

# Ep\_21\_Listener\_Question\_Boundaries\_and\_Why\_still\_here

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

boundaries enforcement, natural consequences, non-violent communication, sexual integrity, emotional safety, spiritual boundaries, communication boundaries, financial boundaries, responsive actions, power imbalance, self-control, recovery support, relationship repair, personal autonomy, boundary categories

## SPEAKERS

Pam B., Bonny, Lyschel

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**P** Pam B. 00:02  
Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace, and I'm

**L** Lyschel 00:06  
Michelle Burkett with hope redefined,

**B** Bonny 00:07  
and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. Welcome to another episode of hope for wives today. We're going to do things a little differently. We have reached into our mail bag and have pulled out listener questions, and I'm just going to jump right in our first listener asks. Can you give examples of boundaries and of consequences when those boundaries are broken? I'd love to hear some examples, because I'm struggling in this area.

**P** Pam B. 00:38  
Very common question, because boundaries are so foreign to us, because when you get married, you take those vows and those are the boundaries, and so you don't think about that you're going to have to enforce anything around those limits and those agreements. Let's talk about some of the common boundary violations that we have. Let's start with the first, most obvious one. You found out that your husband is watching pornography. That's probably the most common boundary violation. Let's talk about consequences. So there are natural consequences. Could be a range of things. First, you feel shock. That's a natural consequence. There may be other consequences besides your feelings that may you know certain things may start to make sense, like I've noticed that my husband's been very withdrawn lately or isolated, not very present in conversations. He seems to be distracted, or maybe he has a shorter temper than he used to. So those are some of the natural consequences that are a result of him watching pornography, too. So a consequence doesn't have to be punishment, like when we give our kids a consequence for slamming the door. What we want to also think about is enforcing, enforcing a boundary. The purpose of the boundary for you is to keep you safe. It's not to make somebody else change their behavior. The primary purpose of that boundary is to give you safety, a sense of peace and serenity and clarity, a place where you can go and you can begin to heal the boundary violation that happened, the wounding that happened to you. I guess we could call that a consequence too. So, you know, a natural a consequence is going to be, I'm going to go and enforce a boundary. The enforcement is the consequence. If I found my husband watching porn, I would, of course, I would be devastated. I would be shocked. I'd be hurt and be confused. And I use non violent communication, which is what I use with all my boundaries, and how I teach people to give, to communicate their boundaries in a way that isn't threatening or

blaming, that keeps it very focused on you. And I say, when you watch pornography, I feel shocked, hurt, confused, angry, scared, and I am going to withdraw. I'm going to take some time away from you, because I need some space to heal what's happened in my heart, and I'm not going to be able to spend time with you until you make a repair. Making a repair is acknowledging what's happened and saying I'm sorry, or I apologize, or showing remorse, taking full responsibility without saying, Yes, I used porn, and I'm sorry, but I was overtired, but I was really stressed, but you were really busy with the kids. There are no buts or blaming anybody else in that repair. Harriet Lerner has a really good book, why won't you apologize? And she lays out in that book all the points that you have to hit to make a repair when there's a break in a relationship, until he repairs that rift. I can't pretend like everything's wonderful and hunky dory and loving and connected. I can't pretend that may also include him deciding that he needs to talk to his therapist, talk to a sponsor, talk to a pastor, take it to his group that may, that might be another consequence that he gives himself if he relapses and watches porn. You

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Bonny 04:28

know, Pam, something you said, really struck a chord with me, and that was about clarity, and my boundary making was confusing before I had true clarity about porn use, because I think we get a lot of mixed messages, especially as Christian women, where does pornography land? Is it a sin? Is it divorce worthy? Well, I'm going to say yes, it is a sin because it is defiling the marriage bed. You're bringing a third party, even if it's digital, you're bringing a third party in. Into the bedroom, and before I had this clarity and this confidence that spiritually, this is defiling my marriage, I boundaries were hard, but once I had that clarity, and I seeing this with my clients too, once they have clarity around their values, that I will not have a marriage that has anything less than 100% sexual integrity, and that means no pornography. So for for my for an example, I would give of boundaries would be if I were to catch him with pornography, the my response is, I will not accept anything less than 100% sexual integrity in my marriage, but because I cannot change you, I cannot make you do anything. I can only control my own behaviors. So my behaviors say that I will not be having sex with you until you are sober from pornography. That is not a sin to say you will not be having sex with him because he is not honoring his marriage vow at this point, plus you are within your rights to protect your own personhood. Marriage doesn't mean you get to be abused in the sexual arena. So that is one area

