

# BELOVED RISING

## 12-Week Freedom in Christ Journey

*Small Group Curriculum*

Breaking Free from Co-Dependency

Finding Your True Identity in Christ

## Table of Contents

Introduction for Leaders

Week 1: Awakening to Truth

Week 2: Understanding Co-Dependency

Week 3: Recognizing Narcissistic Patterns

Week 4: Your True Identity in Christ

Week 5: Breaking the Performance Trap

Week 6: Healthy Boundaries

Week 7: Grieving What Was Lost

Week 8: Renewing Your Mind

Week 9: Learning to Trust Again

Week 10: Voice and Validation

Week 11: Walking in Freedom

Week 12: Living as Beloved

Leader's Guide

## Introduction for Leaders

Welcome to the Beloved Rising 12-week journey. This curriculum is designed for individuals recovering from co-dependent relationships and narcissistic abuse, particularly within religious contexts. Your role as a leader is vital in creating a safe, grace-filled environment where healing can occur.

## What Makes This Curriculum Unique

Unlike traditional recovery programs that rely solely on psychological principles, Beloved Rising integrates biblical truth with proven therapeutic insights. This curriculum recognizes that co-dependency often has spiritual roots and requires spiritual healing, while also addressing the practical, emotional, and relational aspects of recovery.

## Core Principles

- **Grace Over Performance:** Participants are not here to perform or prove themselves worthy. They are already beloved by God.
- **Truth Telling:** Create space for honest sharing about painful experiences, including church hurt and spiritual abuse.
- **No Spiritual Bypassing:** Avoid quick-fix scriptures or minimizing pain with religious platitudes.
- **Respect Individual Pace:** Healing is not linear. Some weeks will be harder than others.
- **Confidentiality is Sacred:** What's shared in the group stays in the group.

## Preparing to Lead

Before beginning this curriculum, ensure you have:

- Done your own healing work around co-dependency and boundaries
- A clear understanding of narcissistic abuse patterns
- Resources for professional referrals (therapists, counselors) when needed
- A co-leader or support person for your own accountability

## Session Structure

Each 90-minute session includes:

- **Opening (10 min):** Brief check-in and centering exercise
- **Teaching (15 min):** Present the week's core concepts
- **Discussion (40 min):** Guided questions for group sharing
- **Activity (15 min):** Interactive exercise or reflection
- **Closing (10 min):** Review homework and prayer

# Week 1: Awakening to Truth

## Session Overview

This opening session creates a safe foundation for the journey ahead. Participants will begin to recognize patterns in their relationships and understand that they are not alone. The focus is on validation, hope, and beginning to see their situation clearly.

## Key Scripture

*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - John 8:32*

## Opening Exercise (10 min)

Have each person share their name and complete this sentence: "I'm here because..." Keep it brief. No one is required to go into detail yet. Emphasize that this is a judgment-free space.

## Discussion Questions

- When did you first realize something wasn't right in your relationship or situation?
- What words would you use to describe how you've been feeling? (exhausted, confused, guilty, etc.)
- Have you been told that the problems were all your fault? How did that affect you?
- What religious or spiritual messages made it harder to see the truth of your situation?
- What gives you hope that healing is possible?

## Group Activity (15 min)

### "Naming the Patterns" Exercise

On a whiteboard or large paper, create two columns: "What I Was Told" and "What Is Actually True." Have participants call out common lies they've believed about themselves or their situations. Then, together, identify the corresponding truth.

Examples:

"You're too sensitive" → "My feelings are valid and deserve to be heard"

"If you just pray/submit more" → "Abuse is never God's will for my life"

"You're destroying the family" → "I'm protecting myself and that's healthy"

## Personal Reflection

Take time to journal on this question: "What truths am I beginning to see that I couldn't see before?" Allow yourself to acknowledge the pain of waking up to reality while also celebrating the courage it takes to face the truth.

## Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read and meditate on John 8:31-36. Ask God to show you truth, even when it hurts.

- Journal: Write about one pattern in your relationship that you now recognize as unhealthy.
- Read: Research the basic characteristics of narcissistic behavior and co-dependency. Notice which ones resonate with your experience.
- Practice: When you notice yourself minimizing or excusing harmful behavior, pause and name it for what it is.

