

When do We Set Boundaries? How do we Get Free from Negative, hurtful People (Titus 2:12)?
Prepared and preached by Pastor Steve Rhodes for and at Bethel Friends Church in Poland, OH on
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Imagine giving your children the keys to the car and telling them to go have fun but not giving them any limits.

When Mercedes was about two years old, she was quite a climber. One night, I was awakened by a noise in the night. I went to the kitchen and saw Mercedes lying on the floor by a chair and a little play table. She had stacked the chair on the table and climbed to get something out of the refrigerator. She fell. Praise God, she was okay. Our boundaries needed to be better. What I just described would be a lack of physical boundaries.

Physical boundaries are gates in the house when we have toddlers. Physical boundaries mean that we do not allow a toddler to wander outside the house. They are for safety. Physical boundaries are when we do not give a 16-year-old the keys to the car without a driver's education and still some limits.

There are other types of boundaries, and we will discuss them today.

One writes:

Think of the types of situations where people feel the need for boundaries. Here is just a partial list:

- *Being physically exhausted or emotionally overwhelmed*
- *Chronic feelings of anger or resentment*
- *The inability to say "no"*
- *Poor health habits*
- *The inability to speak the truth in love*
- *Having relationships without mutual care and service*
- *Feeling controlled by the opinions and desires of others*
- *Being primarily motivated by guilt or fear.*¹

Some of you need more boundaries. You say "yes" to everything. You think that is what a Christian must do. I will show you that Jesus had boundaries.

I received the question:

When do We Set Boundaries? How do we Get Free from Negative, hurtful People?

My theme today is:

Boundaries are set to stay focused on what God calls us to do.

I. Boundaries in life:

- a. Gal. 6:7: *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

¹ <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/02/05/better-than-boundaries/>

- b. This means that we must set boundaries. Otherwise, we will reap what we will sow. This is an agricultural metaphor meaning that if we do not work, we do not get any food.
- c. Gal 5:22-23: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
- d. Notice that a fruit of the Spirit is “self-control.” This means we have boundaries. We are not out of control.
- e. Titus 2:12: *...training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...*
- f. I argue that we should always understand our human limits.
- g. Yet, we should not have our boundaries to protect self but preserve relationships AND for the betterment of the other person. We also set boundaries to stay on mission to what God has called us to do. I will repeat that later.
- h. A boundary is a line that should not be crossed.
- i. There are physical boundaries.
- j. *The one who owns the property has the right to control the property and the responsibility to set the rules for those on the property.*²
- k. There are moral boundaries such as Gen 2:16-17: *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*
- l. One source shares: *Boundaries protect you by allowing that which is safe and constructive to come close to you and by keeping that which is unsafe and destructive away from you. The boundary of a tiger’s cage keeps a dangerous tiger inside the cage and vulnerable people outside the cage—away from harm. In relationships, boundaries are put in place to guard us and protect us and to provide a healthy environment in which relationships can flourish and grow toward Christlike maturity.*³
- m. Boundaries, protect and preserve relationships:
- n. *Another familiar example are common filters found in every automobile, lawn mower, factory, business, home, office, and even every airplane. They protect both engines and people from undue damage. Similarly, a fence around a home protects young children and pets from wandering out into the street and provides a barrier against strangers and stray animals coming into the yard. Boundaries guard us from giving more than we should and protect us from others’ taking more than they should. And boundaries make it possible for us to enjoy mutual giving and taking from one another in healthy relationships....*⁴
- o. Proverbs 4:23: *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life*
- p. Jesus set boundaries:
- q. One writes:
- r. *Jesus took care of His bodily needs, sleeping peacefully even during a storm (Mark 4:37-39).*
- s. *Jesus prioritized His time with the Father, withdrawing to pray despite the needs of the crowds (Luke 5:15-16).*

² June Hunt, [Biblical Counseling Keys on Boundaries](#), Hope for the Heart Series (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2013), 2.

³ Ibid, 4.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

- t. *Jesus did not accept others' agendas by refusing to become an earthly king (John 6:15).*
 - u. *While Jesus was willing to sacrifice His life for the sake of others, He did so according to the divine plan, not the whims of men. At times, He fled harm and protected Himself from evil (Luke 9:10).⁵*
 - v. *One writes: We cannot be or do everything for anyone, much less everyone, so we must choose who we will be and what we will do regarding the individuals God brings into our lives. Jesus established boundaries for His relationships by ... prioritizing the Father ... discipling the twelve ... and being intimate with the few. He also set boundaries on His actions....*
 - w. *"Jesus gave them this answer: 'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.... By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.'" (John 5:19, 30)⁶*
 - x. We must understand that we are finite.
- II. Boundaries in the family:
- a. Skit
 - b. Prov. 19:18: *Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.*
 - c. Prov. 22:6: *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*
 - d. Eph 6:4: *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
 - e. We are to have boundaries in the home.
 - f. We must educate our children.
 - g. We must provide for their material needs.
 - h. We must show them healthy boundaries so that they can set healthy boundaries when they grow up.
 - i. Deut. 6:1-9 is an example of a boundary. We raise our children teaching them to love the Lord. Some of you are so busy with NO boundaries that you cannot teach your children the Word of God, you cannot show them commitment to the local church (Hebrews 10:24-25). We must know that we have a stewardship under God to raise our children in the Lord, and we must set a boundary that, as much as possible, we cut out what gets in the way of that.
 - j. Have you ever seen a tired 2-year-old?
 - k. That is why we set boundaries. They need sleep, and so do we.
 - l. If you want to torture someone, deprive them of sleep. If you want to REALLY torture someone, deprive their toddler of sleep.
 - m. No! DON'T DO THAT!
 - n. We need sleep; our children need sleep; that is a boundary.
 - o. We teach our children how to treat others.
 - p. We teach them respect.

