

S E T F R E E

**FINDING TRUTH AND HOPE
WHEN A LOVED ONE IS ADDICTED**

CHERRI RAWS FREEMAN

LOVE THEM TO LIFE PRESS

ENDORSEMENTS

Cherri Raws Freeman has written a painfully honest assessment of the devastation addiction unleashes on families. With drug and alcohol dependencies on the rise, *Set Free* is a must-read for every parent and grandparent whose descendants are dealing with addiction. The real-life stories, spiritual insights, and practical helps are priceless. It's also a book for those who think their kids have sidestepped the ravages of chemical enslavement, because God only knows what they still might face.

— John Ashmen, President, Citygate Network

Cherri Raws Freeman has documented the amazing stories of people impacted by addiction. The stories are worth the price of the book. However, Cherri's experiences and her own background living as a child at The Colony of Mercy make the suggestions she shares real and practical. This book will be very helpful for those who (1) are addicted; (2) those who have children and loved one who are addicted; and (3) those who need to know more about our culture today and the massive issue of addiction, especially drug addiction. It is a pleasure to highly recommend the book.

— Dr. Marti McCullough, Distinguished Professor
Emeritus, Cairn University

Having been personally impacted by addiction 30 years ago and serving in addiction recovery, I have read dozens of books on addiction, and attended many classes and seminars. While some were very helpful, Cherri Freeman's new book, "Set Free" is a true gem for anyone seeking a deeper biblical understanding of addiction, it's causes, effects on loved ones, and most importantly, what each individual can do to walk in freedom from the slavery to addiction or how to understand what you can do, if someone you love is an addict. For anyone like me, who was caught blindsided in the midst of addiction, this book will not only help you understand addiction, but will help you to move from insanity to being able to live each day wholly dependent on the only One who can help you to live with joy, strength and peace, Jesus Christ. A book that will be underlined and highlighted and referred to again and again. A must read.

— MaryAnn Kiernan MCC, Counselor and Retired Intake Manager of the Colony of Mercy at America's Keswick.

SET FREE proved to be a great read in engaging the truth and pathway out of addiction, as well as freeing all those involved. My wife Karen and I stepped through the challenges of a child enslaved by addiction and were devastated by this challenging journey as we responded as most parents would, from the heart and according to our emotions. We didn't know how to apply 1 John 3:20 as our hearts condemned us. Through some great programs and wonderful books like Cherri's, we began to realize we had to walk in and by "Truth." As a pastor, my heart has always been broken for those addicted and in bondage as well as those family members enslaved also. I have directed Celebrate Recovery Programs for some 10 years, as well as counseled many. Cherri's book, *Set Free* has beautifully laid out the whole picture, including the statistics, the addicted one's

plight, how we enable, the vain efforts to fix the person we love, and finally, the road home to healing and deliverance. I loved the real-life stories that were included. I would recommend this book to everyone seeking recovery and healing! Thank You, Cherri! God bless.

— Gary Coleman, Senior Pastor,
First Baptist Church, East Providence R.I.

Cherri Raws Freeman's book, *Set Free: Finding Truth and Hope When a Loved One is Addicted*, injects light into a dark subject. There is, as the book makes clear, a silent epidemic of addiction happening all around us that we tend to ignore until we can't. When someone we love finds themselves in the grips of addiction, this is the book we'll need. It is honest and passionate. Written from places of personal hurt and healing, Freeman reveals the harsh truth and realities of addiction. But at the same time, the book is thoughtful and offers help. Its primary goal, after all, is to set people free in the hope and power of the gospel. I suspect this book will be a lifeline for many.

— Dr. Travis Dickinson, author of *Wandering Toward God: Finding Faith amid Doubts and Big Questions*

Cherri's heritage of America's Keswick, her family heartaches, and her personal testimony give her a passion to help those struggling with addiction and their families. Her decade of recovery ministry and her research and writing skills contribute to make this volume a unique and reliable resource. It will be required reading for our recovery coach training.

— Dr. John Woodward, Director of Counseling and
Training, Grace Fellowship International

Are you a family member of someone in the grip of addiction? *Set Free: Finding Truth and Hope When a Loved One is Addicted* offers the support needed to help you navigate the process of their journey. Cherri knows firsthand of what she writes, having been on that journey with her children. Encouraging testimonies are strategically interwoven with teaching and encouragement for those on this difficult path. There is hope! Jesus is in the transformation business. He longs to heal broken hearts. This book will show you that path of healing, transformation, and freedom. “For whom the Son has set free, is free indeed!”

