

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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Healthy boundaries are such an important part of having a healthy self—given that we live in an imperfect world surrounded by imperfect people. The purpose of this handout is to provide a pretty thorough compilation of key information about the need for boundaries and how to set healthy boundaries. We've also included many additional resources to help you understand boundaries even better. We especially wanted to provide scriptural references of Jesus Christ having healthy boundaries particularly for those who may think boundaries aren't Christlike.

OVERVIEW

- What are Boundaries?
 - Diagram of Unhealthy / Healthy Boundaries
 - Why are Boundaries Important?
 - Tips for Setting and Enforcing Healthy Boundaries
 - Examples of Boundaries Jesus Christ Has Set
 - Principles Learned from Jesus Christ Setting Boundaries
 - Additional Scriptural Examples of Boundaries
 - Additional Church Quotes about Boundaries
 - Other Quotes about Boundaries
 - Examples of Healthy Boundaries
 - References and Additional Related Resources
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What are Boundaries?

- “Boundaries help us define what *we are* responsible for and what *we are not* responsible for. Three important guidelines for setting boundaries are: ‘don’t hurt yourself, don’t hurt anyone else [and] don’t let anyone hurt you.’”¹
 - “Personal boundaries are guidelines or limits we choose to establish for ourselves that make it possible to have reasonable, safe and healthy interactions with others...Boundaries can empower us to decide how we will allow others to treat us and how we will treat and respond to others,” including when someone oversteps those limits.²
 - Boundaries are like fences around our personal property line. They are intended to help us “keep the good in and the bad out.” Our fences need gates in them not brick walls.³
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Why are Boundaries Important?

- Boundaries help to create healthy relationships through open communication and respect for ourselves and others. If others make demands upon us, we have the right to say “yes” or “no.” We begin to understand and communicate where our responsibilities end, and help others to begin to comprehend where their responsibilities begin...⁴
- Our Father in heaven has set boundaries for us in order to experience happiness in our lives. As He allows us to experience the consequences of ignoring those boundaries, we learn and grow.⁵
- “We are learning to do what is healthy in our relationships by allowing others to experience the consequence of their behaviors, even if their behaviors are addictive and beyond their power to stop on their own.”⁶
- Boundaries are especially important in marriage relationships because when one person exerts control over another, love cannot grow freely, deeply and fully, as there is no freedom to choose.⁷
- Without having healthy boundaries people will unfortunately take advantage of “niceness.”

Diagram of Unhealthy / Healthy Boundaries

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

“Doormat”

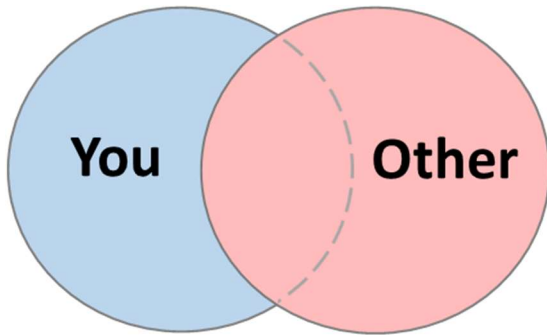


Diagram 1

“Overbearing”

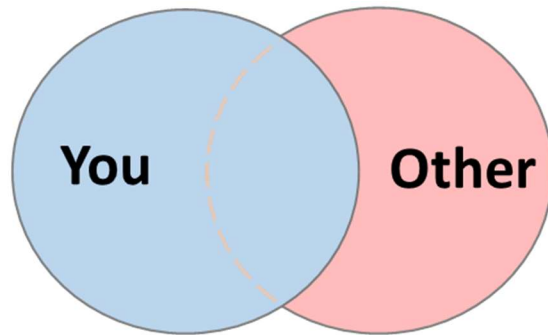


Diagram 2

Unhealthy Boundaries - occur when we either take on too much responsibility and require too little of others; or take on too little responsibility ourselves and give too little to others.

Diagram 1 “Doormat” – We might be allowing others to take more than their share, treating us like a “doormat” if we fail to speak up when we’re treated poorly, saying yes when we really want/need to say no, constantly feeling like the victim, feeling out of touch with our own needs, putting others ahead of self, feeling guilty for dedicating time to self, feeling like we have no voice. We risk getting tangled in enmeshment rather than interacting interdependently. (See Laura’s “20%-er.”)

Diagram 2 “Overbearing” – We might be crossing others’ boundaries (being overbearing), if we attempt to control or manipulate others, often blame others, get/demand love and respect without giving it in return, tend to take more than we give. (See Laura’s “80%-er.”)

