

## Where's the Boundary? A Helpful Ten-Point Test

Boundaries are less about rigid rules and more about a way of thinking about relationship (power, role, expectation, perception, etc.) And if that is true, then what principles should serve to guide a ministry leader in setting helpful boundaries? A hard and fast set of rules can't possibly apply to every context and the vast array of situations and relationships faced in ministry. How then should a church leader determine where to place healthy boundaries?

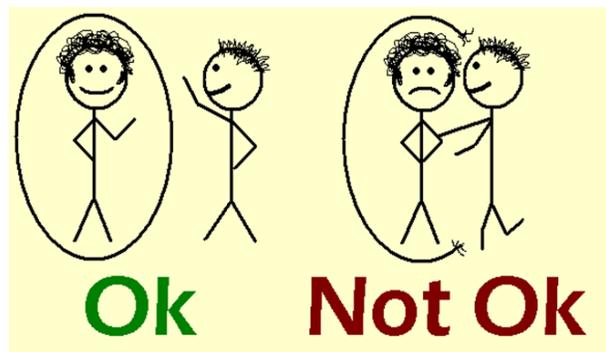
Below are 10 Moral Tests\*, which can be used to help guide in determining healthy ministry boundaries:

1. **The Bullhorn or Transparency Test** – How would my actions be perceived if they were made public?
2. **The Test of Fiduciary Responsibility** – Whose needs are being met? Are my actions in the best interest of the one that I am ministering to?
3. **The Ministry Service Test** – What ministerial service am I providing? And what is included in that ministerial service? What is not included?
4. **The Collegial Accountability and Supervision Test** – How do my supervisor and colleagues respond when I report my behavior? (Am I willing to honestly share my behavior with them?)
5. **The “Do No Harm” Test** – Who is put at risk by my actions?
6. **The Staying Above Reproach Test** – How might my behavior be perceived by others? Am I avoiding any appearance of impropriety?
7. **The Dependency Test** – How important or indispensable do I feel in this relationship? Being needed by others is a powerful form of dependency – ministry is not about me.
8. **The Dependency Test 2** – Does the person I'm ministering to show signs of emotional dependency?
9. **The Precedent Test** – What kind of precedent am I setting? Am I setting a precedent or creating a culture that accepts certain behaviors that could put someone at risk.
10. **The Exception Test** – Do I feel that for some reason this situation or relationship is an exception to the usual rules and limits?

Healthy boundaries must be carefully maintained as a container for effective ministry. That takes a little time, effort, self-reflection, and accountability.

### Questions for reflection

- *How important is maintaining healthy boundaries to you in your own ministry?*
- *Would the boundaries you keep in your own ministry pass these 10 moral tests? Or, do some of these tests reveal a potential red flag or warning sign?*
- *Who keeps you accountable in regards to boundaries in your ministry? Who can you talk with openly about struggles with any of these boundaries?*



\* *Pastors who Prey: Overcoming Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women*

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