

HOW TO CREATE BOUNDARIES WITH PEOPLE YOU LOVE AND RESPECT

BISHOP RC BLAKES, JR.

Introduction — Boundaries Are Righteous And Healthy

One of the reasons people struggle with boundaries is because they confuse love with unlimited access and respect with unquestioned compliance. But Scripture never teaches us that loving someone requires surrendering our emotional, spiritual, physical, financial, or relational health to them.

Jesus loved people deeply, but He did not give everyone the same level of access to Him. There were moments when He withdrew from crowds, refused demands, challenged inappropriate expectations, and protected the assignment God had given Him.

Mark 1:35

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Luke 5:16

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Jesus understood something many loving people struggle to understand:

Being needed does not mean you must always be available.

A boundary is not punishment.

A boundary is a definition.

It defines what I am responsible for, what you are responsible for, what behavior I will participate in, and what behavior I will remove myself from.

Healthy boundaries say:

"I can love you without losing myself."

"I can honor you without allowing you to control me."

"I can respect your position without surrendering my responsibility before God."

"I can forgive you without restoring unlimited access to me."

Paul gives us an important balance:

Galatians 6:2

Bear ye one another's burdens...

But only a few verses later:

Galatians 6:5

For every man shall bear his own burden.

There are some burdens we help one another carry, and there are responsibilities every adult must carry for themselves.

Boundaries become necessary whenever relationship begins violating responsibility.

1. BOUNDARIES WITH PARENTS

Parents deserve honor, but honor does not mean permanent parental control.

Exodus 20:12

Honour thy father and thy mother...

But Scripture also establishes a transition into adult autonomy:

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother...

You never outgrow honor.

But you are supposed to outgrow dependency.

Many adults have physically left their parents' homes but have never psychologically left parental government.

When A Boundary May Be Necessary

A. When a parent attempts to make adult decisions for you.

There is a difference between receiving parental wisdom and surrendering adult responsibility.

Proverbs 15:22

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Counsel is valuable.

But counsel is not control.

You can receive wisdom and still make your own decision.

B. When guilt is used to influence your choices.

Statements such as:

"After everything I've done for you..."

"If you really loved me..."

"You've changed..."

can become emotional tools of control.

Love should never require emotional blackmail.

C. When financial assistance becomes a means of control.

Sometimes money comes with invisible strings.

If financial support repeatedly becomes leverage over your decisions, you may need to reduce your financial dependence in order to increase your personal freedom.

Proverbs 22:7

...the borrower is servant to the lender.

Sometimes the price of financial assistance is greater than the amount of money received.

D. When your marriage, parenting, career, appearance, or decisions are constantly criticized.

Parents may have opinions.

But adulthood means those opinions are no longer automatically instructions.

Particularly in marriage, Scripture establishes a new primary human relationship.

Genesis 2:24

...and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Your parents should not be permitted to govern your marriage.

E. When a parent demands access to information you consider private.

Privacy is not secrecy.

Some things are simply not everybody's business.
Even Jesus did not tell everyone everything.

John 16:12

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Wisdom determines not merely what you communicate, but to whom and when.

F. When disagreement produces verbal abuse, manipulation, or disrespect.

Honor does not require remaining present while someone abuses you.
You can love someone and remove yourself from an unhealthy conversation.

Prescription For Establishing The Boundary

A. Separate honor from obedience.

Children are instructed to obey their parents.

Ephesians 6:1

Children, obey your parents in the Lord...

Adults continue to honor their parents, but adulthood requires personal responsibility before God.

You can respectfully say:

"I value your wisdom, but I have to make this decision for myself."

B. Stop over-explaining adult decisions.

Excessive explanation often reveals that you still feel you need permission.

Instead of giving a twenty-minute defense, learn to say:
"I appreciate your concern. I have made my decision."

Matthew 5:37

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay...

Maturity learns how to communicate clearly without unnecessary justification.

C. Decide what information remains private.

If every piece of information becomes an opportunity for interference, reduce the information.

Access to information should be determined by trust.

D. Establish consequences for disrespect.

You can say:

"I love you, but if this conversation becomes disrespectful, I am going to end it and we can speak later."

Notice: the boundary does not tell them what they must do.

The boundary tells them what you will do.

E. Be consistent.

James 1:8

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

If your boundary changes every time someone becomes upset, it is not really a boundary.

Key Principle

Honor your parents, but do not abandon your adulthood to prove your honor.

2. BOUNDARIES WITH SIBLINGS

Sibling relationships contain tremendous history.

