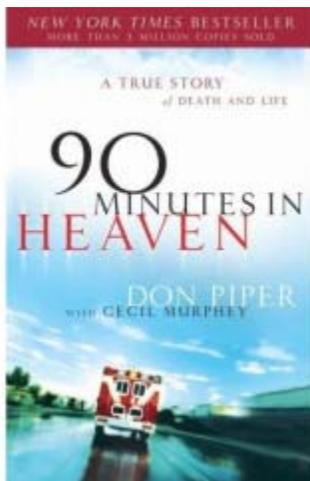




Cec has many reasons to smile.



As of October 23, *90 Minutes in Heaven* has been on the *New York Times*' best seller list for three years!

Boundaries?

A couple of decades ago when I first heard the expression, *setting boundaries*, I didn't think much about the two words. But seven years ago I faced the need to do just that.

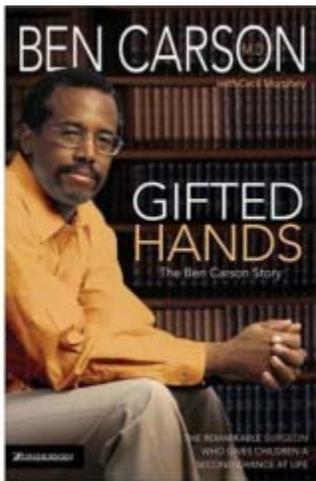
Without trying to blame parents or environment, I'll say I grew up without guidelines on where to erect fences to keep out prying and intrusive people. In our family, when anyone wanted a favor, we granted it. If someone asked a question—no matter how personal—we answered. I don't recall any of us saying, "That's none of your business" (or even a softer expression).

Because I didn't know how to establish limits, people sometimes took advantage of me. For example, almost every week a few individuals phoned and took up immense amounts of my time. Or they asked me to do things for them I preferred not to do, but I did anyway. Seven years ago I promised myself, "I'll stop them from taking up all that time." It still took me awhile to figure out my strategy. For me, it was mostly being able to say no to things I didn't want to do. When someone asked, "Do you have a minute?" (and really meant, "Do you have an hour?") I learned to say, "I have a few minutes." After perhaps ten minutes, I can now say, "I have to hang up." Most of the time it works, although a few of those callers want to keep talking. After watching the clock for two more minutes, I say, "I really have to hang up now." And I cut them off. I don't like doing that, but they've overstepped my private property line.

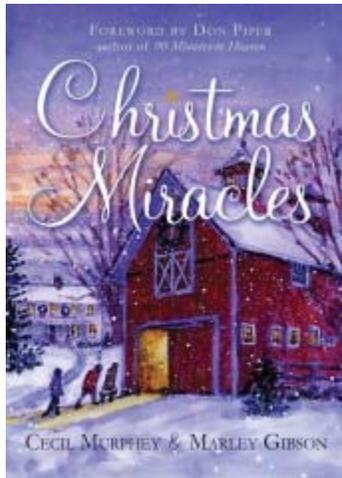
I want to tell you *the* event that made me realize the need to set firm boundaries. I met "Emma" when I taught classes at a writers conference. I skimmed a few paragraphs of what she had written and encouraged her to continue. A week later, she emailed me, "I've attached my manuscript. Critique it and tear it up as much as you need."

She didn't ask permission to send me material. She didn't ask if I would edit it. She assumed I'd edit her work—all 293 pages.

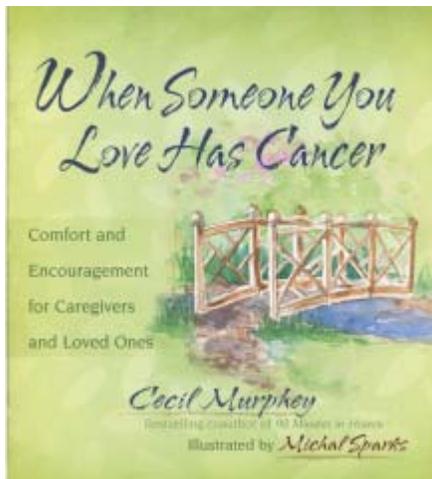
I decided to wait a few days before I answered. Three days later, Emma emailed to ask how I was coming along. "I'd like to send it to a publisher at the end of the



Gifted Hands mass market paperback is now in its 73rd printing.



