

CULTIVATING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IN CROSS-RACIAL/CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRIES

As clergy, the demands for our time and attention can often be intense and overwhelming. Learning to prioritize and discern what is urgent and important, while remaining faithful to what is right in front of us is a delicate juggling act. To sustain ourselves in ministry then, requires us to establish and maintain healthy boundaries with those we encounter on life's journey and those we are committed to in ministry. For Christian leaders, healthy boundaries can be seen as the fruitful manifestation of a Christian identity attuned to the process of growing in Christ-likeness. In other words, allowing our yeses to be yeses, our no's to be no's (Matthew 5:37), to engage with people of peace as we are sent out (Luke 10:5-6), and to remain committed to the work itself even when colleagues or those we love seek to push back against our boundaries (Mark 1:35-38). Boundary setting, when done in love and commitment to self and to God's revelation in our lives, offers us the bandwidth and presence of mind to be prophetic agents of the Gospel as we seek to live out our callings in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministerial settings.

Here is a checklist of questions to consider as you journey toward strengthening and cultivating healthier boundaries in your ministerial context:

- **Practice Mindfulness.** Where in your body do you experience a boundary violation? In your chest? Your shoulders? When do you know you're feeling or experiencing a boundary violation?
- **Brainstorm.** Name two or three areas in your personal and professional life that you desire more delineated boundaries or expectations. How can you go about beginning to do that work?
- **Notice.** How do you feel about yourself when you must set a firm boundary that causes disruption or a shift in expectation with someone else?

- **Reflect.** When setting a boundary, name one or two stories or explanations you give to yourself about why you set that boundary. What feeling comes up for relaxing on that story or explanation?

Boundary setting, particularly in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry, is a delicate dance of honoring ourselves, our ministerial context, and discovering a sustaining rhythm to ministry that protects against burnout, resentment, and fatigue. When boundary setting becomes not only a personal commitment, but cultural expectation within our context, our work and our lives become enriched and we lessen our grip on having to have it all figured out.

For more resources on how to better explore and set boundaries, check out:

- [**Strengthen your Emotional Vocabulary: The Feeling Wheel**](#) by the Gottman Institute
- [**8 Steps to Setting Healthy Boundaries**](#)
- [**Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself**](#) by Nedra Glover Tawwab
- [**The Set Boundaries Workbook: Practical Exercises for Understanding Your Needs and Setting Healthy Limits**](#) by Nedra Glover Tawwab