



# UNIT 5

## Chapter 8 Boundaries for Effective Ministry

This unit was written by several HCMA Chaplains and edited by Jeffrey R. Funk, former HCMA Executive Director. It is for the exclusive use of HCMA Chaplains and Trainees. It is not to be altered in any way—no edits of form or content.

Permission for any other use must be obtained in writing from:

**Healthcare Chaplains Ministry Association**

101 S Kraemer Blvd, Suite 123A

Placentia, California 92870-5094

Phone : (714) 572-3626 | Fax : (714) 572-0585

E-mail : [info@hcmachaplains.org](mailto:info@hcmachaplains.org) | Website : [www.hcmachaplains.org](http://www.hcmachaplains.org)

**[www.hcmachaplains.org](http://www.hcmachaplains.org)**

Copyright © HCMA, 2016. All rights reserved.

# Chapter 8

## Boundaries for Effective Ministry

### Table of Contents

Importance of Boundaries.....	4
Confidentiality.....	5
Spiritual Boundaries.....	5
Physical Boundaries.....	7
Emotional/Social Boundaries.....	8
Financial Boundaries.....	9
Additional Boundaries.....	9
Warning Signs.....	10
Avoiding a Problem.....	11
Correcting a Problem.....	12
Chapter Assignments.....	12
Chapter Resources.....	13
Appendix A: Six Principles for Boundaries in Pastoral Ministry.....	17

# Boundaries for Effective Ministry<sup>1</sup>



*Earth has its boundaries, but human stupidity is limitless.*

— Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), French novelist<sup>2</sup>



*No servant can be in bondage to two masters.  
For either he will hate one and love the other,  
or else he will cling fast to one and scorn the other.  
You cannot be bondservants both of God and of gold*

— Like 16:13 (Weymouth New Testament)



Well-established and maintained boundaries serve to guide and protect us in all areas of life and ministry. One illustration of viewing boundaries as an important line of protection is to look at our own skin. Our skin helps to keep out countless, ever present threats to our physical well-being. For example, this natural barrier keeps our body safe and protected from germs. When there is a break in the skin, such as when we get a cut, we become open to infection. Just as our body needs a barrier of skin for protection, as a Chaplain we also need ministry barriers that protect us and our ministry.

Psychologist Archibald Hart believes that every person involved in counseling, which includes Chaplains, walks on the edge of a virtual moral precipice. One wrong step and we are over the edge.<sup>3</sup> That is why it is important for us as Chaplains to evaluate whether or not we have set appropriate personal and professional parameters for our ministry activities. As Chaplains, we are often responsible for caring, exploring alternatives, listening to and praying for hurting individuals. However, we are not responsible for their entire emotional well-being. As pastoral caregivers, we must create some type of emotional, physical and moral line (boundary, fence, or limit) that we are committed to never cross with a patient, family member, staff person, or another Chaplain.

We may mean well in our pastoral caring, but the Bible clearly speaks of the dilemma we face when attempting to justify and rationalize our good intentions: “The heart is the most deceitful thing there is, and desperately wicked. No one can really know how bad it is!” (Jeremiah 17:9, The Living Bible)

As Chaplains, we need to think through and establish professional boundaries that will help us to respond appropriately to people we come in contact with. In no area is this more important than in our

---

<sup>1</sup> The main contributor to the information in this chapter was Chaplain Jeffrey Funk. He is a Board Certified Chaplain with HCMA, served as a healthcare Chaplain for nine years before becoming the Executive Director of HCMA in 2000, and has taught this subject as part of the Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy class at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, CA.

<sup>2</sup> HCMA may not agree with Flaubert’s philosophy, but this statement is certainly thought provoking.

<sup>3</sup> Archibald D. Hart, “Walking on the Edge: The Counselor’s Sexuality,” *Christian Counseling Today* 7.3 (1999): 20.

interactions with members of the opposite gender. And remember: These ministry boundaries are meant to be there for our own self-control, not for controlling others.

This chapter is designed to be a general overview of some (it is not meant to be exhaustive) of the prudent boundaries we need to consider when involved in pastoral relationships. May God bless us as we establish ministry boundaries that will help preserve and enhance our ministry as professional Chaplains.

## Importance of Boundaries

Why do we need ministry boundaries? There are several reasons we need them.

### To guard against harm to the public whom we serve

We may have good intentions to help, but we must also be competent to help. Dr. Mark Lasser, a counselor and nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual addiction, asserts this claim: “The counselor stands responsible to guard the safety of the client and is culpable for not doing so, no matter how the client behaves.”<sup>4</sup>

We need to guard against exploiting clients. We must not intentionally take advantage of our “power” and “authority” with their “weakness” and “vulnerability.” Anne Katherine, counselor and therapist, gives this caution:

*The therapist-client relationship mirrors other relationships where one person is in the position of mentor, steward, authority, employer, or parent to another. Those with power have certain responsibilities toward the people they serve, assist, teach, supervise, or lead. The person who has power carries an ethical mandate not to exploit their position, not to abuse a subordinate in order to extract personal gain.*<sup>5</sup>

We need to resist “rescuing” clients: doing for them what they are capable of doing for themselves. We need to avoid “going overboard” in our pastoral caregiving. We must not go beyond what is professionally appropriate while trying to help them. This includes steering clear of over-investing ourselves.

According to Ken Royer, pastoral counselor at Link Care Center in Fresno, California:

*The ultimate goal of Christian counseling is to increase the client’s dependence upon God, not man. Counselors can be tempted to assume responsibility for the outcome of the presenting dilemma. An over-responsible counselor can unknowingly cripple a client’s growth by fostering an unhealthy dependence that resembles a parent-child relationship. Meeting every need and answering every request is also a sure way to burnout.*<sup>6</sup>

We need to guard against our own neediness. We must avoid role reversal regarding support. “Counter-transference” is the counselor’s feelings toward the patient as a result of his or her own emotional needs and projections, and must be carefully guarded against.