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Pam B. 06:24

you talk about. Is this, you know, how serious is this of somebody watching pornography? Because we're going to get a lot of messages that it's not that bad. Everybody does it. Men are just this way. Those are all myths, by the way. Those aren't true, and we're going to struggle with that, but I think there needs to be two different kinds of boundaries. One is a deal breaker. If you come running at me with a machete, that's probably a deal breaker. So a lot of women will have deal deal breakers that if you physically cheat on me or other really dangerous behaviors that are deal breakers, meaning no second chances, no third chances. But there's also the types of boundaries of things we can be patient with. And if you use pornography one time, I might be able to be patient with that. But if I catch you a second time or a third time, it doesn't mean I'm I have to be patient endlessly, that I give unlimited chances. We're not meant to enforce boundaries forever and ever and ever. We're supposed to enforce boundaries that keep us safe.

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Bonny 07:31

What I'd like to add is that in your boundary, you can be flexible. You can say, I won't be having sex with you for 30 days, and then we will reassess where your sobriety is. Boundaries aren't unless they're unless they're deal breakers, like Pam's talking about, maybe your deal breaker is an affair and you're done, and that's okay. If it's it's not a deal breaker. You can put those parameters around it. Can

P

Pam B. 07:59

I add a boundary consequence that doesn't work. If I find that you've been using porn, you have to sleep apart from me for seven days. What change can happen within seven days? Or unless, unless there is some sort of fruits expected, like changed behavior, like owning it, like showing compassion for the damage that you caused,

making the repair, just sleeping on the couch for seven days. That's just sleeping on the couch for seven days. It may be uncomfortable, but what does it really do to advance somebody's recovery? So I don't recommend consequences like that that are just, you know, because that almost seems like a punishment. When I