They remember who you were before you became who you are.

And sometimes family members have difficulty updating their picture of you.

Jesus experienced something similar:

Mark 6:4

A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin...

Sometimes familiarity causes people to disregard growth.

When A Boundary May Be Necessary

A. When you are repeatedly expected to rescue them from consequences.

There is a difference between helping someone through hardship and repeatedly financing dysfunction.

Galatians 6:7

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Sometimes consequences are the classroom God is using to mature somebody.

Constantly rescuing them can interrupt the lesson.

B. When a sibling continually borrows money without

responsibility.

Generosity is biblical.

Financial self-destruction is not.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity...

Giving should not be produced through family pressure, guilt, or manipulation.

C. When they disrespect your spouse or children.

Being your sibling does not give someone permission to destabilize the family God has entrusted to you.

Your household deserves protection.

D. When confidential information becomes family gossip.

Proverbs 11:13

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

If someone repeatedly proves they cannot handle sensitive information, wisdom says reduce their access to it.

E. When insults are consistently disguised as humor.

Every joke is not harmless.

Repeated sarcasm, ridicule, comparison, and humiliation can slowly damage

relationships.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue...

Words create atmospheres.

F. When your success becomes an expectation that you finance everyone else's irresponsibility.

Sometimes the "responsible child" becomes the family's permanent emergency fund.

That is not sustainable.

G. When family drama continually disrupts your peace.

Romans 12:18

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Notice the language:

"If it be possible."

Scripture recognizes that peace requires cooperation.

Prescription For Establishing The Boundary

A. Stop playing your childhood role.

Every family develops roles:

The rescuer.

The responsible one.

The peacemaker.

The successful one.

The fixer.

The family ATM.

Ask yourself:

"Am I helping because God is leading me to help, or because my family trained me to feel responsible for everybody?"

B. Stop rescuing adults from every consequence.

Sometimes love gives assistance.
Sometimes love allows responsibility.

Paul wrote:

2 Thessalonians 3:10

...if any would not work, neither should he eat.

The point is not cruelty.
The point is responsibility.

C. Establish financial boundaries before the crisis occurs.

Know what you are willing to give, loan, or decline before emotional pressure arrives.

You may need to say:

"I am willing to help this time, but I cannot become the ongoing solution."

D. Protect confidentiality.

Forgiveness does not mean restoring someone to the same level of access that they previously abused.

Jesus said:

Matthew 10:16

...be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Grace and wisdom belong together.

E. Accept that closeness may change.

Some siblings can love each other deeply but function better with greater distance.

Distance does not always mean hatred.

Sometimes distance protects the possibility of relationship.

Key Principle

Being family gives someone a place in your heart. It does not automatically give them unlimited access to your life.

3. BOUNDARIES WITH CHURCH LEADERS

This is an especially important area because spiritual authority can be misunderstood.

Scripture clearly teaches believers to respect spiritual leadership.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves...

But biblical leadership is never ownership.

Peter specifically warns leaders:

1 Peter 5:2–3

Feed the flock of God... neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

The people belong to God.

Not the pastor.
Not the bishop.
Not the apostle.
Not the ministry.

When A Boundary May Be Necessary

A. When a leader begins making personal decisions that Scripture leaves to your discretion.

Spiritual leadership should provide wisdom and biblical guidance.
It should not replace your conscience.

B. When loyalty to the leader begins replacing loyalty to God.

Paul confronted this mentality in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 3:4

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Christian identity should never become personality worship.

C. When fear, shame, prophecy, or Scripture are used to manipulate you.

Godly conviction leads toward truth and restoration.
Manipulation uses spiritual language to produce fear-based compliance.

2 Corinthians 3:17

...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Spiritual leadership should help people mature into freedom, not dependency.

D. When you are pressured financially beyond responsible stewardship.

Biblical giving should come from faith, willingness, and conviction.

2 Corinthians 9:7

...not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

If giving is being produced through humiliation, intimidation, or coercion, something is wrong.

E. When legitimate questions are treated as rebellion.

The Bereans were praised for checking what Paul taught.

Acts 17:11

...they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Healthy leadership is not afraid of biblical examination.

F. When ministry expectations consistently damage your family, health, livelihood, or spiritual wellbeing.

Your service to church should not consistently require neglecting the responsibilities God has already given you.

Prescription For Establishing The Boundary

A. Remember who your ultimate authority is.

Acts 5:29

We ought to obey God rather than men.

Your pastor may be your spiritual leader.

Your pastor is not your God.

