

What to do When a Boundary has been Broken

Welcome back! We're finally in Step Four: Living Out Boundaries. If you're here, congratulations on making it this far into the course! I know boundaries can be overwhelming but hopefully, this has helped give you a plan to hold onto as you're in this difficult season.

In this lesson, we're going to talk about what to do when a boundary has been broken. In the last lesson, we learned about how to lay down our boundaries. I used a verse from the book of Matthew as an example on how to handle sin. Jesus said,

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses."

-Matthew 18:15-16 (ESV)

To me, this is initially laying out boundaries and then seeking counsel from a counsellor, pastor, sponsor, or other third-party.

But what if your loved one still doesn't listen?

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

-Matthew 18:17 (ESV)

Now, I wrote on this once before and to be totally honest, I don't even know what I said it meant to be treated as a Gentile or tax collector (I should really look it up!) but I've done some studying and I think I have a handle on what that means.

Matthew was a tax collector. Jesus took him under His wing, loved him, forgave him, encouraged him, prayed for him and lifted him up to be a disciple. Clearly, Jesus loves the tax collectors!

“As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he rose and followed him.

And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

-Matthew 9:9-13 (ESV)

As you can see, treating our loved ones as tax collectors means to be merciful, remembering they are in need of the Great Physician. I would even go as far as to say that Jesus may very well be reclining at your table- right beside your loved one.

What about the Gentile part? In the simplest terms, I would say to treat them as though they were unbelievers. You would not push scripture on an unbeliever, nor would you share with them everything you feel God is doing in your life. **Stay close to Jesus and do not allow your loved one's sin to come between you and God.**

So, when your loved one breaks your boundary, handle it in the way Jesus said to handle sin:

- Speak to them in private
- Speak to them with a third-party
- Take it to the church
- Treat them as an unbeliever because they are “sick” and pray for their salvation

I understand this is not, “When they do _____, do _____” but it isn’t my place to lay out your steps. I’m helping you find the way to your best, peaceful boundaries and I want you to trust God and yourself to figure out your next step. Sometimes, there is no next move- we just need to wait. Other times, we have had enough and we must go for our own health and safety. Only you (and God!) know when that is.

Today’s homework is a bit of a fun one so download your worksheet and you’ll be on your way with the steps you can take today!