

# Boundaries

For many Believers, saying “no” does not seem Christian. After all Christ said, *“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”* (Matt 5:42) However, many Christians have misapplied this verse and have found themselves enabling dependence, abusing others’ kindness, taking responsibilities they cannot fulfill, and becoming bitter in ministry.

The law of love is a larger understanding that cradles Christ’s important instruction- true love is voluntary. That is, we love best when we love out of our boundaries. Consider Jesus: His expression of love on the cross was made real because He gave of Himself. He was not coerced. *“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”* (John 10:18) When we can say “no,” but we voluntarily say “yes” because we want to say “yes”, we exhibit love in the truest sense.

God created us with boundaries. Our physical bodies separate what is and is not us. This is a boundary. In like manner, it is important to have a proper understanding of our emotional, spiritual and mental boundaries. It is incumbent upon us to be good stewards of our boundaries. We do not love well with rigid boundaries. Boundaries which are impenetrable shut others out and therefore, make loving others difficult. We shut out the bad, but also shut out the good. Also we do not love well with loose or lax boundaries. Boundaries which are easily penetrable allow others to take advantage of us. We are continually taken from and not given the opportunity to voluntarily give. We can become *“menpleasers”* (Col. 3:22) as we begin to find our value in what we offer someone else instead of finding our value in the completeness found in Christ (Col. 2:10).

The first step in establishing healthy boundaries is to KNOWYOURSELF. Boundaries get confused when our view of ourselves is subject to the ebb and flow of mine or others’ opinions. We need to be settled in the complete view God has toward us in order to be able to maintain healthy boundaries.

The second step in living out healthy boundaries is to take RESPONSIBILITY “for” yourself and “to” others. Reap what you personally sow. Consequences will be a very good teacher. Reaping the consequence of another person’s planting is not being responsible “to” them. Yes, Christ’s law of love compels us to help others; however, boundaries ensure this care for others is wise and effective.

The third step towards healthy boundaries is having RESPECT. Just as property boundaries need to be respected, we need to respect our own personal boundary limits and those of others. Realizing what we can and cannot control is valuable. Focus on what we each have the ability to control. When we respect others’ boundaries we receive “no” from them much easier.

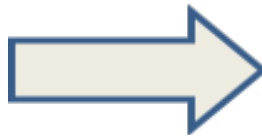
The fourth step for healthy boundaries is using DISCERNMENT. Proper discernment helps us say “no.” We understand the difference between disappointing versus harming another person. We see that our decisions will affect others, but we cannot own or be responsible for their reactions. Our “no” may very well disappoint or even make others angry at times, but it should not harm another.

Lastly being PROACTIVE is important for healthy boundaries. A proactive person is not lazy. They do not think they are a “victim.” Every time we say “yes” to something, we say “no” to something else. Be proactive in what we say “no” to. Every “no” allows us another opportunity for a “yes.” It is in this “yes” that we love and love in the true sense-voluntarily.

## If

## Then

you know yourself...



- You will find your value in God's view of you.
- You will understand God's view of others.
- Others' opinions of you will not affect you.
- Your view of you will be defined by God's view of you.

you take responsibility...



- You will reap what you sow.
- You will not reap what another person sows.
- Consequences will be a teacher.
- You will be responsible "to" others but not "for" others.

you have respect...



- You will understand you cannot control others.
- You will control what is inside your boundaries.
- You will not easily be offended by being told "no."
- You will protect the boundaries of others.
- You will love others better, out of your boundaries.

you use discernment...



- You will detect when you violate boundaries by responding out of fear, guilt, desire for approval, or payback.
- You will see your boundaries may cause "pain" to another but will not cause harm.
- You will not feel responsible for others' reactions.
- You will understand that "no" is not negative.

you are proactive...



- You will not be lazy.
- You will not play the "victim" card.
- You will set proactive boundaries.
- Your boundaries will advocate for you.
- Your "no" will allow for a better "yes."

### APPLICATION:

IF \_\_\_\_\_ occurs, then I will do \_\_\_\_\_

I will do \_\_\_\_\_, so that \_\_\_\_\_ may occur.

Adapted from *Boundaries*, Cloud & Townsend. Adapted 2016 by Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services.

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