See [Laura’s 80/20 Relationship Dynamic](#) for more details.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

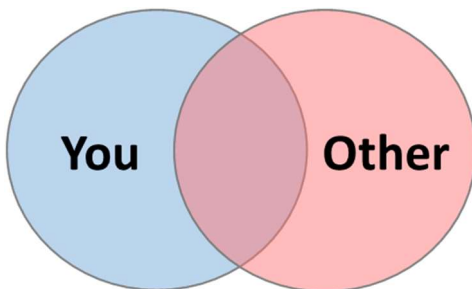


Diagram 3a

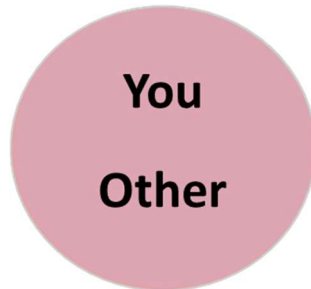


Diagram 3b

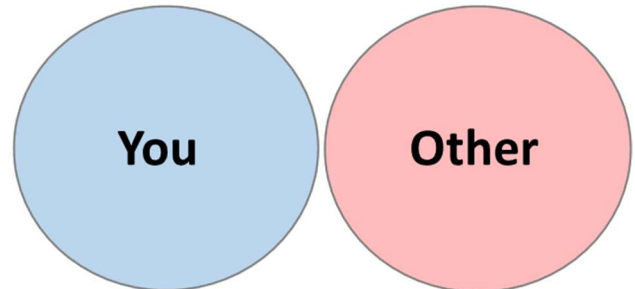


Diagram 4

Healthy Boundaries - occur when we can separate who we are, and what we think and feel from the thoughts and feelings of others. This also describes the concept of “differentiation of self.” (See <https://www.essentiallifefskills.net/personalboundaries.html>)

Diagram 3a – We recognize each of us as separate and distinct individuals even when interacting with others. We maintain a healthy balance of taking responsibility for ourselves – standing firm in “our space” for what is and isn’t okay. We also respect the boundaries of others. Though we each have our differences our integrity and self-respect – or being true to what our needs are – remains intact. Including within sexual intimacy (**Diagram 3b**).

Diagram 4 – It may be necessary to set a boundary of physical or emotional space as a result of a violated or threatened violation of boundaries to keep ourselves emotionally or physically safe. **Note:** This can become an unhealthy boundary if our boundaries are so rigid that they do not let *anyone* in, even those who are or have become safe. As a result, we may feel lonely, closed off, numb, have trouble giving and receiving touch, and feel there are very few people who really know us because we don’t open up. This can occur from relationship wounds. (See: <https://psychcentral.com/blog/signs-your-boundaries-are-too-loose-or-too-rigid/>)

Tips for Setting and Enforcing Boundaries

The following are tips that can aid us in setting and enforcing boundaries:

Surrendering. There may be times we recognize specific responsibilities belong to someone else, but we struggle with relinquishing our desire to control. My [“7 Steps of Spiritual Surrender”](#)⁸ handout can help you make peace with people or circumstances you cannot change.

Boundaries are self-focused. Boundaries are focused on what we as individuals will or will not do that will keep us safe physically and emotionally, not what we desire another person to do. Anything beyond this self-focus would be exercising unrighteous dominion such as what is seen in Diagram 2 above.

Boundaries are not about fixing, changing or punishing another. If you aren't in control of yourself, the solution is not learning to control someone else, the solution is learning self-control...It is more about taking ownership of your own life so that you are protected and you can love and protect yourself without enabling or rescuing another.⁹

Boundaries include consequences. The difference between a boundary and a request is that boundaries have a consequence. What we will or will not do if a boundary is violated. When establishing a consequence be sure:

1. The consequence is something that you are willing to follow through with.
2. You follow through with the consequence EVERY time.
3. It is a consequence and not a punishment (see **Check your motive** below).

Check your motive. It is important to check your motive to determine whether something is a healthy or unhealthy boundary. Although the boundary may look the same, the intention or motive behind it is different when enforcing a healthy boundary (consequence) vs. an unhealthy boundary (trying to control or punish another person). When enforcing healthy boundaries, it is important to note that there is a difference between consequence and punishment.

“A consequence is the reaction that comes after an action. It can be a natural consequence, such as scraping your knee after jumping off the porch when your mom told you not to, or it can be an imposed consequence, such as losing your phone after using it in class against the rules.

“A consequence is meant to teach, maintain accountability, and maintain safety.

“A punishment, however, is something quite different. The goal of a punishment is to shame, guilt, impose authority, or harm. The motivation behind a punishment comes from a place of emotion and a need to maintain control.”¹⁰

In short, we do not want to use any form of persecuting behaviors in an effort to control another, which may include threatening, nagging, judging, shaming, blaming, criticizing, bribing, withholding love (as a means of control, not protection) playing the role of a martyr or using the silent treatment.¹¹

A note about anger. There is a difference between feeling anger and responding (reacting or retaliating) in anger. It is common to feel angry when a boundary (known or unknown) has been crossed and can be “a voice inside of us that says ‘Enough! Something has to change.’”¹² When we respond in anger, though, this comes from a spirit of contention, which is not of God ([3 Nephi 11:29](#)).

Remember, “feelings aren't facts. No matter how intense the feelings may be, they are only feelings. They are reactions to, rather than reflections of, reality.”¹³

Instead of allowing the anger to control our responses, we can use it (or any other negative emotion we experience) as a warning system that something is not right (in us and/or in our present situation). This provides an opportunity to reflect on our thoughts and motives and to establish healthy boundaries if needed and avoid crossing others' boundaries.

