

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author of
Forgiving What You Can't Forget and *Uninvited*

LYSA TERKEURST

**GOOD
BOUNDARIES
AND
GOODBYES**



**LOVING OTHERS WITHOUT
LOSING THE BEST OF
WHO YOU ARE**

What Readers Are Saying About *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*

“This is the book I wish someone had given me at the start of my journey as a Jesus follower. I was so emotionally wounded from traumatic experiences in my past that I didn’t know how to set healthy boundaries, nor when to say necessary goodbyes. As a result, I experienced relational fractures that caused much pain and could have been avoided by applying the hard-earned wisdom shared within these pages. In *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*, Lysa unpacks important principles and dispels destructive fallacies that will help you to honor God and flourish in life by setting healthy boundaries and embracing necessary goodbyes.”

— Christine Caine, founder of A21 and Propel Women

“In a world that talks a lot *about* boundaries, Lysa gently guides us to understand *why* they are critical to the loving relationships we crave and shows us how to do them well. By reframing boundaries from something that can feel *limiting* to something that is truly *loving*, this book equips us to navigate relationships in a loving, healthy, and God-honoring way. If you ever feel as though you’re stuck between being taken advantage of by those you love most or shutting others out to avoid being hurt, *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes* will provide both the practical and biblical guidance you need to operate in the most loving place, with healthy boundaries instead of either extreme.”

— Jordan Lee Dooley, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author

“Once again, Lysa does what she does best by gently guiding us through something hard that all of us will have to make decisions about—boundaries in our relationships. If you are like me, these conversations about boundaries make me nervous and fearful. In *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*, Lysa uses her own journey as an encouragement to us all. I finished the last page of this book and cried. Tears of encouragement and hope for those relationships that I know will be healthier after having some hard conversations about boundaries. Thank you, Lysa, for helping us! Everyone needs this book!”

— Jamie Ivey, bestselling author and host of *The Happy Hour with Jamie Ivey* podcast

“*Good Boundaries and Goodbyes* is full of scriptural and therapeutic truth for navigating your most complicated relationships. Boundaries are not just a good idea, they’re God’s idea. This may be Lysa’s most important message yet!”

— **Sandra and Andy Stanley, North Point Ministries**

“For many people, *boundaries* is like a cuss word. It’s something many of us find extremely uncomfortable talking about, but it’s what so many of us desperately need to actually win in our relationships. What I love about this book is, it may not be the easiest message to consume but if you will challenge yourself to push past the pressure and the pain, I promise you *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes* will be a tool of healing and restoration that will help bring about real transformation in your life.”

— **Michael Todd, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and lead pastor of Transformation Church**

“Lysa TerKeurst has crafted a book that will heal the deepest part of a wounded heart. She has delivered a manual on living in the tension of pain and promise that feels like the exhale we have been waiting to release.”

— **Carlos Whittaker, author of *How to Human* and host of *The Human Hope Podcast***

“The raw honesty that Lysa writes with is stunning and so satisfying . . . She gives great examples of harmful relationships and how to identify the signs. She also provides practical ways to establish boundaries . . . This book is transformational.”

— **Kimberly W.**

“For so long, I’d subscribed to the falsehood that boundary-setting was un-Christlike. Lysa’s wisdom around boundaries was, for me, a paradigmshifting revelation, an answered prayer, and a healing balm for the soul.”

— **Lauren R.**

“Written in the tone of a wise, loving girlfriend who has your best interest at heart, this book had me highlighting something on just about every page! . . . I kept reading parts of it out loud to myself because I found it so profound.”

— **Shanae G.**

“What a gift this book is! Lysa’s words have been soaked in countless hours of study in God’s Word and weighed with grace and mercy in real-life experiences. This book has changed every false belief I entertained about boundaries for the good!”

— **Melanie P.**

“Lysa does an amazing job of sharing her raw, vulnerable, and heartfelt experiences, lessons, and hurts. Reading her words has made me feel seen and understood in a

way not many authors can. I am so grateful that she has been willing to share her life, pains, and joys with the rest of us. I can't wait to give this book to my close friends, hoping it will help them as much as it's helped me."

