EMBRACE GOD'S GIFT OF LIMITS (GUARDRAILS) PT2

20240310 (Final)

INTRODUCTION

We are busy with a series of teachings based on the book "**Emotional Healthy Discipleship**". Subjects covered to date are:

- Moving Beyond Shallow Discipleship
- BE before you DO
- Follow the Crucified Christ

Last week David shared part 1 of the subject, "Embrace God's gift of limits". This morning I round off the subject with the second part. I promise you it is going to be very interesting and challenging. Some of you will be changing your choices regarding decisions you make.

I kick off with reminding you of some of the words I said to Andrew and Mandy at the handover service on the 5th November last year:

> *Andrew, You pick up a church that I have led for 40 years, but I must tell you that it is not yet the church that I would like it to be. It is far from being perfect. I have realised that **my gifting** was to bring the church **to this stage**; **your gifting** is going to take the church into the **next phase** of what God has ordained for Centurion Vineyard.*

My statement revealed the fact that I believe in embracing God's gift of limits. I recognised that I do not have the gifting to continue to grow the church. I believe I am capable of doing **maintenance ministry**, and keep things going, but that would rob the church of what God has for us in the future.

Reality Check: Whether or not we like the fact, we **all** have limits. None of us is gifted with **no limits**. It does not matter how anointed we may believe we are, we need to understand that we have limits. I think only an ignorant believer, or misled believer will believe they are limitless.

Two significant facts:

1. **Knowing what you cannot do, may be more important than knowing what you can do.**
2. Knowing what you cannot do may keep you from wasting a lot of time and energy for something that's not going to go anywhere.

Let's read what Paul says about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to illustrate the limits we have:

1 Corinthians 12:4-12 (NASB77)

> *4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries (service), and the same Lord. 6 And there are varieties of effects (operations), but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But **to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good**. 8 For **to one** is given the word of*

*wisdom through the Spirit, and **to another** the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;* [9] ***to another** faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,* [10] *and **to another** the effecting of miracles, and **to another** prophecy, and **to another** the distinguishing of spirits, **to another** various kinds of tongues, and **to another** the interpretation of tongues.* [11] *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*** [12] *For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.*

You will receive some spiritual gifts from God and not others. Even in the body of Christ, personal gifting is limited. God has something special and unique for you, because of who you are. We are all different with various **gifts**, **strengths**, **abilities** and **talents**. We do not have all of the spiritual gifts and talents, nor do we all have the same ones. Nothing is going to change it, that is why we are the body of Christ. We need each other to become all God wants us to be.

We are also different because of the limitations which we each possess. None of us are limited in the exact same way. The issue before us is, will we learn from our limitations or use them as an excuse to not reach the potential God has placed within us.

My invitation to you is to accept God's gift of limits on your gifting and your ministry today. Before you end up emotionally distressed.

John Maxwell:

"There are three times in life when people change because of their limitations.

- When they hurt enough that they have to
- when they learn enough that they want to
- when they receive enough that they are able to.

Receiving "**the gift of limits (guardrails)**" as **a church** is both essential and challenging. It's essential because, if we don't, we miss the unique and creative ways God wants to move through our communities. And it's challenging because it requires creating a new discipleship culture that not only affirms limits as a value, but also helps people to integrate limits in practical ways.

Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend have written a best-selling book called "**Boundaries**". The subtitle of the book reads, "**When to say 'Yes', when to say 'No' to take control of your life.**" It is a book worth reading and practicing the principles they share that helps us learn how to set God directed limitations. (Other books: Boundaries in Marriage, Boundaries with Kids, Boundaries in Dating.)

There are at least four ways that we can work to intentionally entrench the gift of limits into our church:

1. **Take care of yourself (self-care)**
2. **Set limits on invasive people**
3. **It is OK to say "No"**
4. **Promote and observe healthy boundaries as a Church.**

1. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (SELF-CARE)

As with all the marks of **emotionally healthy discipleship**, this one begins with the leadership. As leaders we are to attempt to model the priority that our personal lives and family — not the ministry — come first. But few leaders get schooled in this subject. It was not one of the subjects at seminary.

One of the mistakes I made for most of my years in ministry was to put the needs of the congregation and others first, before my family. So I ended up not being a good father or husband. The sad thing about life's mistakes is that you can't turn the clock back.