What to do when you receive pushback? It is common to encounter resistance from others when trying to establish healthy boundaries. They won't like this new restriction, so be prepared to stand firm, nevertheless. When healthy boundaries have been set, we can remember that:

When we start to implement boundaries, we may get push-back and negative responses from others. ‘That's okay. We don't have to let their reactions control us, stop us, or influence our decision to take care of ourselves... People will react when we do things differently or take assertive action to nurture ourselves, particularly if our decision in some way affects them. Let them have their feelings. Let them have their reactions. But continue on your course anyway.’¹⁴

To the person receiving a boundary, it may *feel* like a punishment since they had more freedom to roam as they pleased before (see Diagram 1 above). This especially occurs for the 80%-er in an [80/20 relationship](#)¹⁵ where they are more likely to do, say and take what they want (often unaware of the effects it can have on another). If a 20%-er does not have good boundaries in place they often get

taken advantage of, walked on, emotionally abused and sometimes violated as well. They don't usually even speak up until it really reaches a boiling point for them. Boundaries are especially needed for 20%-ers until the 80%-ers they live with learn to be more respectful of them and their wants/needs, thus helping the relationship move closer to a "50/50" relationship dynamic.

"When two people together take responsibility to do what is best for the marriage, love can grow. When they do not, one takes on too much responsibility and resents it, the other does not take on enough and becomes self-centered and controlling."¹⁶

"Marriage is not slavery. It is based on a love relationship deeply rooted in freedom. Each partner is free *from* the other and therefore free *to* love the other. Where there is control, or perception of control, there is not love. Love only exists where there is freedom."¹⁷

For more tips, refer to "[Boundaries in marriage – Resolving Conflict With a Resistant Spouse](#)."¹⁸

Examples of Boundaries Jesus Christ Has Set

Met His Personal Needs (Physical/Spiritual)

- **Took time alone; conversed with God**

[John 10:40](#) - *And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.*

[Matthew 14:22-23](#) – *22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

- **Physical nourishment**

[Matthew 26:17-18](#) – *17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? 18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*

[Luke 7:36](#) – *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.*

[John 12:2](#) – *There they made him a supper; and Martha served...*

- **Rested**

[Mark 4:38](#) – *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?*

Did Not Allow Unhealthy Behavior

- **Demands**

[Luke 5:15-16](#) – *15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

- **Abuse (to him and to others)**

[Luke 4:28-30](#) – *28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way -- Christ declared that it is His choice to lay down his life, no one will take it from him ([John 10:18](#)). There were many instances where Jesus could have allowed his life to be taken, but he escaped for "his hour was not yet come" ([Luke 4:28-30](#); [John 7:30, 44](#); [8:20](#); [10:39](#)). On one occasion, Jesus questions the guard who struck him, verbally standing up for himself.¹⁹*

[Matthew 26:51-52](#) – *51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place...*

[Luke 22:50-51](#) – *50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.*

[John 8:1-11](#) – In the account of the woman caught in adultery and her accusers, Jesus also offers both grace and truth (boundary). To the woman caught in adultery: "Neither do I condemn you" (grace) and "Go and sin no more" (truth). To the

pharisees who tried to condemn the woman and trap Jesus: Jesus listens to what they share (grace) and says, “Let him who is without sin throw the first stone” (truth).

- **Entitlement:**

[Matthew 12:46-50](#) – Jesus’ mother and brethren desire to speak with him. When Jesus was approached regarding this, he acknowledges that *all* who “do the will of [his] Father...the same is [his] brother, and sister, and mother.”

[Matthew 20:20-23](#) – *20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons... [and] said unto [Jesus], Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom...23 And he saith unto them...to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

Sought Support of Friends (and accepting their ‘No’)

[Matt 26:36-45](#) (see also [Mark 14:32-42](#)) – *36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder...38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me...40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy...45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

Respected God the Father’s ‘No’

[Matt 26:39, 42](#) – *39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt...42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*

Spoke Truth to those stuck or wrong

- **Temptations**

[Matthew 4:1-11](#) (See also [Mark 1:9-11](#); [Luke 4:1-13](#)) – Having been fasting for forty days and forty nights, the devil tempted Jesus to which Jesus responded with truth:

Temptation by the Devil	Truth Spoken by Jesus
Turn stones into bread (v. 3)	<i>It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (v. 4).</i>
Jump off a pinnacle of the temple for angels will bear you (Jesus) up (v. 5-6).	<i>It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (v. 7).</i>
I will give you all the kingdoms of the world and glory of them if you would worship me (v. 8-9).	<i><u>Get thee hence, Satan:</u> for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (v. 10).</i>

- **Exploitation**

[Matthew 21:12-17](#) (See also [John 2:12-16](#)) – *12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves...*

- **Addiction/Dependencies**

[Matthew 19:16-23](#) – Jesus invites the rich man to give up that which was controlling his life and preventing him from “enter[ing] into the kingdom of heaven.”

- **Misguidance**

[Matthew 19:13-15](#) – *13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*

God will not impose on our agency; we must ask and let Him in

[Revelation 3:20 \(20-21\)](#) – 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

[3 Nephi 27:29](#) – Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened. See also [Matthew 21:22](#); [John 16:24](#); [Enos 1:15](#); [3 Nephi 18:20](#); [D&C 4:7](#); [6:5](#); [11:5](#); [12:5](#); [14:5](#); [29:6](#); [35:9](#); [49:26](#); [66:9](#); [75:27](#); [88:63](#); [103:31](#).

[Matthew 20:29-34](#) – 29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David...32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, *What will ye that I shall do unto you?* 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

(Many references in this section have been extracted from <https://www.soulshepherding.org/jesus-set-boundaries/>.)

