

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



Chris & Carmen Garner MA-MFT

Visit our website

www.fortifiedmarriages.com

to find out more about the ministry and how you can get involved.

The website also has a great deal of marriage resources and links to other marriage organizations available.

Donations are tax-deductible and make the ministry to couples locally and internationally possible.

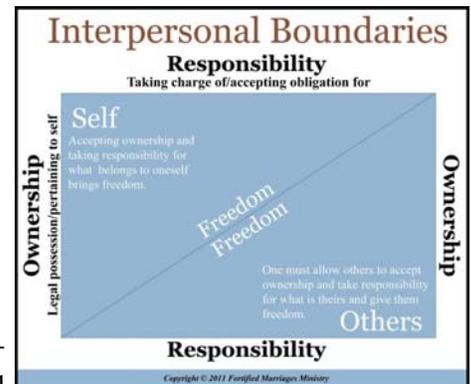
Healthy Boundaries: A Sign of Healthy Relationships

Personal boundaries can be a difficult concept, especially for Christians. One reason is that our example, our Lord and Savior, gave up everything so that we could be reconciled to God and Jesus taught that we are to “die to self,” and go the extra mile for others, giving of ourselves. Yes, these things are true, but we also must realize that boundaries are necessary for healthy relationships. The Bible does not specifically address the concept of personal boundaries, but God set boundaries throughout the Bible and when we respect His boundaries and take ownership of our own boundaries, we are able to lead healthier lives. Our relationships are not to be about the boundaries, but healthy boundaries do often indicate healthy relationships.

What is a boundary? Simply put, it is “something that indicates or fixes a limit or extant.” Physical boundaries, such as fences, walls or borders are easy to identify, but personal boundaries are much more difficult. Boundaries define ownership and responsibility; they define self—who a person is, externally and internally. A person is to accept ownership for what is his or hers and take responsibility for his or her behavior, and also to allow others to accept ownership and take responsibility for what is theirs. Personal

boundaries are the limits one sets to protect himself and live a healthy life. 1Corinthians 6:12 speaks to healthy boundaries; “Everything is permissible for me- but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me - but I will not be mastered by anything.”

Taking ownership is accepting those things pertaining to self; weaknesses, strengths, needs, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts - who a person is. One must choose to be his or her own person. Family, outsiders, loss, or sin of others will certainly affect a person, but those hurts and pain do not have to change who one is. Yes, a person must work through the loss or pain, but the outcome is his or her choice. A person must also accept responsibility what is his or hers; actions, behaviors, choices, feelings, even to love. It might be human nature to blame others as Adam and Eve did in the Garden, but it does not lead to healthy relationships. Taking ownership and accepting responsibility is not popular in society today, but when a person does this, it leads to freedom; freedom because one knows where the limits are for healthy relationships. It is not easy after many years of too rigid or undefined boundaries, but one can develop healthy boundaries.



Burdens and Loads

Galatians 6:2,5 says; “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...each one should carry his own load.” This passage provides a good illustration of boundaries. The burden is the weight of the world, those cares and worries that are just too much for one person. We are to help each other with the burdens of life. Serious illness, death of a loved one, job loss, or relationship struggles are some of the burdens people might encounter. We help by caring for the hurting person, praying for him or her and being available to help as we are able.



The passage also states that each person should carry his own load. This is “a small cargo, a task, or a service” - it is the responsibilities each person has. When we take on other’s responsibilities, we usually are not helping, but hindering his or her growth and maturity. It is important to make the distinction and allow others to take ownership and accept responsibility for what is theirs.



It is not always easy to determine what constitutes a burden or a load. If we err, it should be on the side of grace and love, but as we develop an awareness of how boundaries work in relationships, we can better make the differentiation and grow in our relationships. Setting boundaries does not mean closing off relationships and avoiding the work required to maintain them. On contrary, by exercising healthy boundaries, one is able to be free and open in his or her relationships. Building healthy boundaries takes time and we must give ourselves grace during the process. Use the resources on our website to learn more about boundaries and how to build and maintain healthy boundaries.

It wasn’t easy for Paula to establish healthy boundaries with her son. For many years she jumped anytime he had a problem and did not hesitate to spend whatever was necessary and do whatever it took to fix the problems he got himself into. Once she set boundaries, he screamed and threw fits at her refusal bail him out yet again, but eventually he began to accept responsibility for his own choices and as he began to grow and mature their relationship became healthier.

Action Point: What are *you* going to do?

Take an honest look at where you are with boundaries by looking at your relationships. Are your boundaries too rigid, keeping others out? Or are they undefined, enabling

others to continue with unhealthy behaviors? If your relationships tend to be unhealthy, get help to establish healthy boundaries in your life.



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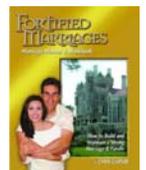
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Resources Available at www.fortifiedmarriages.com

- Go to the *Resources Available* page to find a lot of great resources, including resources and ideas to help spark romance.
- Boundaries, Communication, and Conflict Resolution resources are available also.
- Click “Manual” to learn about the Fortified Marriages manual and workbook.
- Articles and information are also available to learn more about God’s design for marriage.



Fortified Marriages Ministry is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization seeking to build strong marriages to withstand the storms that will come. Please consider partnering with us to affect marriages and help couples leave a Godly legacy. Ministry partners may donate to the cause of building strong marriages, become monthly contributors, pray regularly for the ministry, or by letting others know about the ministry. More information is available at <http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com/page.php?22>.