Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 93: Setting Boundaries Lessens Conflict and Increases Progress

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[Intro Music]

Brian Miller: Welcome to the Coach Approach Ministries Podcast, where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. Our podcast today is sponsored by our certificate in Christian leadership coaching. This is a nine-month, ICF approved, coach training program that will prepare you to coach those around you, to set goals, take action, and reach new levels of success. We have a cohort forming in July, so if you're interested, go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. I'm Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and I'm joined here today by my good friend, Chad Hall. How you doing, Chad?

Chad Hall: Brian, I'm doing well. How about you?

Brian: I'm doing real well. Chad happens to be the president of Coach Approach Ministries, but I thought today, I would introduce him as a dear friend, as someone I really enjoy hanging out with.

Chad: I was just trying to reflect on how much I had accomplished in my first 100 days as president of Coach Approach Ministries.

Brian: You'd have to think back a long ways.

Chad: Yeah. I think I did a lot in the first 100 days. That's in the news right now as we're recording this.

Brian: It'll be in the news as well, and I think we've got the budget shut down taken care of for Coach Approach Ministries, so I don't think that's going to happen, not going to be a shut down, so that's good. Today, I want to talk about boundaries. It's something that's been in our heart, on our mind, talking about boundaries. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend wrote a classic book, and I looked it up. They wrote *Boundaries*. I looked it up. When do you think that was written, Chad, *Boundaries*?

Chad: Gosh. Probably when I was in college, or something. I remember the book pretty well.

Brian: 2012?

Chad: Yeah, that's right. I was on the 20-year plan in college. I'm going to think late-80's, mid-90's,

somewhere in there.

Brian: You nailed it. It was 1992. I looked it up because it just seems like this book has been around since Moses. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, *Boundaries.* It's not scripture by any means.

Chad: I do think Leviticus would be a shorter book if they had written *Boundaries* first.

Brian: Leviticus means boundaries in some sense, right? That's funny. There's a quote here, and I want to get your feedback on this quote. It's even in the front cover of *Boundaries*. "Christians often focus so much on being loving and giving, that they forget their own limits and limitations." What's your feedback on that quote?

Chad: I think there's a lot of truth to it, obviously. I think it's probably also only one of the reasons we often aren't very good at boundaries. I think another reason we're not very good at boundaries is we're lazy. So, maybe we're so loving and giving, we don't want to set boundaries, but also, sometimes we're just kind of lazy. It takes a lot of work to establish boundaries. It takes a lot of intentionality, so I don't think that all of us that fail to set boundaries it's because we're so loving. That's not the only reason anyway.

Brian: I agree. I think it's more about avoiding conflict. When there's boundaries, there has to be conflict of saying, "You're in my boundary here. You need to move back." I think Cloud and Townsend are being really nice saying Christians are so loving and giving. I think most people have this avoidance of conflict that's just got to be a number one, but it causes all kinds of problems, and so, Townsend and Cloud wrote *Boundaries,* and then I think Cloud went on to write the sequels. You talk about the *Fast and Furious 29*, they wrote *Boundaries 57*. They wrote *Boundaries and Marriage, Boundaries with Kids,* you know. One book they wrote that's not called *Boundaries,* or that Cloud wrote, is called *Necessary Endings: the Employees, Businesses, and Relationships that All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward.* I don't even have to read the book. I'm like man, oh man, they're saying something really strong there.

Chad: We use that book in the Doctor of Ministry cohort that I led, that's just wrapping up, actually, with some of our Western Seminary students, and Bob Dale, one of our Community of Coaches members, a good friend, taught that class. He and I co-taught it, and he brought that book in, and man, it was a game changer for a lot of the guys in the cohort, really good, just man. I think in some ways *Necessary Endings* is kind of in the boundaries vein. To say something is ending, and to have to say goodbye to a relationship or a project, whatever it is, in a way, kind of is a boundary. We tend to want to hold on to things too long. It takes a lot of strength and intentionality to end things well.

Brian: Especially people, too. Our colleague, partner, and friend, Bill Copper wrote a blog post. I love the title, personally. It was, *How to Get People Off the Bus Without Throwing Them Under the Bus*, and some of the pushback is, Jesus never would have thrown anybody off the bus.

Chad: I'm pretty sure he did. I'm pretty sure, "Get thee behind me, Satan," was the ancient Aramaic equivalent to, "Get off the bus."