Principles Learned from Jesus Christ Setting Boundaries

1. **Biblical boundaries stem from an understanding of who we are, and a refusal to be defined as anything less.** Jesus knows who he is and *whose* he is and boldly proclaimed it on many occasions, declaring, “I am the Lord,” “I am Jesus Christ the Son of God,” “*I am the way, the truth, and the life,*” “*I am Messiah,*” “*I am the Son of God*” ([Exodus 6:2](#); [3 Nephi 9:15](#); see also [11:10](#); [John 14:6](#); [Moses 7:53](#); [Matt 27:43](#); see also [John 10:36](#), [3 Nephi, 20:31](#), [D&C 6:21](#), [10:57](#), [11:28](#), [45:52](#), [68:6](#)). He did not allow others’ perceptions of him to threaten the integrity of his divinity.

Knowing who we are and *whose* we are can help us define what’s okay and what isn’t in our own relationships and interactions with others. Many find it helpful to write their own “Bill of Rights” – inherent personal rights which we all have that contribute to well-being, self-esteem, and internal boundaries.²⁰ This can help us see more clearly what is and isn’t okay, and where our “property line” ends and another’s begins, coming from a place of integrity. A few examples are:

- I have the right to make my own decisions.
- I have the right to experience all my emotions – they make me neither weak nor strong, they are a natural part of being human.
- I have a right to say “no” whenever I feel something is not safe or I am not ready.
- I have the right to NOT people-please at the expense of my emotional well-being – even if it means saying “no” to people who are used to hearing “yes.”
- I have the right to expect honesty from others.

Additional examples of boundaries can be found at:

- www.loveaddictionhelp.com/personal-bill-of-rights
- <https://recoveringcodependent.wordpress.com/personal-bill-of-rights/>
- http://www.dharmaspirit.com/pdf/Personal%20Bill%20of%20Rights_Handout.pdf

2. **Biblical boundaries are made with the intent to draw others in and build healthy relationships, not tear them down or punish.** Every boundary God has established, every commandment he has affirmed is for the purpose of drawing us closer to Him. “Appropriate boundaries actually increase our ability to care about others.”²¹

When we honor and respect the lines between us, relationships flourish. We feel seen and loved for the distinct individuals we are, not just how well we get along or fit into someone else’s plan...God didn’t create us to disappear into one another. He designed us to love and encourage each other to become our best selves – separate yet deeply attached. (See Diagrams 3a and 3b above) We draw closer together and experience the joy and wonder of loving one another for who we really [are] when we respect the lines between us.²²

3. **Biblical boundaries lovingly offer choice to others rather than attempting to control them.** God does not force his way in. He respects our boundaries and lovingly reaches out – “*behold I stand at the door and knock...*” ([Revelation 3:20](#)).

“Healthy boundaries say, ‘I may have the right to this, but I’m still going to let you choose. I’ll invite you to love, honor and cherish me, but you get to choose whether you will. You get to choose whether you’ll experience the rewards of a relationship with me or choose instead to cross the line and give up a relationship with me.’”²³

4. **Biblical boundaries clearly communicate expectations and the reasons behind them.** God clearly defines his expectations and explains why. He doesn't make his people guess or assume they will just know: "*Watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation...*" ([3 Nephi 18:18](#); see also [Mark 14:38](#), [Luke 22:46](#), [D&C 23:1](#) and [31:12](#)).

It may be helpful to implement the following practice when setting healthy boundaries:

We take the time to examine our motives so we'll be able to clearly communicate them. We sit down with our loved one and have a conversation about the boundary and the reasons behind it...If we need to do it again later, we will. Once the boundary has been clearly communicated, we'll write it down and ask that it be confirmed. We'll leave no room for there to be any confusion by us or anyone else what is expected.²⁴

5. **Biblical boundaries clearly define the consequences of a violation of their borders.** In addition to communicating His expectations, God also explains what will happen if we step outside of His boundaries.

Healthy boundaries will always be clear about what will happen outside of their borders. This is the only way the person in the relationship with us can have all the information necessary to make his/her choice.²⁵

6. **Biblical boundaries will draw out the true heart of others, ultimately expediting a resolution – one way or the other.** Jesus established a boundary in the account of the rich young man asking what good thing he should do to have eternal life. Jesus' response: "*Go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven*" ([Matthew 19:21](#), see also [v. 16-22](#)). This quickly brought to light what was already in the man's heart: An unwillingness to give up his possessions in order to store up treasure in heaven.

Jesus could have invited the man to follow without setting this boundary...but it wouldn't have changed anything other than time. Eventually, the hardness of the man's heart would still have come to light...

Strong, biblical boundaries save us from spending years being hurt again and again by a fake relationship. A lie."²⁶

7. **Biblical boundaries are genuinely concerned for the well-being of another.** On several accounts, the Lord proclaims, "*how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*" ([3 Ne. 10:4-6](#); see also [Matthew 23:37](#), [Luke 13:34](#), [D&C 10:65](#), [29:2](#), [43:24](#)). Elder Von G. Keetch affirms:

As you and I walk the paths of life and pursue our dreams, God's commands and standards...can sometimes be difficult to understand. They may appear rigid and unyielding, blocking a path that looks fun and exciting and that is being followed by so many others. As the Apostle Paul described, "We see through a glass, darkly," with such a limited perspective that we often cannot comprehend the great dangers hidden just below the surface.

