

**Here are a few questions that might help determine the difference between helping and enabling an addict in your life whether it be passive or active:**

- Have you accepted part of the blame for their addictive behavior?
- Have you avoided talking about a drinking/drugging out of fear of a negative response?
- Have you bailed out of jail or paid for legal fees?
- Have you paid bills that someone else was supposed to have paid?
- Have you loaned money?
- Have you tried drinking/drugging with him in hopes of strengthening the relationship?
- Have you given "one more chance" and then another and another?
- Have you threatened to leave and didn't?
- Have you finished a job or project that the addict failed to complete?

Decide to be honest with yourself about any part you play in enabling a loved one to continue in sin; in their addiction and then decide to repent; turn away from it and do it no more.

As long as the addict in your life has their way, as long as the enabling structure is firmly in place, it will remain easy for them to continue to deny that there is a problem because all of their problems are being taken care of by the people in their life who love them.

I know that what I have shared here is not easy. It is never easy to stand firm in truth when there is so much pressure to do otherwise. However, we must prevail! We must get all the help we can! We must do all that is up to us to do and then stand firm, trusting God to do what only He can do anyway — to make a way out of no way!

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." – PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NKJV)*

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. – 1PETER 5:6-7 (NKJV)*

*But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." – JAMES 4:6*

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

– PHILIPPIANS 4:13

Before I wrap this up I want to share a few more practical ways that you can go from being a negative enabler to one who is being redemptive in all they say and do! What this change looks like will vary from person to person and at the same time there will be some very basic things we can all do.

- Have a plan with goals that are specific and measureable
- Set clear and concise boundaries
- Understand that the process takes time
- Take time to think and consider the patterned ways you already have of responding to the addicted person in your life
- Distinguish between changeable and unchangeable

**Changeable:** Where the person lives, sleeps, eats  
The things that you allow in the home

**Unchangeable:** The past  
Damaged health  
Often broken relationships

*All scripture is from the English Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.*

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

*When People Are Big and God is Small*  
by Ed Welch

**DIGGING DEEPER**

**For more help on this topic or for information on the multi-faceted ministry of America's Keswick call 800.453.7942 or visit our website at [www.americaskeswick.org](http://www.americaskeswick.org).**



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**ENABLING**



**Enabling**

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

by **STEPHANIE PAUL**  
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*Where God speaks to hearts and transforms lives!*

*Transformation Resource Series*



## Enabling

Are you an enabler (co-dependent)? Are you always giving or always giving in? Is this good, bad, right or wrong? First let's look at the definition of an enabler:

According to dictionary.com website an enabler is as follows:

- to make able; give power, means, competence, or ability to; authorize:
- to make possible or easy:
- to make ready; equip

So by clear definition we can easily see that enabling in and of itself is not a bad thing, neither is it wrong.

If I equip my children with the means of taking care of themselves, helping them to be competent in an area of their lives, then it goes without saying that enabling in this context is good.

In being a helper to my husband there are numerous ways that I make his life easier, thereby making it possible for him to do more freely all that he can, in the best way he can to glorify God in his everyday life.

However, there is a way in which I could negatively enable my children or my husband and therefore, do harm rather than good.

For example, if one of my children was to steal something, I could respond in two ways. One way would be to use the event as an opportunity for instruction in godliness and enable them to understand that their actions have consequences for which there might be punitive results.

Another way I could respond would be to minimize, justify or cover it up. Anything we do to help avoid responsibility.

For example would I be equipping my children for life, or helping them to grow up, if I did everything for

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them? There are a number of tasks that if I did the work for them, I would simply be crippling them and rendering them dependent and incapable of functioning without me. I'd also be teaching them that they don't have to be responsible for anything. This type of interaction would establish a firm co-dependent relationship with them. They'd always need me and I'd always have them in my life, feeding whatever need I have for that type of unhealthy dependence.

Now let's put negative enabling in the context of addiction. Sometimes we enable in ignorance; other times we do so out of fear and almost always we do so thinking that we are "helping." In most, if not all cases, enabling in this way will never bear good fruit because our help really isn't help.

Let me put it this way, if I am doing anything for you that you are capable of doing or that you need to do for yourself, I am not helping you, I am hindering you and delaying the maturation process.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, our challenge will always be to relate to all people redemptively, to come alongside and be willing to make the hard choices, which are critical to the well-being of those whom we love.

The bottom line is, when it comes to addiction of any kind, we all have choices to make. We can make them for good or we can make choices that harm. The choice will always be ours to make and we can continue making them our way or we can find out what God's way is.

James 3:16-18 gives a glimpse of God's way. *"His way is the only way that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. His Way produces a harvest of righteousness sown in peace, by those who make peace."*

It's important to note that we will never be likely to make good and righteous choices apart from seeking God. We cannot rightly discern what is right to do without first going to Him in prayer and knowing Him through His word. So often I hear people say that God's Word doesn't tell them how to think and act

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toward an addict. I dare you to put God to the test! His Word is full of sinful people doing life on their terms, people who refused to submit to His Lordship in their lives and thus, they went astray, were even led away captive at times by His sworn enemies. Over and over again they rebelled against God and His way and suffered sometimes fatal consequences. And over and over again He led them out of bondage, setting them free from whatever or whoever held them captive.

God has a way and a plan for our lives and for those whom we love. The question is: are we willing to seek Him, listen to His voice and obey His Word? There is no magic pill; no pixie dust, no easy way. It is work — hard work and we don't have to go it alone. He is with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us!

I'm going to share with you a few key ways that you can help the person in your life who may be trapped in the bondage of addiction and at the same time, hopefully, free yourself from the thinking that it is up to you to change them or make them better. I'll put them in the form of decisions:

**Decide to examine your own heart and life for ways in which you may be enabling** and then go to God and ask for help, strength and a willingness to change; to get out of His way!

**Decide to be okay with saying the word, "No!"** Say "no" to manipulation even at the risk of someone being mad at you. Know that with God on your side you can say and do the extraordinary and the unpopular.

**Decide that you are not going to actively or passively participate in sinful, unhealthy behavior.** To actively participate could mean you go and buy drugs or alcohol; you give money when it's demanded knowing full well what it will be used for. You allow drinking and drug use in the home, thinking that it is after all better than them being in the street using them, where something bad could possible happen. Passive participation could be saying and doing nothing just to keep the peace, to avoid someone being angry with you. It could mean you call into work when your husband or loved one has a hangover, lying about why they can't come to work that day.

The list could go on regarding the many things we do out of so-called love for the addict in our lives.