Brian: Which isn't what he said to Judas, by the way. It's what he said to Peter. It's what he said to maybe his number one guy there. He said, "Here's a boundary, man, and if you can't abide by this

boundary, we're not going forward any farther." What was some of your good learnings from that book as you guys delved into that?

Chad: Yeah, I mean, one of them was the idea, I think Larry Osborne at North Coast also kind of hits this idea, that the people who've been with you since the beginning, aren't necessarily the team that needs to be with you as you proceed, as you get to the next stages of growth, maybe for a church or any other organization. It's not a bad thing. It doesn't mean someone's bad, incompetent, incapable, immoral, unethical, anything like that. It just means that people who can function well at one level or one stage of an organizations life aren't necessarily the people who can function well and really thrive at the next level, and that's okay. So, to be able to say that without judgement. Especially, what we tend to do is wrap that into moral or character kind of judgement, and it's not really there. People are different. Some people are good starting things off. Some people are good managing them long-term. Some people are good working in a small team, others are better at the complexity, maybe a larger organization. I remember those two, Larry Osborne's and the *Necessary Endings* book coming together to help really bring that point home for some of the guys in the cohort.

Brian: I was thinking about some bands like Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, they've been the same band for 50 years, and Tom Petty's band has been, but looking back very early, that's not their original, original band, but they were able to stick with… But I think those are the exceptions. I think those are romanticized a little bit. It would be great if you could see it all the way through.

Chad: And, you know, a band, you take one of my favorites, U2. Same band album after album, tour after tour, but they kind of do the same thing year after year. They're not running an organization. Probably the better analog to that would be who has their management team been as they've grown?

Brian: Their agents.

Chad: Who can handle booking concerts for them when they're playing some bar in Dublin? That's probably different than who's handling that for them on their world tour, and to be able to say goodbye to someone, thank you, and we're moving on. That's a challenge for a lot of us because we do have a sense of loyalty. It could be loyalty. It could be driven by we just don't like uncomfortable conversations.

Brian: Yeah. You're making me think of a lot of examples of that, but I'm going to move forward because there's a distinction that happens very quickly in the book *Boundaries for Leaders*, which is by Townsend, which is really good. I've downloaded that on my Kindle. There's a quote in there that says, "In the end, as a leader, you are always going to get a combination of two things, what you create and what you allow." What you create and what you allow, so there's this distinction, and I think that's a big thing. You're going to be teaching CAM 505 here pretty soon, the Language of Coaching, and one of the language pieces there is the idea of distinctions, how a coach can help somebody think about this even further. So, it's one thing to talk about boundaries, but there's this distinction, and they make this really clear that there's two ways to think about boundaries, "Positively," he says, "They establish intentional structures: values, norms, practices, and disciplines that build what they desire," and then, "Negatively, they set limits on confusion and distraction. They prohibit practices and behaviors that sow the seeds of a negative, emotional client in any way, realizing that the toxic behavior and emotions impede high performance."

Chad: I like that. It really mirrors that idea of what you create and what you allow. So, I'm curious, Brian,

with boundaries, we coach a lot of leaders. Where have you seen some boundary issues come up, not necessarily between you and your client, I'm thinking more for your clients, where do they wrestle or struggle with boundaries?

Brian: Oh, absolutely. Especially in ministry. So, I coach a lot of leaders in ministry, a lot of staff. Sometimes I think the main leadership, maybe not the leader or the pastor, but the guiding board, will completely change directions on the staff member or put some values on them that they don't personally hold. A lot of times going into a coaching conversation with my client, they're just kind of up in the air because everything's just changed, and I would use the word pleasing, there's a lot of pleasing in there. How do I do this to make somebody else happy? There needs to be a boundary there that says I'm not here to make people happy. I'm here for this purpose. This is why I was hired, this is why God called me. I'm here to establish this ministry in this way, and sometimes I have to set boundaries in order to not only with my team below me, but with my bosses as well.

Chad: I think specifically, what you say brings to my mind, a specific example, it's interesting with lead pastors, I've probably had this with at least a dozen different lead pastors where they have a team member, usually it's either the student minister or the worship leader, because you know how those guys and gals are.

Brian: I don't. You're typecasting. I don't know.