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Lyschel 08:38

was reading the question, one of the things that we do as an organization, we have a support group that we run specifically around boundaries. And I know Pam also has curriculum. I think we've talked about this on a different podcast when the listener was asking the question, Can you give examples of boundaries, consequences? The word consequence, women have a love hate with that, right? And I kind of do too, like as a mother, I know that my kids have consequences natural or enforced, but the bottom line is I didn't like that type of language in my marital relationship because I was looking for a peer to peer type relationship. So we actually refer to it as boundaries and responsive actions. So if this is my boundary, and if this boundary is crossed, this is how I will respond, and it's the same as true with if you had a physical boundary of fence in your backyard, it's like, this is our boundary. And if you throw your trash in my yard, this is how I'm going to respond. I'm going to put the trash back over in your yard, right? Or maybe I'm going to bag it up and throw it out. I don't know, but I have a responsive action, and that's the consequence. Like Pam said early on, it's not about us forcing somebody else to change their behaviors. And one of the things that I had to learn early in my walk with the concept of boundaries was I needed to discover my values because I was attempting to create or enforce boundaries that didn't necessarily line up with my needs. Like, Pam was saying about having somebody move out of the space for them that didn't feel like a violation if he had done what he had done, like pushing him out of the home or whatever, maybe that just didn't line up with where I was, and that wasn't a boundary that I needed. But I do need other things, like I need to see you working toward repairing this relationship, and that may look like getting into back into your support group, having therapy appointments, blah, blah, blah. Now those are things I'm asking of him, but that's not really consequence, right? Those are just asks. In this dialog, what we do in our group is we actually break them down into categories, and then there's this opportunity for you to start unpacking what boundaries would look like in various categories, because you guys gave great examples. Great examples of sexual boundaries, right? I will not engage in sex with you or physical boundaries. But there's also emotional boundaries. We have the ability to create emotional boundaries to help maintain our mental and emotional health. And so the question would be, is, what do you need to feel emotionally safe, and that was probably a bigger boundary for me than even the others, because that was probably the greatest place that I felt a lot of risk and unsafety. So it was like, What are my emotional boundaries? So for me, it was, if you begin to gaslight me as we're attempting to have this conversation, I'm going to step away. We talk about spiritual boundaries, helping to bring joy and serenity and to help you live in an authentic way. The question is, what do you need to be spiritually safe in this relationship? So for me, for a long time, I was not comfortable praying together. Partially, was because I think my husband was that was still a place of unknown. For him, he would make passive aggressive comments while we're praying together. It wasn't safe for me, so it was like, I'm not doing that with you anymore, not until I can see that we're functioning healthy in the everyday, and I start to feel safe with you before we go back into that space. The other one is communication boundaries, right? I've had this. We actually use communication boundaries with couples after disclosure, and we talk about, what does communication look like for you guys following your full therapeutic disclosure? And the boundary we set up is that they begin communicating their questions through email. And there's lots of reasons behind that. Mostly it's just to give them each space to process and respond with their best self versus being reactionary. But maybe that's a communication boundary that needs to happen. Is there's some guys out there that just like, tell it everything at any moment they possibly can, because they can't possibly keep the information inside, and she's so overwhelmed, and he ends up disclosing information while she's literally making dinner with a baby on her hip and loading the dishwasher, it's the most inopportune time for him to give her information, right? So maybe she needs to ask for a communication boundary that's we're going to connect on Thursdays, and that's when you can disclose your slips and relapses, like giving her the space to be able to feel like she can fully show up in that space. But that's a part of us, being able to be aware of who we are and what we need. And then the last one we have as an example is our financial boundaries. There's a lot that may be needed there. You may have boundaries of saying, Hey, you don't get access to our accounts anymore because you have literally just blown 1000s of dollars on your acting out behaviors. Or we have, I mean, we have a financial boundary in our home that had nothing to do with his sexual betrayal had everything to do with us trying to live in a debt free relationship, and so it was like any purchase that was going to be made over \$100 we had to call the other person first before we were going to do that. That's a boundary. That's all that is. There's a lot of other

ways that we can have healthy boundaries in our relationships, knowing how we're going to respond, even if it is violated, like, that's the important part there is, like, what am I going to do if this isn't followed through? And because I can't make him do anything, you don't want to

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Bonny 13:50

be able to make him do anything. If I had made him do all of his recovery work and he was begrudgingly doing it, it wouldn't be real recovery, you, and

L

Lyschel 13:59

he wouldn't have gotten the credit. Oh, true. Yeah, right. There has been so many times where my husband's like, well, I did the blah, blah, blah, and I'm like, I scheduled the appointment for you, right? But that's me controlling and then him trying to take credit from my work. And that is a part of that, the surrender, Mm, hmm, right? Of being able to say you're an adult and you can choose to show up in this space, or you can choose not to show up. Yes, you

B

Bonny 14:27

can say, yeah, do you want to be in a relationship with me? And if he says, No, that's that's his choice. There's a lot of healing that will need to be done after that. But if he says, Yes, he does want to be in relationship with you, then you get to tell him what you need. And as I was listening to Michelle and all that wonderful information about boundaries, it occurred to me that some of my clients have a really hard time knowing what they need, and I think we might have mentioned this on the previous podcast, but if you have a hard time thinking. About what you need, think about what you don't want. For example, my husband would talk to me in a patronizing tone that he was superior, that pissed me off. I did not want that. What I needed was a respectful tone. Was a partnership tone of I missing his equal, not his child or his servant. So we had a communication boundary where if I say that your tone is offensive to me, then if you do not change that tone, I will walk away, same thing as if he was yelling at me. If I tell you to quit yelling at me and you do not, I will leave the room. Actually, distance boundaries are the easiest boundaries to enact. You just walk away.

