

RETHINKING BOUNDARIES

May 6, 2021 - Dave Lee

When you hear the word *boundaries* what thoughts come to mind?

- Ministry leaders tend to think of boundaries in defensive terms (this is wise)
- Remember that boundaries also define what is included—belonging
- *Who is included in the boundaries you've drawn in your ministry? Who do you belong to?*

Without a deep sense of belonging, we over-identify with our titles and accomplishments

- Sometimes the leader of a community is the only one who doesn't belong to it
- *To what extent do you feel a deep sense of belonging to the community you lead?*

It is helpful to have a close circle outside your ministry organization

- This is portable and offers continuity if God moves you elsewhere
- But these outside circles shouldn't be a substitute for community within your organization

Leadership can be an isolating journey

- Sometimes leaders draw boundaries of access that isolate them from those they lead
- These boundaries can be wise and appropriate but taken too far they can lead to isolation

ISOLATION BY SHELTER

Some leaders limit access to their home, making it a refuge away from their community

- Home must be a safe place and boundaries are important
- But the leader's home must not be a fortress away from their community
- When we invite people into our homes, we are inviting them into our lives

Jesus was called Immanuel (God *with us*)

- John 1:14a (MSG) – The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.
- *How incarnational is your leadership?*

ISOLATION BY SCALE

One might assume that leading 2,000 people = 10x relational engagement as leading 200

- Strange mathematics of community means the opposite is true
- In larger communities people assume they won't have access to the leader at the top
- Busy leaders don't lament this lack of access
- *What does the mathematics of community look like in your ministry context?*

There are great things that come with scale

- But leaders in large organizations must guard against isolation that comes with scale
- Ask God to give you the heart of Jesus who ministered to multitudes but always saw the individual

ISOLATION BY SECRECY

Healthy privacy boundaries are important for leaders

- But beware of raising fences too high for the sake of image management and reputation
- *Are there things you keep private that the Lord wants your community to see?*

Philemon 1-2 (NIV) – [1] Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—[2] also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—*and to the church that meets in your home.*

Paul wrote to Philemon but also cc'd his wife, ministry partner, and entire congregation!

- Philemon's reception of his runaway slave, now a Christian, was a defining issue
- Paul didn't give Philemon the option of privatizing this decision
- The whole community was meant to grow by watching Philemon struggle through this