We need to defend against distorted expectations of the client. We also need to avoid attempting to fix everything with simple solutions and quick advice.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mark R. Laaser, “Therapists Who Offend,” *Christian Counseling Today* 6.1 (1998): 59.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Katherine, *Where to Draw the Line* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> From a personal conversation with Ken Royer.

### To safeguard against ruining our ministry

Thomas Fischer, consulting director of Ministry Health, LLC, wisely declares: “The combination of poor boundaries and a passionate calling from God is like giving an adolescent the car keys for the first time. At best, it’s precarious. At worst, it’s an accident waiting to happen. The crash can be devastating.”<sup>7</sup>

Having boundaries will protect us and our ministry from the devastation that a moral failure would cause. So much can be lost even through an accidental or well-intentioned act that is viewed as a violation of a boundary. For example, one chaplain regularly hugged people as a demonstration of his love for them. But when it comes to sexual harassment issues, it’s not about our intent that matters but rather the perception of the recipient of our behavior. This chaplain was let go by his facility for inappropriate conduct.

Remember Joseph and Potiphar’s wife? We need to ask God regularly to preserve us from such a trial.

## **Confidentiality**

Have we established guidelines to ensure that confidential communication between us and our clients remains private?

Definition: Keeping things confidential means that we do not pass on any communication revealed to us by a client in confidence to *anyone* else. Situations we know about are kept quiet, secure and private. Confidential client information includes all verbal, written, telephonic, or electronic communications arising within the helping relationship.

Doing anything beyond simple spiritual assessment and support requires the fully informed and uncoerced consent of the client. Initiating prayer with patients, for example, should take place only when the Chaplain knows beyond any doubt that the person would welcome such a suggestion. Likewise, before discussing a patient’s case with the patient’s clergy or others, the Chaplain must obtain consent from the patient.

If asked by legal counsel for confidential information about a client, then we respond with, “I *assert privilege* (a legal term) on that matter.” That means no information about a client is to be shared—even in a court of law.

Exceptions include:

- The client (and all parties involved) signs a release.
- The client demonstrates deadly harm to self and/or others (such as elder or child abuse). Such confessions require mandatory disclosure to the proper authorities, even in a clergy-client counseling context. Examples would include: the threat is serious and/or the client seems serious, the threat is imminent, the threat is doable, and the threat is an identifiable person.
- Minors. Anything a child says, *under the age of twelve*, we may tell the parents. We need to remember to get written permission from the parents in order to counsel a minor. Make sure to check the rules in each area, for this age limit may vary from state to state.

## **Spiritual Boundaries**

The spiritual aspect of our lives is never simply a *part* of life. Rather, it is at the *heart* and *center* of life. What spiritual disciplines have we established to advance our spiritual growth and to help guard against our crossing over our boundaries?

---

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Fischer, “7 Things Every Counselor Should Know to Nurture Congregational Health,” *Christian Counseling Today* 10.3 (2002): 23-24.

### Spiritual Formation

We need to hear from God daily. Spending time in God's Word needs to be a priority in our ministry activities. Look at the example of Moses and Joshua in Exodus 33:11. In other words, we should not counsel others unless we have first had personal counsel from God.

Our effectiveness as a pastoral caregiver is directly and proportionately connected to our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to put personal devotional time (worship, prayer, liturgy, meditation, quiet-time, etc.) at the top of our daily "to do" list.

### Proselytizing

Imposing our faith on another person (proselytizing) is never appropriate behavior for a Chaplain. Professional Chaplains demonstrate respect and sensitivity for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from coercing their own values and beliefs on those served. Anything in the nature of manipulation, any exploiting of any weakness, any use of coercion, is not a part of true evangelism.

### Servanthood versus Servitude<sup>8</sup>

Understanding the difference between servitude and servanthood may be helpful in further understanding our boundaries. Servitude is associated with slavery; servanthood incorporates the idea of voluntary commitment. The former has four negative problems; the latter involves four healthy aspects.

#### **Servitude**

- Over-identification:  
This is taking on the problems of others at the expense of losing our own identity. We don't need to jump into the mudhole in order to get someone out of it.
- Superficial sweetness and gushiness:  
This is covering up our true feelings of frustration. We don't have to be delighted when dinner with our spouse is interrupted by an urgent (not an emergency) call.
- Being manipulated:  
This is allowing others to abuse our caregiving relationship. We are being manipulated when another person controls our behavior or plays on our emotions for selfish ends. We do not need to be a doormat that is unable to say no to unreasonable requests.
- Begrudging care:  
This is complaining about caregiving relationships we are in. Our resentment of the situation will block effective relating and caring.

#### **Servanthood**

- Empathy:  
This is feeling with another person while retaining good objectivity and maintaining our own identity.
- Genuineness:  
This is being ourselves; consistently being in congruence with who we are.
- Meeting needs, not wants:  
This is speaking the truth in love. If we seek to help others, we must meet their needs (e.g., needing a balanced diet), not their wants (e.g., only wanting sweets).
- Intentionality:  
This is choosing to be in a caregiving relationship, or getting out of it when that is the best option for all concerned.

---

<sup>8</sup> This subject is covered quite well by Kenneth Haugk, founder of Stephen Ministries, in Chapter 9 of *Christian Caregiving: A Way of Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 71-80. It is suggested you read the whole book.

## Physical Boundaries

What physical limits have we put into effect between us and those we minister to as a healthcare Chaplain?

Obviously, there should be no sexual contact/touching. There is absolutely no room or place for such behavior. It is always a serious boundary violation.