— **Amy H.**

"Lysa's words and faith-based perspective in this book helped me cultivate boundaries in my own life that I didn't realize I needed. This encouragement has been a blessing and equipped me to strengthen some of my closest relationships."

— **Hope H.**

"This book is for the girl with a wide-open heart who needs some guidance about when to say no, how to set boundaries without guilt, and what words to speak in those hard moments. Lysa always reminds me to keep my heart safe and how to truly honor our God."

— **Sanaz W.**

Other Books and Video Bible Studies by Lysa

I'll Start Again Monday (abridged from *Made to Crave*)

Forgiving What You Can't Forget

Forgiving What You Can't Forget Video and Study Guide

Seeing Beautiful Again (devotional)

It's Not Supposed to Be This Way

It's Not Supposed to Be This Way Video and Study Guide

Embraced (devotional)

Uninvited

Uninvited Video and Study Guide

The Best Yes

The Best Yes Video and Study Guide

Unglued

Unglued Video and Participant's Guide

Becoming More Than a Good Bible Study Girl

Becoming More Than a Good Bible Study

Girl Video and Participant's Guide

Made to Crave

Made to Crave Video and Participant's Guide


What Happens When Women Say Yes to God

40 Days Through the Bible (Lysa and the Proverbs 31 Ministries Team)

Children's

It Will Be Okay

Win or Lose, I Love You!



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I dedicate this message to the courageous woman who will make some hard but very brave decisions to step out of chaos toward health and honesty. I thought about you as I wrote every word of this book. Remember when you love deeply you may get hurt deeply. But getting hurt doesn't mean you have to fear closeness with all people. It actually means you have a tremendous capacity to love others really well because you dared to offer another person the most tender depths of your heart. Don't pack love away like an old sweater you never want to wear again. Good boundaries can help you recognize what got unraveled so you can love others without losing the best of who you are. Tucked within these pages, are thousands of my tears that dripped into smudges of ink as I promised God that if He would help me live this message, I would write this message. And that I would do everything possible to get this book into your hands. It's such an honor to meet you here. Now, let's get started together.



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Introduction

We Can't Set Good Boundaries Without Love

Well, hello. There's so much I want to write in these first words to provide the right environment for this book. I wish I could hand you your favorite coffee, toss you a blanket, set a box of tissues on the table in front of us, put on just the right soundtrack, and catch up on where we both are in life.

I would so much rather talk all of this through face-to-face. Or at least write this to you in a letter in my own handwriting. There's a deeply human element that I don't want to get lost in these black-and-white pages and words typed with a computer font. We're both picking up this book in the middle of real life where we're navigating what works and what doesn't in the relationships we treasure.

And because relationships are so very organic, they move like breath in and out of our lungs, expanding with deep connection one minute and in the next atrophying into complete misunderstanding. Relationships are wonderful and full of love and frustration and wrought with angst and all the things we bring into every attempted embrace with another person. When those we love draw close to us, they draw close to our issues. And we come face-to-face with their issues as well.

And as we open up to each other, the deeper we connect, the more vulnerable we become. The more vulnerable we become, the more exposed the tender places inside of us become. This exposure is risky. When we dare to be so very known, we risk being so very hurt. When we dare to be so very hopeful, we risk being so very disappointed. When we dare to be so very giving, we risk being so very taken advantage of. And when we dare to

unnaturally change into what someone else needs, we risk losing ourselves in the process.

To love and be loved is to be enveloped in the safest feeling I've ever known.

To cause hurt and be hurt is to be crushed with the scariest feeling I've ever known.

You and I both know this. In different ways with different people and to varying degrees, we know the multifaceted complications of love and heartbreak.

We dream of the best, we dread the worst, and we keep trying to figure out how to do relationships right. We build our lives around those we love. And those we love build their lives around us.

We laugh and connect and disconnect and fight and make up and coast and drift and come back and think about how lucky we are to be with someone until we send our counselor the broken heart emoji with the text, "Need help now . . . this isn't going well." Or maybe we use other words and emojis we can't really put right here in this little book.

It's just not all magical like the plots of the Hallmark Christmas movies.

