



5

Embrace God's Gift of Limits

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Without a deep theological and practical understanding of limits, we severely compromise our ability to love God, ourselves, and others over the long haul. Limits are a deeply spiritual issue.
- The examples of Adam and Eve, Jesus, and John the Baptist demonstrate that what we do with our limits has far-reaching consequences, for good or ill.
- In bypassing or denying our limits, we bypass and miss God as well.
- Receiving the gift of limits requires asking two primary questions: *What limits do I need to receive and submit to joyfully as God's invitation to trust him? What limits is God asking me to break through by faith so that others might know him, or so that I might become the person he intends?*
- Limits offer many gifts. They protect us, keep us grounded and humble, and break our self-will. They are God's means of giving us direction, wisdom, and encounters with himself.
- We each have a unique set of personal limits related to six areas of life: personality and temperament; current season of life; marriage or singleness; emotional, physical, and intellectual capacities; family of origin; time.
- Four ways to receive the gift of limits as a church: systematize self-care of leaders, set limits on invasive people, give people freedom to say no, teach healthy boundaries.

DISCUSSION

1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on "Embrace God's Gift of Limits"?

2. What experiences from your own life came to mind when you read the opening story about the man holding the rope? What has holding onto the rope cost you over the years?
3. Embracing the gift of limits can be especially challenging for leaders. Using the continuum below, what number would you choose to characterize your posture toward limits overall? Share the reasons for your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I resent and actively resist limits.					I live joyfully within God-given limits				

4. We each have a unique set of personal limits we must receive in areas of life such as personality and temperament; current season of life; marriage or singleness; emotional, physical, and intellectual capacities; family of origin; time.
 - In which area of life are you most aware of your need to receive a limit right now? Briefly share why.
 - In which area of life are you most aware of how your limits are truly a gift, a means of God giving you direction, wisdom, and encounters with himself?
5. God invites us to break through some limits by faith so that others might know him, or so that we might become the person he intends. The author describes how, after twenty years of denial, he accepted God's invitation to break through the limit of a weakness in his character. As a result, he experienced what he described as the "most significant, God-transforming season of my entire leadership journey."
 - As a leader, how do you understand the differences between legitimate strengths and weaknesses with your gifts, and immaturities or weaknesses of character?
 - All of us have areas of denial or resistance, perhaps especially in connection with the limits of our immaturity. What did breaking through his denial and the limit of his weakness require of the author?
 - What insights or encouragement did you gain from the author's breakthrough?

6. Listed below are four ways to intentionally embed the gift of limits into a church or organization. Based on the unique needs and issues you face as a team, how would you prioritize this list? Use the numbers 1–4 to rank the statements, indicating which you would prioritize first, second, third, and fourth.

_____ **Systematize self-care of leaders.**

_____ **Set limits on invasive people.**

_____ **Give people freedom to say no.**

_____ **Model and teach healthy boundaries.**

- Which did you identify as the first priority? Briefly share why.
- If you could fully implement your first priority, share your hopes for how things might change by completing the following sentence: *We'll know we've embedded this limit into our ministry or organization when . . .*



READING ASSIGNMENT

Before your next meeting, read Chapter 6, “Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss.” As an option, consider identifying in advance a loss you have experienced recently in leadership or in life and use it as a lens through which to read and reflect on the chapter.

GOING DEEPER

Listen to one or more of the following the Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast episodes:

- “Teams that Embrace Rhythms and Limits, Part 1, accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Teams-that-Embrace-Rhythms-and-Limits-Part-1/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.
- “Teams that Embrace Rhythms and Limits, Part 2, accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Teams-that-Embrace-Rhythms-and-Limits-Part-2/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.