⁵ <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/02/05/better-than-boundaries/>

⁶ June Hunt, [Biblical Counseling Keys on Boundaries](#), Hope for the Heart Series (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2013), 1.

- q. We teach them discipline.
 - r. We set boundaries for them, and then as they grow up, we give them more freedom to set their own boundaries.
 - s. We do not just give them the car keys.
 - t. Also, we should not simply give a child a smartphone. No! There must be limits.
 - u. We must discipline. We must follow through. BUT WE DO NOT PROVOKE.
 - v. I recommend Kevin Leman's resources on this subject. He has a book: "Have a New Kid by Friday."
- III. Boundaries in relationships:
- a. Now, the hard part:
 - b. How do we get free from negative, hurtful people?
 - c. One writes: *In cases of habitual sin or abuse, the most loving thing we can do may be to deny an unrepentant sinner the opportunity to sin against us. Limiting contact may prevent further damage to the relationship and can be an expression of hope in its future restoration.*⁷
 - d. I argue that we should always understand our human limits.
 - e. Yet, we should not have our boundaries to protect ourselves but preserve relationships AND for the betterment of the other person. We also set boundaries to stay on mission to what God has called us to do.
 - f. Proverbs 22:24: *Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.*
 - g. *"The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.... for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.... Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you."*(Proverbs 2:6, 8, 11)⁸
 - h. 1 Cor. 15:33: *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*
 - i. *Guilt and fear come from the misconception that godly servants never say no. The truth is, the perfect Servant did not do what everyone asked of Him ... nor was He always available to everyone.*⁹
 - j. We must say no and sometimes we must say no EVEN to being around other people.
 - k. If a person is perpetually unfaithful, verbally, or physically abusive, you must set boundaries. Otherwise, we are allowing their sin to continue. Further, we may be violating our calling to protect others and violating our God-given mission.
 - l. Listen, you are created in the image of God. You are a steward of a body that God owns; therefore, to allow someone to mistreat you is poor stewardship of your body and God owns your body.
 - m. The boundary might mean that you only see a person in public places. Though, I would argue if someone mistreated you in an ongoing way, you should cut off the relationship. Certainly, depending on the severity, you should confront and ask for repentance first. I know that sometimes the person is your child's father, or your children are mean. I know

⁷ <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/02/05/better-than-boundaries/>

⁸ June Hunt, [*Biblical Counseling Keys on Boundaries*](#), Hope for the Heart Series (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2013), 11.

⁹ June Hunt, [*Biblical Counseling Keys on Boundaries*](#), Hope for the Heart Series (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2013), 28.

those cases are complicated and must be handled case by case. But what is clear is that you are not to allow yourself to be perpetually hurt. Further, if your child is hurt, you must stay clear of that situation.

- n. Your children cannot see you as a doormat. Maybe the person hurts you, but not your children. Let me suggest by hurting you, they are hurting your children. There are physical changes in the brain when a child watches abuse. Further, what does that teach a son about how to treat a woman?
 - o. Matthew 18:15-17 is a good guideline.
 - p. How do you get free from hurtful people?
 - q. Set wise boundaries. Seek the Lord.
 - r. It is hard to answer this without knowing the situation for sure, but I will proclaim from the mountains that if someone is being hurt, they must leave the situation. If they must stay close to the person because they are family, then they must set boundaries. If physical danger is or has been present, call the police.
 - s. If I can help, please talk with me.
 - t. It is biblical to set boundaries.
- IV. When should we not have boundaries?
- a. Never.
 - b. I argue that we should always understand our human limits.
 - c. Yet, we should not have our boundaries to protect ourselves but preserve relationships AND for the betterment of the other person. We also set boundaries to stay on mission to what God has called us to do.
 - d. Yes, the Bible says to self-sacrifice (Phil. 2:3-4). I agree, no argument here. But we self-sacrifice when focused on what God calls us to do. We set the boundaries to properly focus on what God calls us to do. God never calls us to allow another person to harm us. That is violating the principle of stewardship of our body.
 - e. If we do not set boundaries, we cannot be focused on what God calls us to do.
 - f. We cannot have it all.
 - g. We cannot commit to everything. Even Jesus set limits.

PARENTS of teenagers know that the boundary lines between parent and child can get blurry real quick. The older the young person gets, the more apt they are to rebel against restrictions. Many a parent has had to remind their teenagers of who's who. The propensity of the young person is to mentally erase the parent-child distinction because they don't want to be told to clean up their room. They don't want restrictions; they want freedom without boundaries, which erases the line of demarcation.

God wants it to be clear that there is a major difference between man and God—a big-time difference. God is transcendent. God is infinite. Man is not. There is only one God. Man is not Him, so he needs restrictions.⁵⁴¹⁰

Prayer

¹⁰ Tony Evans, [*Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations: Stories, Quotes, and Anecdotes from More than 30 Years of Preaching and Public Speaking*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 29.