People in these movies seem to live with the blessing of predictability and things always epically working out. There's never a need for ongoing boundaries because there are no ongoing hardships. Once the story turns for good, it stays good until the credits roll.

Last week I sent a text to my friends after watching too many of these movies. It was my attempt at correcting these unrealistic plots.

And it went like this:

OPENING SCENE: Snow falling gently on townspeople smiling, laughing, ice skating. Girl is serving customers in the midst of everyone else's fun. She has an unreasonable, mean boss. She looks out of sorts, like she's searching for something, something that's just beyond her grasp. Suddenly a man with a guitar, smug attitude, and unusual fame appears. And he's a secret prince from a far-off land. She spills water on him. He writes her a song. They fall in love.

CLOSING SCENE: She becomes a princess.

But unfortunately, we all know that's unrealistic. Life doesn't tie up in a neat, nice bow. So, really the script should go like this:

OPENING SCENE: Same beginning scenario, but . . . she spills water on the guy, he freaks out, doesn't leave a tip, tries to get her fired, and she goes home mumbling about what a jerk he was. Also, his castle is in foreclosure and soon he's working as a busboy at the same restaurant. She's eventually promoted to manager, becomes independently successful, and she sets boundaries with him because he's being irresponsible in the way he closes out the registers each night. Then she makes some discoveries that cause her to fire him because he's stealing from the cash drawer.

CLOSING SCENE: She buys the castle and invites her friends over to process what went wrong with him and how in the world he could steal from her! But then, after the closing scene, she questions herself over and over and still wishes things could have been different.

Obviously, Hallmark isn't clamoring for me to write for them anytime soon.

But I am eager to process what I believe has been the missing piece in the storyline of my relationships for far too long: *good boundaries*.

Now, this is where I want to look straight into your eyes and say something really important. This isn't a book about leaving people. It's a book about loving people in right and healthy ways. And it's about communicating appropriate boundaries and parameters so that love can stay safe and sustainable. Boundaries aren't meant to shove love away. Quite the opposite. We set boundaries so we know what to do when we very much want to love those around us really well without losing ourselves in the process. Good boundaries help us preserve the love within us even when some relationships become unsustainable and we must accept the reality of a goodbye.

Throughout these pages we'll seek to honestly examine what is and is not healthy in our hearts but also in the relationships where we invest our hearts. Sometimes it's difficult to know what's healthy and what's not, so it's important to seek godly counsel and, in more complex situations like addictions and abuse, someone specifically trained on the issues at hand. (Please see [Getting the Help You Need](#).)

After all, God's ultimate assignment is for us to love Him and love others. And this is exactly what Jesus taught and modeled. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

But we can't enable bad behavior in ourselves and others and call it love. We can't tolerate destructive patterns and call it love. And we can't pride ourselves on being loyal and longsuffering in our relationships when it's really perpetuating violations of what God says love is. Please hear me clearly say, the purpose of this book isn't to quickly call out issues in others without looking honestly at ourselves as well. We need to examine our motivations and our mindsets.

We can't enable bad behavior and call it love.

And this isn't a message that is encouraging people to divorce quickly, thoughtlessly, or unadvisedly. Proverbs 15:22 reminds us that there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. This also isn't a message about encouraging people to abandon others just because things get difficult or the other person is walking through a hard season.

But we also don't need to swing the pendulum to the extreme where we stay in a destructive, toxic, or abusive relationship no matter what. (See [Some Important Notes to Consider on Abuse](#).) Boundaries, as you will soon see, should help us avoid extremes and live closer to the kind of love God intended for relationships.

Love must be honest. Love must be safe. Love must seek each person's highest good.

And love must honor God to experience the fullness and the freedom of the sweetest connection between two humans.

In fact, when I turn to 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, I'm reminded of God's intention for the purest form of love. Here's how I journaled what I want to remember from these scriptures:

Love is not dishonorable.

Love does not justify wrongs to enable selfishness.

Love does not celebrate evil.

Love requires truth.

Love leads to honor, kindness, and compassion.