## Week 2: Understanding Co-Dependency

### Session Overview

This session helps participants understand the roots and patterns of co-dependent behavior. The goal is insight without shame, recognizing that co-dependency developed as a survival mechanism, not a character flaw.

### Key Scripture

*"Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." - Galatians 1:10*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one insight from last week's homework. What truth became clearer to you this week?

### Discussion Questions

- Looking back at your childhood or early relationships, when did you first learn to prioritize others' needs over your own?
- What messages did you receive about being "selfless" or "serving others"? How were these teachings used or misused?
- Can you identify times when you've sacrificed your own wellbeing, values, or truth to keep peace or gain approval?
- How has co-dependency shown up in your spiritual life? (Over-functioning in church, inability to say no, etc.)
- What would it mean to honor both God and your own needs? Does that feel possible?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "The Co-Dependency Inventory"

Review a list of co-dependent traits together. Have each person privately mark which ones they identify with:

- Difficulty identifying or expressing feelings
- Feeling responsible for others' emotions and behaviors
- Chronic people-pleasing and fear of disapproval
- Poor boundaries or inability to say no
- Seeking validation and identity through others
- Perfectionism and excessive responsibility
- Difficulty trusting your own perceptions

Discuss: Which of these patterns feel most familiar? How have they affected your relationships?

### Personal Reflection

Write a letter to your younger self, the one who first learned to abandon their own needs. What do you want them to know? What grace do you want to offer them?

## Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Galatians 1:10. Ask yourself: Whose approval am I seeking today?
- Journal: Track moments when you feel responsible for someone else's emotions. Notice the physical sensations in your body.
- Practice: Say no to one request this week, even a small one. Notice what feelings come up.
- Read: Research generational patterns and family systems. Consider how co-dependency may have been modeled in your family.

## Week 3: Recognizing Narcissistic Patterns

### Session Overview

This session provides education about narcissistic abuse patterns, helping participants understand the dynamics they've experienced. The goal is clarity and validation, not diagnosis or demonization.

### Key Scripture

*"For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people." - Romans 16:18*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Check in: How did it feel to say no this week? What resistance did you experience, either internally or externally?

### Discussion Questions

- What behaviors have you experienced that left you feeling confused, crazy, or constantly wrong?
- Can you identify times when love was used as a weapon or reward, given and withheld to control you?
- How have you experienced gaslighting, where your reality was denied or twisted?
- Have you witnessed a pattern of charm toward others but cruelty behind closed doors?
- How has spiritual language been weaponized against you? (submission, forgiveness, authority, etc.)

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "The Narcissistic Cycle"

Draw or display the narcissistic abuse cycle: Idealization → Devaluation → Discard → Hoovering. Discuss each phase:

- **Idealization:** Love-bombing, intense attention, promises of a perfect future
- **Devaluation:** Criticism, contempt, withdrawal of affection, blame-shifting
- **Discard:** Sudden abandonment, cold indifference, or replacing you
- **Hoovering:** Attempts to suck you back in with apologies, promises, or crisis

Have participants identify where they are in this cycle or which phases they've experienced repeatedly.

### Personal Reflection

Write about a specific incident where you felt your reality was denied or twisted. What actually happened? What were you told happened? How did this make you feel about yourself?

### Weekly Homework



- Daily: Read Romans 16:17-18 and Proverbs 26:28. Ask God to give you discernment between love and manipulation.
- Journal: List examples of gaslighting or reality-twisting you've experienced. Write the truth beside each one.
- Practice: When someone contradicts your experience, pause and write down what you know to be true. Trust your perceptions.
- Read: Look into trauma bonding and cognitive dissonance. Recognize how these psychological mechanisms kept you attached to harm.

## Week 4: Your True Identity in Christ

### Session Overview

This pivotal session shifts focus from what happened to who you truly are. Participants will begin to rebuild their identity on the foundation of God's love rather than human approval or performance.

### Key Scripture

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" - 1 John 3:1*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one truth you reclaimed this week by trusting your own perceptions.

