

# 28 Characteristics of Effective Christian Leaders

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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.