— Robyn Henning, M.A. President Exchanged Life
Ministries of Greater Philadelphia

Cherri Raws Freeman writes from a heart transformed by Christ and the wisdom His grace gave her during dark nights in her own journey. Key misunderstandings, such as the medical model of addiction and its lie-based conclusions, are exposed. *Set Free* is filled with testimonies that attack the shame and hopelessness accompanying addiction. Cherri exposes a critical fact that is obscured at best and often completely hidden by lies. Freedom from addiction is so much more than abstinence. It's the very life of Jesus Christ living within His children. We've so often missed the point in helping those addicted. Only the vitality of the life that Jesus freely gives brings genuine freedom. Anyone impacted by addiction who reads *Set Free* cannot remain hopeless.

— Don Steve, Uncommon Life Ministries

Set Free
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This book is dedicated to my dad,

William Addison Raws.

There is not a day that goes by that I don't miss

you, your gentle humor and puns,

and your healing hugs.

You were a giant of the faith and

a man of integrity who loved his

"Raws girls" well.

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There are so many people who have contributed to this book that it seems impossible to name them all and thank them adequately. My deepest expression of thanks is to my Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. My life belongs to Him, and all that I do is for Him. God's expression of love in human form has been through my family and friends. I can't imagine getting through this past year without your constant support and encouragement. Special thanks to my niece Jenny for giving me a safe place to land when I needed it. Thank you, Dianne, Donna, Kris, and Beth, as well as my sisters Jan, Judee, and Karen. I couldn't ask for better friends and sisters. Thank you, Bill, for being my "adopted brother" and for your support of this project. Thanks also to those who contributed your stories. You have blessed me with your willingness to share some difficult things. Thank you to the wonderful women who have been and are currently part of Love Them To Life. Your transparency and willingness to share in the hard times and the triumphs of each other continually blesses me. I have learned so much from you all. Thank you, Donna D, for writing the questions in each chapter. Thank you to those who have spent time reading, proofing, and editing the manuscript, including Donna B, Jan, and Marti. Thank you, David, for your encouragement and suggestions. Thank you, Nancy, for financially helping this book become a reality. Thank you, John Woodward, for being my mentor/friend through the years, for your encouragement to me to write this book, and for sharing your own personal story. For

all those who took the time to read the manuscript and write an endorsement, you are such a blessing. Despite your busy lives, you all believed in this project and spent the time needed to make it happen. Thank you to my wonderful children Sara, Chris, Susy and Trevor, Gloria and Kyle, Ali and Kevin. You are the best.

—Soli Deo gloria

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INTRODUCTION

*You need to know who you are
before you can know how to live.¹*

— Josh McDowell and Bob Bennett

I grew up on the property of the oldest men's residential recovery center, The Colony of Mercy at America's Keswick, which was founded by my great grandfather in 1897 and then directed by my grandfather and later by my dad. I was literally surrounded from the time of my birth by people whose lives had been deeply impacted by addiction. When we were children, the men of the Colony were our friends, protectors, and sometimes teachers. Tex and Sam taught us how to ride horses and to take care of them. Dave had a booming voice and enormous personality and taught me that life can be lived with exuberance. Sometimes the teaching was indirect. We saw men come into the program battered from life in addiction and in terrible physical shape and go out restored physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Families that had been put back together came back to Keswick year after year and were part of the framework of our lives. Colony Reunion weekend was held twice a year and was a time to celebrate the transformation that had taken place in the men's lives and subsequently in the family. The highlight of the weekend was Roll Call on Sunday morning. The graduates of the Colony

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would line up around the front and sides of the auditorium and give their name, where they were from, when they graduated from the Colony, and their life verse. Their families would then join them for the final verse of the Reunion hymn and a prayer of dedication. It was a wonderful time of celebrating what God had done in their lives.

I thought I knew addiction. But I didn't. Or rather, I knew about addiction but did not truly understand it until the lives of two of my children were threatened by it. I naively thought that growing up at Keswick and having my kids live or spend a considerable amount of time there would addiction-proof them. It didn't. As a result of much pain in their lives, some of which I take responsibility for, they made very destructive choices that could easily have ended their lives. I am profoundly thankful that both are doing well now, and the experience launched me into the ministry of Love Them To Life, which was never on the radar of my life plans (want to make God laugh? Tell Him your plans!). Did I ever want to know what it would be like to see my son in handcuffs or visit him in jail for months? Most emphatically no! Did I want to see my beautiful daughter looking like a skeleton due to her cocaine use? Never! But if you ask me if I know addiction these days, the answer would be "yes" and for a good reason this time. While I have not personally been enslaved to a substance, I understand being enslaved in other ways, including enabling destructive behavior because I did not know any better. God has taught me the very hard lessons so the readers of this book can learn those lessons in an easier way. No matter what happens to our loved ones who are in addiction, God's heart for us is that we get well. We do not need to be enslaved to past mistakes and pain, to present turmoil and ineffective strategies to change our loved ones, and to fear of what could happen in the future. The enemy wants to kill, steal, and destroy us and those we love. But he doesn't get to win. Jesus does.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was your first introduction to the problem of addiction?
2. How has addiction changed your life and the life of your family?
3. As we begin to have a deeper understanding of addiction, its roots, its impact on the loved ones, and the hope of transformation, are you willing to allow God to heal you from the pain of watching someone you love destroy themselves?
4. What, if anything, made you believe you were immune to the problem of addiction?