### Discussion Questions

- Who have you believed yourself to be based on the messages you received from others?
- What names or labels have been put on you? (difficult, rebellious, not enough, too much, etc.)
- How does God see you differently than you've been taught to see yourself?
- What would change if you fully believed you are beloved, chosen, and delighted in by God?
- How have performance and works distorted your understanding of God's grace?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Identity Cards"

Provide index cards and markers. On one side, have participants write the false identity they've carried (the lies they've believed about themselves). On the other side, write their true identity in Christ using scriptures:

- I am chosen (Ephesians 1:4)
- I am loved (Romans 8:38-39)
- I am forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14)
- I am free (Galatians 5:1)
- I am a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Encourage participants to tear up or ceremonially discard the side with lies, keeping only the truth.

### Personal Reflection

Meditate on Romans 8:38-39. Write about what it means that nothing can separate you from God's love. Does this include your mistakes? Your failures? Your current struggles?

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read 1 John 3:1. Speak aloud: "I am a child of God. This is who I am."

- Journal: Write your own spiritual birth certificate. Include the date you came to understand God's love, who you are in Christ, and the inheritance that belongs to you.
- Practice: When old messages of unworthiness arise, counter them with scripture. Speak truth over the lies.
- Read: Study passages about adoption (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:4-7, Ephesians 1:5). You are not a slave; you are a son or daughter.

## Week 5: Breaking the Performance Trap

### Session Overview

This session confronts the exhausting cycle of earning love and approval through performance. Participants will learn to distinguish between grace-based living and works-based identity.

### Key Scripture

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." - Ephesians 2:8-9*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one way you practiced speaking truth over lies this week. What resistance did you encounter?

### Discussion Questions

- What have you been doing to try to earn love, acceptance, or approval?
- How have you measured your worth by your productivity, service, or spiritual performance?
- What would it mean to rest in God's finished work instead of trying to add to it?
- Can you identify the fear underneath your performance? (fear of rejection, abandonment, anger, etc.)
- How has religion or church culture reinforced performance-based worth?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "The Performance Wheel"

Draw a wheel with spokes, each representing an area where participants have tried to earn acceptance: ministry, parenting, marriage, career, appearance, spiritual disciplines, etc. Have each person identify their primary performance areas. Discuss:

- What happens when you can't maintain this level of performance?
- How has this wheel kept you spinning but never arriving?
- What would happen if you stepped off the wheel? What do you fear?

### Personal Reflection

Complete this sentence in as many ways as you can: "I am afraid that if I stop performing, then..." Be brutally honest. Then respond to each fear with God's truth.

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Sit with the word "gift." You can't earn a gift.
- Journal: Write about one area where you will intentionally stop performing this week. How does this feel?
- Practice: Say no to one church activity, volunteer opportunity, or request without explanation or guilt.

- Read: Study the concept of Sabbath rest. What does God's command to rest reveal about His character and His view of you?

## Week 6: Healthy Boundaries

### Session Overview

This crucial session teaches the biblical basis for boundaries and provides practical tools for establishing and maintaining them. Participants will learn that boundaries are not selfish but essential for healthy relationships.

### Key Scripture

*"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." - Proverbs 4:23*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share about your experience stepping off the performance wheel. What happened? What did you learn?

### Discussion Questions

- What messages did you receive about boundaries growing up? In church?
- How have you been taught that boundaries are selfish, unloving, or unChristian?
- Where in your life do you currently have poor or no boundaries?
- What are you afraid will happen if you set boundaries? (anger, rejection, being called selfish, etc.)
- Can you think of biblical examples where Jesus set boundaries? (with family, crowds, religious leaders, etc.)

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Boundary Scenarios"

Present common scenarios and practice boundary-setting responses:

- Someone demands to know details about your personal life
- A family member insists you attend an event where you'll be unsafe
- Your time and resources are being exploited
- Someone tries to guilt you using spiritual language

Practice clear, kind, firm responses: "I'm not comfortable discussing that." "That doesn't work for me." "I understand you're disappointed, but this is what I need."

### Personal Reflection

Draw a circle representing yourself. Inside the circle, write what you are responsible FOR (your feelings, choices, behaviors, relationship with God). Outside the circle, write what you are not responsible for (others' feelings, choices, behaviors, healing).

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Proverbs 4:23 and Galatians 6:2-5. Notice the balance between bearing burdens and carrying your own load.
- Journal: Identify three boundaries you need to set. Write them down clearly: "I will not..." "I need..." "I have the right to..."