Christmas Miracles was already in its third printing before it officially released October 13. It's selling well nationwide.



month."

That actually happened (and it's not a-once-in-a-lifetime event). I didn't know if I should rebuke her lack of manners, instruct her on professional conduct, or ignore both her emails. Finally I wrote back, "I'm too busy." That was the wrong answer.

She knew I was busy, but "Surely someone had helped you in your early days." After a few more sentences, she concluded, "If you'll work on the first three chapters that will be enough for now." (*For now?* I assume she still expected me to edit the entire book.)

I didn't reply and ignored two emails that followed. That was cowardly of me, but I didn't want more uninvited conversation. At first, I felt bad—really bad—about my response. But then, I thought: I have erected a boundary. I blocked her from intruding. I hadn't done it well, but it was a beginning.

I'm getting better at it. I've learned not to explain because some individuals respond by knocking down each argument. I wish I had learned that strategy twenty years ago. But the good news is that I can do it now. It also occurs to me that if I take care of my own property and push away squatters, maybe I'll teach them to stay within their own boundaries.

Maybe.

Personal News

I've cut back on travel and also canceled a couple of events I truly wanted to do, including a nice gig in Hawaii. I need more time at my desk to write. (Shirley smiled when I told her.)

As of October 23, [*90 Minutes in Heaven*](#) has been on the *New York Times*' best seller list for 156 weeks—3 years. For 114 weeks it was above number 10. Currently it's number 12.

Zondervan released 20,000 copies of the 73rd printing of the mass paper edition of [*Gifted Hands*](#).

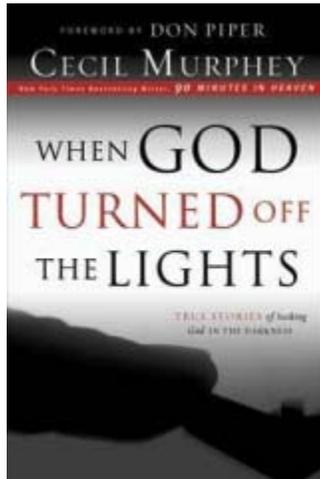
Although St. Martin's Press officially launched [*Christmas Miracles*](#) on October 13, pre-sales put it into its third printing by its release date.

Many thanks to those who've helped promote my gift book, [*When Someone You Love Has Cancer*](#). It's sold about 8,500 since January and I'm told that's good. Some of you helped promote [*When God Turned off the Lights*](#) that came out this fall and is already in its second printing. I'm grateful for all the positive reviews.

I'll be home all November, but on December 1, I'll make a quick trip to Toronto to do four or five interviews in two days and hurry home.

The Twila Zone—Words from my assistant, Twila Belk

When Someone You Love Has Cancer is a top-selling gift book for Harvest House. It's a nice gift for caregivers and loved ones.



When God Turned off the Lights is in its second printing and has received great reviews. We receive several comments each week about how the book has been just what people need at this particular time.

Have you noticed that life isn't always easy? Does it seem to you at times as if God has turned off the lights? If that's the case for you, then you'll want to read Cec's ten suggestions for what to do when the lights go out. [Click here.](#)

November is National Family Caregivers Month. Do you know a caregiver who might appreciate a copy of Cec's book [When Someone You Love Has Cancer](#)? It's written in Cec's warm, inspirational style and includes many practical helps. [Click here for a few tips taken from the book.](#)

Can you believe Christmas is next month? What are you going to get Aunt Mabel, your pastor, the letter carrier, and all those teachers on your list? Do you need a nice addition to the gift baskets you're preparing? How about Cec's beautiful new book [Christmas Miracles](#)? For a fun interview with Cec and his co-author, Marley Gibson, [click here](#). I'm a bit partial to this book because it includes two of my stories.

As always, you're welcome to contact me with any Cec-related questions at twila@gottatellsomebody.com or 563-332-1622.