L

Lyschel 15:49

You just said pissed on our podcast. Yeah, that's

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15:52

okay. I think that's okay. It's ruined

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Lyschel 15:55

all the Christianese that we had

B

Bonny 16:00

going on. What other kind of boundary I mean, really specific and your consequence or response, or whatever you want to call it, when

P

Pam B. 16:08

you turned your back on me and walked away when I was in the middle of talking to you, whatever, calling out the behavior very specifically and factually. You know, hey, when you were acting like a jerk, that's judgment, right? Calling out to behavior. Say I feel because my feelings are going to lead are going to lead me to what I need. I feel unsafe. I need to feel safe. I feel sad. I need to feel happy. I feel a lot of hate right now and angry. I need to feel love. I'm not engaging. You don't get access to me. I'm going to go off and do my own thing that's good for me, that helps me remember I am important. My mental health, my emotional health, is more important to me than the relationship, because without that, I can't participate in the relationship,

**B** Bonny 17:03

I will say that for some of my clients, his distance is more for her mental health. He's a trigger for her, and so having him in bed next to her doesn't help her find stability. So sometimes it's for her to find stability that he needs to be gone for a while, and

**P** Pam B. 17:24

that's included in my I'm not engaging with you. That means I'm not sleeping in the same room with you. I'm not going to eat with you. I will talk to you about children and finance your business kind of stuff. But I'm just you're not a safe person from you become a safe person. I'm just saying you have to be on the outside of the fence until you have the behaviors that are appropriate, that unlock the gateway into my into my presence. My presence is a gift. What

**B** Bonny 17:56

brings me to the thought of boundaries are so good because he finally will know what what he can do to help build that safety. So if he knows your boundaries and he respects them, and he goes the fourth and fifth mile with them, it will help build that safety and help start to repair the relationship. So him, him knowing your boundaries is a good thing, and I know for a lot of women, they are hesitant that maybe even fearful, to share boundaries. But boundaries not only protect you, but they help inform him of how he can help repair the relationship

**L** Lyschel 18:35

we ready for this. What are appropriate boundaries for him to have? I know that there was a real imbalance that happened for me. I went from having no boundaries then to having a ton of boundaries, and then my husband attempted to say, No, you cannot do that with me anymore. Lachelle, and it wasn't that he was pushing my boundary down. Here's what was happening, is that in my rage, I was sinning against him. I was throwing stuff, I was angry. I felt just all these things and him coming back and saying, You can't do that. And oh my goodness, I was like, You have no space for a boundary in here. Okay? And then I was like, actually,

**P** Pam B. 19:17

okay, so not personal boundaries, but what are his interpersonal boundaries with you absolutely. And I

**L** Lyschel 19:24

think that's important for our listeners to understand like but it is a very, very important line to know. And the unfortunate part is, is that oftentimes we will use information to manipulate the people we love, which is sad and hard, but I do think that it's important for us to know that one of our personal boundaries can be that we will exhibit self control, right? Like I can exhibit self control. I can still communicate. Now, self control does not include crying like that. Doesn't mean you can't ever cry. That's not what I'm saying, but what my behavior was, which was going, you know, to violence that. Appropriate, even though it felt just and right in the moment, it

still wasn't appropriate. And so my husband's saying, No, you can't do that anymore. And if you do that, I'm leaving the room, which, as you can imagine, it triggered all senses of abandonment for me, like here I am being a hot mess, and now you're walking out on me, and how dare you. But that was a really hard place for us to come and understanding. So because

**B** Bonny 20:26

there's a there's a balance between she's she needs to vent, and he needs to hear the impact of his stuff on her. He needs she, he needs to hear it outside of just the impact letter. And I really think that's part of her healing. So there's but I do, I do hear you. You don't want to say you don't want to be in such a rage that you're caught. You're dropping the F bomb. You're calling him things or throwing, yeah, you don't want to hit him. I think you can throw some pillows. But, you know. So what's the balance? You know? But