But He who "comprehend[s] all things" knows exactly where those dangers lie. He gives us divine direction, through His commands and loving guidance, so that we may avoid the dangers—so that we may set a course in our lives that is protected from spiritual predators and the gaping jaws of sin.²⁷

When we are sincerely concerned for the well-being of others, we will establish guidelines to keep both them and us safe.

8. **Biblical boundaries are loving.**

Healthy boundaries come from a place of love NOT fear. Throughout the scriptures, God proclaims his love for his children (Topical Guide: [God, Love of](#)), even when enforcing boundaries: "*Whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you*" ([D&C 95:1](#); see also [Revelation 3:19](#)).

Just as "*perfect love casteth out fear*," ([1 John 4:18](#)) so can fear drive away love.

"It is true that fear can have a powerful influence over our actions and behavior. But that influence tends to be temporary and shallow. Fear rarely has the power to change our hearts, and it will never transform us into people who love what is right and who want to obey Heavenly Father.

"People who are fearful may say and do the right things, but they do not feel the right things. They often feel helpless and resentful, even angry. Over time these feelings lead to mistrust, defiance, even rebellion."²⁸

When we are filled with fear, we cannot freely love. Setting boundaries is an act of love. It prevents fear from controlling our lives and allows us to love freely and fearlessly – ourselves and others.

9. **Biblical boundaries are faithfully / consistently enforced – even though it can deeply hurt us to do so.**

God wept when seeing the wickedness of the people who were "*without affection, and they hate their own blood...inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment...Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep*" ([Moses 7:28, 39-40](#); see also [v. 28-41](#)), but he maintained his boundaries.

“He loves us. Dearly. But when we abandon Him – when we choose to live according to our own fleshly desires instead of according to His commands, He will enforce His boundaries.”²⁹

God promises, “*I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise*” ([D&C 82:10](#)). He did not and will not alter his commandments when we do not follow them.

“When those we love (dearly) abandon a life of integrity, it is imperative for the good of every single person involved that we hold to our boundaries. We must draw lines that separate us from their foolishness and sin.”

When boundaries are crossed, we consistently follow through with what we said we would or would not do. Every. Time. This builds trust that we mean what we say and will not tolerate our boundaries being crossed, not even a little.

10. **Biblical boundaries provide a gate.**

Just like our homes have doors and locks, protecting ourselves against intruders yet allowing welcomed guests to enter, having a gate within our boundaries allows the good in and the bad out. Jesus testified: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” ([John 14:6](#)).

Amulek declares that the Son of God:

15...shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name...to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. 16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” ([Alma 34:15-16](#)).

Jesus provided a way for those who found themselves outside His borders (all of us!) to be allowed back in through a gate. Through His atonement, we can repent, turn to Him and receive forgiveness.³⁰ (See also Topical Guide: [Repent, Repentance](#))

When our boundaries have been violated, it can be tempting to go beyond closing the gate and taking some needed space (see Diagram 4 above) to putting up a stone wall, “preventing” further harm of any kind. Though this keeps trespassers out, it can also prevent us from allowing God and any other good thing into our lives. Having a gate allow those who respect our boundaries to enter and “provide a way for one who is repentant and earned enough of our trust to come back inside our borders.”³¹ Jesus Christ offers a way for us that even though our anger may not be turned away while our boundaries are being violated, our hands can be stretched out still, open enough to receive the repentant back in ([2 Nephi 15:25](#)).

11. **Turning the other cheek does not negate or supersede setting and enforcing boundaries**

When the concept of boundaries is brought up, so often the response I receive is, “But isn’t that unkind or un-Christlike? Aren’t I supposed to ‘turn the other cheek?’” In short, yes, we have been commanded to turn the other cheek, but God “*cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance*” ([D&C 1:31](#)). It is clear in the examples above that Jesus was not opposed to setting boundaries, that he established and enforced them, including what would or wouldn’t happen to him (see the section on “Abuse” above). He even provides scriptural instructions on what to do when someone trespasses against us (boundaries underlined):

[Matthew 18:15-17](#) – *15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone...16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established...17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

[Alma 43:46-47](#) – Mormon wrote that the Lord told the Nephites who fought under Captain Moroni, “*Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed.*” The Lord had also told them that “*Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies.*”³²

When Jesus says “*whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*” ([Matthew 5:39](#)), he is not asking us to become doormats, allowing others to abuse us (see Diagram 1 above). Christ is inviting us to exercise *self-control* and *self-restraint*, they are “designed to keep us from returning evil with evil, anger with anger, hate for hate, and force for force.”³³ (See Diagram 2 above) “They’re to keep our hearts full of love for all and create in us a giving spirit.”³⁴ He is instructing us to avoid seeking revenge and retaliation. This is a sign of strength not weakness.

[Results of retaliation](#). We see the unfortunate results of retaliation when some Nephites “*return railing for railing*” ([3 Nephi 6:13](#)) in [3 Nephi 6:14, 17, 18, 30](#) and [3 Nephi 7:7](#):

14 There became a great inequality in all the land...the church began to be broken up...17 the people [were]...carried about by the temptations of the devil...in a state of awful wickedness...18 they did willfully rebel against God...30 set at defiance the

law and the rights of their country...they did covenant one with another to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land, that the land should no more be at liberty... [3 Nephi 7:7](#) And they did cause a great contention in the land.

Contention, retaliation and revenge lead to destruction and bondage.

