

HOME REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE: Family Boundaries

Luke 8:19-21

Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City

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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/family-boundaries/>

It's appropriate we address the topic of family boundaries on the same Sunday we honor high school graduates. Growing up means growing away. Someone once said that once you teach your children to walk, they just keep on walking...away from you. Ideas and plans of their own. A child naturally differentiates—what is me? What is not me?

In their book *Boundaries*, Cloud and Townsend describe a world full of boundaries. Skin, oceans, rivers, moats with alligators in them, property lines, fences, hedge rows [*Boundaries*, p. 31]. As poet Robert Frost wrote, "Good fences make good neighbors..." ("Mending Wall").

All of us, at one time or another, have failed to keep healthy boundaries or we have violated boundaries of others. Perhaps you have fallen into abusive relationships, failing to keep healthy boundaries. We sometimes mistakenly believe Jesus wants us to be controlled by other people, as if this is a spiritual thing to do. It's not.

There are at least three times in the gospels where Jesus interacts with his mother and we see some normal, healthy (at times tense) discussions of boundaries. In Luke 2, Hannah's text from three weeks ago, we see the adolescent Jesus lost in the holiday crowd. When they find him, he tells them he must be about his Father's work.

In John 2, Jesus and his family are at a wedding in Cana. The host is running out of wine. Mary wants Jesus to show his stuff and perform a miracle. Jesus resists. Later, he does perform the sign, but it seems that it needs to be on his terms. Mary would learn what every parent of a teen or adult learns. You don't have control but you have influence. When we try to control, we actually lose influence. When we give up control, we gain influence.

The other family boundary episode is our text. A simple blocking the scene is very revealing. Jesus is here. His biological family is over here. And the crowd is in between (v. 19). Jesus recognizes the boundary issues involved. The nuance of the original language is not a putdown of his biological family, just a recognition of boundaries.

Why was his family seeking Jesus? The distance from Nazareth to Capernaum is about 20 miles (a long trek on foot). Was this a family intervention? Did they think he was overdoing it and wanted him to back off from his radical statements? Were they concerned about his safety or health? Was there some family business to discuss?

Perhaps New Testament scholar Hans Conzelmann had an interesting take on this. Jesus had been rejected by his own people in his hometown of Nazareth, so he moved to Capernaum. [*The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, p. 74]. Notice. Jesus didn't let that rejection define him, control him or make him bitter. He is comfortable in his own skin, doing his Heavenly Father's will.

Someone said, "You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep other people warm." No matter what our biological family is like, we are called to the Jesus family (vv. 19-21). There, we are free to enjoy others, not to dominate them or be dominated by them. In Christ, we are named and loved and honored. And God's opinion is the only one that really counts.