Clearly, any sexual misconduct is unacceptable for a Chaplain. This would include, but not be limited to, the solicitation of sexual or romantic relations, sexual harassment by comments, touch, or promises/threats of special action, seductive sexual speech or non-verbal behavior, nudity, innuendos, or “off-color” jokes.

This will bring up the question: “When is touching okay (e.g., hugging)?” Here are some guidelines we will want to consider.

It’s better to err on the safe side and not hug at all. Misplaced hugs have torn apart families and ruined lives. If you do decide to hug, avoid full-on, frontal hugs. Frontal hugs between a man and woman who are not related to each other are considered inappropriate. Any hug that includes contact with the breast area is too intimate and therefore improper. Make it a one-armed or side-to-side hug and keep it brief. Don’t let the hug last more than a second or two. A tight hug (big squeeze) is too intimate. A pat on the back is okay, but no rubbing. That’s unacceptable. Always announce the hug and receive permission before doing it. “Hey! Come here; you need a hug. Is that okay?” Don’t hug those you supervise.

In consideration of this topic, we will want to answer the following questions:

- How well do I know this person? Is there any emotional intimacy between the two of us? If so, be careful with any physical contact.
- Is this person ready for a hug?
- How will this person and others interpret it? What message does a caring embrace send to another individual who is looking to me for direction and purpose, but is also vulnerable to anyone with a caring touch?
- Is it side-to-side (maybe okay) or frontal (usually not okay)?
- What if the person asks for a hug? It still may **not** be appropriate!
- Is our own marriage healthy? If not, refrain and go give our spouse a meaningful hug.

According to Ken Royer, “We do not want to re-victimize a person who may have been abused.”<sup>9</sup> That is another reason to use caution when giving a hug.

While we’re on the subject of touching, what is the best way to hold someone’s hand, like when we’re praying with them? First of all, make sure we have their permission before we take their hand. Not everyone wants to hold hands. Second, once we have their permission to hold their hand, place our hand palm up when taking their hand. To place our hand palm down over their hand tends to project authority and indicate a dominant rather than submissive, non-threatening (palm up) role in the relationship. Interlocking fingers tends to communicate a deeper connection with each other.

---

<sup>9</sup> Personal advice from Ken Royer, pastoral counselor with Link Care Center in Fresno, CA.

## Emotional/Social Boundaries

What emotional/social restrictions have we set up between ourselves and those we counsel? An “affair” is not usually a steamy, sexual experience. However, it is about accommodation, affirmation, adoration and affection.

A Chaplain needs to refrain from counseling close, personal relationships. We will be prone to have a biased judgment with such people and the potential for client exploitation is a greater risk. Many dual relationships are wrong and indefensible (e.g., romantic or business relations, close friends or family members). The Chaplain has the burden of proving a justified dual relationship by showing (1) informed consent, including discussion of how the counseling relationship might be harmed as other relations proceed, and (2) lack of harm or exploitation to the client.

We are to avoid “rescuing” (or trying to fix) people (versus “helping” them).

We are never to rely on a client for personal support.

We must stay away from flirting. This should never occur in a professional relationship. Giving compliments about appearance or giving hugs or walking out with a colleague to their car can all be misunderstood by the recipient and viewed by others as flirting.

Chaplains need to be careful with self-disclosure. We can ask ourselves, “Will what I say help *them* or *me*?” If it detracts from a focus on the counselee, then it is probably inappropriate. We should share only if we are convinced our comments will help solve the counselee’s present problem and not distract the attention or diffuse the focus.

We will want to refrain from counseling someone of the opposite gender in a closed room or more than once. We can leave the door open or go to a room that has a window. Counseling (including mentoring and discipleship) is an intimate activity. And counseling the opposite sex is like playing with fire. We will probably want to limit the number of times we counsel someone of the opposite gender (once is best), and then refer him or her to another counselor.

We should avoid eating a meal alone with someone of the opposite gender. Sharing a meal together can be an intimate affair. Regardless of the innocence of our cross-gender friendship, people can get the wrong idea if we are seen spending too much time together or are exclusive of others.

We will want to steer clear of riding alone in a car with someone of the opposite gender (other than a family member). That means no carpooling alone with a social worker or Chaplain to a meeting. No lifts home for a nurse, doctor, babysitter, etc. We may see it as only trying to be helpful; they may perceive it as something more personal.

A Chaplain should refrain from complimenting someone of the opposite gender about his or her coiffure, clothing, or physical appearance. Such references can be misinterpreted as romantic or sexual advances. Instead, compliment character and conduct. As Chaplains, it is understandable that we want to be an encouragement to others. However, we should focus on things God is doing in a person’s life (like their character) rather than the externals that can be easily misunderstood. Remember: Perception is everything. We might intend it as simply a compliment; they may perceive it as flirting.

We must avoid “toxic” humor. When people in positions of power or influence mistake degradation for comedy, the wound spreads wider than the immediate audience. Here are some guidelines for humor in the workplace:<sup>10</sup>

- If it’s not language we would use with our mother or child, then don’t use it at work.
- Direct irony towards ourselves or our own situation.

---

<sup>10</sup> Anne Underwood, “Toxic Humor,” *PlainViews* 4, no. 7 (May 2, 2007).



- Never use sarcasm (the intent and impact are often wounding).
- Stories or “jokes” in which the subject or objects are people of different racial, ethnic, religious, gender, or sexual orientation than ourselves, are never appropriate in the work place, no matter how well we think we know the listener(s). Racist, sexist, and ageist comments are never appropriate, clever, or funny anywhere.
- Stories or “jokes” targeting physical or mental conditions are never appropriate anywhere.
- Stories or “jokes” about patients/residents or students are never appropriate without their express permission for the particular occasion.
- Stories or “jokes” about our colleagues should be saved for retirement “roasts,” and then told with loving discretion. What we consider funny may not be to the colleague.
- Remember: the measure of appropriateness is the impact on others (i.e., their perception of the humor), not our intent.

