

Beside Still Waters



Discovering Peace in the Midst of
Your Child's Addiction:

A Guide for Mothers of Addicts

Cherri Raws Freeman

Love Them to Life

ISBN 978-0-9962471-2-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64258-102-7 (digital)

Formerly published under ISBN 978-1-64258-101-0

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Cover Concept by Ali Pavuk
1st Edition Photo by Cherri Freeman
1st Edition Cover by Mark Phillips, marksphillips.com Formatted
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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references were taken from the English Standard Version (Crossway Publishers).

Printed in the United States of America

Praise for *Beside Still Waters*

“From one wounded mom’s heart to another, Cherri uses biblical principles to help moms with addicted children of any age to find hope, freedom, peace, and the skills to deal with the devastation of that addiction. As moms of addicted children, we tend to love them to death...literally. Here we learn a new way to love them to life!

—MaryAnn Kiernan, MA, BCCC, Intake Coordinator for
the Colony of Mercy, Biblical Counselor

“*Beside Still Waters* is a marvelous book that reflects my own journey as a mother whose son has been in addiction. Through this book, I have realized that I am not alone, that I can trust my Heavenly Father, and that I can love my child to life. Through the healing and hope in my life, God has led me to bring Cherri’s guidance and biblical teaching to help others.”

—Susan Mathisen, facilitator/Care Group Leader,
Faith Baptist Church, Bartlett, TN.

“Cherri Freeman speaks straight into the heart of anyone walking through life with a child in addiction. This book compels the reader to draw closer to the Lord and to understand that living with shame and guilt is not where we are to stay; our strength lies in our true identity in Christ. This message of hope will equip the reader to assist their child to brokenness. Only then can we ‘love them to life.’”

—Sharon Dickerson, Facilitator – Love Them to Life
support group, Coastal Christian Church, Ocean City, NJ.

“Cherri Freeman is an anamcara, which, for the non-Gaelic reader, is a soul friend. Anamcaras are present in others’ lives in times of sorrow, loss, and dying. If you or someone you love is immersed in the plague of addiction, you need Cherri to help, explain, and guide you. My prayer is that *Beside Still Waters* becomes a source of grace and healing to your soul.”

—Rev. Charles Harrah, Director of CURE (Christians
United for Recovery), Associate Pastor at The
Lighthouse Church, Cape May Courthouse, NJ.

“*Beside Still Waters* is a resource that needs to find its way into the hands of every mother whose child struggles with addiction. It provides valuable information in bite-size portions, and guides personal reflection leading to practical application. More than helping mothers know what to *do* in response to a child’s addiction, it helps mothers learn how to *be* in the midst of seemingly hopeless circumstances. Cherri wants you to know that you are not alone!

There is One who is sufficient to carry you through the dark valley of your child's addiction."

—Dr. David A. Ridder, Senior Pastor, Bayside Chapel

"Cherri brings some extremely difficult, and often unspoken, mother-heart issues into the light and strips them of their condemning power with honest open discussion. She brings a sense of order and hope into the confusion of parenting a child in addiction.

Cherri understands a mother's heart is motivated by the desire to prove its love. Through wisdom borne of experience she shares how this God-given desire becomes a complex, confusing, and painful force in our lives. She brings clarity and hope through her discussion on loving your child to Life rather than loving them as if they are our source of life. The difference is pivotal to experiencing rest, peace, and hope, and to being free to love our children with Father's eyes."

—Leis Steve, Biblical Counselor Life Point Ministries

Dedication

This book was born out of the pain of being the mother of children who had lost their way and stumbled into the seeming abyss of addiction. Although that pain is fierce, I am grateful to God for using my experiences to help other mothers as they walk through deep waters.

Many thanks to Cathy Solomon for her hours of work formatting this book. We couldn't have done it without you, Cathy.

Thanks also to Dr. John Woodward for his editing, mentoring, and constant support.

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Introduction

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me (Psalm 23:1-4).