So, as we take this journey, let's remember the real purpose of good boundaries. Boundaries protect the right kind of love and help prevent dysfunction from destroying that love. Boundaries help us say what needs to be said, do what needs to be done, and establish what is and isn't acceptable. Love should be what draws us together not what tears us apart.

And, remember, we can't set good boundaries without love. Setting boundaries from a place of anger and bitterness will only lead to control and manipulation. Setting boundaries as a punishment will only serve to imprison us. But setting boundaries from a place of love provides an opportunity for relationships to grow deeply because true connection thrives within the safety of health and honesty.

I guess my greatest fear in writing this book after an unwanted divorce is that it might seem I'm eager to push others away. But that's not true. I'm more eager than ever before to deeply love the people in my life. And I know how destructive it can be to navigate relationship devastation because of a lack of boundaries. I know what it feels like to be paralyzed by another person's choices that break your heart over and over and not know what to do about it. I know the frustration of saying something has to change but feeling stuck when the other person isn't cooperating with those needed changes. So while some relationships become unsustainable to the point that it's necessary to move beyond a good boundary to a goodbye, you don't have to become someone you were never meant to be.

When we're hurt, good boundaries and goodbyes help us to not get stuck in a perpetual state of living hurt.



Love should be what
draws us together not
what tears us apart.

— *ups*

When we're hurt, good boundaries and goodbyes help us to not get stuck in a perpetual state of living hurt.

This is a book written to help you discover that good boundaries can pave the road for the truest and purest version of love to emerge within the relationships that make up so much of who we are and what we want the most.

As we process good boundaries and learn more about goodbyes throughout the book, I've created a section at the end of each chapter called, "Now, Let's Live This." It's a wrap-up of what we're reading and learning and includes some questions and scriptures to ponder as we go. Remember, this isn't just a message to read, it's one we will want to sit with, wrestle through, and process in prayer. Then, if we want real transformation, we'll have to take the crucial step of application.

This won't be the easiest message to apply to your life, but it will likely be one of the most valuable steps you take toward emotional health and better relationships. And the best part of it all, you won't be alone. I'll be with you as we trust God to lead us through every word and every next step. And you'll also hear from my Christian counselor Jim Cress, who will weigh in with therapeutic insights throughout the book.

Now, Let's Live This ...

REMEMBER (STATEMENTS TO CLING TO):

- We can't enable bad behavior and call it love.
- Love must honor God to experience the fullness and the freedom of the sweetest connection between two humans.

- Boundaries protect the right kind of love and help prevent dysfunction from destroying that love.
- Love should be what draws us together not what tears us apart.
- Setting boundaries from a place of love provides an opportunity for relationships to grow deeply because true connection thrives within the safety of health and honesty.
- When we're hurt, good boundaries and goodbyes help us to not get stuck in a perpetual state of living hurt.

RECEIVE (SCRIPTURES TO SOAK IN):

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

Love is patient, love is kind It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

REFLECT (QUESTIONS TO THINK THROUGH):

- Have you ever considered that establishing healthy parameters in your relationships is actually an act of love? As you start this book, how does this change your perspective?
- What may have motivated you in the past to set boundaries or say a goodbye? Take time to think this through and then write down your answers.
- When you're in a relationship where there's been chaos, confusion, and hurt, reacting in extremes can add even more pain. Some people take on all the blame and minimize the actions of the other person. The opposite extreme is to place sole blame on the other person without checking your own heart. Throughout this book, we want to avoid going to either of these extremes. So, honest self-reflection is always a good practice. Asking yourself these questions is a wise step now, and revisiting them before you set a boundary or say goodbye could also be helpful:
 - Have I set unrealistic expectations?
 - Am I too easily offended?

- Have I considered my own shortcomings relative to this relationship?
- Have I sought wisdom from a godly advisor, mentor, or counselor?

PRAYER:

Lord, the greatest desire of my heart is to love and treasure others the way You treasure us. But honestly, sometimes these hard relationship dynamics make it incredibly difficult to discern what is truly loving. So, as I turn these next pages, I ask that You guide me and help me to walk in Your ways, not mine. Show me how to approach my closest relationships with both compassion and a healthy commitment to reality so I am in alignment with You. In Jesus' name, amen.