ROSEMARY'S STORY:

“My son has now been clean for about four and a half years. He began in high school with steroids and graduated to heroin and IV drugs. He tried going to rehab, one time up to 10 months, but after two months home, he started again. I was very naive about drugs. I always believed him when he asked for money for ‘gas’ to get to work or lunch money. I believed him, very convincing. While he was away at his 10 months rehab, I learned about drugs and what they do to us and our loved ones and was introduced to the Love Them To Life group. I could not believe what my son was doing to himself and to his family. I was given the book *Beside Still Waters: Discovering Peace in the Midst of Your Child's Addiction*. It took me a while to get into reading it as it was too convicting, and I did not want to believe that this book related to me and my son. I have been a part of the Love Them To Life group for quite a few years and received much support. I remember on one of my birthdays, my son was in rehab in Kentucky. I told him that he could not come home yet. He was not very happy. He ran away from rehab and walked for over 11 hours, just wandering around Kentucky. I was a basket case, wringing my hands, and never got out of my pajamas. I was terrified that he was wandering around a city he did not know anyone; what was he going to do? I called Cherri for support and advice. I had to come to terms with the worst thing could happen, which was that he could die. I had to somehow accept that possibility. That birthday night, my son called me at 11:30 p.m., asking me to pay for a motel, He was exhausted from walking for all those hours. I said I could not since I had previously spent a lot of money visiting him (which it was not a good visit). I could not believe my own hearing that I had said no to him. I told him that if he wanted, I could give him the telephone

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numbers to the rehab or the phone number of a friend that I met in Kentucky. He said, “no thanks,” that he would figure it out. Five minutes later, he called for the rehab telephone numbers. Another time, at another attempt at rehab, he went to Keswick Colony of Mercy. He decided he didn’t like it there, so he walked away. I got a call from his girlfriend to go and pick him up at 11:00 p.m. I again said “no.” I got a phone call from the police saying that they were taking my son to the bus station and asked if I would put his telephone charger in the mailbox. I did that and went back to sleep. That was definitely not me.... I thank the Lord for giving me the grace to do what I had to do.

The last time my son took the step to stop using, he took his car and just drove away. He wound up back in Kentucky. He found a job making \$10/hour and found someone to share an apartment. He went days without food. He made some great friends at work and they at times would bring him lunch or invite him to dinner. He finally got on his feet. After being away for a year or so, he came back home. At his two-year NA meeting, he gave his testimony. He said he had to hit rock bottom. He was eating out of garbage cans. He had gone days without food after his girlfriend and I threw him out. He had to go through all those things for him to wake up. I am grateful that there is a support group for mothers of addicts; without it, I don’t know where I would have wound up. I had the support and wisdom of others and knew that I was not the only one that was going through this with my son. The hardest thing for me to do was to stop enabling my son when I had to!”

SECTION I

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

CHAPTER 1

SLAVERY

You can't be an external solution to someone's internal problem.

— Jim Cress

Addiction to drugs and alcohol has become a deadly epidemic that is impossible to ignore. In 2017 alone, more people died of overdose and alcohol-related issues than died in the entire Vietnam War and Korean War put together. No longer an inner-city problem, addiction cuts across all socioeconomic and geographic lines, affecting the rich and poor alike. Significant effort has gone into educating our children to the dangers of drugs and alcohol, only to have them turn in droves to substance use and abuse. Children who have been raised in the church are not immune to the problem, much to the dismay of parents who wonder what they did wrong or what more they could have done to raise their children well.

I recently spoke with a young woman who told me that she has lost twenty-seven members of her high school class to overdose. This translates into twenty-seven sets of parents who never expected to have to bury their child, whose hearts are broken into tiny pieces. It also translates into siblings, grandparents,

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aunts, uncles, and cousins deeply grieved by the loss of their loved one. There are also the friends in shock from the senseless and unexpected death of a bright, beautiful person they loved.