Strength of self-restraint. Another example where we see the contrast between revenge and boundaries is Limhi and the king of the Lamanites. Assuming Limhi's people had abducted the Lamanite daughters, the King of the Lamanites wages war, breaking the oath of peace they made with Limhi and his people. The Lamanite king caused unnecessary destruction of many lives in his haste to retaliate. The King, being wounded and left among the dead, was bound and brought before Limhi with the suggestion to slay him. Limhi's restraint and desire to understand the king's perspective lead to resolving the conflict and prevented further loss as the Lamanites were making preparations to come against them once again. ([Mosiah 19-20](#))

Turning the other cheek does not mean enabling. In our efforts to avoid retaliation, we must also avoid enabling (doing for others what they can and need to do for themselves) by allowing our loved ones to experience their consequences and establishing healthy boundaries:

"Enabling behaviors are misguided attempts to rescue our loved ones and are often motivated by a righteous desire to serve others and to be loving, kind and Christ-like. Many of us 'have interpreted religious beliefs as a mandate to care-take...And then we wonder what's wrong with us because our Christian beliefs aren't working. Our lives aren't working either. Christian beliefs work just fine...It's rescuing that doesn't work.' We always remember that...enabling does not help anyone and in reality, reinforces the destructive behaviors of others...Consequences provide powerful learning lessons that can give our loved ones the opportunity and motivation to seek change."³⁵

God limits what he will allow in his yard. He confronts sin and allows consequences for behavior. He guards his house and will not allow evil things to go on there.³⁶

Forgiveness and trust. Forgiveness does not mean that we must trust a person. We can freely forgive, but when trust is broken, it must be earned over time through changed attitudes and behaviors.³⁷

The Lord commands us to forgive ([D&C 64:10](#)), but He never commands us to trust. Trust has to be earned, and those who don't earn our trust don't have the right to be around us. Isn't that what God Himself does? "*And the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel, and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name*" ([2 Nephi 9:41](#)).

As you see over time that your limits are being respected and not violated, you can better trust. Trust is something that needs to be earned by repeated behaviors, rather than given in advance.³⁸ It is a natural consequence, a result of honored boundaries. We must also be willing to respect others' boundaries, providing an equal opportunity to earn their trust.

Kindness. We can set boundaries and still be kind. "Kind people don't want to hurt others, but they will speak the truth with boldness and love. Kind people care about the welfare of those around them. Kind people draw healthy boundaries because that's good for everybody."³⁹

In the three guidelines for setting boundaries of, "don't hurt yourself, don't hurt anyone else [and] don't let anyone hurt you,"⁴⁰ we must protect ourselves and avoid harming others as well. We can be kind and Christ-like by establishing healthy boundaries, allowing us the freedom to love as Christ loves.

(Many references in this section have been extracted from www.hisdearlyloveddaughter.com/2018/05/07/5-principles-healthy-boundaries-learn-god/ and www.hisdearlyloveddaughter.com/2018/05/14/principles-biblical-boundaries-learn-god/)

Additional Scriptural Examples of Boundaries

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Esther | Esther risks losing her life by entering the inner court of the king's house to request he and Haman attend a banquet she will prepare. Then again when revealing Haman's plot to destroy the Jews. (Esther 5:1-8, 7:1-6) |
| Captain Moroni | Captain Moroni exemplifies setting healthy boundaries to protect the lives of them, their families and religion and follows through with the consequences when boundaries are crossed. (Alma 44) |
| Anti-Nephi-Lehi's | Having repented of their sins, the Anti-Nephi-Lehi's choose to suffer death rather than fight against their brethren, the Lamanites that they may retain a remission of their sins. (Alma 24) |
| Prodigal Son | In the parable of the prodigal son, the son is allowed to experience the consequences of his choices. Upon returning, his father welcomes him in love. (Luke 15:11-32) |

- Lehi** Following the Lord's counsel, Lehi leaves Jerusalem to protect himself and his family after he prophesied to the people and they sought to take his life. ([1 Nephi 1:18-20](#) and [1 Nephi 2:1-3](#))
- Nephi** Nephi continues to build the ship instructed by the Lord despite persecution from his brothers. ([1 Nephi 17:8, 17-19, 49-51](#) and [1 Nephi 18:2-4](#))
- Nephi frequently prays to God because of the anger of his brothers. Their anger increases and they seek to take away Nephi's life. Nephi and all those who would go with him leave and flee into the wilderness for protection. ([2 Nephi 5:1-2, 5-6](#))
- Abinadi** Abinadi prophesies the destruction of King Noah and the people. The king desires to slay Abinadi, to which Abinadi boldly proclaims, "3 *Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time. 4 But I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me... 9 But I finish my message; and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved*" ([Mosiah 13:3-4, 9](#)). After hearing all that Abinadi had to announce, King Noah threatens death to unless he retracts his words. Abinadi declares, "I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands" ([Mosiah 17:8-9](#)). Not only did Abinadi stand firm in truth, he surrendered his life (different than being taken).
- [Galatians 6:7](#) ... for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
- [D&C 1:31-33](#) 31 For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance 32 Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven; 33 And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.
- [D&C 121:43](#) *Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved.* – From the Spanish translation of the Doctrine and Covenants we can better understand "reproving betimes with sharpness" to mean reprimanding in the opportune moment with sternness.
- [Proverbs 22:3](#) *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*
- [Proverbs 25:28](#) *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Additional Church Quotes about Boundaries

