This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_28\_\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, *we* are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

A client of mine recently shared about how a friend of hers can be a bit territorial of their friendship. She hangs out with others that aren’t said friend, and said friend gets upset. My client was telling me how that friend can be manipulative and try to make her feel guilty for spending time with others, which of course is highly problematic. Ideally, my client would not allow her friend to “make her guilty,” but it didn’t work that way. My client *was* feeling guilty over her friend’s loneliness. She thought it was her job to help her friend *not* feel lonely anymore by spending all her time again with only her. She was taking her friend’s feelings and placing them on her own back. And that can paralyze a person.

I recently walked through something similar, but at a much larger scale. My husband and I had been feeling for over two years that our time at our local church was coming to an end. Two years! We loved our church and had been there for over a decade, but we knew God was leading us in a new direction. I fought against God on it for a long time, but not for the reasons you might think— the main reason I fought God is because I felt this extreme pressure to not hurt the people I cared about there. I didn’t want to be the reason they were upset. I didn’t want to lose their relationships or their trust. I disobeyed God for nearly two years because I was scared of hurting people’s feelings. But what I was doing was holding something that was not mine to hold. Other’s feelings and decisions are not my responsibility. Those things are theirs to hold. Sure it was my responsibility how I left and how I communicated what we needed to— to make sure I honored them and showed them kindness. But how they responded? That was on them. I was letting the fear of hurting them hold me back from moving forward.

Christians often feel it is their job to do this. The whole “bear one another’s burdens” from Galatians 6:2 gets taken out of context, and they forget that in verse 5 it says, “For each will have to bear his own load.” They also hear the “when one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer” idea from 1 Corinthians 12. They hear this and think they should carry other’s responsibilities in a way.

There are circumstances when we can help relieve a person from the burden they carry because that is the loving thing to do. However, we must be able to distinguish between what is our responsibility and what is not. Henry Cloud and John Townsend say it this way in their famous book, *Boundaries*: “We are responsible *to* others and *for* ourselves.” They then go into explaining more about that Galatians 6 passage, concluding with this truth: “Lest we stay in pain or become irresponsible, it is very important to determine what ‘me’ is, where my boundary of responsibility is and where someone else’s begins.” (pgs. 32-33) We must know “what is our job and what isn’t” (p. 27).

So what is our job? What is our responsibility? What is the load we are to bear?

1. Our Feelings/ emotions

The phrase “you make me…” as in “you make me angry” or “she made me feel guilty” indicates that another person is in charge of your feelings. But that is not true. You and you alone are in charge of your feelings. We are *not* responsible for the feelings of others, either, as previously explained. I make a decision that my child can’t eat candy for dinner, and she is very upset with me. Her feelings are her own. I can’t change that or magically take away that feeling unless I give her candy, but that is boundary breach. I am assuming it is my job to make sure she isn’t upset anymore, when in reality, it is her job to calm herself down and accept her present reality. I can guide her in that process if needed, but I can’t change how she feels.

When we choose to own our own feelings, we no longer allow others to influence those feelings. That is very important. This doesn’t mean we are stone cold, living life not caring about the feelings of others. We *should* care about their feelings, just as they *should* care about ours. We *should* treat others with kindness and respect and strive to live peaceably with everyone, and others *should* do the same for us. But if we make a decision that is best for us and/or is obedient to what God has asked of us, and another person is hurt by it, we must accept that it is their job to deal with that hurt. Sure we can own any mistakes we made to contribute to the hurt, but we can’t take it away. They must learn what to do with it. And the same goes for us. We can’t blame others on the feelings we have. I can’t blame my busy husband on my loneliness. I can’t blame my loud children for my anger and stress. I must own those. God has given us emotions as a gift to steward well. We must not pass blame for things that are ours, and we must not blame ourselves for what isn’t.

2. Our decisions and behaviors.

Other’s decisions and behaviors? Those things are not ours to hold. My kid does poorly on a test, and I think, “Oh, this is a reflection on me. I should have studied more with her.” No, it is her job to study for her test, not mine. She is old enough to assume that responsibility. Your adult child is struggling financially and is starting to mooch off of you. You think it is your job to take care of your child, because that’s what a good parent does. Nope. It is your child’s responsibility to take care of himself. Our friend is an addict and keeps coming back to ask if she can live with you. You think it is your job as a believer to take her in and take care of her. But actually it is her job to stay in rehab or stay clean and take care of her needs. Our brother commits suicide, and we think about everything we could have done to stop him. But that was his decision, not ours.

We can be generous and kind and help meet needs when they arise without taking on the responsibility of another. If we take on too many of their responsibilities, we are enabling them (actually crippling them) from becoming the mature person they need to be. Others’ decisions are their own. They must accept the responsibility of those decisions. And we must accept our own, too. If I yell at my kids, and then tell them it is their fault, I am not accepting the fact that I screwed up. And just as my decisions are my own… the consequences of those choices are mine to bear, too. Just as they are with others. We need to stop trying to rescue people from the consequences of their actions. This teaches them nothing. We are not their savior. They already have one of those.

3. Our thoughts, values, and beliefs.

This one can get tricky, especially in the church world. We so often think or believe something just because it has been taught to us without weighing the truth for ourselves, without measuring it and seeking scripture or truth and attempting to understand it. We just accept it as fact and keep going, but this is a sign of immaturity. To be mature people, we need to be responsible for what we believe and what we value. We need to take ownership of it. In light of this, we are not responsible for the beliefs of others. Yes, we are to love them with the love of Christ and yes, we are to share the truth of the gospel with them… But if they choose not to believe what we share? That is on them. We can’t make people agree with us. This is true in politics, on social media, in religion, about cultural concepts and values… anything. We can’t make someone believe what we do, and they can’t make us believe what they do.

The same goes for our thoughts. I decide to leave my local church after ten years to begin going to a new one. If a friend of mine thinks I am selfish or wrong or not following God or if they think I am upset with them or whatever, those thoughts are not mine. I can only say so much to help guide their thoughts in a more helpful, truthful direction. They must notice their own unhealthy thinking patterns. I can only do so much. I can’t change another person’s mind. Only they can do that, along with the Spirit within them.

Enter music

This is one of the most basic truths of not only having healthy boundaries, but being a whole, healthy person with whole, healthy relationships. We need to know where we end and another begins, as Cloud and Townsend say. We can love people and serve them and be kind and generous, but we cannot control how they feel, what they think and believe, and what decisions they make in their lives. And they can’t control ours either. Let’s hold what is ours to hold and discern when it is right to do what is in our power to ease the burdens of others.

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that understanding what is your responsibility and what is not will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

Did you know that I have 6-part course called The Boundaries Bootcamp? In this course, we talk about healthy and unhealthy boundaries, who are safe people and who aren’t, the boundaries of Jesus, the effects of healthy and unhealthy boundaries, and more. Plus a transformational five-principle framework to help you develop better boundaries through communication. There are reflection questions and action steps at the end of each part to help you make the hard decisions you need to make in order move forward with better boundaries. This course is worth over $200, but I’m giving it to you for only $47. To begin working through The Boundaries Bootcamp, check out my website at [www.kerrahfabacher.com/shop](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com/shop) . This framework has changed my life and my relationships, as well as many clients, too. So come on in and get those healthy boundaries you know you need!

To finish up, the transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com).

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

Until next time friend, I’ll see you soon.