## Financial Boundaries

What monetary boundaries have we established for ourselves in relation to those we minister to and within the healthcare setting?

We should discourage non-monetary compensation from clients (e.g., having them do a favor for us or giving us a gift). Our healthcare facility probably has a policy against such behavior between patients/family and staff. If so, abide by it.

A Chaplain will want to pass up any kind of financial entanglement (e.g., borrowing or lending money).

We need to be very cautious when giving gifts (like at Christmas or for a birthday). It must be inexpensive and not of a personal nature (e.g., jewelry or clothing). It would be a good idea for us to understand our answer to this question: What’s my (or their) motivation/intent for giving the gift?

## Additional Boundaries

### Time Management

It is essential that we learn the concept of time-limited counseling sessions, phone calls, and visits. We need to be wise in allocating the time God has given us to care for people in need (Ephesians 5:15-16; Luke 4:42). Typical counseling sessions are not longer than fifty minutes. If more time is needed, reschedule another visit or refer them to someone who has the time and skill to help them.

### Urgency versus Emergency

A Chaplain needs to understand the difference between urgency and an emergency. *Urgency* is a situation where the person *wants* us to help him or her immediately. What they are requesting may be important (at least to them), but it is probably not necessary for us to immediately respond. If it can wait (and it usually can), postpone it. A real *emergency* is a situation where they *need* us to help them immediately.

### Teamwork

We must learn to recognize and utilize teamwork. We need to understand our own counseling and knowledge limits. This is a boundary of humility. Understanding our limits will help us to make appropriate referrals to other clergy, social workers, and psychologists. No one is an expert in everything. Making a referral shows a healthy respect for the expertise of other professional caregivers.

### Self Care

Chaplains need to exercise self-care and self-understanding. In the midst of so many demands and the temptation to meet personal needs, what is appropriate self-care?<sup>11</sup>

Physical self-care. This would include stress management, exercising regularly, eating properly, getting enough rest, and having an annual physical by our family physician.

Mental self-care. Proverbs 23:7 reminds us that as we think in our heart, so are we. Mental self-care might include seeing a counselor to check out how we perceive ourselves and our situation.

Emotional self-care. The Psalms are a primary emotional resource for us as ministers gifted with the capacity for feeling. A trained counselor or clergy person may also be able to help us sort out our sometimes conflicting feelings and guide us in ways to express or act on those feelings that are consistent with our values and responsibilities.

### Ten Laws of Boundaries<sup>12</sup>

Some of these “laws” have already been covered elsewhere.

1. The law of *sowing and reaping*: Our actions have consequences.
2. The law of *responsibility*: Boundaries help to determine who is responsible for what. We are responsible *to* one another, but not *for* each other. We are responsible for our own feelings, attitudes, values and handling of life’s difficulties.
3. The law of *power*: We have power over some things (e.g., influencing others, confessing our hurtful ways and repenting); we do not have power over other things (e.g., we cannot change others).
4. The law of *respect*: If we wish for others to respect our boundaries, then we need to respect theirs.
5. The law of *motivation*: We must be free to say no before we can wholeheartedly say yes. Realize that when we say yes to one activity, we are also saying no to another. For example, when we say yes to teach an evening seminar, we are also saying no to spending time with our family that evening.
6. The law of *evaluation*: We need to evaluate the pain our boundaries (or not having boundaries) cause others. Sometimes that *pain* may lead to growth and sometimes it may lead to injury.
7. The law of *proactivity*: We take action to solve problems based on our values, wants and needs.
8. The law of *envy*: We will never get what we want if we focus outside our boundaries onto what others have. Envy is devaluing what we have, thinking it is not enough.
9. The law of *Activity*: We need to take the initiative (rather than being passive and waiting for someone else to make the first move) in setting limits.
10. The law of *Exposure*: We need to communicate our boundaries to each other.

## **Warning Signs**

Those who have trespassed their boundaries have ignored some danger signs. Here are a few “red flags” and “flashing lights” that may indicate that we are about to or have already crossed a “no trespassing” line.

1. Having no accountability partner. We need someone else, preferably a peer, to objectively evaluate our ministry involvement and relationships on a regular basis.
2. Suffering persistent or increasing marital frustrations. Unhappiness in marriage will increase our vulnerability to temptation.

---

<sup>11</sup> Read chapter in training curriculum on “Avoiding Compassion Fatigue” for a full discussion about self-care.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries in Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999): 59.

3. Undergoing excessive stress. Fatigue increases our vulnerability to temptation.
4. Experiencing chronic, low-level depression increases our vulnerability to temptation.
5. Going alone to breakfast, lunch, dinner, or social activities with a member of the opposite gender (other than our spouse).
6. Dating or romantic involvement with a client. (That one should have sirens going off as well as the flashing red lights!)
7. Changing normal office practices or routines (e.g., seeing someone away from the office, talking on the phone excessively or after hours with someone of the opposite gender, or sending e-mails or texting to someone of the opposite gender too often or after hours).
8. Looking forward with unusual enthusiasm to a counseling session with someone of the opposite gender. This might be a good signal that it is time to make a referral.
9. Confiding in someone of the opposite gender. This should be done only with our spouse or accountability partner, never a counselee.
10. Relying on someone of the opposite gender for personal affirmation. Everyone needs personal “strokes.” But to seek or expect such affirmation from a member of the opposite gender (other than our spouse) is a boundary violation that should not occur.
11. Asking very personal questions of someone of the opposite gender. Permitting someone of the opposite gender to ask us very personal questions.
12. Giving intimate, personal gifts to someone of the opposite gender. Allowing someone of the opposite gender to give us an intimate, personal gift.
13. Thinking of a patient/resident as a friend rather than a client. A counselor is in danger of overstepping professional boundaries if s/he treats the client in a way that encourages personal friendship or becomes personally involved with the patient or the patient’s problems. Such over-involvement will threaten to compromise objectivity, the development of transference (the patient’s projection onto the counselor of qualities of a significant other), and the counselor’s ability to use the therapeutic relationship to help the client.

