

Bearing Other's Burdens: Knowing the Boundaries

FAQs

The purpose of this workshop is to help you define the boundaries of service when helping one another in body of Christ. When boundaries are clear, helping others see God's deliverance, it is one of the most rewarding, joyous, and satisfying things we can do. But when boundaries get lost, and we get pulled into things we shouldn't be involved in, it can be one of the most frustrating, discouraging, and draining things we can do. Our desire is to impart onto you lessons from the scripture and the wisdom of application God has blessed us with over the years. So that you have clear boundaries in your service to others, and can enjoy the rewards.

1. How can you tell if someone is overtaken in a fault?

While instructing His disciples at a mountain retreat, Jesus warned them about false prophets. Using trees as an example, He illustrated that "by their fruit you shall know them." In other words, you can read what is going on in their life by their doings. Chapter 20 and verse 6 of Proverbs also says that even a child is known by his doings.

There are four doctrinal epistles and four correctional epistles. When we know the truth to live by, and the correction needed to get back on track, we are able to see the error not only in our own lives, but also to aid others. Thus, with a heart of meekness, our motive will be one of love, not criticism or judgment. For example, if a child is instructed and shown how to keep his room in order and does it not, after a time his life will be overtaken by his fault and not the instruction. Restoring, retraining is part of the answer. This a believing parent's task.

The record of Naaman in 2Kings 5 shows these truths in play. Naaman was a great man in the military which had taken captive out of Israel a little maid who served his wife. But he had leprosy. Naaman learned through this little maid that there was a prophet in Israel that would recover him of his leprosy. Following his healing, he requested of the prophet Elisha that when he went into the temple of his kingdom to worship their nation's god, and while leaning on the king's hand to bow before an idol, that the Lord that delivered Naaman would pardon him for such action toward another god. Elisha responded in the spirit of meekness, "Go in peace." No judgment or criticism was involved. This action must have been like frosting on the cake for Naaman and good advertisement for the God of Israel's love that is far-reaching.

2. What does it mean to bear one another's burdens?

This burden is the kind of burden which has a crushing heavy weight, not the daily load of a burden which we all must bear. Things like a tragedy in our family, a chronic sickness, a hospital stay, the loss of a job, a divorce, the loss of a child.

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. No man is an island so try to be a help to someone else it is commanded in the scriptures.

A grieving widow needs an arm around her shoulder just to know she is not alone. We are all in this together, we weep with those who weep, joy with those who joy.

Ten years ago I had to be treated for a medical condition which required me to be 2 hrs away from my home, alone in a motel for a total of 6 weeks. My husband was still working, so he could only visit on some of those weekends. Four wonderful believers at different times provided transportation, friendship and fellowship, spending time with me so that I knew I was not alone, that I was loved and cared for in the ways they were blessed to help. The heavy weight was lifted in so many ways. We cannot help everyone but we can help someone. We can think like a band of brothers and sisters who ask how can I help you. We are not in a spiritual competition, we are in spiritual teamwork.

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, the law of love. Our identity in Christ fundamentally expresses itself in the practice of this mutual love.

3. What does it mean, that every man should bear his own burden?

In the New Testament there four words translated "burden." The word for bearing one's own burden means "an obligation." For example, this word is used in relationship to the lading of a ship – its cargo, what it carries where it goes. This cargo is usually listed on a manifest or bill of lading to allow one to know exactly what are the kinds of products the ship has on board as its load. It indicates the obligations it has to see to it that all reach their destination and shows the receiver that they are met. A daily load we carry as being spiritually minded is being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Only I can do that for me and it's a continuous obligation until I reach my destination. Another scripture is to lay aside every weight and the sin which easily besets us in order to run our race with patience (Hebrews 12).

The word used in Galatians 6 where we are instructed to bear one another's burdens to fulfill the law of Christ means "trouble" or "weight – a heaviness." This kind of load can be shared by someone spiritually minded who, out of love, pursues to help correct a heavy situation.

In Luke 10 after the seventy disciples returned from the cities in which they labored in the harvest, they shared with Jesus the greatness of their experience.