Understanding the **gift of limits** enables us to **affirm self-care**, and yet it is often a great challenge for those who've been trained to prioritize the needs of others over their own.

The challenge is that leaders are expected to do **self-care** and **set boundaries** based on who God has made them **to be** and not on the expectations of Church members.

Please Note: It is okay to take care of yourself before you take care of others. If you have ever been on a plane flight, you would have been instructed before the plane took off, that in the event of a problem, you are to put your oxygen mask on first, then you can begin to help others with theirs.

Taking care of yourself, often called "**practicing soul care**", is more about **being** than **doing**. Doing is important, but **being is the foundation** from which we do.

Authentic doing flows out of authentic being with Jesus. This means we take time to rest. Take time to pray. Take time to be in God's presence. Refresh yourself in His word. Enjoy His presence. Drink in the beauty of His creation. Stop and smell the roses. Take care of yourself!

If we don't take care of ourselves and guard ourselves emotionally, spiritually, physically, mentally, we are likely to run out of fuel and stall out or burn out.

The people around you need you for who you are, more than they need you for what you can do for them! And you are amazing! Made in the image of God!

Created to bring glory to God! Made alive in Christ as a new creation! And yes, created for good works that flow out of who you are in Christ.

I want to say this clearly: Take care of yourself! There is only one you. You are the only version of you that God created.

2. Set Limits (boundaries) on Invasive People

We all need to learn to set boundaries on what is known as "**invasive people**" (even if you're related to them).

Some humour:

> Do you know that church members who never get involved in church life, who occasionally attend church, who never financially support the kingdom, etc, are called, "FBPOs". Do you know what that stands for? Well, let me inform you: it stands for "**For burial purposes only**".

Well on a more serious note, I don't know if you have ever come across any of the following people? VIPs, VDPs, VOPs, VUPs and EGRPs.

VIP = Very Impossible People
VDP = Very Difficult (Depressing, Depressed) People
VOP = Very Opinionated People
VUP = Very Unteachable People
EGR = Extra Grace Required People

There are more but these will suffice for today. Are you one of those? (Just raise your hand and we will pray for you).

Invasive people range from **mild** to **severe**. Most of us regularly engage with mildly invasive people – could be family, friends, church members, folk we work with, and acquaintances. Then there are others that demand more and more of our time at our expense and the expense of others. They invade, manipulate and abuse other people's spaces in destructive ways because they feel their needs are greater than anyone else's. They put pressure on small group members to meet their needs.

As a Vineyard Church we welcome all people – positive or negative people.

THE VINEYARD "GENETIC CODE" #3

3. **Evidence of an ongoing ministry to the poor / broken / divorced etc. Ministry to the poor, needy and hurting** is very important to God and to the Vineyard — it should be a regular practice of mercy in terms of feeding, clothing, helping, serving, ministry, etc.

VIPs, VDPs, VOPs, VUPs and EGRs are welcome. But, we do not allow broken, hurting and depressed folk to negatively affect the fellowship by unloading their 'stuff' on other folk in the church.

It is simply a case of us clarifying that they cannot make others responsible for **their life problems** or **their happiness**. Setting limits on them is an important discipleship moment, both for them and the community.

We have programs they can be referred to like "**Celebrate Recovery**" or "**Healing Rooms Ellel counselling program**" where they can find healing and learn how to deal with and overcome their life issues.

The Apostle Paul taught on setting limits. Some example Scriptures:

Titus 3:9 (NLT2)

> [9] *Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws.* ***These things are useless and a waste of time****.*

Romans 16:17 (NLT2)

> [17] *And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught.* ***Stay away from them.***

Titus 3:10-11 (NLT2)

> [10] *If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning.* ***After that, have nothing more to do with them****.* [11] *For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.*

3. IT'S OKAY TO SAY, "NO".

John Maxwell often makes this statement:

> **Keep a diary, and discipline yourself to fill it in yourself. If you don't, others will fill in your diary for you.**

You probably have certain boundaries in place, whether you realise it or not. Your personal space, who may touch you, who may use your toothbrush, who may work on your notebook, who may touch your cell phone, drive your car, loan your tools to - things like that. But it needs to go further.

God hasn't given you enough energy and time to solve every problem that people bring your way or try to put on you. So, put the responsibility back where it belongs - on their shoulders. If you say "**YES**" when you should be saying "**NO**", then you may be saying "**NO**" to what God has called you and gifted you to do!

