

BOUNDARIES

SUMMARY OF Key Principles, Our Boundaries & the Ten Laws of Boundaries

KEY PRINCIPLES //

In the physical world there are physical boundaries (fences, signs, walls, moats with alligators, manicured lawns and hedges)...

- These boundaries give the same message: this is where my property begins.
- The owner of that property is responsible what happens on his/her property.
- Physical boundaries mark a visible property line that someone holds the deed to.

In the spiritual world, boundaries are just as real but hard to see.

- These boundaries help define your soul and help you to guard it and maintain it. (Prov. 4:23)

1. Me and not me...

- Shows me where I end and someone else begins = ownership.
- Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom.
- If we don't "own" our life, you may feel stuck or like your options and freedom are limited.
- God has given us each emotional and spiritual responsibility where we are to take ownership..
 - Proverbs 14:10 "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can fully share its joy."
- If we get this wrong, we're in for much pain.
- The Bible clearly tells us what our parameters are how to protect them.
 - The problem we all run into is that our upbringing, past relationships and maybe even our personality makes it difficult to get the parameters right.
- In the same breath, boundaries help us understand what is not ours to own.

2. To and for:

- We are responsible to others and for ourselves..
 - Galatians 6:2 "Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ."
- Many times, others have burdens that are too big to bear.
- They don't have the strength, resources or knowledge to carry their load and they need help.
- In this, we are called to help others do what they cannot do for themselves, giving sacrificially of ourselves.
 - This is what Christ did for us!

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2. To and for (continued)

- On the other hand...
 - Galatians 6:5 "For we are each responsible for our own conduct."
- We all have responsibilities that only we can carry.
 - These are things we have to carry daily and take responsibility for.
- The Greek word for burden is really to be understood as "excess burdens" whereas the greek word for load means "cargo" or "the burden of daily toil".
 - We are expected to carry our own backpack worth of emotions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours...

3. Good in, bad out

- Boundaries help us distinguish our property so we can take care of it...
 - We need to keep good things in that will nurture it and help it...
 - We guard the treasures (Matt. 6:19-20) that God has given us and ensure we're not throwing our "pearls to pigs" (Matt. 7:6) or rather, letting our good and health get compromised by someone else.
- But sometimes we need to get the bad things out so we can let the good things in...
- This is why, when we establish our "fences" we need to put a "gate" in there so that we can do just that: let the good in, and get the bad out.
 - If I have sin or bitterness or offence in my life, I need to open up about those things to God and others so that I can get prayer and experience freedom.
 - I loved Chantalle's prayer of forgiveness she walked us through last week because it did just this:
 - It got some specific hurts and wounds out as we named them and gave them to God, so that in their place, we experience forgiveness, healing and peace.
- In short, boundaries, then, are not walls.
 - We're not made to wall of the world or keep everyone and everything we don't like out.
 - We created for community - so much so that Jesus' prayer to God for his followers and future followers was that they'd be "one" as He was one with God and the Holy Spirit. (John 17:11)

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3. Good in, bad out (continued)

- So again, while we are responsible for ourselves, we are responsible to each other.
 - And when it comes to letting the good in and getting the bad out, this is especially important to realize.
- Often, when people experience abuse, this is reversed and they learn to keep the bad in and the good out.

4. God and Boundaries

- Boundaries come from the very nature of God...
 - God defines himself all throughout scripture and helps us understand that He is a distinct, separate being and that He is responsible for Himself...
 - He tells us what He thinks, feels, plans, allows, will not allow, what He likes, what He dislikes.
 - He also defines Himself as separate from His creation and from us.
 - Even in the Trinity there are boundaries between each member. While they are one, at the same time, they are all distinct persons with their own boundaries and responsibilities.
 - Just like you and I, God limits what is allowed in "His yard"
 - He confronts sin and allows consequences for behaviour.
 - He guards His house and will not allow evil things to go on there.
 - He lets people who love Him in, and His love flows freely back to them.
 - His "gate" and "fence" are working as they should.
- And in all of this, we are made in his likeness (Gen. 1:26) and also have personal responsibility within limits.
 - He wants us to rule over the earth and to be responsible stewards over the life he has given us...
- Some of the boundaries we all have and should be aware of are...
 - Our skin...
 - The most basic boundary..
 - The is the first way you learn you are separate from others...
 - On a biological level it protects your blood and bones and organs, holding on the inside, together, with spaces for germs and the stuff our bodies don't need to get out.

