13 Avoiding the Misuse of Boundaries

Establishing appropriate boundaries, as we have seen, is essential for developing a healthy, balanced lifestyle, for spiritual growth, and for our ability to give and receive love. In a marriage relationship, they are the key to resolving conflicts and to rebuild a marriage that has been burdened by problems that have not been addressed for years. Sadly enough however, the idea of establishing boundaries has also been misunderstood and misused.

- A compliant wife divorces her husband as her first and only boundary.
- A husband attempts to control his wife by what he calls "setting boundaries"
- A wife uses withdrawal and consequences to punish her husband for misbehavior.
- A husband declares his rage attacks as "simply being truthful"
- A married son neglects his needy parents and uses **Genesis 2:24** as excuse.

There are many more ways in which boundaries have been misused to justify steps that God never intended to be taken. People often go from one extreme to the other. A compliant person finally learns how to say no – but becomes selfish and irresponsible. An irresponsible person finally begins disciplining himself, but becomes legalistic and intolerant in the process. These are grievous misunderstandings of what the Bible teaches about becoming a righteous, responsible, and free person with good boundaries. And usually they result in increased alienation instead of increased love.

This is not what boundaries are supposed to be about. They are not designed to end relationships but to preserve and deepen them. They should be used for the benefit of a marriage, not as a means to exclude others, an excuse for selfishness or self-righteousness, or as a means for fixing, punishing, or controlling others.

In this chapter we want to clarify some of the most common misconceptions about boundaries, particularly at boundaries in marriage. We will look at the true purpose of suffering and why boundaries are not a means to quickly escape suffering. We will discuss the distinction between setting limits and ultimatums and the proper use of boundaries in conflict solving. We will take a close look at a proper understanding of submission and finally revisit the misconceptions about divorce and separation as a means to solve difficult marriage conflicts.

All these discussions shall help us to use boundaries in a way that makes the relationship to our spouse grow stronger and deeper. However, we have to keep in mind that there are no simple recipes for establishing proper boundaries. There can only be general guidelines from the Word of God that we need to interpret in the specific situation that we are dealing with. God has give us a brain to think **(James 1:5)** and the Holy Spirit as a helper **(John 14:26)** – we need to use both if we want to succeed, even if that means a lot of (mental) work for us.[7]

[7] Recently I heard a Bible College Professor state that about 90% of today's adults do really not think and thus do not actively control their lives anymore. They either let others do the thinking for them and do whatever they are being

13.1 Boundaries are not a quick escape from suffering or responsibility

Some people have the idea that setting boundaries is a means to end suffering in their life. A compliant wife may one day decide that she has given in to her husband's demands long enough and that now it is her turn to do things as she wants. So she starts doing things without checking with her husband, spends money as she sees fit, leaves for the evening without telling him in advance, and explains all this as finally setting boundaries. After all, she is a grown adult and doesn't have to answer to somebody else for her actions.

What is wrong here?

While a compliant person does indeed have to learn to say no, that doesn't mean she can now begin to do what she wants. Freedom from control is not a license for selfishness. Independence doesn't mean the end of our responsibility to other people, particularly your spouse. Setting boundaries does not aim at making life *easier* and more comfortable, but at making it *better* and deeper connected to our spouse. In other words, boundaries are not a quick escape from suffering, but aim at a more meaningful relationship between us and out spouse – even if that means a temporary increase in suffering.

In fact, suffering is a necessary part of life, growth, and close relationships. It is an important component of the procedure that helps us develop character and become more mature.

> ... we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope **(Romans 5:3–4)**.
>
> Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **(James 1:2–4)**

Suffering, if we deal with it in the right way, can help us adapt to reality. We will realize our limitations, give up the wish to be God ourselves, learn to give to others, and learn to let God (and others) fill our true needs, while giving up truly selfish desires. All this helps us become more complete, grow in our faith, strengthen our relationship to our spouses. Here are a few examples of how a marriage can benefit from the results of (Godly) suffering.