B. Ask questions without feeling guilty.

You can say:

"I respect your leadership, but I need clarity before I participate in this."

Respectful questions are not rebellion.

C. Maintain personal biblical discernment.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...

The responsibility to discern does not disappear because someone has a title.

D. Protect your primary responsibilities.

1 Timothy 5:8

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house...

Ministry should not become an excuse for chronic neglect of home.

E. Learn to respectfully decline.

You can say:

"I appreciate the opportunity, but I cannot take that responsibility in this season."

No guilt.

No hostility.

No twenty-minute explanation.

Key Principle

Healthy spiritual authority develops your relationship with God. Unhealthy spiritual authority tries to replace it.

4. BOUNDARIES WITH EMPLOYERS

Your employer purchases your labor.

They do not purchase your entire life.

The Bible teaches excellence:

Colossians 3:23

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord...

But Scripture also teaches rest, integrity, family responsibility, and proper stewardship.

Excellence is biblical.

Exploitation is not.

When A Boundary May Be Necessary

A. When you are regularly expected to work beyond agreed hours without reasonable limits.

Occasional sacrifice is part of almost every career.

Chronic availability is something different.
Even Jesus recognized the necessity of rest.

Mark 6:31

Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while...

If Jesus acknowledged human limits, you should not feel guilty for having them.

B. When your employer constantly contacts you during personal time.

Your availability needs definition.
Without boundaries, exceptional availability can quietly become normal expectation.

C. When responsibilities increase but priorities never change.

You cannot continually add responsibilities without eventually removing, delegating, or reprioritizing something.

Wisdom asks for clarity.

D. When family responsibilities are repeatedly disregarded.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

Work has a place.
Family has a place.

Rest has a place.
Worship has a place.
A healthy life requires recognizing seasons and priorities.

E. When you are pressured to participate in unethical behavior.

No paycheck is worth sacrificing integrity.

Proverbs 10:9
He that walketh uprightly walketh surely...

F. When fear of termination becomes a tool of manipulation.

Fear can cause people to tolerate what wisdom would otherwise challenge.
You must remember that your employer is a resource God may use, but your employer is not your source.

Philippians 4:19
But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

G. When work continually consumes your rest, relationships, and identity.

Your career is something you do.
It is not the totality of who you are.
Prescription For Establishing The Boundary

A. Clarify expectations.

Ask:

"What exactly are the expectations of this position?"

"What constitutes an emergency after hours?"

"Which responsibility should take priority?"

1 Corinthians 14:40

Let all things be done decently and in order.

Clarity produces order.

B. Stop rewarding unreasonable expectations with constant availability.

Every pattern teaches people what they can expect from you.

If you routinely respond to messages at midnight, people may eventually believe midnight access is normal.

C. Communicate capacity professionally.

Instead of: "I have too much work."

Say: "I currently have projects A, B, and C. If D becomes the priority, which project would you like me to postpone?"

That is not rebellion.

That is mature communication.

D. Refuse ethical compromise.

Daniel served governments with excellence but maintained clear spiritual boundaries.

Daniel 6:4

...they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful...

You can be loyal to an organization without surrendering integrity.

E. Separate your identity from your occupation.

Your position may change.

Your salary may change.

Your employer may change.

Your identity in God does not.

Key Principle

Be an excellent employee without becoming an owned person.

Closing — The Boundary Formula

Healthy boundaries generally follow the same process regardless of the relationship.

A. Identify the violation.

What specifically is producing resentment, anxiety, exhaustion, fear, or dysfunction?

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Pay attention to what repeatedly disturbs your inner life.

B. Define the boundary.

Determine what you will participate in and what you will no longer participate in.

C. Communicate the boundary clearly.

Do not say: "You need to treat me better."

Say: "If yelling begins, I am going to end the conversation."

D. Establish the consequence.

A boundary is not primarily about controlling somebody else.

It describes what you will do.

You cannot control whether they yell.

You can control whether you remain in the room.

E. Remain consistent.

Matthew 5:37

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay...

Do not continually announce boundaries you refuse to maintain.

And remember:

I can love you and tell you no.

I can respect you and disagree with you.

I can forgive you and limit your access to me.

I can honor your position without surrendering my personhood.

Jesus told His disciples:

Matthew 10:16

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Notice the balance.

Harmless—but wise.

Loving—but discerning.

Forgiving—but not foolish.

Gracious—but still governed.

Because boundaries are not the opposite of love.

Healthy boundaries are the structure that keeps love from becoming dysfunction.