- Practice: Set one small boundary this week. Notice your feelings and the response you receive.
- Read: Study examples of Jesus' boundaries: withdrawing from crowds (Mark 1:35), confronting hypocrisy (Matthew 23), limiting time with family (Mark 3:31-35).

## Week 7: Grieving What Was Lost

### Session Overview

Healing requires grief. This session gives permission to mourn the losses that come with awakening to truth: lost years, relationships, dreams, and even the loss of the person you thought you were dealing with.

### Key Scripture

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." - Psalm 34:18*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Check in about boundaries. Did you set one this week? What happened?

### Discussion Questions

- What have you lost as a result of this relationship or situation?
- Have you given yourself permission to grieve, or have you been told to "just forgive and move on"?
- What are you mourning: the relationship as it was, or the relationship you hoped it could be?
- How does it feel to acknowledge that the person you loved may never have truly existed as you perceived them?
- What comfort does God offer to the brokenhearted?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Lament Prayer"

Explain that the Psalms are filled with honest, raw expressions of pain to God. Read Psalm 13 together as an example. Then, give time for participants to write their own lament prayer. Provide prompts:

- "How long, O Lord?"
- "Why did You allow...?"
- "I feel abandoned when..."
- "But I will trust You because..."

Invite those who are comfortable to share their lament aloud. Hold space for tears without trying to fix or comfort prematurely.

### Personal Reflection

Write a list of everything you are grieving. Don't minimize or spiritualize. Be specific. This is holy work.

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Psalm 34:18. Know that God is with you in your pain, not condemning you for feeling it.
- Journal: Allow yourself to feel one emotion each day without judgment. Name it, sit with it, and bring it to God.



- Practice: Create a small ritual of release. Write your grief on paper and burn it, or bury it. Mark this as part of your healing.
- Read: Study the stages of grief. Recognize that healing is not linear; you may cycle through these stages multiple times.

## Week 8: Renewing Your Mind

### Session Overview

This session focuses on the practical work of replacing lies with truth, rewiring thought patterns, and learning to take captive thoughts that don't align with God's character or word.

### Key Scripture

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." - Romans 12:2*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one insight from your grief work this week. How is God meeting you in your pain?

### Discussion Questions

- What automatic negative thoughts do you notice recurring in your mind?
- How have the lies you've been told become the voice in your own head?
- What practices help you interrupt destructive thought patterns?
- How does scripture function differently than positive affirmations or self-help mantras?
- What would it look like to take every thought captive to Christ?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Thought Records"

Provide a worksheet with four columns: Situation | Automatic Thought | Evidence Against | Truth. Work through examples together:

- **Situation:** Friend doesn't respond to text
- **Automatic Thought:** "I did something wrong. They're mad at me."
- **Evidence Against:** They have a life. Not everything is about me. They've been busy before.
- **Truth:** "I am not responsible for others' responses. I am worthy of love even when not receiving immediate attention."

Have participants practice with their own examples.

### Personal Reflection

Identify the top three lies you believe about yourself. For each one, find a scripture that speaks the opposite truth. Memorize these scriptures.

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5. Ask God to help you recognize thoughts that don't align with His truth.
- Journal: Use the thought record worksheet daily. Track your automatic thoughts and replace them with truth.

- Practice: When you notice a lie, speak the truth out loud. Literally interrupt the thought with scripture.
- Read: Study cognitive distortions (all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, mind-reading). Notice which ones you tend toward.

## Week 9: Learning to Trust Again

### Session Overview

Betrayal destroys trust, and participants may struggle to trust God, others, or even themselves. This session addresses how to rebuild trust wisely, discerning between healthy and unsafe relationships.

### Key Scripture

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." - Proverbs 3:5-6*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one lie you replaced with truth this week. How did speaking truth change your perspective?

### Discussion Questions

- How has betrayal affected your ability to trust God?
- Do you struggle to trust your own judgment after being manipulated?
- What's the difference between trusting God and trusting people?
- How can you discern who is safe to trust versus who has not earned trust?
- Is it possible to forgive someone and still not trust them? Should you?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Trust Audit"

Create two columns: Safe People and Unsafe People. List characteristics of each:

- **Safe:** Consistent words and actions, respects boundaries, takes responsibility, allows disagreement, celebrates your growth
- **Unsafe:** Says one thing, does another, violates boundaries, blames others, can't handle truth, feels threatened by your healing

Have participants privately assess their relationships. Who is safe? Who isn't? What changes are needed?