Why is addiction taking out a generation of our children? Why are people of all ages turning to drugs and alcohol in ever increasing numbers? What has gone wrong in our world that causes people to ignore the warnings about dangerous substances and plunge into the darkness of drug and alcohol abuse? It is possible to have hope, not only for sobriety but also for being set free. Release from the dark prison of addiction seems improbable when we look at our loved ones going deeper and deeper into slavery, but it is not impossible.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32 NIV).

The goal of this book is to peel away the layers of misinformation concerning addiction, to explain the roots of addiction, to understand the effects on the loved ones of those in addiction, and to give the hope of a life of freedom in Jesus Christ for the enslaved one as well as the family and friends who love them.

SLAVERY

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all the slaves in the United States. Word quickly spread throughout the country that it was no longer legal to own another human being. However, even after the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, there were many former slaves who continued to work for their masters as if nothing had changed. Practically speaking, they still lived in bondage to the

Chapter 1: Slavery

old system, even though positionally they were free to live where they wanted to, marry whom they wanted to, and do what they wanted to. They were not able to appropriate their freedom for many reasons that were difficult to overcome at that time.

When it comes to addiction, there are four areas in which people live in slavery.

The first and most obvious is slavery to addiction, such as drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, etc. The other three are not as obvious but are just as real. The second is slavery to the brain disease model of addiction. Addiction is seen as a disease that isn't my fault and one from which I can never be free. The third is slavery to "treatment." This can include 12-Step programs, "90 meetings in 90 days," and maintenance drugs. Meetings can become an addiction, an identity. Detox and rehabs can become like a revolving door without giving any real help. It is not unusual for a person to go to double-digit numbers of detox centers and rehabs during their years of addiction. I heard recently of a young man who has been to 40 rehabs and is still struggling. He would get detoxed, go to rehab for twenty-eight to thirty days, sometimes leave early, and be back out on the streets again. The fourth is that families become enslaved by trying to help, which can lead to enabling and codependency. The whole focus of the family becomes centered on the person in addiction. It is hard to think about anything other than trying to keep that person from dying from their own destructive behaviors.

John 10:10 says,

*The thief comes only to steal and destroy, but
I have come to give you life and that more
abundantly.*

Jesus did not die on the cross so that we would live as slaves. He died and rose again to conquer sin and death and offers us abundant

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life, regardless of how our loved one is doing. He offers that same abundant life to the one caught in the slavery of addiction. There is no addiction that is stronger than the power of God. There is no person so hopeless that God cannot change them if they are willing. We who are enslaved to fixing or controlling the problem and “making” them get well can be set free ourselves.

QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways did Rosemary free herself from slavery to her son's addiction?
2. We don't think of ourselves as being enslaved when a loved one is addicted, but often we are. We think we must control them, help them, support them financially, and make excuses for them. How do feel about the concept of slavery set out in this chapter? What are ways that you can see yourself being enslaved to someone else's addiction?
3. The enemy wants to use any means he can to turn us against God. What are some of the lies he has used with you to try to accomplish his goal?

ROB'S STORY:

After growing up in what I thought was a “normal” household, my world came crashing down at age 14 when my mother decided to leave our family. Everything I thought was stable was gone. I didn't have a faith in God, although I knew of God through the Catholic religion I was raised with. Leaning on my own understanding, this began a pattern of reactions from an angry young boy that would change the course of his life.

I think back and recall doing things I would never have imagined doing. Deciding to end my relationship with my mother and family members over the divorce, experimenting with drugs and alcohol because of emotional pain and lack of supervision led to the next five years of my life being unstable. I bounced from house to house, living with my dad, my brothers, and friends. I was a nomad on a course for destruction. My life was becoming dominated by drug use, and my identity was one of a “party person.” Some party!

I had a longing to have a family again, so I began dating in order to marry. I met my first wife and things began to get serious. It was time to meet the parents. I was warned by my girlfriend that her parents were “different.” They were born-again Christians. I was not the guy that they were praying would marry their daughter. God was about to shake my world. My addiction spiraled out of control, and once again, I found myself doing things I never thought I would do. Lying, manipulating, and dishonesty became my new identity.

After much loss and nowhere else to turn, I did another thing I never thought I would do. I went to church. It was

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there that my heart broke because of my sin, and I realized that I needed a Savior.

*He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
And broke their chains in pieces.
Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
For He has broken the gates of bronze,
And cut the bars of iron in two. Psalm 107:14-16*

This began a process of transformation and reconciliation. My first marriage had been destroyed, and my wife divorced me. However, both of my parents and one of my brothers is with the Lord in Heaven now, as God used me to introduce them to Him (still praying for my oldest brother, as he is a tough one). I'm remarried and have dedicated my life to serving in full-time ministry, working with men who are coming out of addiction. My new identity is in Christ. I have been saved and set free by the power of the Holy Spirit.