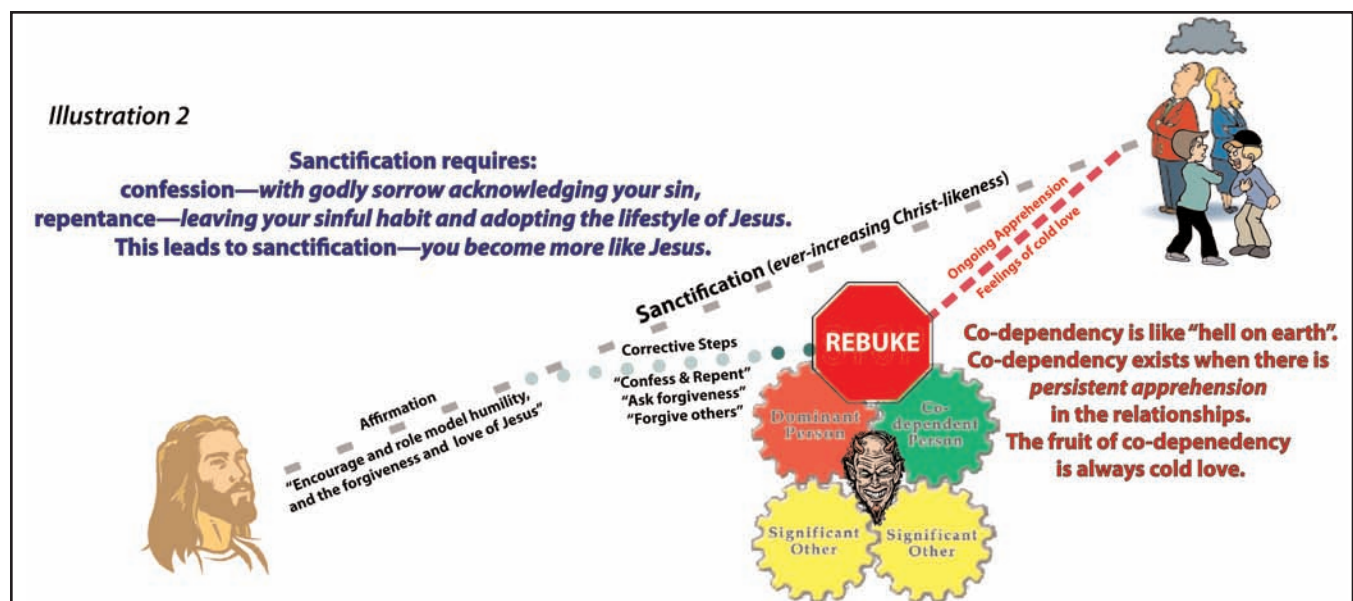
Keep in mind that it's the *co-dependent person* and their *habitual unwillingness to confront the dominant person* that has kept the gears turning. So pay particular attention to *stopping the co-dependent gear*. Usually the co-dependent person will stop when they see the ongoing emotional pain they've caused the *significant others*. Quite often you'll find it easier to confront the dominant person once the co-dependent gear isn't spinning.

If each one who is involved can confess, repent, and forgive, then you need to provide *corrective steps* to help them get on a new life path. Make sure you follow-up with them frequently until you're absolutely sure they are on our *Lord's glideslope of sanctification*. Be lovingly diligent to verify that each *corrective "dot"* you give is followed. If you don't initiate intensive follow-up discussion to help them walk in righteousness rather than apprehension, the participants will return to the old ruts of co-dependency again—this time hardening themselves with the glib response, "We've already talked about it."

As you provide corrective steps, continue to look for indicators (like the dots on the diagram) that they are heading for the glideslope. It's critical that each person refrains from *bringing up past wrongs*. Rather, each person needs to focus with obedient trust on becoming more like Jesus in attitude and character through the work of His Spirit in them. When any one of them is "on glideslope", *affirm them* in their obedience and be a role model yourself of Christ-likeness to help them along.