Chad: That's not a stereotypical remark. It will be things like, "Gosh, I can't get him to do X." One that I've heard many times, "I can't get the worship leader to tell us what he's planning for the music on Sunday." "When do you need to know that?" "We need to know it by Thursday so we can plan the rest of the service around it and tell everybody." The lead pastor's kind of got this idea of there's nothing I can do about it. This is where boundaries come in. Well, you're somehow tolerating that, and you may think you're doing it as a loving, generous, peaceful, pleasing, to use your word, idea between you and this person who's failing. What they eventually recognize is without boundaries, everyone else is being displeased, is that a word, because of this somewhat toxic behavior from one of the team members. So, having boundaries, having standards, holding people accountable, holding yourself accountable, man, it's crucial for being a great leader, or even just a good leader.

Brian: Well, it's counterintuitive, and this is something you have to learn from experience, is that people are more pleased when you have boundaries. When you say, "Here's how it's going to go. I'm not okay with that." You think people are going to be less pleased because there's conflict, but I find that there's more harmony, almost every time, when there are boundaries set. You think, "If I start standing up, it's going to get worse. There's going to be an explosion." It might just be the exact opposite.

Chad: Yeah, and I think a lot of people are unhappy… Obviously, you can go overboard and be so boundary oriented that you become controlling. Most people I know aren't going that far. I think you've got to recognize, people are unhappy with their supervisor, with their manager, with their boss not because they have too many boundaries. It's actually because of apathy. If you really want your people to just fade away, maybe even quit, be apathetic. Don't communicate boundaries. Don't communicate standards. Don't communicate expectations. Be so hands-off that they don't know whether they're doing a good job or not. I think to be a successful leader, you want to implement some level of boundaries, standards, expectations, being intentional with those things.

Brian: Oh absolutely, and you were talking about what do I run into the most. One is, not knowing that they need to set boundaries. That's probably the number one thing I run into, and I find that to be all the time. The second thing, I would say, is figuring out as a client, even myself as a client, how to calibrate setting boundaries because I'm not used to it. It becomes this unexplored space, and as I go out and start putting up my fence or my signs that say, "Stay off my lawn," it creates some conflict within myself, before any conflict occurs. It's hard to calibrate how not to come off, I'm going to use this phrase, not to come off as a jerk, and sometimes you do come off as a jerk, and it's not okay, actually. You might want to say that's okay. It's not okay. It's in that sense of trying to calibrate how to set boundaries and have that emotional confidence to do so.

Chad: One thing I recognized talking to a lot of clients, and myself, real honestly here, is we have trouble calibrating that because we have the boundary or the standard, we've never communicated it, so we let this sort of emotion build up as if they should know that there's a boundary there, so by the time I communicate it explicitly, I've already built up this tension inside of you've crossed my boundary over, and over, and over, and now, I've got to enforce it. You come off way too strong. Where if we just recognized, "Oh, I've never communicated this boundary before. Let me articulate it, and then wait for someone to cross it, and then we'll have that conversation, but let's don't bring six months of me being frustrated because someone has crossed an unexpressed boundary. I've let that go. I've allowed that to happen, and I think recognizing that really can dial down the emotion a lot, and things get a lot easier when you're not so emotionally in the grip.

Brian: And also just learning how to communicate. This has been something for me. This happened the other day. I'm a worship leader, and we have some boundaries, and we actually set some boundaries based on team concepts, the code of conduct. The whole team came together. We discussed boundaries together. We go over those a lot together, at least one a week, and I think that's very healthy, but then we had a guest artist the other day, and I thought, there's some things I want to make sure stay right in place so things go smoothly. So, I started communicating a little more. It's funny the internal part. What I heard in my head is, "I'm communicating a little more." What my band heard was, "What's the tone all about?" I'm like, tone? The tone is, and I think I even said it, "I'm just trying to clearly communicate." That's the tone. Not only do I know there has to be boundaries, but I have to learn how to… I can't just say, "There needs to be boundaries, folks, and that's too bad if you don't like it." I have to learn how to communicate it as a leader in a healthy way and be able to function.

Chad: One of the things that sparks for me, Brian, is a lot of leaders, they resist establishing and enforcing boundaries because they think that means they have to be bossy. "Well, who am I to say what the boundary is?" Well, there are two schools of thought on that. One school of thought is, you're the leader. It's your responsibility. The leader's first job is to define reality, and one reality is, what are the boundaries? Although, another school of thought is, it's at least the leader's responsibility to facilitate the creation of boundaries.

Brian: Oh, absolutely.