After Jesus blessed them, a lawyer stood up and tempting or testing Him said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He was a lawyer, he knew the law. Jesus countered by asking him what the law says. The lawyer responded by citing the two great

commandments. Jesus agreed and encouraged him to do this and he would live. But the lawyer wanted to exhibit his own righteousness and asked Jesus who was his neighbor. Then follows the record of the certain Samaritan to illustrate loving your neighbor as yourself.

Note that the Samaritan was prepared for his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. We know he had more than enough time because he interrupted his trip to help the injured man. He had more than enough money as he provided care and housing for the man to recover. And, he had the skills to provide emergency care for the man before he put him on his donkey to move him to the inn, being willing to walk rather than to ride. These actions indicate that the Samaritan was well prepared for various situations which his compassionate lifestyle prompted – plenty of time, plenty of finances, plenty of skills, and a lot of love. Did the Samaritan fulfill the law of Christ. Then, he truly had the first great commandment also in his life as he bore the burden of the wounded man who was left for dead.

4. **What can you do if someone is not meek or doesn't want help even though they need it?** This situation can frustrate us when helping others. We clearly see the need in someone's life but they do not. Generally this will fall into two categories, those that just don't see it and may have some type of mental block they are fighting against, or those who are actively divisive and/or argumentative when you bring it to their attention.

In the first situation we are to admonish or warn our fellow believer. This is the Greek words *noutheteo* (G3560) and *nouthesia* (G3559). Through the uses of the words and the context of the scripture this is loving confrontation done from a genuine concern within our heart for the other person, with a believing expectation that over time they will change.

In Rom. 15:14 Paul assures the believers they were filled with goodness and knowledge and able to admonish [*noutheteo*] one another. In I Co. 4:14 "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons to warn [*noutheteo*] you". In Corinthians Paul plainly confronts the issues facing the believers, not for confrontations sake, but because they were beloved to him. He also believed they would change. Finally, we do it with patience, as noted in I Thessalonians. 5:12-14.

For those who seek to be divisive or argumentative, we don't get drawn into a verbal conflict with them.

Titus 3:10 "A man that is an heretick (divisive or argumentative) after the first and second admonition [*noutheteo*] reject". The concept of rejecting the person has been used incorrectly. We don't reject our brothers and sisters. Could you imagine if God rejected us each time we broke fellowship in our minds? God's love never rejects the person. We reject what they say. We excuse ourselves and do not engage further in that topic. If they want to argue further they can take it up with management.

5. What should I do if I've went too far and gotten out of bounds? There are times as we will go beyond the bounds of what we should do when helping others. Rule #1 when you find yourself in a hole dug of your own demise; Stop digging! In Col. 3:15 we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts, if we are unpeaceful with our level of involvement or the direction things are going, we need to stop and assess why. Peace is a powerful boundary marker.

If you are out of bounds in a relationship and have taken on someone else's responsibility you're going to need to sit down with them and explain what has happened, that you realize you shouldn't have taken it on, and that you now have to give it back to them. Relationship boundaries can be difficult to re-establish. Depending on the other person and how long you've been carrying their load this can be a difficult conversation. You'll need to be firm in your resolve, but you don't need to be unkind. Make sure they know you still love them, but you both can no longer continue as you have. Respond don't react.

Do not take ownership of others problems, but love them through the challenge of taking on their own burdens. In Mark 9:17 and following, a man came to Jesus because Jesus' disciples couldn't heal his son. In verse 23 Jesus confronts the man, and tells him it is his unbelief that has kept his son from being healed. The man responds positively to the reproof and correction, asking for help to overcome his burden of unbelief, and his son got healed.

6. When to say no to helping, and how to do it kindly.

We all need help at times, and we do like to help each other many times. However, sometimes we really cannot help. It is a temptation to want to say yes, when we really mean no, because we love the person asking us. A dear friend called for help to move her to another home. I mentioned it to my husband, who said you know, I am just not comfortable with that for some reason. I thought oh, it will be alright Ray, and went to help and assured Ray I would be ok. It was not ok, during the move I slipped and fell and ended up in the emergency room of her local hospital. That was a hard lesson to learn.