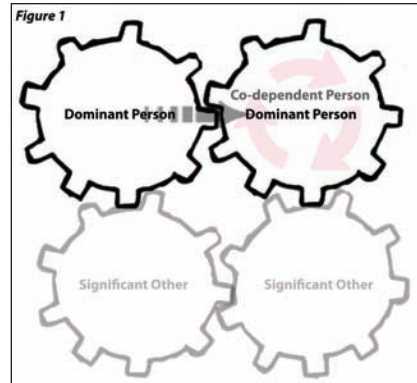
Recapping Intervention:

- If you're confronting co-dependency, you must **first** stop the gears from turning.
- **Your rebuke** must stop those involved from rehashing their past hurts. To be effective, **you** can't be the judge of their past. If you do, you'll only hinder your ability to end their co-dependency.
- **ONLY Jesus** can heal their past wounding! A good rule of thumb is this: **No one** has been completely innocent! No one! And, Jesus is the only source to their healing and pressing forward.
- To leave the past behind, **everyone involved** must confess, repent, seek forgiveness and forgive, as necessary.
- Emotional healing requires **asking and receiving forgiveness**. The true fruit of forgiveness is that all parties have hope (confidence) about the future. Hope is their mutual assurance that each person **can change**.
- If you give corrective steps, you must closely observe that **each person** is taking your guidance toward the "glideslope" of sanctification.
- Continue to offer guidance and be on the lookout for indicators of **inner heart change** in each person.
- Success isn't achieved until **all** are completely on the path of sanctification and becoming more like Jesus.
- If someone repeatedly refuses to stop their gear from turning, cut them off, if possible, from the relationships. Turn them over to Satan if you have to (1 Corinthians 5:5); they're being the devil's instrument to hurt others, and it won't take long for the personification of all evil to do his job and send them running to our Lord in repentance.



The Co-dependent Person May Need Deliberate Follow-up

Be aware of a potential aftermath when you've intervened to help disengage co-dependent gears, especially if the period of co-dependency has gone on for many years. The *co-dependent* person often becomes the *dominant* person (Figure 1) as others begin to repent and stop their own gears from turning. Most co-dependent people see themselves as the innocent party, deeply concerned with the feelings of everyone when the gears were turning. Because of this perceived role as placater, the co-dependent person feels their role is being threatened when they see the other gears *stop* turning.



For a long time, the co-dependent person's identity was based on needing to **protect everyone's feelings**. Trying to get the co-dependent person to stop their own gear *and keep it stopped* can be as difficult as trying to stop a woman from delivering at the moment the baby is coming out of the birth

Most Likely Strongholds in the Co-dependent

REJECTION

Addictive Behavior
Compulsions
Seeks Acceptance
Unworthiness
Withdrawal
Shallow Relationships
Loneliness
Hopelessness

FEAR & INSECURITY

Inferiority
Inadequacy
Timidity
Pleasing People, Not God
Lack of Trust/Worry
Phobias
Anxiety Over Injury, Death
Perfectionism
Dread of Failure
Inability to Set Goals
"Motor-mouth"

CONTROL

Manipulative
Striving
Lack of Trust
Devil's Advocate
Insensitive
Desiring Recognition
Seductive Empowerment
Cursing
Emotional Outbursts
Schemes, Intrigues

canal! You need to understand the depth of emotion that motivates the co-dependent person and how far they'll go to keep as many gears as possible turning. The co-dependent person's identity is at stake to make sure that confrontation is avoided and *outward* peace maintained.

The co-dependent person, NOT the dominant person, kept the gears turning through *non-confrontation*. They felt that their non-confrontation was an expression of their care for others. But they were deceived! They perpetuated darkness by imprisoning others, especially their children, as significant others in non-confrontation cages. This controlling bondage is demonically sinister. Often you'll find that the co-dependent person has been ruled by a stronghold of **rejection** or **fear and insecurity**. If it's the latter, you'll find the stronghold of **control** lurking behind the nonconfrontive placation.