## **Avoiding a Problem**

The preceding “warning signs” are guidelines that will help us avoid most problems. In applying this advice to our lives, we will also want to consider the following:

Pray about our vulnerability. This invokes God’s protection and increases our awareness of our vulnerability.

Develop a healthy fear of God. Since Proverbs 1:7 tells us that the fear of God is the “beginning of knowledge,” this means that taking God into account in our daily lives is the foundation of a disciplined and holy life. To fear God means to adopt a godly lifestyle out of respect for Him. Consider the following passages: Joshua 24:14; 2 Kings 17:36, 39; Job 28:28; Psalm 34:7, 9; 85:9; Proverbs 8:13; 14:2, 16, 26-27; 19:23; Isaiah 2:10, 19-21; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:28-29; Revelation 14:7.

Intensify a super heightened awareness of the significant damage we will do to our ministry, marriage, family, HCMA, friends, etc., if we crash through the barriers (even unintentionally) and fall over the edge. Consider the following passages: Proverbs 5:3-6; 7:1-27; 9:13-18.

We need to make our fences public. A boundary is useless if we can take it down any time our heart desires. Those around us (spouse, confidant, and colleagues) must understand our boundaries and be willing to tell us if they see one broken or becoming weak.

We should be accountable for the moral fences we have established. For example, we cannot trust ourselves to remain objective when it comes to sexuality. We need to be transparently accountable with a peer. No one understands the pressures on a minister as well as another minister. This person should be able to ask us straightforward questions like, “Have you set anything unclean before your eyes (Internet, TV, movies, magazines) this week?” (See Psalm 101:3). And we need to give an honest answer. David is a good example of someone who attempted to rationalize his emotional vulnerability in having an affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-24). David needed an accountability partner (Nathan), and so do we.

Some of the objectives of an accountability group are:

*To help clergy understand and accept their need for peer affirmation and for mutual accountability in personal life and in conducting public ministry, to offer clergy a place where they may temporarily set aside the role of “pastoral caregiver” and focus on their own care, health, and wholeness, to provide a safe place where clergy (or other leaders) can speak honestly about their personal or pastoral concerns and receive feedback in an informal and non-judgmental atmosphere, to reduce some of the intellectual, spiritual, and role-connected isolation experienced by many leaders.*<sup>13</sup>

Chaplains must avoid sexual or romantic fantasies about their clients. This is one clear sign that we have lost control of our counter-transference. This would include looking forward with unusual enthusiasm to a counseling session with the person.

Recognize Satan’s traps. Temptation can be subtle, but the payoff is not! Be on guard! As the Apostle Paul cautioned: “So be careful. If you are thinking, ‘Oh, I would never behave like that’ — let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin” (1 Corinthians 10:12, The Living Bible).

Breaking major boundaries often happens over a gradual period of time. It is not a sudden blow out, but a slow leak. We may take small steps that subtly cross some minor boundaries without incident. These little infractions may eventually lead to crossing over some major boundaries. We might think, “I crossed the others without a problem, so there’s no risk in crossing this one either.” Do not believe that lie!

## Correcting a Problem

What if we discover that we have transgressed (even unintentionally) any of our boundaries? What should we do?

1. Stop seeing the client! Immediately (now, not later) *refer* the client to someone else.
2. Take a break from counseling. During the sabbatical, we need to take the time that is necessary to *rebuild* our fences.
3. Consult with a professional counselor. We need to make every effort to *repair* our broken boundaries.
4. Get supervision from a Pastor and/or the HCMA Area Director. We need to take time to regularly *reinforce* our fences through peer review (accountability).



## Chapter Assignments

1. Have you established *spiritual* boundaries for yourself? What are they?

---

<sup>13</sup> Gary L. Harbaugh, Rebecca Lee Brenneis and Rodney R. Hutton, *Covenants & Care: Boundaries in Life, Faith, and Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 17.

2. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer on 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. Record your insights in a journal and discuss your insights with the Teaching Chaplain.

3. Read and reflect on the following passages: Joshua 24:14; 2 Kings 17:36, 39; Job 28:28; Psalm 34:7, 9; 85:9; Proverbs 8:13; 14:2, 16, 26-27; 19:23; Isaiah 2:10, 19-21; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:28-29; Revelation 14:7. After spending several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer on the fear of God, record your insights in a journal and share them with the Teaching Chaplain.

4. Read the following passages: Proverbs 5:3-6; 7:1-27; 9:13-18. After spending several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer about the consequences of stepping over moral boundaries, record your insights in a journal and share them with the Teaching Chaplain.

5. Jesus had boundaries for His life. He took time for solitude and He sought the company of friends. He got the sleep He needed, He ate healthy foods, and He did a lot of walking. He was never in a hurry or forced things to happen; yet He was committed to His mission. He said no to inappropriate behavior (the demands of the crowds, the lure of entitlement, the baiting questions, cynicism and pride). Find Bible verses for each of these examples of healthy boundaries.

Jesus taught us about boundaries. For example, He instructed us about our personal prayer time (Mt 6:6), about being honest and direct (Mt 5:37), about setting priorities (Lk 16:13), about pleasing God and not people (Jn 5:44), and about obeying God (Mt 21:28-31).

In what ways does Christ's example and teaching about limits influence your own boundaries for your ministry?