I have since learned an acronym from a friend to consider before responding to these requests. USA

(U) = understand: I understand your need.

(S)=situation. This is my situation: I am not able, I have other commitments, or I simply do not think it best to do this at this time.

(A) alternative: Here are some alternatives. I can recommend a moving company or some other possible solution for your consideration.

We are allowed to say no...and do it nicely.

7. How do I utilize the resources within the body of Christ to provide help?

We must recognize and accept that as a leader it is not our responsibility or capability to have all the answers. Good leaders manage people, great leaders develop people. The greatest leaders recognize the strengths in others and provide them with an environment that others can thrive and contribute in. We honor the body of Christ when we refer those in need of help to others who have a long suit.

That doesn't mean we just dump those in need off on others. For example, a believer is struggling with believing for financial prosperity. If we know someone who has a long suit in that area, contact them and explain the situation. Ask them if they want to help. If they say no, thank them for their honesty and move on. If they say yes, trust that God works in them and they will be a great help to the one in need. Encourage both parties to glorify God as they see the results.

8. Other's people's weaknesses drive me crazy. What can I do?

This question reminds me of Romans 15:1 which instructs the mature Christian to carry and support the immature one, teaching them more and loving them greatly.

Romans 12:3 is another piece of instruction that exhorts us to think soberly, to curb our passions, not to get out of bounds but to have boundaries for what we allow to enter our heart (Proverbs 23:7).

Remember the day that Jesus borrowed Peter's ship to teach the crowd that was following Him? Following His teaching, Jesus asked Peter to move his boat into deeper water and cast his nets into the sea. Since Peter had not caught any fish all night, he only offered one of his nets that he had cleaned for the next day. Did Jesus get offended and cut Peter off? No! Instead, Jesus stuck with him until Peter learned the lesson and Peter caught more than enough fish for him and his partners as a result.

If there tends to be offence on our part because it seems we have to put up with immaturity, see the record in Matthew 18:21, 22. Again, Peter is involved in the mix asking Jesus how many times he must forgive a brother who offends him. Should he forgive him seven times of his fault. Jesus replied that it should not be seven times, but 490 times. There is a lesson for us on patience.

9. How to help someone who is overwhelmed by the death of a loved one.

Psalm 147:3 comes to mind. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

We received a phone call, at 4 in the morning requesting Ray to go to the hospital and be with a believer whose son had just died from a car accident. Ray had to be at his job in an hour, so he sent me to be with the mother.

A myriad of thoughts raced in my head. I had no idea what to say or do really, and went there completely relying on God. We met at the waiting room, the mother had not seen her son yet. None of her relatives had arrived yet. She asked me to take the walk down the long corridor with her to see her son for the first time since the accident. It seemed like the longest walk ever!

We saw her beloved son, we prayed, I held her hand as she took all the time she needed to be with him. She kissed him, and we then took that long walk back to the waiting room. My words were few, my just being there was what she needed, at the time. She was not alone.

Some situations require further help, and I personally love Dr. Caroline Leaf. She is a neuroscientist and a Christian who has written many helpful books. I refer people to her online detox the brain program which has been a tremendous source of healing in my life. We have others in the body of Christ who are specially trained to help people overcome hardships, and broken hearts. Some of these believers may be of further help.

Closing Statement:

5 boundaries that will help us bear others' burdens.

1. Be clear on if the other person has been overtaken or overcome in the situation.
2. Are they meek? Are they ready for help and are they ready to help themselves?
3. Am I the right person to help them, or is there someone else who may be better? Don't take ownership of others problems.
4. Knowing how to say no. This will keep us from being entangled where we cannot help.
5. Understand there are 2 types of burdens. Those that are too great to bear alone and overcome us, and those that are each person's responsibility and are made bearable by Christ. (Matt. 11:30)

Recommended Reading:

[Boundaries: by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend](#)

[Keep Your Love On! Connection, Communication, and Boundaries: by Danny Silk](#)

[Competent to Council: by Jay E. Adams](#)

[Dr. Carolyn Leaf: Who Switched Off My Brain; Who Switched Off Your Brain? Solving the Mystery of He Said / She Said; Switch On Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking and Health.](#)