One Pastor's approach:

> When people say to me, "***Pete, I know you're busy, but might you be willing to . .*** " I allow them to finish making their request. Then I smile and slowly reply, "***Well, you see . . . I'm not busy . . . I'm just limited***." My point is that there is plenty of time to do what God has

given me to do. The issue, of course, is my discernment of what **His priorities** are.

We all need to learn to say the word, "**NO**". (Let's try it) (Now diplomatically)

We need to understand that we are to be free to say "**No**" from time to time!

JESUS SAID "NO".

Jesus said "No" many times. Jesus is a great example! He said "NO" to the tempter. He could have easily turned rocks to bread, but God had not called Him to be a baker, but a Saviour!

Jesus didn't do everything people asked Him to do either. How many people did He say 'NO' to by choosing only the 12 disciples?

Another example: A mother's plea for her sons to sit with Jesus.
Matthew 20:20-23 (NLT2)

> *20 Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favour.* *21 "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honour next to you, one on your right and the other on your left."* *22 But Jesus answered by saying to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!"* *23 Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup.* ***But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.***"

As a Vineyard Church we teach and expect our family members to use their **spiritual gifts** in the church and also encourage them to serve in at least one ministry with their primary gifting. Also being free to minister outside of regulated church activities.

At the same time, we congratulate people for saying "no", especially those already serving in ministry, who work long hours or have difficulty taking care of themselves and family time wise. And we do this by modelling limits in the way we lead and serve.

For those who feel guilty when they see an unmet need, it takes great discernment, courage and strength not to volunteer.

- Some people think that they always have to say yes in order to demonstrate love and to be loved.
- Some people feel bad when they say no so they keep trying to earn a sense of goodness through other's approval and give in to the guilt trips and pressures of people.
- Do not always think you have to give people what they want in order for them to like you.

We want to grow mature disciples of Jesus who are able to say, without shame, guilt, or pressure, "*Thank you for asking, but 'No'*". The result is that the quality of the ministry we do provide is less stressed and is more loving. Perhaps most important, people will feel loved rather than used.

4. PROMOTE & OBSERVE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Adam and Eve were the first boundary breakers. They crossed the limit God set for them when they ate from the forbidden tree and then ran from God. From that time forward, human beings have been breaking boundaries and crossing lines with God and one another. The Fall distorted for the rest of human history our sense of separateness, boundaries, and responsibility.

As a church family we need to promote and observe healthy boundaries. If we fail to observe limits, we will be limited in what we have to offer the Lord and other people.

Sometimes we live as if we have an endless supply of energy, stamina, health, emotional capacity, and time. This will catch up with us unless we begin to promote and observe limits and control our lives, rather than being controlled by others and everything else.

Remember Pastor Pete's words, I mentioned earlier: 'I smile and slowly reply, "***Well, you see . . . I'm not busy . . . I'm just limited***."'

If we don't have boundaries, we might make statements such as the following:

- "I said I would lead the sports ministry because the pastor asked. I know I don't have the time right now, but I just couldn't say no."

- "I have to go to men's Bible study on Saturday morning at seven. People really expect me to show up. I know Joe and the others would be let down if I didn't go."

- "Honey, I know you're exhausted, but we have to go to dinner with that couple from church. Do you know how hurt and upset they would be if we said no?"

With proper boundaries, I know what I am responsible for and what I am not responsible for. We cannot please everybody and can't make everybody happy. None of us can make anybody love us. Some people are going to reject us no matter what we do. Now if we cannot accept these limitations as facts of life, we are going to become very frustrated and bitter people.

Question: Are there some boundaries you need to set for other people? People can place expectations on you that conflict with who you are. Ask God for strength to draw the lines in a way that honours Him and will allow you to help others in the best possible way.

God wants us to face our limitations, but we need not be totally limited because God still has a call, a plan, and a purpose for our lives. When we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, we find an unlimited power to save us from sin, to save us from ourselves, and to save us from the wrong expectations of others. **Look not at your limitations, but to Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith.**

Hebrews 12:2 (MSG)

> [2] *Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed — that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honour, right alongside God.*

So, to wrap things up, we covered four ways today to embrace God's limits (Guardrails):

1. Take care of yourself (self-care)
2. Set limits on invasive people
3. It is OK to say "No"
4. Promote and observe healthy boundaries as a Church.