6. Read a book on professional boundaries, write a review, and discuss your insights with the Teaching Chaplain.

7. Knowledge is not enough. It is good to know about boundary guidelines. But it is not enough! Most who break through their moral fences clearly see the posted "NO TRESPASSING" signs. They know the boundaries, but deliberately choose to ignore them. Others naively cross boundaries when they confuse personal boundaries with professional boundaries. What are you going to do to make certain that this does not happen to you? Discuss this with the Teaching Chaplain.

8. If married, discuss your boundary guidelines with your spouse. If not married, discuss these boundaries with your confidant (i.e., your accountability person).

9. Do you have a person (in addition to your spouse) to whom you are regularly accountable? Who is this person and how often do you meet? What are the guidelines s/he uses for holding you accountable for your spiritual, mental, emotional and physical conduct? Share your insights with the Teaching Chaplain.

However, accountability is not enough. It is good to be involved in an accountability group. But it is not enough! Most people who breach their moral boundaries do so while they deliberately lie to their accountability partner. What are you going to do to make certain this does not happen to you?

10. Make rounds and debrief with the Teaching Chaplain.

11. Write a verbatim report, share it with a peer group, and discuss your learning issues with your Teaching Chaplain.

## **Chapter Resources**

The following bibliography is not intended to be exhaustive in its content, nor does it contain all the latest resources. HCMA does not endorse all of the ideas expressed in all of the resources listed here. Some of the sources are given simply to expose us to a variety of viewpoints on the subject. It is expected that even in places of disagreement we will reflect upon and think critically regarding our own views rather than simply dismissing views that may run counter to our own.

Cloud, Henry, and John Townsend. *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*. Revised ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.

In order to call themselves good Christians, many people have drawn overly flexible boundaries (unwilling to say no, always accommodating others' needs) or overly rigid boundaries (to the point of being righteous and judgmental). Psychologists and inspirational speakers Cloud and Townsend show readers how to set reasonable boundaries in order to follow the true path of Christianity.

———. *Boundaries in Marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Only when a husband and wife know and respect each other's needs, choices, and freedom can they give themselves freely and lovingly to one another. Boundaries are the "property lines" that define and protect husbands and wives as individuals. Once they are in place, a good marriage can become better, and a less-than-satisfying one can even be saved. Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend show couples how to apply the 10 laws of boundaries that can make a real difference in relationships. They help husbands and wives understand the friction points or serious hurts and betrayals in their marriage—and move beyond them to the mutual care, respect, affirmation, and intimacy they both long for. *Boundaries in Marriage* helps couples: (1) set and maintain personal boundaries and respect those of their spouse, (2) establish values that form a godly structure and architecture for their marriage, (3) protect their marriage from different kinds of "intruders", and (4) work with a spouse who understands and values boundaries—or work with one who doesn't.

Conway, Jim & Sally, "Conduct Unbecoming: Seeing Harassment from a Clearer Perspective." *Christian Counseling Today* 3.1 (1995): 27-31.

Doehring, Carrie. *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relations Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Clarifies how to distinguish between healthy therapeutic relationships and ones which have become abusive. When we monitor the power struggles within us, between us, in our communities and cultures, and the ways in which we are pulled to disengagement and merger, we will be able to prevent abuse and neglect. We will also be more likely to experience empowering, empathic moments in our relationships, and use these to "get our bearings."

Harbaugh, Gary L., Rebecca Lee Brenneis, and Rodney R. Hutton. *Covenants & Care: Boundaries in Life, Faith, and Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.

The authors employ the Old Testament notion of covenant and ask ministers to enter a covenant both for their own self-care and as a key to framing and enlivening their care for others in ministry. True-to-life stories show how biblically-based covenantal relationships with clear boundaries promote healthy relationships, and how they are integral to faithful personal and pastoral care. The authors' sensible yet sensitive approach offers practical help for the minister's self-care while providing tools for meeting such challenges as conflict in the congregation, issues of sexual ethics, questions of power and conscience, and the dynamics of spirituality.

Hart, Archibald D. "Walking on the Edge: The Counselor's Sexuality." *Christian Counseling Today* 7.3 (1999): 20-23.

Haugk, Kenneth C. *Christian Caregiving: A Way of Life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.

See Chapter 9 on "Servanthood v. Servitude" as an interesting perspective on ministry boundaries.

Hawkins, David. *Dealing with the CrazyMakers in Your Life: Setting Boundaries on Unhealthy Relationships*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2007

Some of the most difficult people to deal with are those who fail to take responsibility for their lives and who wreak havoc in their relationships. Author and relationship doctor David Hawkins offers help for those caught unavoidably in the craziness of a disordered person's life. With clear explanations, examples, and real life solutions, Hawkins shows readers how to develop healthy life skill tools and boundaries; when, why, and how to confront a person who drives them crazy; how disordered people think, act, and see the world.

Johnson, David, and Jeff Van Vonderen. *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing & Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church*, reprint edition. Ada, MI: Bethany, 2005.

The authors address the dynamics in churches that can ensnare people in legalism, guilt, and begrudging service, keeping them from the grace and joy of God's kingdom. Written for both those who feel abused and those who

may be causing it. The book shows how people get hooked into abusive systems, the impact of controlling leadership on a congregation, and how the abused believer can find rest and recovery.

Katherine, Anne. *Boundaries: Where You End and I Begin: How to Recognize and Set Healthy Boundaries*. Second ed. New York: Fireside, 1994.

Boundaries bring order to our lives, strengthen our relationships with others and ourselves, and are essential to our mental and physical health. For those of us who have walked away from a conversation, meeting, or visit feeling violated and not understanding why, this book helps us recognize and set healthy boundaries. Real-life stories illustrate the ill effects of not setting limits and the benefits gained by respecting our own boundaries and those of others.

———. *Where to Draw the Line: How to Set Healthy Boundaries Every Day*. New York: Fireside, 2000.