- We *grow in our faith* that God helps and supports us where we reach our limits.
- We learn to *hold on to our values* in difficult times (when we most need them).
- We *become a truthful person* even if that what we have to say is not popular.
- We *delay gratification* and save for a future and better goal **(Matthew 6:19–21)**.

told (this is compliance), or do whatever goes through their mind without considering the consequences or what they do to others (this is irresponsibility). Even if this behavior creates a lot of suffering or problems for them they continue to do that because it is so much easier to just do as they always did than having to think through their actions thoroughly and then do what is right.

- We stay connected to others even when we feel the urge to withdraw.
- We learn to *live in forgiveness* with an imperfect spouse.
- We learn to *accept forgiveness*, as we are imperfect ourselves.

All these character values are the result of our willingness to accept suffering for a higher goal. Almost all of the processes that strengthen and deepen our marriage will involve some form of pain and discomfort. If avoiding suffering has a priority for us (recall our discussion in Chapter 8.1), then will stay away from the learning curve of adulthood and miss much of the progress that God has intended for us.

Now there is, of course, a lot of suffering in our lives that God never intended for us to endure. This kind of suffering, however, has little to do with the suffering that leads to growth. Ungodly suffering, as we may call it, is the result of ungodly behavior – that is either doing the wrong thing or not doing the right thing. For instance, when the bible tells us

> In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry **(Ephesians 4:26)**.

and we do not resolve the issue that makes us angry before we go to sleep, then we should not be surprised if we can't sleep or wake up the next morning with a bad feeling. We haven't been doing the right thing and suffer the consequences. Similar, when **Proverbs 19:19** tells us

> A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.

and we enable our spouse's immaturity instead of confronting it, we will realize that we have to suffer our spouse's rage over and over again. We have done the wrong thing and the consequences we reap are painful for us.
Either way, the suffering we have to endure in these situations is nothing we have the right to complain about. We caused it and we are the only ones who can resolve it by changing *our* behavior.

Godly suffering is something different. As an athlete suffers while he undergoes the difficult training for a competition, so we suffer as we mature. For instance, if a compliant spouse speaks up and tells the truth instead of remaining silent, she experiences that this is difficult for her. After a while, truthfulness becomes easier, but then she has to take the next step: realizing that she also has a judgmental, condemning spirit. Working on forgiveness to resolve this problem again means godly suffering. The process continues while she grows more and more.
The difference is that godly suffering changes as we mature and become more sensitive for the "tiny" sins in our life and always makes us look forward to the next goal that we accomplish.

> ... he who has suffered in his body is done with sin **(1. Peter 4:1b)**

Ungodly suffering, on the other hand, repeats itself over and over again and leads to a miserable situation without hope, unless we really change *our* behavior. God wants us to end this form of suffering, since it produces no growth. Here are a few examples of how setting appropriate boundaries can help replacing ungodly suffering by one that leads to a strengthened relationship between you and your spouse.

1. If your husband constantly criticizes everything you do, you may want to stop complying to win his approval, since you won't succeed anyway. Instead, you may tell him that you don't want to hear this form of unjust criticism anymore and leave the room.
   The difference? You're being honest about how you experience his behavior instead of letting him believe that he is right in every criticism he utters. That may be difficult and it may create an angry reaction. But it is a chance for resolving the issue as prescribed in **Matthew 18:15**.
2. If your wife continuously overspends, you should not continue to nag or be silent about it. It doesn't change her behavior and you will always be forced to deal with financial problems that you didn't cause. Instead, you may have to come up with creative ideas to make her stay within the agreed limits, for instance by reducing the limit on joint credit cards or – if it is really bad – canceling joint credit cards and letting her deal with the banks herself.
3. If your husband doesn't want to help at home although both of you have jobs, stop pretending that this is OK with you and overlook it. Let him cook his own meals occasionally until he gets the message.
4. If your wife tries to control you by guilt messages, don't continue to do what she wants if you really resent it. It only makes you angry at her and drives a wedge between the two of you. Instead, you may have to openly confront her covert control, even if she increases her guilt messages by calling you an unloving person.

None of these scenarios offers you a chance for a painless response. The only choice you have is whether you want to suffer a situation that will not change or whether you want at least some good long-term results if you have to suffer anyway, even if the discomfort is temporarily greater than in the other case. Boundaries aim at the latter. They don't stop the suffering, but they help you build love, honesty and freedom in your relationship.

