

SETTING LIMITS FOR

BOUNDARIES

A HEALTHY LIFE

WEEK 2

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BOUNDARIES: WEEK 2

THE HARDEST BOUNDARIES TO SET

PROVERBS 28:23, NLT | MATTHEW 10:37, NLT

There's something uniquely challenging about setting boundaries with family. We can manage expectations at work and navigate friendships with relative ease. But when it comes to parents, siblings, and in-laws? That's where things get messy. Family relationships carry the weight of our history. These are the people who knew us before we even knew ourselves, and just the thought of disappointing them or being labeled as "difficult" can feel unbearable. So we avoid the hard conversations, we let things slide, we accommodate and adjust until we're carrying loads we were never meant to bear. Consider where many of us learned to handle conflict or say "no" without guilt. For many, these skills weren't taught at home—they were learned later through painful trial and error. We grew up in environments where keeping peace meant staying silent, where expressing needs was seen as selfish, and where boundaries were viewed as a lack of love rather than an expression of it. But here's the uncomfortable truth: the absence of boundaries doesn't create closeness. It creates confusion, resentment, and exhaustion. When we fail to communicate directly with the people who can actually address our concerns, we end up venting to everyone else. The problem never gets solved, and now multiple people are frustrated instead of just two. We think we're being kind by avoiding difficult conversations, but we're actually being cowardly. The real tragedy occurs when well-meaning family members inadvertently undermine what we're trying to build. The grandparent who overrides parenting

decisions. The parent who still treats their married child like a teenager. The in-law who offers unsolicited criticism disguised as concern. These patterns prevent growth. Even more challenging is when family members become toxic to our spiritual health—people who consistently leave us spiritually drained, criticize our faith, or pressure us to compromise our convictions. We tell ourselves that we're honoring family by maintaining unlimited access, but at what cost? This is where biblical order becomes crucial. God established a hierarchy not to diminish relationships but to protect them. He comes first. Then spouse. Then children. Then extended family. When we reverse this order to keep peace, we don't create harmony; we create chaos. God's love for us is unconditional, but His access to us isn't. From the Garden of Eden onward, Scripture shows that intimacy with God requires obedience. If God Himself operates with boundaries, how can we think we're being more loving by refusing to establish them? Setting boundaries with family is difficult because it forces us to risk rejection from the people whose acceptance we've craved since childhood. But the alternative—living in constant anxiety, carrying loads we weren't meant to carry, and compromising our relationship with God—is far worse. The question isn't whether you love your family. The question is whether you love them enough to have the hard conversations, to speak truth, and to trust that God comes first—even when it's difficult.



Proverbs 28:23, NLT

"In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery."

Historical Context

Written by Solomon, the wisest king in Israel's history, this proverb addresses the tension between speaking truth and seeking approval. In ancient Israel, maintaining honor and avoiding shame were powerful social forces. Flattery was a common strategy to gain favor, advance socially, or sidestep difficult conversations—especially within families where hierarchy and respect were deeply valued.

Key Points

- Telling the truth requires courage; flattery takes the easy path
- People eventually recognize and appreciate those who speak honestly
- Avoiding hard conversations doesn't preserve relationships—it damages them
- Flattery protects our comfort, but honesty protects the relationship
- Biblical love speaks truth even when it's uncomfortable

Reflection

What is a time when you had to make the difficult choice in telling someone what they needed to hear, rather than what they wanted to hear? How did it affect your relationship with that person?

Can you think of a time when someone told you something that you didn't necessarily 'want' to hear, but **needed** to hear? What was your reaction?

Matthew 10:37, NLT

"If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine."

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words while commissioning His twelve disciples for ministry. Jesus asked for absolute and unqualified loyalty, something even the most revered rabbi did not demand. Jesus was preparing them for the reality ahead — that following Him would create division, even within their own families. For Jews in the first century, family loyalty wasn't optional, it was regarded as a sacred obligation. For Jesus to say that disciples must love Him more than their own parents would have been shocking and countercultural. This wasn't merely an idea to consider. Early Christians often paid the price of rejection, persecution, and even being cast out by their families for their faith.

- Jesus establishes a clear hierarchy: God first, then family
- True discipleship requires prioritizing Christ above all other relationships
- To love God above all else doesn't diminish our love for family, rather it rightly directs it.
- Our identity as God's children supersedes our identity as someone's child
- When family loyalty conflicts with obedience to God, God must win

Reflection

Has following Jesus ever cost you a relationship? (Family, friends, etc.) Has following Jesus provided new relationships?

Is there something in your life that you love 'more than' Christ?



GUIDED PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
Thank you for the gift of family and for loving us enough to show us how to love them well. We're grateful that You've given us a clear path, helping us to understand that by putting You first, actually helps us love others better.

Give us courage and wisdom as we navigate boundaries with the people closest to our hearts. Help us to speak truth with kindness and to have the conversations that will bring greater health to our relationships.

For those of us who struggle with fear of disappointing family, replace that fear with peace. Remind us that healthy boundaries create space for more authentic connection, not less.

For those of us learning to honor You above all else, help us to remain steadfast. Show us that when we prioritize our relationship with You, every other relationship finds its proper place and flourishes.

We pray for restoration and healing in our own relationships. Help us to communicate clearly, forgive freely, and trust You to work in the hearts of those we love.

Thank you that as we grow in setting healthy boundaries, we're not building walls, rather we're creating a space for genuine love to thrive. When we put our faith in You, we can trust that you will bring lasting results in our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.