

Boundaries- Session 7

A) Having Boundaries With The Family We Grew Up In

1. Signs of a Lack of Boundaries

a) Catching the Virus

When one does not have good emotional boundaries, after having contact with them over the phone or in person, he or she becomes depressed, argumentative, self-critical, perfectionist, angry, combative, or withdrawn. It as though he or she has caught something from his or her family origin and passes it on to his or her immediate family. (pg. 126)

Warning Sign: When your relationship with one person has the power to affect your relationships with others. If this is true, then you are giving one person way too much power in your life.

- How do you feel when you are visiting your extended family? How do you feel after you return to your own home?
- Is there a specific person who affects your relationships with others? If so, how do you respond emotionally to that person? What is the emotional fallout from contact with that person?
- How does that fallout impact your feelings about yourself? Your relationship with others?

b) Second Fiddle

When a spouse feels like he or she gets the leftovers. Example, “Dan feels that Megan’s real allegiance is to her parents rather than to him, her husband.

“This spouse hasn’t completed the ‘leaving before the cleaving’ process; she has a boundary problem. God has designed the process whereby a “man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:4, KJV). The Hebrew word for “leave” comes from a root word that means to “loosen”, or to “relinquish” or to “forsake”. For marriage to work, the spouse needs to loosen her ties with her family of origin and forge new ones with the new family she is creating through marriage.” (Pg.127)

Our spouse and children should not get leftovers.

- Do you think your spouse is pleased with the boundaries you maintain with your family of origin? Ask him or her.
- Where do you need to loosen ties with your family of origin? What specific steps will you take to strengthen ties or forge new ones with the family that was created by your marriage?

c) May I Have My Allowance, Please?

Common boundary problem for Young Adults; both married and single. Although adult by age, but not yet an adult financially. There is two sides to this coin...

Side one: Pleasing the parent idea, “to have everything we have”, and so are in constant need for periodic financial bailouts, and the constant reception of these gifts and handouts. The result: Not able to spend any money without consulting the family who contributed the funds.

Side two: Help “I’m in Trouble”. Many young adults get into financial messes because of irresponsibility, drug or alcohol use, out of control spending, or the modern syndrome “I haven’t found my niche syndrome.” Parents response: the parents finance this road of failure and irresponsibility... in hopes they will do better next time. Result: Preventing their young adults from achieving independence.

- Are you an adult financially? Support your answer with specific details about your life.
- How well do you live within your means and pay for your own failures? Are you an adult financially? Are your boundaries clearly defined and carefully maintained when it comes to your finances and your parents?

d) Mom, Where Are My Socks?

A person can be financially on his or her own, but still allows his or her family of origin to perform certain life management functions that hinders his or her from achieving independence.

This tends to happen in friendly, loving families where things are so nice that the desire to be independent has decreased.

- What if any, life management functions are you still allowing your parents to perform for you? Does this type of support hinder you from growing in your independence? Have you become emotionally dependant upon your parents?

e) Three's A Crowd

The failure to resolve a conflict between two persons and the pulling in of a third to take sides. The third person has no business in the conflict but is used for comfort and validation by the ones who are afraid to confront each other. Side affects: failing to own anger, covering it up with nice words and flattery.

- What did your family of origin teach you about resolving conflict and dealing with anger?
- What does the Bible teaching in the following passages?
 - Leviticus 19:17
 - Proverbs 28:23
 - Matthew 5:23-24
 - Matthew 18:15

We can avoid this unhealthy method of communication by talking to the person with whom we have a conflict. Never say to a third party something about someone that you do not plan to say to the person himself.

- What conflict do you need to resolve directly right now?

f) Who's The Child Here, Anyhow?

"Children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children." 2 Corinthians 12:14)

Some people were born to take care of their parents. They did not sign up for this duty; they inherited it. Early in life, some people learned that they were responsible for their parents, who were stuck in childish patterns of irresponsibility. Every time they tried to have separate lives, they felt selfish (pg. 131)

- Do you feel responsible for your parents? Is it unhealthy or is it a biblical, healthy responsibility?

The Bible teaches that adult children should help care for their elderly parents (1 Timothy 5:3-4). It is good to feel grateful to our parents and to repay them for what they have done for us. But there are two problems that sometimes arises...

- Are you at the point of needing to care for elderly parents? If so, are you facing either of these problems?
 - Do you have parents who aren't in need but are acting like martyrs or being demanding?
 - Do you find yourself lacking the clear boundaries you need to determine what you can give and what you can't give?
 - Explain why "good boundaries prevent resentment" and then, perhaps by taking a reading of your own resentment, evaluate the boundaries you have set or are resetting with your parents. Or are you reacting by not giving to your parents at all?

g) But I'm Your Brother/Sister

Another frequent dynamic is an irresponsible adult child depending on a responsible adult sibling to avoid growing up and leaving the family. "(We are not talking about a truly needy sibling who has a mental or physical impairment)" (pg. 132).

- Do you see this happening in your family of origin? If so, where and what role, if any, are you playing?
- Reflect on the condition of your boundaries with your family of origin. Where are the boundaries doing the job? Where could they be more clearly defined or more strongly maintained?

2. Firming Your Boundaries

a) Forgive the Aggressor

Nothing clarifies boundaries more than forgiveness. When you refuse to forgive someone, you still want something from that person, and it keeps you tied to him or her forever.

Refusing to forgive a family member is one of the main reasons people are unable to separate from their unhealthy relationships. They still want something from them. It is much better to receive grace from God, who has much to give, and to forgive those who have no money to pay their debt (Matthew 18:21-35) (pg. 136-137)

- Is there someone who you are not forgiving?
- If so, what do you still want from that person? Love? Confession of wrongdoing? An apology? Something else?

Spend a few quiet moments in prayer. Talk to God about your struggles to let go and forgive. Ask God to help you want to forgive. Ask Him to teach you to forgive and to help you receive his grace, which can heal the hurts you sustained in your family of origin. When you forgive the aggressor, your suffering ends. The wish for repayment that is never forthcoming—a wish that makes your heart sick because your hope is deferred (Proverbs 13:12)—will die and you will be free. (pg. 136-37)

b) Respond Don't React

When you respond to what someone says or does, you remain in control, with options and choices. But when you react to what someone says or does, you may have a problem with boundaries. If someone is able to cause havoc by doing or saying something, that person is in control of you, and your boundaries are lost. (pg. 137)

If you feel yourself reacting, step away so that family members can't force you to do or say something you don't want to, something that violates your separateness. When you react, the other person is in control. When you respond you are gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:23.)

- When, if ever, have you been able to keep your boundaries with someone who has controlled you? What did you do? What did you learn from their experience?

c) Learn to Love in Freedom and Responsibility, Not in Guilt

Boundaries are in no way a mean to stop loving. Instead, with boundaries, you gain freedom to love. It is good to sacrifice and deny yourself for the sake of others, but you need boundaries to make that choice. (pg. 137)

- When have you been motivated more by guilt than love in a family relationship?
- What boundary violations were involved in that guilt- ridden relationship?

The person who has to remain forever in a protective mode is losing out on love and freedom. However, doing good for someone, when you freely choose to do it, is boundary enhancing and is not seen as being codependent. (John 13:34-35)

- Where can you practice purposeful giving so that you can experience the freedom that comes with boundaries? Be specific about your plan—have someone hold you accountable.

* Resource: [Henry Cloud](#) & [John Townsend](#), “Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life”