13.2 Boundaries are more than simple limits and ultimatums

People who have a hard time setting boundaries sometimes jump from compliance to extremely rigid limits. Instead of confronting the issue lovingly, they go from silence about it to an ultimatum: *I have endured this for years. Now I have enough of all this. You either change right now or else ....* And usually the consequence they announce is rather drastic.

Unfortunately, such an approach usually backfires severely instead of bringing about the solution they desire, as it makes the two of you adversaries instead of partners in resolving a conflict. If you don't give your spouse a chance to understand the problem that you have with him but confront him with threats right away, he will only sense your anger, but not that you have a genuine interest in resolving the issue. How would you react, if your spouse would set an ultimatum before you the first time he talks about a weakness of yours? The purpose of showing him his fault is not to knock it over him, but to win him back **(Matthew 18:15)**.

Establishing appropriate boundaries is much more than just setting limits. It is a part of a spiritual and emotional growth process that shall bring the two of you closer together – instead of driving you apart. God himself deals with us the same way. Although he would have the right to put an ultimatum before us to make us leave our sinful ways, he takes a different route.

> Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. **(Isaiah 1:18–20)**

God clearly states his limits – he will not tolerate our sin. However he couples this with a lot of other ingredients: reason, a promise, a warning, and a choice.

Do the same in your marriage. Growth is difficult for your spouse, especially when she is in denial or out of control. Although you have to establish firm limits, you also need to give her the same grace that you wish to receive when you need to work on your character **(Matthew 7:12)**. Limits should never come alone but should be accompanied by the following elements.

Love is the key ingredient of any relationship. When you love someone, everything you do is *for* him, and nothing you do or say comes from a vengeful or punishing perspective. Before you establish limits, you need to make your spouse understand that you desire the best for him.

The limits you have to set may be painful, but your love balances the pain and replaces the fear, that may be triggered by your limits, with the hope that what you do is for the best of your relationship **(1. John 4:17–18, 1. Timothy 1:5, 1 Corinthians 13:4–7)**.

Not all spouses respond openly to the love you show them. But be assured that your love reaches their soul even if they don't show it.

Other people: We talked about this over and over again. Everyone needs to have friends in addition to his or her spouse **(Proverbs 17:17, 18:24, 27:6, Ecclesiastes 4:9–12)**, particularly in times of relationship conflicts. If you don't have supportive relationships to other people, chances are that you will set no boundaries at all or that you will set extremely harsh ones as a response to your lack of feeling loved. Either way, you will not get what you want.

Ownership: In a marriage, no relationship problem is only the fault of one partner. This may be hard to believe when you see yourself as the innocent victim of an irresponsible spouse. But whatever the problem is, you will discover that you have contributed to it as well – even if your share is only a tenth of a percent. Perhaps you have not spoken up when you should have. Perhaps you have told others about your problem but have never gone directly to your spouse with it. Take the plank out of your eye **(Matthew 7:3–5)**! Humbly take responsibility for what you have done or failed to do, apologize (honestly), ask for forgiveness, and change. If you own your part of the problem, your spouse will not feel judged and put down by you and will be more likely to accept your boundaries.

Invitation: The first step in confronting your spouse should never be a limit, but always an invitation to change. Bring up the issue, clearly and specifically. Let him know how his actions affect you and that you want him to change because you want to be closer to him. Maybe he did not realize that he always has a critical tone that hurts your feelings. Your loving request gives him a chance to empathize with your feelings and to repent.

Of course, a request to change will not always find a positive response. But if you don't even try, you miss a great chance to resolve an issue peacefully.

Warning: One of the biggest mistakes that you can make when establishing boundaries is not giving appropriate warning. If you just set limits out of the blue, your spouse will feel ambushed and rightfully become angry at you.

A warning, on the other hand, gives him a choice. Something painful may happen in the future, but his behavior will help determine what happens. That is the way God deals with us **(Ezekiel 3:18–19, Deuteronomy 30:15–20)**. Knowing what consequences the future may bring helps us take ownership of ourselves.