**P** Pam B. 21:03

I'll tell you, what if he says, when you throw a pillow, I feel scared, I feel sad. Would you consider not throwing pillows? Because if you throw pillows, I will leave the conversation. That's a very fair boundary for him to have. And you know, rules of engagement are boundaries. You know when you come together to and you need to vent out that pain, and there he Yes, he has to be able to learn to listen to that. And another really great tool is the tap out. Because especially early in recovery, we are all dealing with extreme emotions, and I always say to my ladies in my groups, what do addicts medicate emotions? And so they're not medicating them anymore. We're all learning to get better at feeling not feeling better having those conversations can can set off your amygdala and overwhelm your brain and shut down the prefrontal cortex, and so it's very fair to agree to a tap out procedure where one person says, I'm just so overwhelmed. I'm so overwhelmed. Right now, I want to have this conversation, but I need to take a pause or a break. Let's come back to it. That's the key point that makes it not stonewalling. Let's come back to this in an hour. And the person who taps out, it's their job to come back in an hour and say, okay, come on. Let's have can are we? Are you ready to have this conversation again? There is an imbalance. Now. There is a power imbalance, because where I thought we were equal, and I found out that you were not all in and I have been disempowered. You didn't ask me if you could spend that money or have that private bank account. And so there is a power imbalance, and there needs to be a rebalancing of power that can we can have that without we can have that and still allow him to have boundaries. We want him to have boundaries because that'll be good for his recovery.

**B** Bonny 23:08

So because he's gotta start putting boundaries on himself, around his porn viewing, around who he's interacting with on social media, all of those things. So

**P** Pam B. 23:18

Yes, Doctor Stephanie carne says in her book that addiction to boundary failures.

**B** Bonny 23:23

So we're going to move on to our next question, and I'm just going to read what she's written here. So many women, when they experience D Day, just kick the guy out. They're done. I don't think of myself as a woman who is so broken and abused that I just can't leave him. However, can you help me explain why I want this to work? I'm not questioning whether or not I want it to work. I do. I just don't understand why I want it to work,

**P** Pam B. 23:51

because you love him, and he hurt you, and he wounded you, but that did not switch off your love. You are wounded and hurt because you love him. We value our marriages. Our marriages are something that we prize

wounded and hurt because you love him. We value our marriages. Our marriages are something that we prize very highly, rightly so. And we want it to work. We want it to be fixed. And I think it's probably a myth that most women just break it off after they've been cheated on or find their husband using porn. We think we're going to before it happens. We think, Boy, if my husband ever cheats on me, that's the end. But when you're actually in it, it's not what you think it's going to be. Many marriages do continue on. The three of us are perfect examples.

**B** Bonny 24:38

I think there's a spiritual component here too, because we we have a covenant. It's a mere if it's two Christians who have come together, you create a marriage covenant with each other, but that covenant includes God. So in the spiritual realm, you are solidly bonded together as one. And I don't think that's easily severed. We have principles that allow us to sever it, adultery, I would say abandonment and abuse as well. But that doesn't necessarily mean that it severs immediately. So I think the natural. I think it's natural for us to want to try to save it, especially for pragmatic reasons as well. If you have children together, you want to keep your family intact. I've heard that from a lot of older and I will say older partners that I have coached a lot, of their motivation is for their family and the grandchildren and having this extended unity, pragmatic as well is it could really change your lifestyle. Now, that's not a reason to stay necessarily, but it's pragmatic. It's something to consider. And the third thing is, all the memories you've created together, depending on how long you've been married, you could have a lifetime of memories together. And the thought of ending that and having to start over again, fresh if you wanted another relationship, that is, but the thought of that all being a season that's ended and gone. That's another reason that it could be hard.

**P** Pam B. 26:24

Can I add too that we have investments? There's, there's just so many reasons beyond the romantic attachment to stay.

**B** Bonny 26:33

And I will say that even when I found out about my my husband's acting out, i There were still things about him I liked, um, even though, for for a short while, when the trauma was high, I wasn't sure what was real and what wasn't. However, as things became more stable, I could see there were things I still liked about him. We still had fun together.