["Marriage, Technology, and Emotional Infidelity"](#) by Lori Cluff Schade – **Boundaries offer Protection, Joy and Love**

"In this Internet age it is vital that we build strong boundaries to protect our marriages. In [Alma 49](#) we read how Captain Moroni led the Nephites to build a fortress around the city Ammonihah "in a manner which never had been known among the children of Lehi" ([verse 8](#)). The Lamanites had conquered that city before and assumed it would be "easy prey" ([verse 3](#)), but they were wrong and "astonished exceedingly" ([verse 5](#)). They failed in their attempt to take the city."⁴¹

["Blessed and Happy Are Those Who Keep the Commandments of God"](#) by Elder Von G. Keetch

Elder Keetch shares an experience he had while in Australia. Walking along a beach, he observed a group of American surfers were upset about the "barrier stretching across the entire mouth of the bay, right where the large, enticing waves were breaking...here on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to surf these big waves," they continued their "ever-increasing complaints about the barrier." An older Australian man walked over to the group, handing the surfers a pair of binoculars. It was then they could see large sharks feeding near the reef on the other side of the barrier. Upon retrieving his binoculars, the Australian "old surfer" turning to walk away then said, "Don't be too critical of the barrier...it's the only thing that's keeping you from being devoured."

From Elder Keetch: "The Lord's commands do not constitute some grueling underwater maze of barriers that we must learn to grudgingly endure in this life so that we might be exalted in the next. Rather, the barriers established by the Lord create for us a safe harbor from the evil and destructive influences that would otherwise drag us down to the depths of despair. The Lord's commandments are given out of love and caring; they are intended for our joy in this life ([2 Nephi 2:25](#)) just as much as they are intended for our joy and exaltation in the next."⁴²

["Obedience to Law is Liberty"](#) by Elder L. Tom Perry

"Today we find ourselves in another war. This is not a war of armaments. It is a war of thoughts, words, and deeds. It is a war with sin, and more than ever we need to be reminded of the commandments...Men and women receive their agency as a gift from God, but their liberty and, in turn, their eternal happiness come from obedience to His laws."⁴³

[“Love and Law”](#) by Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The love of God does not supersede His laws and His commandments, and the effect of God’s laws and commandments does not diminish the purpose and effect of His love.”⁴⁴

[“Teach us Tolerance and Love”](#) by Elder Russell M. Nelson (*Ensign*, May 1994)

“Paul’s list included ‘uncleanness.’ As members of the Church entrusted with its holy temples, we are commanded that ‘*no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into [His] house to pollute it*’ ([D&C 109:20](#)).

“That assignment requires great fortitude as well as love. In former days, disciples of the Lord “*were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin*” ([Alma 24:19](#)). In latter days, devoted disciples of the Lord are just as firm. Real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructing behavior.”⁴⁵

[“Agency and Anger”](#) by Lynn G. Robbins (owning our emotions - healthy boundaries for self)

“No one makes us mad. Others don’t make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. We choose!”⁴⁶

[Family Home Evening Resource Book](#), “Setting Limits”

Guidelines in Setting Limits

1. Involving children in setting limits helps them understand rules and consequences from the parent’s perspective.
2. Real love and concern for children is not shown by allowing them to do whatever they want. Rather, it is having them obey rules and limits and face consequences when those rules and limits are broken.
3. Being consistently allowed to cross limits without facing consequences fails to teach children the purposes of rules.
4. Firmness, fairness, and love go together when teaching dependability and setting limits. Indulgence, injustice, and indifference to limits teach irresponsibility.⁴⁷

Other Quotes about Boundaries

[Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life](#), by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

“God...leaves work for us to do that only we can do. And he allows us to experience the painful consequences of our behavior so that we will change. Not willing for us to perish and takes no pleasure in our destruction ([2 Peter 3:9](#) ; [Ezekiel 18:23](#)), but he wants us to change for our own good and his glory. It hurts him deeply when we don’t. But at the same time, he does not rescue us; he wants us to work it out for our own good. He will not violate our wish to be left alone, although he will plead with us to come back to Him.”⁴⁸

[“Quotes to Inspire Healthy Boundaries,”](#) by blogs.psychcentral.com

- “We can say what we need to say. We can gently, but assertively, speak our mind. We do not need to be judgmental, tactless, blaming or cruel when we speak our truths.” — Melody Beattie
- “Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say ‘no’ when they need to, and when they say ‘yes,’ they mean it. They’re compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment.” — Brené Brown
- “You get what you tolerate.” — Henry Cloud
- “Setting boundaries is a way of caring for myself. It doesn’t make me mean, selfish, or uncaring (just) because I don’t do things your way. I care about me, too.” — Christine Morgan
- “Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves even when we risk disappointing others.” — Brené Brown
- “When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated.” — Brené Brown
- “Much of the time, the things we feel guilty about are not our issues. Another person behaves inappropriately or in some way violates our boundaries. We challenge the behavior, and the person gets angry and defensive. Then we feel guilty.” — Melody Beattie
- “Givers need to set limits because takers rarely do.” — Rachel Wolchin
- “Boundaries are a part of self-care. They are healthy, normal, and necessary.” — Doreen Virtue
- “The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say ‘No’ to almost everything.” — Warren Buffett

- “No!’ is a complete sentence.” — Anne Lamont
- “Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom.” – Henry Cloud
- “Letting go helps us to live in a more peaceful state of mind and helps restore our balance. It allows others to be responsible for themselves and for us to take our hands off situations that do not belong to us. This frees us from unnecessary stress.” – Melody Beattie
- “Your personal boundaries protect the inner core of your identity and your right to choices.” — Gerard Manley Hopkins

“[Boundaries](#)” by Hank R. Smith

You cry? I cry.