### Personal Reflection

Write a letter to God expressing your struggle with trust. Tell Him the truth about your doubts, fears, and anger. Then listen. What do you sense Him saying to you?

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Proverbs 3:5-6. Ask God to help you trust Him even when you can't trust people.
- Journal: Reflect on times God proved faithful even when people weren't. Build evidence of His trustworthiness.
- Practice: Take one small risk with a safe person. Share something vulnerable. Notice how it feels.
- Read: Study the concept of earned trust. Trust is not given automatically; it's built through consistent, safe behavior over time.



## Week 10: Voice and Validation

### Session Overview

Co-dependency often silences your voice. This session empowers participants to speak up, express needs, and stop seeking external validation for what they already know to be true.

### Key Scripture

*"Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you." - Philippians 2:17*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share about your experience taking a risk with a safe person. What did you learn?

### Discussion Questions

- When did you learn to silence your own voice?
- What happens when you try to speak up about your needs or feelings?
- How have you been trained to seek validation from others rather than trusting yourself?
- What would it look like to honor your own voice without needing others to affirm it first?
- How does God validate your experience and give you permission to speak?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "I Need" Statements

Practice articulating needs without apology or over-explanation. Go around the circle and have each person complete these sentences:

- "I need..."
- "I deserve..."
- "I will no longer tolerate..."
- "I have the right to..."

Notice how it feels to speak these statements clearly and unapologetically.

### Personal Reflection

Write about what you've been afraid to say. To whom? Why? What would happen if you spoke up? What's the cost of continuing to stay silent?

### Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Psalm 139. God knows you fully and values your voice.
- Journal: Practice writing "I need" statements without justifying, explaining, or apologizing.
- Practice: Speak one truth this week that you've been afraid to say. Notice the response and how you feel.
- Read: Study assertive communication. Learn the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive expression.



# Week 11: Walking in Freedom

## Session Overview

Freedom has been won, but now it must be lived. This session addresses what it looks like to walk in daily freedom, resist old patterns, and make choices from a place of health rather than fear.

## Key Scripture

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." - Galatians 5:1*

## Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share about speaking up this week. What truth did you finally say?

## Discussion Questions

- What does freedom look like for you personally?
- How do you recognize when you're slipping back into old patterns?
- What daily practices help you stay rooted in truth and freedom?
- How do you respond now when someone tries to manipulate or control you?
- What does it mean that Christ has set you free from performing, pleasing, and proving?

## Group Activity (15 min)

### "Freedom Looks Good On Me"

Create a "Then vs. Now" comparison. Have participants reflect on specific changes:

- **Then:** I believed I was responsible for everyone's happiness
- **Now:** I know I'm only responsible for my own choices
- **Then:** I couldn't say no without guilt
- **Now:** I set boundaries clearly and kindly

Celebrate these changes together. Freedom looks good on each of them.

## Personal Reflection

What does a life of freedom look like practically for you? Be specific. What will you do differently? What will you no longer tolerate?

## Weekly Homework

- Daily: Read Galatians 5:1. Declare over yourself: "I am free. I will not go back."
- Journal: Create a "Freedom Plan" outlining warning signs of old patterns and your response plan.
- Practice: Make one decision this week from a place of freedom, not fear. What changes when you're no longer controlled by others' reactions?
- Read: Study what it means to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). Freedom is not independence; it's dependence on God.



## Week 12: Living as Beloved

### Session Overview

This final session anchors participants in their identity as God's beloved. The journey doesn't end here; this is a new beginning. They are loved, free, and equipped to live from that truth.

### Key Scripture

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" - 1 John 3:1*

### Opening Exercise (10 min)

Share one decision you made from freedom this week, not fear.

### Discussion Questions

- How has your understanding of God's love changed through this journey?
- What does it mean to you personally to be called "beloved"?
- Looking back at Week 1, what has changed in you?
- What practices will you continue to maintain your freedom?
- How might God use your story to help others find freedom?

