



How to Evaluate the Boundaries You've Set in your Family



Several years ago I came to a very profound revelation based on a simple observation over several years of ministry. We refine our beliefs, values, perspectives, and even our list of non-negotiables as we grow in our faith, maturity and understanding. Hills I once thought worth dying on I now see as unworthy of defending. There are also some things, which in years past, wouldn't even elicit a thought, that are now very important to me. A crucial part of growing is understanding how and what we should change, and what we should not. Understanding this principle (if we can call it that) is vital to establishing healthy boundaries for our families.

Boundaries should serve a purpose, and as we grow, we adjust some and bolster others. Boundaries define and identify what is off-limits and out-of-bounds.

- For toddlers and preschoolers, we primarily set boundaries to keep them safe from physical harm.
- For our adolescents, we set boundaries to protect them from their own immaturity and to help them develop social skills, values, and a biblical worldview.
- For our teens, we set boundaries to protect them from poor decisions and to help them navigate the transition into responsible adulthood.

Every boundary should have a clear, positive objective in mind, and those objectives change as our children grow and mature. A few common mistakes parents may make in setting boundaries include:

- Thinking all boundaries have to be the same for everyone in the family, regardless of age or maturity.
- Believing it's only fair to hold everyone to the boundaries we had in place for our first child.
- Defending boundaries that really need to change.
- Thinking it is inappropriate to reconsider or change boundaries.



To help avoid these mistakes consider the following guidelines when setting boundaries:

- What is the objective of the boundary?
- How does the boundary support the objective?
- Does this objective require a hard and fast boundary or is there a better approach to teaching what we want understood?
- Is there a logical, incremental way for the boundary to evolve to accommodate growth and maturing?
- How can we use the boundary as a tool to teach and coach?
- Are we setting a boundary just to avoid dealing with a difficult issue?

There are some boundaries that need to be carved in stone, but more often than not, a boundary serves a purpose that is specific to a certain situation and stage of development.