

# SETTING AND ENFORCING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## WHAT KIND OF BOUNDARIES DO PEOPLE NEED?

Physical	To have our own space, time; preserve our health
Financial	To have and control what we need
Sexual	To have our own desires and preferences
Mental	To have our own thoughts, opinions, and responses
Emotional	To help us disengage from manipulation or worse
Conversational	To have our own natural reactions and to feel respected
Spiritual	To have our own beliefs and practices

## THE DILEMMA

The problem with most people is not SETTING boundaries but ENFORCING them.

When you enforce a boundary, you are likely to get: **push back \* rejection \* tantrums \* threats \* criticism \* shaming \* stonewalling \* name-calling \* and so much more.**

You think, *is it worth it?*

## THE BIG DECISION

THAT's the crucial point and the BIG DECISION you must make:

Will you choose:

( 1 ) lack of conflict, peace, and the *easy way and thus remain a victim?* Stuffing your true feelings and building self-pity or resentment, or both? Handing over your self-respect, authority, and dignity? Allowing the other to control and even bully you?

( 2 ) Or will you endure a little rough spot for TRUE PEACE, respect, and a future of FREEDOM and joy?

We have a distorted idea that being a victim is being loving and a good Christian. But we must look more closely at Jesus' attitudes and actions.

## COMMON QUESTIONS

**Can I set limits and still be a loving person?** Yes, you are actually most loving when you set and enforce healthy boundaries. And you help others to love you rightly as well.

**What are legitimate boundaries?** Those that protect your goodness, virtue, authority, respect, dignity, safety and well-being.

**What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?** You must allow them to feel as they do. Hurt feelings (of which you are not responsible) are not the same as actual harm.

**How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?** Carefully, generously, but never out of fear of rejection, bullying, conflict, or affection. Then you're being bullied.

**Aren't boundaries selfish?** Healthy boundaries are vital to authentic holiness and happiness.

**Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?** Because you are operating on false beliefs and misunderstandings about what it means to be good, loving, holy, and a Christian. You fear conflict, hard work, being exposed, judged, criticized, or loss of affection, approval, good standing.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BOUNDARIES

They define the "property" lines necessary to protect our mind, heart, body, and soul.

### 1 - Healthy boundaries are not "selfish"

That is a lie meant to keep us from erecting and enforcing them

Look at other boundaries: walls, fences

Without boundaries we have chaos, sin, and even death

We don't have to give of ourselves and our possession indiscriminately

### 2 - Healthy boundaries may hurt, but they do not harm

Feeling hurt or angry is their response

Feeling the sting of shame or physical pain is not harm but actually helps

Consider: a woman who slaps a man for being fresh

**3 - Healthy boundaries are a gift to the other**

They help to keep the other person from being sinful and selfish  
They train a child (and others) in virtue and holiness  
The ten commandments are God's boundaries  
When we desire to break them, we need them!

**4 - Unenforced boundaries may be a participation in another's sin**

We allow others to bully without calling them out of it  
We allow others to sin against and with us

**5 - Boundaries protect us from (a) unknowing or (b) intentional intruders**

Intruder is anyone who WANTS something that may disregard, disrespect, take advantage of, use, or even violate us.

**6 - Boundaries need to be visible, clear, firm**

People do NOT always know what you need You must tell them.  
Some things they should know, but you may have to remind them.  
Not posting a limit or warning sign is disrespectful of the other.  
Others want to know and respect your boundaries; give them direction.

**7 - We need to recognize the tools people use to pry the locks**

People will use mental and emotional intimidation  
Criticism, shame, contempt, stonewalling, name calling, body language  
Threats of moods, attack, revenge, abandonment  
People will use physical intimidation, attacks, tantrums

**8 - Experiencing push back is a good sign**

It means you have set a boundary that is being tested for its strength;  
keep going.  
Don't be afraid; it shows their feelings of feeling powerless.  
Look for and see the fear that is fueling their push-back.

**9 - Boundaries need to have consequences to be effective**

Build a fence – not too low or weak; they will find the weak spot  
Close the door tightly – Lock it if you have to.  
Barbed wire is not cruel – For the tough offenders, pain is a great teacher  
Weak boundaries train others to violate them (and us)  
We need to know and believe in our rights/ responsibility to enforce them  
We must be sufficiently detached from fear of rejection, conflict, or hard work

## 10 - Jesus shows us a lot about boundaries

### Ten Truths from the Gospels

- 1 - **You do not have to get along with everyone to be a good Christian.**  
You can't control others—Jesus didn't try.
- 2 - **You do not have to be nice to be a good Christian.**  
Jesus was not very “nice” to people who were arrogant or abusive.
- 3 - **You don't have to accept every invitation to an argument.**  
Jesus was silent before Herod.
- 4 - **You have the right to leave, shake the dust, or even run.**  
Jesus hurried away when they tried to kill him.  
Disengaging and even leaving are not necessarily cowardly.
- 5 - **You have the right/ responsibility to peace, quiet, space, solitude**  
Jesus went off by himself when he was drained or tired.  
He didn't apologize.
- 6 - **You have the right to decide when to sacrifice or not**  
Jesus did not permit himself to be abused all the time.  
There is a time for yes and a time for no.  
There is a time to go to the cross and a time to say NOT NOW
- 7 - **You are not responsible for the other person's response.**  
Jesus let the rich young ruler man reject him and walk away from him.
- 8 - **You must set/ enforce clearly, firmly, & with no malice.**  
Jesus regularly warned people of the consequences. “Woe to you...”
- 9 - **You may sometimes have a responsibility to get angry.**  
Jesus made a whip. Healthy anger is not a sin and is necessary for  
Keeping peace, order, and even saving souls  
Anger should move you to work within your rights and your authority,  
to resolve the problem and then let go.
- 10 - **You have the right and even the responsibility to call it what it is.**  
Jesus warned, chastised, and painted unpleasant pictures to help others  
behave as they should. Whitewashed tombs with dead men's bones.  
Brood of vipers. People are rude, bullies, and selfish. It is loving to ask  
them to go higher.

## TIPS

### **When you have to say no, see where you can appropriately say yes**

The kids can't have the sugary apple juice (NO) but they can choose white or chocolate milk (YES).

I don't really want to do that (NO), but I AM willing to do this (YES).

I can't say now (NO) but give me a week (YES).

### **Give yourself time or get wise counsel**

Some boundaries should not be a knee jerk reaction. You have a right to think about it and not be pressured or worn down.

### **When you must walk away/ hang up/ leave, advise when you'll return.**

I can't talk right now, but let's continue tomorrow.

I'm sorry, I can't do this right now, but I'll be back in an hour.

### **You don't have to explain, defend, or testify on your behalf.**

That is how people wear you down. Don't stick around for argument.

Long, drawn-out, circular argument? Just stop talking.

### **Never say I'm sorry YOU feel that way.**

Use "I" statements (I feel, I want, I need, I hope..)

Take ownership and don't counter- attack.

I'm sorry, I cannot do this right now.

### **Use the Oreo technique**

Sandwich the NO between two affirmatives or YESes.

\* I am flattered that you thought of me and I think it is very generous.

\* However, I can't make it, do it, be there. (no excuse needed)

\* I trust you understand, Thank you!

### **Get to the root of your own fears.**

Get the help of a wise coach or counselor to help you.

Understanding how God sees it is key to success in this area.

*For personal coaching in these areas, go to [rosesweet.com](http://rosesweet.com)*