### Group Activity (15 min)

#### "Beloved Declarations"

Provide beautiful paper or cards. Have each participant write their own "I Am Beloved" declaration, including:

- Who I am in Christ
- What I will no longer tolerate
- What I commit to protect in myself
- How I will walk in freedom

Invite participants to read these aloud as a proclamation. Celebrate together.

### Personal Reflection

Write a letter to yourself one year from now. What do you hope to see? What do you want to remember? What truths do you never want to forget?

### Closing Ceremony

Consider a simple ceremony to mark this milestone: lighting candles, sharing communion, anointing with oil, or praying over each participant. This is holy ground. They are not who they were 12 weeks ago.

### Continuing the Journey

Discuss how the group might continue: monthly check-ins, ongoing community, accountability partners, or moving into a new study. Healing is not a one-time event; it's a lifestyle.

# Leader's Guide

## Essential Principles for Leading

### 1. Create Psychological Safety

Participants are coming from environments where it was unsafe to be themselves. Your group must be different. This means:

- Establishing and enforcing strict confidentiality
- Never pressuring anyone to share more than they're ready to
- Validating all feelings without judgment or spiritual correction
- Protecting the group from anyone who violates safety

### 2. Avoid Spiritual Bypassing

Do not use scripture to minimize pain or rush healing. Avoid phrases like:

- "Just forgive and move on"
- "God works all things for good" (without honoring the current pain)
- "You need to submit/respect/honor" (when abuse is present)
- "If you had more faith..."

Instead, sit with people in their pain. Lament with them. Acknowledge that what happened was wrong.

### 3. Recognize Trauma Responses

Understand that participants may exhibit:

- Hypervigilance and scanning the room for danger
- Difficulty trusting authority figures, including you
- Emotional dysregulation or shutting down
- Testing boundaries to see if they're safe
- Difficulty making decisions or stating preferences

These are normal responses to abnormal situations. Be patient, consistent, and safe.

### 4. Maintain Appropriate Boundaries

As a leader, you must model healthy boundaries:

- Do not become a participant's therapist, rescuer, or sole support
- Refer to professional counseling when needed
- Don't allow one person to dominate group time
- Protect your own emotional energy and seek support

## Handling Difficult Situations

### When Someone Is in Crisis

- Take them seriously. Don't minimize suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Have crisis resources readily available (hotlines, emergency contacts)
- Maintain confidentiality unless there is imminent danger
- Follow up personally within 24 hours

### When Someone Wants to Reconcile With Their Abuser

- Do not forbid or encourage. Allow them to process their own decision.
- Ask questions: "What has changed? How will you protect yourself? What are your non-negotiables?"

- Discuss the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation (one is always required, the other requires repentance and change)
- Be prepared for potential relapse into old patterns

### **When Someone Isn't Ready to Leave**

- Respect their timeline. Leaving is complex and dangerous.
- Plant seeds of truth without pressuring decisions
- Help them create a safety plan even if they're staying
- Keep the door open. They may need to leave and return multiple times before permanently separating

## **Facilitating Discussion**

### **Creating Space for All Voices**

- If someone dominates, gently redirect: "Thank you for sharing. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."
- For quiet members: "We haven't heard from you yet. Would you like to share, or would you prefer to pass?"
- Allow silence. Not every question needs an immediate answer.
- Use "popcorn" style sharing where anyone can speak when ready, rather than going in order

### **When Disagreements Arise**

- Affirm that different perspectives are valid
- Redirect from debate back to personal experience: "How does this apply to your own story?"
- Don't allow anyone to correct or challenge another's experience

## **Self-Care for Leaders**

Leading this curriculum will stir up your own healing work. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Ensure you have:

- Your own therapist or counselor
- A supervisor or mentor for debriefing
- Strong personal boundaries
- Regular spiritual practices that fill you up
- Permission to say no or step back if needed

## **Additional Resources**

Recommended Reading:

- "Boundaries" by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel van der Kolk
- "Safe People" by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- "When the Church Hurts" by various authors
- "Spiritual Abuse Recovery" resources

Professional Referrals:

- Trauma-informed therapists specializing in narcissistic abuse
- Domestic violence resources and hotlines
- Legal aid for protection orders if needed
- Support groups for co-dependency and abuse survivors

*Thank you for leading this journey. You are helping set captives free.*