With every encounter, we either demonstrate that we'll protect what we value or that we'll give ourselves away. Healthy boundaries preserve our integrity. Unlike defenses, which isolate us from our true selves and from those we love, boundaries filter out harm. This book provides the tools and insights needed to create boundaries so that we can allow time and energy for the things that matter—and helps break down limiting defenses that stunt personal growth. Focusing on every facet of daily life—from friendships and sexual relationships to dress and appearance to money, food, and psychotherapy—the author presents case studies highlighting the ways in which individuals violate their own boundaries or let other people breach them. Using real-life examples, from self-sacrificing mothers to obsessive neat freaks, she offers specific advice on making choices that balance one's own needs with the needs of others.

———. "Therapists Who Offend: On Being a Wounded Healer, Not an Unhealed Wounder." *Christian Counseling Today* 6.1 (1998): 16-21, 59-62.

Lebacqz, Karen, and Ronald G. Barton. *Sex in the Parish*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991.

Included in this book are the experiences of a pastor who did not set appropriate limits; explanations of how the pastoral role affects sexual contact between pastor and parishioner; suggestions for a framework of ethical analysis; an examination of questions for women in ministry, single pastors, and pastors who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual; and a review of ethical issues related to persons who carry responsibilities for the structures of ministerial practice.

Lebacqz, Karen, and Joseph D. Driscoll, *Ethics and Spiritual Care: A Guide for Pastors, Chaplains and Spiritual Directors*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

The book begins by examining two fundamental questions: What is authentic spirituality? And, is the "professional model" adequate for examining ministry? They then move on to pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction—the differences between them and the ethical issues involved with providing spiritual guidance.

Linden, Anne. *Boundaries in Human Relationships: How to be Separate and Connected*. Bancyfelin: Crown House, 2008.

This book will tell you how to use your ultimate resource—boundaries—in your personal and professional life. While the word is used frequently, very few of us know the inner mechanics of boundaries. This book delves deeply into not only the meaning but the practical skills and tools necessary to use boundaries to your advantage using real life examples and exercises. You will learn to understand exactly what boundaries are, recognize when you need them, and how to create and maintain them using three simple skills: (1) A clearly defined structure of boundaries, (2) Specific practical steps for creating and managing boundaries, and (3) An in-depth exploration of the significant areas of relationships and self-esteem through the lens of boundaries. These three skills will give you choice and control over your emotions, behavior and thinking. The most important distinction you can ever make in your life is between who you are as an individual and your connection with others. Can you truly love another and be the whole, complete and unique person you are? How do you know the difference between your fear and your partners', between your past anger and your here-and-now anger? The answer is boundaries, and this is a practical guide to unlocking these mysteries.

Link Care Center, 1734 W. Shaw, Avenue, Fresno, CA 93711.

If you need wise counsel call them at (559) 439-5920 or by e-mail at [info@linkcare.org](mailto:info@linkcare.org). Link Care Center is a Christian counseling center, dedicated to the health and growth of the entire person, including psychological, emotional, intellectual, familial, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

London, H. B., Jr., Neil B. Wiseman, and Robert N. Hosask, eds. *Pastors at Risk: Help for Pastors, Hope for the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993.

D. James Kennedy commented on this book: “The authors have provided a helpful source of personal renewal for ministers who may feel overwhelmed by the complexity, the diversity, and the sheer weight of the problems confronting pastors today.” Some chaplains are not comfortable in confiding personal concerns and needs with others. This book can help.

Mauck, Kenny. “Defining Moments: Boundaries & Dual Relationships.” *Christian Counseling Today* 7.2 (1999): 18-19, 34.

Moskofian, Peter, and George Ohlschlager. *Sexual Misconduct in Counseling & Ministry*. Nashville: Word, 1995.

Combining their extensive counseling experience and legal expertise, the authors offer a well-written, practical book addressing the thorny issues of sexual exploitation by religious professionals. Prevention and response are both covered.

O’Neil, Mike S., and Charles E. Newbold, Jr. *Boundary Power: How I Treat You, How I Let You Treat Me, How I Treat Myself*. Second ed. Nashville: Sonlight, 1994.

This is a workbook. It will help you open a whole new way of successfully dealing with life's challenges by answering the questions and acting on the information that you learn in each chapter of the book. You can take charge of your life, strengthen your character, expand your freedom, and improve your marriage and other personal relationships by learning how to set personal boundaries in your life.

Pastoral Care Line. Pastoral Ministries, Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995.

If you need wise counsel, call them toll free at (877) 233-4455 or e-mail them at [pastors@family.org](mailto:pastors@family.org).

Peterson, J. Allan. *The Myth of the Greener Grass: Affair-Proof Your Marriage, Restore Your Love, Recover Your Dreams*. Revised ed. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1984.

Family counselor Petersen speaks frankly about extramarital affairs and offers both preventive and healing measures. Now updated with a chapter on recovery, this book offers practical advice for couples facing the realities of adultery or those desiring to “affair-proof” their marriage.

Peterson, Marilyn R. *At Personal Risk: Boundary Violation in Professional-Client Relationships*. W. W. Norton, 1992.

This book addresses boundary violations through the lens of the professional-client relationship, drawing examples of misconduct from law, medicine, religion, education and psychotherapy. The first three chapters cover the social context of the relationship, the inherent power differential that delineates the relational boundaries, and professionals’ difficulty with managing that power appropriately. Also discussed are the four characteristics of a boundary violation—a reversal of roles, a secret, a double bind, and an indulgence of professional privilege—and the damage to the client. Throughout the book, clients share their stories of violations—sometimes blatant, often subtle—in relationships. These vignettes, along with Peterson’s engaging style, transform ethics from dry, abstract, and theoretical principles to vital struggles to understand and appropriately manage power with clients.