Chad: Different than just kind of coming off the mountain with your two tablets. "God gave me these boundaries, and I'm going to enforce them with you. We could collaboratively create boundaries for our team, for our organization, for our staff, for our family. It's still the leader's responsibility to facilitate that. You can't just say, "Nobody wants boundaries. Oh well." That would be abdicating the

responsibility. Whichever school of thought you would go with there. It's still up to the leader to help establish the boundaries.

Brian: I can't remember the whole subtitle of *Boundaries for Leaders*, but one of the subtitles is, "You are ridiculously in charge." So, just kind of a reminder, being the leader. When you say there's nothing you can do about it. There's everything you can do about it, in fact. Just that even reminder. I was thinking, I'm not sure how to segue into this, but there's this sense too of how boundaries work, and how we clarify and function in that way. There's a story in the book about a CEO who's grooming his son. He's grooming his son to be the next CEO, but there's been problems, and that son has not done well. So, the father is walking around the company, and he sees the son just berating an employee in front of other employees. It's not the first time this has happened. He's told him not to do it this way, so he calls the son into his office and says, "You know, I wear a lot of hats in this company, and one hat I wear is the boss, and one hat I wear is your father. So, I'm putting on the boss hat right now. I want to be clear. I'm putting on the boss hat. You're fired. Now I'm going to put on the father hat. I heard you just got fired. What can I do to help?" Being a leader can really be a fine line. A lot of times you're working with friends or family, and you've got obligations to the organization to have boundaries in place that… You can feel the stress in that. He did need to fire his son, but as soon as he fires his son, you're just sick about it.

Chad: Yeah. Hurting for the son. When we work with our clients, helping them to know what are their key values? The boundaries are going to flow out of those values. I can imagine a lot of leaders, maybe not a lot, but I can at least imagine some leaders saying, "Nope. I value family more than the business, so I'm not going to fire my son even though I know it's bad for the business long-term." I could go into all kind of things on how that's probably not very healthy, all those sort of stuff. I think a healthier example would be the lead pastor who says, "You know what? This is the team that helped us get this far. If we don't grow anymore, that's okay." Helping a client recognize, that is my value. I'm intentional about that. I'm not going to try to have it both ways. I'm not going to try to have a church that's growing and keep the team that we have because those two are incompatible. I'm going to choose to not grow. I've made that choice, and now I can manage that path appropriately versus another client who might say, "No. The growth of the organization. The growth of the church trumps who I've got on the team, and it's going to be a hard thing to maybe let somebody go, or move somebody around, or even discipline someone, but I'm willing to do that." Both of those scenarios, it's flowing out of the client's values, and as coaches, I think that's such an important thing for us to do. Help people get clear, what are my values, how do I operate out of them, and specifically for today's conversation, how do the boundaries that I establish and enforce flow from those values?

Brian: Absolutely. As we finish up here, I'm thinking about the book *Boundaries*, just the original book. He's got 10 laws of boundaries, and I'm only going to look at one which is number 7, the Law of Proactivity. He's basically saying, many times we set boundaries because we have to. Something's come up, and it's like okay, we've got to set a boundary, and he's saying one of the key laws of setting boundaries is you've got to go beyond just being reactive to be proactive, and say, how do I set up intentional structures in order to help this organization, my team, go forward, and grow, and be free, have a little more freedom, actually, by having these boundaries? I think that's just a great word, and our challenge would be to the listeners for themselves, and also as coaches, I think these two distinctions is to help people figure out how to establish intentional structures that build what you

desire, and then also to set limits on confusion and distraction. What's your final word on this, Chad?

Chad: What I like about that Law of Proactivity is let's contrast it with what it's not. The non-boundary person says, "If that ever happens again, I'm going to do something about it." The proactive person says, "I'm going to do something so that never happens again." We don't wait for something to go wrong to then come back and clean it up, or fix it, or whatever. The proactive person puts those boundaries in place for the good of everyone, including him or herself. That's proactivity. It doesn't mean things aren't going to go wrong. It just means that you thought about it before it goes wrong. Therefore, you know how to handle it. That idea of proactivity, I just think that's one of the switches that gets flipped inside the leader that just makes all the difference.

Brian: That's a good word, Chad. We'll end on that. Thank you so much everyone for joining us today. This podcast was sponsored by our certificate in Christian Leadership Coaching. This is a nine-month, ICF-approved, coach training program, that will prepare you to coach those around you, to set goals, take action, and reach new levels of success, and probably to set some good boundaries. We have a cohort forming in July, so if you're interested, go to our website at www.coachapproachministries.org/coachnow. We'll see you next week.

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