You laugh? I laugh.

You’re happy? I’m happy.

You jump off a cliff? I’m gonna miss you.

Boundaries.

Examples of Healthy Boundaries

When establishing boundaries (and consequences) remember that it is about what we will do (which is enforceable) not what the other person will do (not enforceable). Please note each situation is different, therefore the following are simply examples of how the principles of boundary setting can be applied. It is important for each person to prayerfully reflect on what boundaries may need to be set within their particular situation.

Examples of Enforceable Boundaries:

“If you [unhealthy behavior], I will/won’t [state what I will/won’t do].”

- If you slip looking at porn, I won’t be able to be intimate with you for at least 2 weeks or until I feel ready/safe.
- If you touch me sexually outside of lovemaking, then I won’t be able to cuddle with you again for at least a week until you can respect my body and my boundaries.

Boundary examples from *Boundaries in Marriage*⁴⁹

- Cancelling a credit card due to spouse overspending and not being able to wisely manage money
- Leaving for the party alone when the perpetually late partner doesn’t come home by the agreed upon departure time
- Going ahead and eating dinner when a spouse is late for the thousandth time
- Ending an abusive conversation. Removing oneself from an argument or heated situation
- Refusing to bail someone out of a jam because of perpetual irresponsibility, like overspending or not completing work on time.
- “I love you, but I don’t trust you. I can’t be that close until we work this out.”
- “When you can be kind, we can be close again.”
- “When you show you are serious about getting some help, I will feel safe enough to open up to you again.”
- “I can’t share deep feelings if you are going to punish me for them.”
- Taking some time away from one another to sort things out
- Moving out to get treatment for an addiction
- Separating from physical abuse or substance abuse
- Moving into a shelter to protect children
- “We will discuss our budget for one hour, and then we will leave it alone until next week”
- Set a certain time to work on a particular issue instead of discussing it in the heat of the moment.
- Establish seasons for certain goals: “This summer we will work on our communication, and in the fall we will work on our sexual difficulties.”

Main References and Additional Related Resources

Main References Used in This Handout:

- Article: "[5 Principles about Healthy Boundaries we Learn from God](#)," hisdearlyloveddaughter.com
- Article: "[5 More Principles about Biblical Boundaries we Learn from God](#)," hisdearlyloveddaughter.com
- Handout: "[7 Steps of Spiritual Surrender – How to Do Spiritual Surrender](#)," by Laura M. Brotherson
- Handout: "[80/20 Relationship in Marriage](#)," by Laura M. Brotherson
- Book: *Boundaries*, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- Book: *Boundaries in Marriage*, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- Article: "[Boundaries in marriage – Resolving Conflict With a Resistant Spouse](#)," BoundariesBooks.com
- Book: *Healing Through Christ Family Workbook*
- Article: "[Jesus Set Boundaries](#)," SoulShepherding.org

Additional Related Resources:

- Article: "[Book of Mormon Principles: Turning the Other Cheek](#)," *Ensign*, Sep 2004
- Article: "[Boundaries: A road map, not a brick wall](#)," by Real Intimacy
- Article: "[Does 'Turn the Other Cheek' Mean 'Get Walked All Over'?](#)" by The Gospel Coalition
- Article: "[Good Fences Make Good Neighbors](#)," by Real Intimacy
- Article: "[How to Create Healthy Boundaries](#)," by University of Kentucky
- Article: "[Personal Boundaries and How to Establish Them](#)" by Essentiallifeskills.net
- Article: "[Setting and Enforcing Healthy Boundaries](#)," by Terri Cole
- Article: "[Setting Boundaries in the Bedroom](#)," by J. Parker
- Article: "[Signs Your Boundaries Are Too Loose or Too Rigid](#)," psychcentral.com
- Article: "[The Proper Use of Boundaries – Creating Space for Healing and Change](#)," by LifeStar, St. George
- Article: "[When and How Should We Defend Ourselves](#)," *Ensign*, Feb 1989
- Handout: "[Signs of healthy/unhealthy Boundaries](#)," sascwr.org
- Manual: "[Lesson 4: Responding to Challenges in Marriage](#)," *Marriage and Family Relations Instructor's Manual* (2000), 18-22
- Manual: "[Principle 8. Be Firm and Steadfast](#)," *Support Guide: Help for Spouses and Family of Those in Recovery*
- Podcast: "[Boundaries](#)," by The Life Coach School
- Quotes: <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/imperfect/2016/06/quotes-healthy-boundaries/>
- Quote: <https://twitter.com/hankrsmith/status/1120368293393645568>
- Video: [HOW TO—Set Boundaries when a Loved One has an Addiction](#). HOW TO on YouTube.
- Video Interview: "[Don't Be Afraid to Set Boundaries](#)," by Julie Hanks, LCSW
- Video Interview: "[Setting Boundaries with Difficult People](#)," by Julie Hanks, LCSW
- Video Interview: "[When and How to Be More Assertive](#)," by Julie Hanks, LCSW

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