Patience: A warning, if not accompanied with patience, is an ultimatum. Sometimes, you may have a difficult time accepting your mate's irresponsible or controlling behavior. You want to see it changed ... and you want this *now*.

You may not be so lucky. Only few people in the world are capable of changing immediately when they see their error. Your spouse may not be one of them – even if you are. Don't be critical when she fails or even resists the growth process. Be patient, she may need time to adjust to the new reality.

However, that doesn't mean you should be ignoring the lack of progress either. Silent suffering is not the same as patience but only an attempt to avoid conflict. Patience means providing the ingredients for growth while allowing your spouse time to respond. This is how God deals with you – he allows you to grow at a slow pace, but he provides all the help you need.

> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone come to repentance. **(2. Peter 3:9)**

Consequences: When all the above ingredients are in play and your spouse still doesn't change her ways, you may have to follow through with your consequences. Keep in mind however, that consequences have nothing to do with anger, revenge, or punishment. They are there to protect you and to help your spouse deal with the reality of her actions. Be loving, but be consistent too. Otherwise all you have done is nagging and letting your spouse have her way anyway.

Renegotiation: Boundaries don't have to remain the same forever. They can be changed and even dropped altogether as your spouse matures over time. As you and your spouse grow, you will have less of a need to protect yourself and will be able to be closer to her. Renegotiate the rules that you have set in the past: the fewer you need, the better it will be for your relationship.

Forgiveness: Finally, make sure that constantly live in a process of forgiveness – you cancel and forget the sins of the past **(Hebrews 8:12)**. You need both – forgive your spouse and request his forgiveness. If you don't live in forgiveness, all you try to accomplish by setting boundaries can be severely hampered by blaming, judging, laying guilt trips on him, or being unable to let go of the past. Don't give these attitudes a chance to grow – practice forgiveness day by day.

None of the above steps are easy. If they were, we would all do them automatically. As mentioned before, growth involves suffering. But this form of suffering gives us hope, while the alternative – a constantly deteriorating marriage – is much worse.

13.3 Understanding submission

A large number of Christian women fear that establishing boundaries is a sign of rebellion and unsubmissiveness. They believe that submission means doing whatever their husband wants from them and that saying no to their spouse is the greatest sin they can commit. Sadly enough, the issue of submission is one of the most misused teachings of the Bible.

> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the savior. **(Ephesians 5:22-23)**

For centuries, husbands have used the apostle Paul's writings to justify control and abuse of their wives. They confuse "head" with "unquestionable authority" and the

"helper" from **Genesis 2:18** with an inferior being that has no value in itself and needs to be under the control of a man. After all, they reason, men came first **(1. Timothy 2:13)**, women are the weaker part of a marriage **(1. Peter 3:7)** and the ones who can be deceived so easily **(1. Timothy 2:14)**.
Nothing could be more wrong and taken out of context. In a Christian marriage a husband should never quote these passages to his wife to tell her what she is supposed to do. Actually, the only husbands who see the need to bring up the issue of submission are the ones who want to control their wives and to break down any attempt to confront issues that require them to change. Submission cannot be enforced – it has to be earned.

What then does the Bible really teach about submission and the roles of husband and wife in the family?

Basically, by comparing the marriage relationship to the relation between Christ and the church, the Bible establishes a sense of order in a marriage. Without order, there would be chaos in the family. Someone has to be the leader, the one who takes the final responsibility for the family. The Bible assigns that role to the husband and asks the wife to submit to her husband's leadership, since otherwise his task would be impossible.
But what does leadership mean? Certainly not being the boss who can order others around as he sees fit, the one who is being served by everybody else, or the final authority who's opinion is the only thing that counts. The model that the Bible gives us is quite different.

> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. **(Ephesians 5:25)**

A husband's leadership in the family should be Christ-like. As Christ gave himself up for his church, so should the husband sacrifice himself for his wife. He should look out for her growth, give direction and inspiration, help her become holy, provide the resources she needs, protect her from the world around her, heal her hurts, take her suffering upon himself, support her in trials, and help her up when she falls.
In other words, the attitude of the husband should be that of a giving servant **(Philippians 2:5–8)**, who is committed to the best for those he is leading. That is not an easy task, and a wife who resists a husband who is loving, protective, truthful, and providing for her well-being makes it very difficult for him to live up to the role that God has assigned to him. That is why the Bible asks her to submit to him, to respect him, to encourage him, to help him, and to be a loving companion for him.
Marriage works best if both partners are equal but have different roles. Decisions are made mutually, with both partners bringing in their different perspective and a desire to chose the optimal solution for whatever needs to be done. He needs her input and she needs his – they are interdependent, both willing to submit to the other's needs, knowing that the other one does the same.

> Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. (**Ephesians 5:21**)

A problem occurs if either of the two neglects the role that God has given to them. If a husband is passive and lets his wife take over, then this is not an expression of love for her, but simply a way to make life easy for himself – he doesn't take care of her true needs. If he dominates his wife, he does not give himself up for her but follows his selfish desires. Worst of all, if he calls her "unsubmissive" when she confronts him about some ungodly behavior, then he puts himself above God – telling her that submission to him is more important that submission to God. But

> Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God (**Acts 4:19**).

There is also a problem when a woman refuses to submit and wants to be be in charge of everything. This, too, is a sign of selfishness and clearly violates God's role model for the family. In a marriage relationship you can't always have it your way. And if you try to control your spouse, you are damaging the loving relationship between the two of you. Even if he doesn't live up to his role, you should help him and encourage him to do what he needs to do, but not take over yourself. And if he does try to lead you in a loving, protective, and truthful way, don't resist him.
Submission only has meaning in the context of free and mature adults. A wife who is not free to say no to her husband cannot submit. She is subject to a slave driver and out of the will of God.

> It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (**Galatians 5:1**).

Boundaries promote and protect the freedom that God wants you to have. They do not contrast the idea of submission, but they are the key ingredient to make submission possible. Only a free person is able to submit.

While the biblical teaching of submission gives a clear role model for the family, each couple has to work out what this means for their specific situation. The Bible does not give you a fixed set of rules how you should organize your family in detail and how you should divide responsibilities. But it gives you plenty of guidelines that you should take into consideration as you weigh the different options.

13.4 Why separation and divorce doesn't solve conflicts

Many people in today's society believe that a marriage easily gets to the point where divorce is the only option that is left. We all know that divorce rates in this country are stunning and that Christian marriages don't seem to do better than any other marriage. The story that you hear about marriages that have fallen apart is almost always the same.

When the young lady first met her future husband, she was so excited. He was all she ever wanted. Everything was so wonderful and their dating time was heaven on earth. She could not wait to hear him propose and of course she said yes, when he did.
Like many couples, they didn't take the time to get to know each other better and married way too early. They were sure that their love would overcome everything that might come into their way. But this feeling lasted only for a few months – until they discovered the other sides in their partner's personality.
Somehow the warm feeling between them began to cool off. They paid less attention to each other, became more picky, spent more time with other people and other things. And each of them had the feeling that it was the other one who had changed to the worse.
As so often, it was the wife who became more discouraged and demanded a change. She tried nagging, but that only made him angry. She tried the "nice wife" approach, blaming herself for his unresponsiveness. She asked him to go to counseling, but he didn't believe in talking to other people about problems. Nothing seemed to work.
Finally she confided in a friend, who told her to have some boundaries, since God never intended her to live like this. That seemed convincing, so she took her friends advice and told her husband that he had to change or else. When he refused to give in to her ultimatum, she went to see an attorney and filed for divorce. Finally she was free again.

Hardly anybody has never heard of a marriage that went down that way. In fact, even our own marriage relationships have gone down that path up to a certain degree. Discovering the dark side in our spouse's personality is part of what intimacy is about. We are one of the few people who ever get to see that – and of course we are disappointed to see that our ideal partner is not so ideal after all.
But does it *have* to end like that? Is divorce really unavoidable once a marriage has reached a certain point? Does setting boundaries have to mean separation if the situation becomes unbearable for one spouse? We already talked about this issue (see Section 11.5.4) and the answer is clearly *no*! For God, divorce is not an option, and it should not be one for you either.