As a mom who deeply loves her children, including those who have been caught in the idolatry of addiction, I often feel as if there are no still waters in my life. The cascading torrents of trouble pour on relentlessly with no end in sight, or at least it seems that way. Where are those still waters? Mothers of addicts walk through the valley of the shadow of death every day. There is the death of hopes and dreams, the death of trust and integrity, and the potential of an overdose every time they get high. There is palpable fear along with the desire to control the situation, to make everything somehow work out okay.

My prayer for you is that you will find those still waters in the arms of the God who loves you more than you could possibly know. While these are not exhaustive studies on each topic, may they help you learn to work through the tough issues surrounding addiction in a healthy way. Life doesn't always work out the way we dreamed it would, but you can rest in His faithfulness, His sovereignty, and trust in His never-ending love for your child and for you.

Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward You will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:23-26 ESV)

Please note that a facilitator's guide is available as a download on the *Love Them to Life* website:

www.lovethemtolive.com

Chapter 1 The Anatomy of Addiction

“Why can’t my child just stop doing drugs or drinking? He knows it is harmful and he says he wants to stop but he keeps making bad choices.”

All of us have our own ‘addictions,’ to some extent (especially when it comes to chocolate!), but unless we personally have been in chemical addiction, it is difficult to understand the slavery it brings.

Gerald May, M.D., in his book, *Addiction and Grace*, defines addiction as follows:

Addiction is a state of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a person’s will and desire.

There are many different types of addiction, but they primarily fall into three categories:

1. addiction to a chemical substance(s), such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, food, or caffeine.
2. addiction to a behavior, such as shopping, sex, pornography, gambling, work, sports, and others.
3. addiction to relationships, such as codependency or domination/abuse of another person.

It is crucial for moms to understand addiction in order to better know how to deal with their children, no matter what age they are. Many moms are dealing with adult offspring who are in their 40’s, 50’s, and even 60’s and are still asking to live at home or asking for money.

Gerald May states that there are five essential characteristics of addiction:

- tolerance
- withdrawal symptoms

- self-deception
 - loss of willpower
 - distortion of attention
1. Tolerance: when people use a certain substance long enough, they become used to it. More of that substance is needed to get the same effects.
 2. Withdrawal symptoms: when a person stops an addictive substance, the body goes through withdrawal, causing nervous system reactions such as irritability, agitation, increased pulse rate, tremors, and panic. There is also a rebound effect that causes opposite types of symptoms from the prior effect of the drug. Rebound from a depressant drug will cause hyperactivity and so on.
 3. Self-deception: the person is often deluded into thinking they are safe and can stop at any time. They use the techniques of rationalization, minimization, and denial to persuade themselves that they are okay.
 4. Loss of willpower: one part of addiction that makes it so difficult for loved ones to understand is that the person's will is essentially divided in two. One part of the will is sick of living that life and wants to get better. The other part of the will, which is most often stronger, wants to continue in the addiction. The person may make repeated resolutions to stop the destructive behavior. Every time the resolutions fail, the addiction becomes more powerful. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 7:15-24, describes so well the conflict of will when he talks about doing the things he does not want

the anatomy of addiction

to do and not doing the things he knows he should. He finally cries out in agony:

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Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

According to Dr. May, if a person can simply will themselves to stop, they are not truly addicted.

5. Distortion of attention: finding the next fix or the next drink becomes all-consuming, to the exclusion of all other needs and responsibilities, including health, finances, food, family, relationships, and certainly God.

The essence of addiction is the sin of idolatry: worshiping the next fix and sacrificing everything to get it. Every time we try to fill the hole in our souls with anything other than God, it is a form of addiction and is a destructive stronghold.

Questions:

1. When did you first suspect that your child was addicted? How did you feel?
2. What does the phrase “addiction as idolatry” mean to you? Can you see areas of your own life that could become addictions?
3. Codependency is an addiction as much as drug or alcohol use. Is it possible that “helping” your child could be an addiction in your life?

Prayer:

Father, we need to be wise in understanding our children's addictions and clearly seeing the battle that is going on for their very lives. Please give us wisdom as we seek to assist them to brokenness so that they will surrender to You.