Cultivating Boundaries
in Relationships

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A relationship thrives when we learn how to love compassionately and unconditionally, how to communicate effectively and honorably, and how to protect the connection between ourselves and the other individual at all costs. But none of this can be possible without setting proper boundaries in the relationship.

Every powerful person needs to be able to set and maintain boundaries around the behavior they will practice and expect in their close relationships. When someone is violating connection through disrespect and irresponsibility, it's healthy to set a boundary by confronting the behavior and requiring adjustment.

Here are **5 ways** to cultivate boundaries in your relationships:

1

Only engage in respectful conversations.

When someone you love comes to you and starts to complain and spew gossip, slander, and cynicism, try to use questions to redirect them to talk vulnerably about themselves rather than others. Empower them to be responsible for themselves and what they can do in the situation they're in.

2

Let go of feeling someone else's grief.

Only God is strong enough to carry the full emotional weight of another person's life and problems. He tells us, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). The word for "be still" means "to let go." It's not less compassionate to stop dwelling on someone else's emotions. This is a powerful boundary to set to ensure you're not emotionally exhausting yourself and in turn will help you remain tender toward God's heart for that person.

3

Forgive, forgive, forgive.

Forgiveness is one of the ways we let go of bitterness and restore our emotional well-being. Human problems are often filled with mistakes, sin, and injustice, meaning we have many opportunities to take up offenses. True healing and freedom comes from forgiveness, so remaining in view of God's grace toward the other person or people involved is a vital boundary to keep. Bitterness and judgment are like poison. Therefore, we must keep a clean heart and forgive.

4

Learn to say a definitive "No."

Saying "No" is a powerful and important boundary to set. It allows the space and capacity for us to be able to give our "Yes" to the things God is calling us to. If we hope to offer the benefits of our lives to other individuals, then we must build a life we want to live—a life that inspires. The best way to do that is by taking care of the things that will bring us life: spending time in the presence of God, being creative, investing in our dreams, enjoying healthy relationships and hobbies, and practicing recreation that truly "re-creates" and restores us. This way, we are healthy and whole being able to engage in our relationships out of an overflow of life and love and not out of obligation.

5

Empower others to solve their own problems.

Ultimately, this is the most helpful boundary you can keep. Extending compassion and understanding as well as sharing wisdom is very important and necessary in a relationship. Spoon-feeding solutions to someone is not a healthy way to set boundaries for yourself and it certainly does not help the other person. However, you can empower someone else to realize they can choose how they will respond to difficult situations and people. All you are called to do is simply love and empower.

To an unhealthy person, a boundary may seem like a limitation, a method of control, or a form of rejection. This couldn't be further from the truth. Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries is of the utmost importance when it comes to our relationships. They are put in place not to create limitations, but rather to allow for the freedom and empowerment of each individual to be wholehearted and fully themselves. This is why, in order to protect our relationships, we must first establish healthy priorities and boundaries around ourselves and the levels of intimacy we nurture with each person. Only then can we see the relationship thrive and grow into a beautiful, loving, life-changing connection.

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