> I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel (**Malachi 2:16**).

> Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate (**Matthew 19:6**).

> A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife (**1. Corinthians 7:10–11**).

Does that mean that God wants us to quietly endure a bad marriage? Does that mean that the friend who tells us to have some boundaries is wrong? No it doesn't!

We certainly need some boundaries if our marriage goes bad. And our friend is right – God never intended us to live like that. But what usually is wrong is the way we chose to solve the problem.

Divorce does not fix the problems of a marriage. It simply ends the relationship. It is a killer boundary that takes away any chance to resolve a problem. Don't even think about it! And never ever threaten that you might separate from your spouse if he doesn't change. That takes away every basis for rekindling the love between the two of you. His reaction will either be anger and rebellion, in which case you have to follow through with your threat, or fear and compliance, in which case his love for you is gone **(1. John 4:18b)**. Nothing good has ever come out of that.

What then is God's solution for your an unbearable situation? His answer may be: *You can't live that way anymore? Good that you finally realized that! Don't live that way anymore – begin setting limits that are designed to promote change and redemption. They are more than overdue.* We talked about how to do that over and over again. There are many alternatives to getting a divorce. Even if you believe you have tried everything possible to make your marriage work, there are still many Godly ways that you haven't tried yet. You may have to revisit Section 11 again, particularly the issue of resolving conflicts with a boundary-resistant spouse. God has always intended that we do everything we can do to redeem relationships instead of leaving them. And if we do things His way, there is a very good chance that we will succeed – even if that means a lot of temporary suffering.

People with real boundaries can avoid many divorces. They may have to take a strong stance, not participating in the behavioral patterns that burden their marriage, and demanding righteousness from their spouse. In the process they have to work on their own spiritual and emotional growth, so that they live in truth and can't be accused of being hypocritical.

> Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God **(John 3:21)**.

If you become the light, then your spouse either changes, if he lives in the light as well, or goes away, if God's commandments actually mean nothing to him (which will hardly ever be the case). If you are doing the right things, your spouse's reaction will tell you who he really is. If he decides to leave, you can't do much about it **(1. Corinthians 7:15–16)**. But at least you can rest in the assurance that you have done everything possible to redeem the relationship.

Most people whose marriages are deteriorating although they are setting boundaries, make the mistake that they do not work on their own growth as well. They leave the plank in their own eyes while they are trying to take the speck out of their spouse's eye. In reality, all they do is continuing to blame their spouse and demanding change without changing themselves. They don't live in the light, so the effect is not the same as we just described.

When establishing boundaries to repair a damaged relationship, we should keep the following steps in mind. They are similar to the ones already suggested in the section on dealing with boundary-resistant spouses.

- Develop *supportive relationships* with other people so that you have the strength to do the right thing when dealing with your spouse.
- Earn the right to require change by solving your own problems and *acting righteously* towards your spouse.
- *Use others* to intervene **(Matthew 18:16)**, such as pastors, counselors, friends or other people that your spouse may listen to.
- Accept reality and *forgive* what has happened in the past
- *Allow time* for your spouse to respond. After you have stopped enabling your spouse and have set appropriate boundaries, your spouse may need a while to adjust to the new reality.
- Observe, evaluate, and *follow through* – this is where the long suffering begins.
- *Adjust boundaries* and consequences as the situation changes. Relax them if your spouse genuinely repents **(2. Corinthians 2:5–8)**. Increase the severity of the consequence if the behavior of your spouse becomes worse **(Matthew 18:15–17)**.
- In severe cases, a *temporary separation* may be needed to protect you from significant harm. However, your goal should still be to redeem your marriage from a distance.

Boundaries in a marriage always seek to change and redeem a relationship. The boundaries you set should be for that purpose only, not for the purpose of ending the relationship. Take a stance against destructive behavior, but make sure that the problem you're addressing is really the other person's and that you have followed all of God' steps discussed in this book. End your ungodly suffering and see how the boundaries you set can be used to bring about redemption and reconciliation as well. Many "hopeless" situations can and have been resolved that way. Give it a chance.