**L** Lyschel 26:59

I was trying to answer this from my own perspective, I totally agree with the answers that you all have given. I think there was also a part of me that I felt like God had given me a vision or perspective of someone my husband was, but maybe not yet, and I was willing to fight for that. I knew that what we brought for one another, that refinement process of being in relationship with each other could lead to something great, because there was still that tiny piece of hope in knowing that the Lord had a greater purpose. I'm mad at the way that God was going to go around about creating this greater purpose, for sure, but I think that was what held me in the fight, that kept me in the fight was like no, because once you, once you see a woman, get to a place of understanding that this behavior, addiction, all the things are really not about her. They're about broken pieces that he brought into the relationship. That's a game changer, like I have that Azar warrior spirit inside of me. I feel it. I know it. People have called it out in me, and so I think that's the other thing, is, I think most women are fighters like that. That's why you have phrases like mama bear, right? I'm going to go Mama Bear, because women do that. We do fight for the things that are worth fighting for in that regard. So I suspect that this woman's why is because she knows that deep down inside, even though she can't see with her eyes yet, but deep down inside, she knows she's fighting for something bigger. Can we speak though to the woman who does leave? Yes, we need to right? Because the reality is, is that that doesn't mean that she didn't have hope for something. It didn't mean that she had I'm going to tell you that I've walked with enough women in this journey that when they get to the point to say I'm leaving it is one of the most excruciating decisions they've had to make. And the phrase I will say to them often is, look, you are up against two hard decisions, because leaving is a hard choice and staying is a hard choice, right? So I can't there's no way. There's no need for us to

pass judgment off on a woman who does have does make that decision and choice, and I don't think our listener was passing judgment off, but I just want to make sure our listeners, who are wrestling through this themselves and going, I'm ready to leave, I don't I'm done fighting. I'm exhausted, or he's resolved to, uh, this is who I am. You're going to have to get over it or get out. And she's sitting at that decision point. So I just, I think it's important for us to make sure that that listener understands that

**B** Bonny 29:46

right and and wives, it's not a wife who's an ease our It's a woman. You don't have to be a wife to be an easer, connecto, the woman's identity. Identity in Genesis is an equal but opposite warrior of the man. So we're fighting this spiritual battle alongside our brothers. But it's not only a wife who is identified as that. It is women in general. So as she leaves that marriage, she can still be his izar as she's fighting for his because I have some divorce clients who're still desperately praying for his redemption. So she's still fighting for him. She just can't be in relationship with him anymore. How can we leave our listeners with some hope today, I

**P** Pam B. 30:39

just want to say to every woman listening. You are the authority in your life. You get to experience the results of your decisions. So you get to make those decisions no one else can make them for you. You have authority, you have autonomy, you have agency. Nobody has people will judge us always, but nobody has the right to judge which decision you make.

**B** Bonny 31:03

The hope I'd like to leave for the lady who's struggling with boundaries is for her to know your needs and wants are just as important and they are just as valid as everyone else's needs and wants in your world.

**L** Lyschel 31:20

Yeah, I'll add this for our listeners. The encouragement I want to offer or extend to them is to also understand that God lives a boundary lifestyle, and that allows us to be able to move into this place with a little bit more confidence, I think, then sometimes we have when we don't realize that the Trinity, in and of itself, is a boundary relationship. Jesus walked out emotional boundaries consistently when engaging with Pharisees and others who are critics. This isn't a concept that what we're talking about is not like this new arriving of women rights and so on and so forth. Like this is a legit need that has been going on since the beginning of time, is to have boundaries, because boundaries do create order. And got and he is a God of order. He is not a God of chaos. As you're trying to wrestle through this idea, seek out support where you can. We've mentioned them before, but I'll tell you that Townsend and cloud the boundaries book was such a huge resource for me to even address or understand this concept. I think the other book I'd recommend is emotionally healthy relationships by Leslie vernick. Both of those had a lot of valuable information for me to know how to move through relationships and begin to understand this concept, but they are good, and they are for good. They are not for destruction, even though someone may say that they're for destruction, right? The people I set boundaries with would oftentimes say I was doing things to destroy, just to destroy something like I didn't like my boundary. But that really wasn't truth. The truth was is that I was working to find myself in a healthy way.

**B** Bonny 33:07

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