The co-dependent person rather than the dominant person has kept *and* wants to keep the gears turning because that's the status quo. However, if it weren't for the co-dependent person, the dominant person would have to face his or her strongholds and/or unconfessed sin. It's the *fear of confrontation* that creates and perpetuates co-dependency.

Consider these important points:

- It's far easier to help the dominant person and significant others to stop their gears from turning, that is, to *repent and change*, than it is to help the co-dependent person yield their fear of intervention.
- The sin of the dominant person or significant other(s) is often more noticeable than that of the co-dependent person, whose sin is masked by trying to avoid any confrontation.
- When the dominant person and significant others do repent and choose to be changed, the co-dependent person often fails to grasp the depth of their own sinful contribution. That's when they become dominant. They do everything they can to keep the gears turning by having others live in the same *apprehension* to which they'd become painfully accustomed. To the co-dependent person, it's familiar turf; the placation role doesn't have to change.

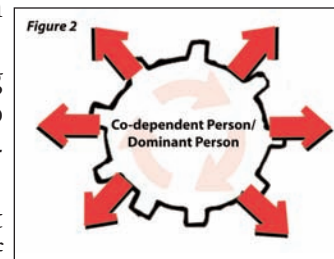
Remember, the co-dependent person lived for a long time believing that their non-confrontation was based on being truly caring. Because the actions of the dominant person were so noticeable to the others, the co-dependent person could hide his/her feelings of rejection or fear and insecurity. The co-dependent person was so desperate to avoid confrontation with the formerly dominant individual that over time, they made up excuses and explanations for the actions of the dominant person. This further deflected anyone from confronting the rejection or fear and insecurity in the heart of the co-dependent person.

How to recognize if the co-dependent gear is still turning:

You'll recognize that the gear of co-dependency still exists because the person has a need to explain the other *ex-gears* to you. Even with the ex-dominant person or ex-significant other(s) present, the co-dependent person continues to go over again the motives or actions that the former gears had exhibited. This is the stronghold of control at work, demonstrating *manipulation* — defining other people rather than letting them speak for themselves.

The co-dependent is now the dominant person, perceiving themselves as informative and caring. But to everyone else who *isn't* turning any more, the co-dependent/dominant person is *controlling*.

The quest to *be needed* as a co-dependent gear is so great that they will actively seek to recruit others into their own mesh of gears (Figure 2). It's much like a mother whose only child has left for a faraway college desperately needing someone to coddle and protect.



How to effectively minister to a co-dependent who refuses to stop:

First, you need to realize that the co-dependent saw him/herself as the “good guy”. Because they are so *feelings oriented*, they’ve habitually endeavored to keep the emotional pain of confrontation from happening. As a result, they’ll perceive your efforts to confront them as an unjust attack. They’ll raise up their defenses and refuse to hear what you need to share because their feelings are being hurt. Remember, confrontation is something they’ve tried to avoid at all cost; therefore, they’ll misinterpret your words as a heartless assault.

No matter how they respond to you, you must confront their evil behavior and motivation. They have stood in the way of bringing about repentance and true reconciliation by forbidding confrontation when it was needed. They are in the grip of deception and denial over their own sin and guilt responsibility. Motivated by love that cares enough to halt the sinful pattern, you must firmly STOP their gear from turning. The input and witness of the former gears may break through their wall of defense. However,

- if they refuse to listen,
- or refuse to stop explaining and defending their actions
- or refuse to stop bringing up excuses or explanations about the ex-gears,

then you must turn them over to Satan for the destruction of their sin nature. They are beyond any human help until Satan does his job of exposing their sinful darkness as utterly detestable to them. As difficult as this seems, it’s the truly loving thing to do. The Word calls for this action so that “[their] spirit will be saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:5). Would *you* want to remain in a prison of blind deception?

The true love of Jesus doesn’t excuse sin, but confronts it.