

# Verbally Correcting Someone Who Crosses Boundaries or Says Something Cruel

Union of Saints

## An Educational Step-by-Step Guide

Correcting someone respectfully is not about shaming or dominating them. It is about **protecting boundaries, preserving dignity, and preventing harm,**

~for yourself and for others.

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## Step 1: Pause Before Responding

**Why:** Reacting emotionally can escalate the situation.

**How:**

- Take one breath.
- Slow your tone.
- Decide your goal (understanding? boundary? accountability?).

**Reminder:** Correction is most effective when calm.

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## Step 2: Identify What Happened

Be specific about what crossed the line.

Instead of:

“You’re being rude.”

Say:

“When you said \_\_\_\_, that felt hurtful.”

“That comment crosses a boundary for me.”

Focus on the **behavior**, not the person’s character.

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## Step 3: Use Clear “I” Statements

This prevents defensiveness and keeps ownership of your experience.

Structure:

- “I feel...”
- “I’m not okay with...”
- “I need...”

Example:

“I’m not comfortable with jokes about my background.”  
“I feel disrespected when you speak to me that way.”

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## Step 4: Name the Boundary

Boundaries must be clear to be respected.

Examples:

- “Please don’t speak to me like that.”
- “I need this conversation to stay respectful.”
- “That topic is off limits.”

Avoid vague statements like “Don’t do that.”

Understanding reduces confusion.

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## Step 5: State the Consequence (If Necessary)

A boundary without consequence is only a preference.

Keep it calm and matter-of-fact:

- “If this continues, I’m going to step away.”
- “If you keep speaking to me that way, I’ll end the conversation.”
- “I won’t stay in discussions that feel hostile.”

Consequences should be actions **you control**, not threats.

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## Step 6: Do Not Debate Your Boundary

You do not need permission to have limits.

If they argue:

- Repeat calmly: “I’m not okay with that.”

- Avoid long explanations.
- Do not over-justify.

Consistency builds respect.

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## Step 7: Exit If Needed

If cruelty continues:

- End the conversation.
- Leave the space.
- Follow through on your stated consequence.

Walking away is strength, not weakness.

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## Tone Matters

Effective correction is:

- Calm
- Direct
- Specific
- Firm
- Non-shaming

Ineffective correction is:

- Sarcastic
  - Publicly humiliating
  - Aggressive
  - Passive-aggressive
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## Example Scenario

**Cruel Comment:**

“You’re too sensitive. It was just a joke.”

**Response:**

“I’m not okay with jokes about that. I need you to stop.”

If repeated:

“I’ve already said I’m not okay with it. I’m stepping away now.”

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## When Correction Protects Community

***Boundaries protect culture.***

When cruelty goes unchecked, it becomes normalized.

When it is calmly addressed, respect becomes the norm.

Correcting someone verbally is an act of:

- Self-respect
  - Community protection
  - Emotional maturity
  - Leadership
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## Verbal Boundary Correction

### A Leadership & Ministry Protection Guide

*For the protection of Pastor Cowdrey, the Union, and the Community*

This document outlines how to verbally correct individuals who cross boundaries or speak cruelly, while protecting the integrity, authority, and mission of **Pastor Cowdrey** and **Union of Saints**.

Correction within a ministry context must preserve:

- Spiritual authority
- Organizational integrity
- Legal safety
- Emotional safety
- Community unity

This is an agreement about preventing harm, disorder, and reputational damage.

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# Foundational Principle

Correction within ministry must be:

- Calm
- Direct
- Non-abusive
- Documentable
- Consistent

No personal attacks.

No emotional escalation.

No public humiliation.

Leadership protects both people and structure. We all make mistakes and are human, but *let's stay on the same page.*

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## Step 1: Pause & Discern

Before responding:

- Take a breath.
- Ask: Is this ignorance, disrespect, or hostility?
- Determine: Does this require correction publicly or privately?

In ministry, discernment matters more than reaction.

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## Step 2: Address the Behavior — Not the Person

Use language that separates the individual from the misconduct.

Instead of:

“You’re being disrespectful.”

Say:

“That statement is not appropriate here.”

“That comment undermines the tone of this space.”

This protects autonomy while correcting conduct.

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## Step 3: Protect Leadership Boundaries Clearly

If a comment targets Pastor Cowdrey, ministry authority, or the Union:

Say:

“We do not speak about our leadership that way.”

“This ministry maintains respectful discourse.”

“If you have concerns, they must be raised through proper channels.”

Casual ~

“That seems like a cruel thing to say.”

*Slight corrections, often subtle go along way. Many people who are first introduced to our Union are not as “seasoned,” in the art of verbal abuses, what constitutes defamation or violences. We are not here to excuse this behavior, but we can certainly provide some cushion for learning. They are coming to us out of a culture that is, well, hostile. We are a new age church-mind: remember our virtues, peace, love, and forgiveness,\* as the highest form of love. We offer patience, but certainly hold true to our boundaries.*

This reinforces:

- Order
- Hierarchy
- Structure
- Accountability

Leadership must not be casually undermined.

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## Step 4: Redirect to Policy & Mission

When appropriate, anchor the correction in mission:

“Our mission requires respectful engagement.”

“We are here to serve, not to attack.”

“We protect our leaders and members from hostility.”

This removes the correction from personal conflict and places it within organizational standards.

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## Step 5: Establish Consequences Calmly

If behavior continues:

“If this continues, we will end this discussion.”  
“We cannot allow that language in this space.”  
“If you persist, you may be asked to leave.”

Consequences should:

- Be calm
- Be enforceable
- Protect the community
- Protect the ministry legally

No threats. Only boundaries.

***Are we ready to march forward US?***

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## Step 6: Move to Private Correction When Necessary

Public correction is sometimes necessary for order.  
However, repeated issues should move to private conversation.

Private format:

1. State the behavior.
2. Explain its impact on the ministry.
3. Clarify expectations moving forward.
4. Document the interaction.

Documentation protects both the ministry and leadership.

In group conversations it is best to correct in the moment, but in more public settings, best to wait until there is privacy, and more respectful to the individual we ask boundaries of as well. It is important to remember, we are all learning.

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# Step 7: Know When to Disengage

If someone becomes:

- Hostile
- Defamatory
- Disruptive
- Aggressively oppositional

Disengage.

You may say:

“This conversation is no longer productive.”  
“We are ending this discussion.”

Withdrawal is protection and also *respectful courtesy*.

Better to retreat respectfully than to escalate.

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## Special Note: Protecting Pastoral Authority

Spiritual leadership requires:

- Respect
- Order
- Stability

Undermining leadership publicly creates:

- Confusion
- Division
- Reputational harm
- Legal vulnerability

It is appropriate to firmly state:

“We do not permit attacks on our pastor or our ministry.”  
“Disagreement is welcome; disrespect is not.”

We honor protective stewardship because it protects *us*.

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# Community Standard Statement

Within this ministry:

- We correct behavior, not identity.
- We uphold leadership structure.
- We reject cruelty and slander.
- We preserve spiritual dignity.
- We maintain lawful boundaries.

Remember breathe, take a pause, slow down communication and then offer some spiritual insight or wisdom. Our boundary offering doesn't have to be "harsh," boundaries can be friendly, fun, comical or jocular.

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## Final Principle

Boundaries protect:

- The pastor
- The organization
- The members
- The mission
- The spirit of the work

Correction, when done properly, is healthy guardianship.

*So let's be great guardians.*

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