

28 Characteristics of Effective Christian Leaders

By Dr. Henry Harbuck, Int'l Overseer & President

The following is **an excerpt** from my book entitled “28 Characteristics of Effective Christian Leaders”. It is an easy reference guide that gives you a quick glance at the characteristics of successful Christian Leaders. The following is just one of the 28 characteristics covered in my book.

Leaders Should Have An Understanding of Behavior and Its Relationship to Church Problems

Lately bookstores have been bombarded with books about “co-dependency”. It seems psychotherapists must have overlooked this characteristic for many years, or it was titled by another name. I’ve often said, “If American doctors can’t figure out a patient’s syndrome, they will invent one.” However, when it comes to characteristics or personality traits, I believe this one is very real. Although I’ve observed this disorder in my clinical practice through the years (especially in women), I had no name for it. (*Note: Because this problem exists mostly in women, it should not be interpreted as implying that men are superior, or that men do not have some of these same traits. Rather, I base my notes totally upon current data that reveals women have a higher average of co-dependent tendencies than men.*)

Every church in America has its share of co-dependent people who need emotional healing. However, leaders should pay close attention to this problem, as I believe it is one reason why churches suffer and/or collapse. As previously stated, however, according to the best experts, most *co-dependents* are women. Many theories abound as to what causes one to become overly dependent upon others. I personally believe women who possess this trait have suffered early childhood abuse or rejection by a father, brother, male teacher, or boyfriend. Therefore, in an effort to overcome their feelings of worthlessness, they establish a “system” or “game plan” to handle their frustration. The end result is *co-dependency*. **Here is a brief description of co-dependent people:**

- They are sacrificial in order to gain control.
- They *appear* to be caregivers, but actually use this to draw attention to themselves.
- They are emotionally dependent on others; especially clinging to selected family members, friends, or pastor.
- They develop their identity from their children, husband, denomination, or any cause or movement that provides a sense of self-worth.
- They “wear themselves out” to please others. Nothing is too great a sacrifice for anyone with whom they have developed a strong co-dependency.
- To feel better about themselves, they volunteer to do anything in the church. In the end, however, they continue to feel the same. There is never any change.
- They have a fear of rejection and loss of love, often burning themselves out in their attempts to be “all things to all people”.
- They tend to reject those with whom they’ve not developed a “clinging” (co-dependent) relationship. Although at times they appear warm, they will always remain emotionally distant.
- They become totally enmeshed in the lives and problems of those to whom they cling.
- They want to *know* everything and *be* everything to those to whom they cling.
- In order to feel good about themselves, they must always be *in control*. Anyone attempting to strip the co-dependent of control will suffer a fierce attack.

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Christian leaders must guard against this tendency in their own lives. Likewise, they must carefully watch for this trait in those to whom they minister or pastor.