

# Love and Boundaries

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | November 7, 2008



*I have been blessed by your seminar on “Healing the Mind.” Redefining the definition of unconditional love in light of the law of liberty raises questions in my mind about what our responsibility is to each other.*

*What is the difference in loving like God does, (continually giving, loving enough to let us choose to kill Him) and having poor boundaries in dysfunctional relationships, which enable destructive behavior?*

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As I travel and speak the issue you have raised is one many people struggle with, so thanks for your excellent question.

Godlike love is the principle of beneficence, other-centered orientation, giving, self-sacrifice for the good of others. What this means is simply that, stemming from a love relationship with God, we have in our heart the best interest of the other person and it is this motive that directs our actions. We want to

do what will benefit them the most from the perspective of their eternal, not merely temporal, best interest. This, therefore means we do not merely give what the other person wants but give what is actual best for them.

What is the “loving” response from a parent when their child wants to watch TV instead of doing homework? If we are thinking what is best for the child the answer is no. And this is not just focused on the temporal benefits of getting good grades in school, but on character development, helping the child develop self-governance, self-discipline and the ability to sacrifice immediate rewards for long term good. Such decision making is thinking of their eternal welfare and is genuinely loving.

However, if we are thinking of self, if we are afraid of how the child might respond, if we somehow need the child to approve of us, like us, validate us, if we need to get something from the child rather than give to the child what is best for them, then we might give into to their request so that we can get what we want - their approval of us. Then we tell ourselves we are being selfless and giving and loving to our child, but this is a lie. The loving course of action is to do what is best for the child, not necessarily what they want, even if the child gets upset with us for doing so.

This principle is applied in all human relationships. If your husband has alcohol problems and asks you to buy him beer, what is the loving response? To do what he wants or to, in love, say “I love you and because I love you I cannot assist in your self-destruction. I will do everything in my power for your good, your health, your welfare but I cannot and will not assist you in destroying yourself.”

Imagine a teenage girl out on her first date and the young man tries to violate her virtue. He might even say “if you loved me you would....” Now obviously we all recognize the right choice is to say no, but why is that the right choice. Often the answer is, “Because giving in breaks God’s commandment” “Because giving in is wrong” “Because it would violate my body - the spiritual temple”. While all of these answers are true if we were to apply the law of love what answer would we give? What is truly best for the young man? Is it in the spiritual best interest of the young man for the girl to say yes to his desires? No, not only is it right in honoring God to say no to him, not only is it right in maintaining her own virtue, but if she loves the young man, if she is concerned with his eternal destiny the answer is “No, I care too much about you, your character, your mind, your spiritual development, your eternal destiny, such an act would damage you and I can’t go along with that.”

Therefore, when we love others as God loves we don’t simply give what others want we use our God given judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to choose to use our energies and resources to be a blessing to others, to lift them up, to help them grow, to assist them in experiencing full healing of heart and mind and character to be like Jesus. And often this means we, in love, say no.