Poling, James Newton. *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Weaving case stories with theory, Poling demonstrates that sexual abuse of children is not a private matter, but very much a matter for society and church—a question of structure and ideology, not just of individual character. Chapter titles are: 1. Hearing the Silenced Voices. 2. Power and Abuse of Power. 3. “Karen”: Survivor of Sexual Violence. 4. Stories of Recovering Perpetrators. 5. The Schreber Case: Methods of Analysis. 6. The Search for Self. 7. The Search for Community. 8. The Search for God. 9. Ministry Practice and Practical Theology.

Ragsdale, Karen Hancock, editor. *Boundary Wars: Intimacy and Distance in Healing Relationships*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1996.

The book reflects fourteen diverse perspectives from mental health professionals and clergy, theologians, ethicists, and lawyer, and an historian; academicians and practitioners; people of color, differing sexual orientations, and various ethnic identifications. While uniformly supporting victims and abhorring abuse, these contributors reveal profound differences in interpreting the need for boundaries in healing relationships. Some



suggest only a "distance" model is morally legitimate; others suggest that rigid, artificial boundaries between individuals may not always be appropriate—and may in fact impede the therapeutic process.

Reediger, G. Lloyd. *Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling, and Care*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.

Schmitz, Eileen. *Staying in Bounds: Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry*. Atlanta, GA: Chalice, 2010.

Provides straight-talk guidance to ministers and other leaders of churches and faith-based organizations on the what, why, and how of relational boundaries. Provides guidance on identifying, implementing, and enforcing healthy boundaries, with a special focus on ministry settings. The author develops the concept of boundaries from psychological and theological perspectives, discusses the benefits of boundaries, and then explains the importance of healthy boundaries in the church.

Virkler, Henry. "When Temptation Knocks: Reducing Your Vulnerability." *Christian Counseling Today* 2.3 (1994): 39-43.

Wilson, Michael Todd, and Brad Hoffman. *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007.

Great falls from ministry don't simply happen. A complex mix of factors, both internal and external, tests the limits of your ability to minister wholeheartedly over the long haul. Senior pastor Brad Hoffmann and licensed professional counselor Michael Todd Wilson work with pastors removed from their place of service. The common experiences of these pastors revealed patterns that consistently contributed to burnout, ineffectiveness and moral failure. If such patterns can be predicted, the authors reasoned, can they be *prevented*? *Preventing Ministry Failure* is a personal guidebook for pastors and other caregivers to prepare them to withstand common pressures and to flourish in the ministry God has called them to. Work through the exercises and reflections individually or in conversation with your peers, and you'll find yourself better equipped for the challenges of vocational ministry, and more conscious of the presence of God leading you on and restoring your soul.

## Appendix A

# Six Principles for Boundaries in Pastoral Ministry<sup>14</sup>

By Barney Self

Ministers often struggle in setting God-honoring boundaries. This struggle may stem from a misunderstanding of the appropriate place ministry has in the life of the minister. When persons experience the sense of call to ministry it is easy to confuse or combine the personal relationship **with** God and ministry **for** God.

Ministry and relationship with God are two very different elements in life. They should be handled in a way that will fulfill our commitments in the most God-honoring fashion.

### Your first covenant relationship is with God

The combining of our covenant with God with the one we have with our spouses leads to the healthy and solid triangular relationship with God at the pinnacle and the husband and wife at the other two corners.

---

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Barney Self is a licensed marriage and family therapist. This article appeared on the LifeWay website (accessed April 9, 2014), which has 110 articles on Pastoral Care: Practical ways to care for yourself and your family. Go to: <http://www.lifeway.com/n/Pastors/Pastoral-Care?type=learn>.

In this way we can both minister in our homes to our spouses' and children's needs, as well as outside our homes to our congregation's needs.

The healthy minister's priority list is God first, spouse second, family third, and ministry fourth.

#### Crises demand your attention

Illnesses, deaths, births, weddings, and traumas all demand the minister's attention and presence. However, outside of these major "musts", the remainder of ministry applications should be called into question. Determine whether the health of the minister — or the well-being of the minister's family — may be harmed by fulfilling a ministry request.

Maintain a healthy balance between meeting the needs of the congregation and those of the family.

#### Scheduling is a battleground

Set aside time each week for yourself, your spouse, and your children. The real key is to determine what amounts of time are necessary for generating personal spiritual renewal, marriage relationship growth, and family connection. Make these decisions together with your spouse. They will vary from time to time, especially as your children age. Treat these time slots the same as other appointments.

Training of your church staff and congregation regarding both the need and the reality of this commitment will also change over time. In so doing, you will model healthy priorities for your staff and the church as a whole.

#### Beware the drain of counseling

Determine if this activity truly is within your gifting. If so, boundaries will be critical for you, your counselees, and your church. Often, ministers who counsel others find both their role as counselor and their role of minister compromised. If counseling an individual is perceived to be a problem, it would be appropriate to refer the counselee to a qualified Christian therapist in your area.

#### Keep a list of pastoral counselors for referrals

Pastoral counselors will allow you to focus on other ministry issues, and may allow your counselees to obtain more effective therapy. You will occasionally discover serious emotional or psychological struggles or other major trauma in those you counsel. When such discoveries take place, ask yourself: "Will I be the **best** person to help?" If not, referral is both a good idea and an ethical mandate.

#### Your church can assist in good boundary setting

Develop a plan for the assistance of church members needing counseling. Such a plan would likely stipulate the assistance to be provided, the timing, the duration, and financial arrangements. This takes pressure off you and helps counselees understand clearly where the boundaries lie.

The ultimate goal of boundary setting is to protect you, your wife and family, and your church body. Clear boundaries better ensure fulfillment of needs for everyone and the most efficient ministry. Your church will also enjoy better opportunities for growth.