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- Our Skin (continued)
 - On an emotional and spiritual level though, when this boundary is crossed without our permission through instances of physical or sexual abuse, our sense of self and boundaries get totally mixed up.
 - Figuring out where we end and where others begins gets hard because others invaded your property in a deeply hurtful and damaging way.
- Words
 - While our boundaries are not physical, they can still be established for others to "see" or rather, understand.
 - The most basic words we can use to do this is using no and yes in the right way at the right times.
 - Being clear about your no and yes is a theme that runs through the Bible (Matt. 5:7; James 5:12).
 - Sometimes the Bible talks about the importance of saying "no" to others sinful behaviour towards us (Matt. 18:15-20)...
 - Other times the Bible warns us of giving reluctantly or under compulsion (2 Cor. 9:7).
 - Sometimes we don't say no to ourselves when we should.
 - We're also to use our words to share with others our thoughts, feelings, intentions and dislikes.
 - People can't read your mind and won't know where you stand if you don't define your property.
- Truth
 - Knowing the truth about God and his property puts limits on you and shows you his boundaries.
 - His truth and character are the measure we use to define ourselves in relation to him.
 - For example.. When Paul through the inspiration of the Spirit says "you reap what you sow" in Galatians 6:7, we can either choose to live in light of that making good decisions that produce good fruit, or we can run against that and experience the consequences of a life untamed.
 - To be in touch with God's truth, is to be in touch with reality... and to live according that reality makes for a better life plain and simple.
 - Satan would love to distort reality with lies and convince you of those lies to keep you stuck.

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- Truth (continued)
 - Choosing to be honest with ourselves and accept God's truth for what it is will give us a foundation with which we can confidently build our lives on!
- Geographical distance
 - Proverbs 22:3 says "the prudent see danger and take refuge"
 - This applies to us in every realm: physical, spiritual, emotional...
 - You can remove yourself to get away from danger..
- Time
 - Giving things time to cool over..
 - Encouraging your adult children to have some time away to figure out adulthood at a college or discipleship program...
- Emotional distance
 - Just like geographical distance, emotional distance is a temporary boundary to give your heart the space it needs to be safe - it's never a permanent way of living.
 - In some relationships, distance may need to be maintained until they produce "fruit keeping with repentance" (Lk. 3:8).
- Other people
 - You need others help to help you set and keep boundaries...
 - Because our most basic need in life is relationships..
 - People in harmful relationships might not have healthy relationships but once they find some, they can come to the realization that they can have love and acceptance from people without getting mistreated...
 - We need new input and teaching..
 - If we solely rely on our perspective and experience to be our guide for what's best for us.
 - A lot of us have life experiences and family traits and "truths" we've brought into our lives and accepted as normal..
 - But when we put ourselves in relationship with others, we start to realize at times that there are some wrong attitudes and wrong perspectives simply by rubbing shoulders with someone who's had a different life and upbringing.

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- Consequences:
 - The Bible is unequivocal about the fact that when you walk a certain way, this will happen. If you walk another way, that will happen.
 - Just as the Bible sets consequences for certain behaviours, we need to back up our boundaries with consequences.
 - How many marriages or how many young adults or teenagers would have been spared if the spouse or the parents around that person had set healthy boundaries with realistic consequences?
 - Consequences give some allowable "barbs" to the fence so that serious offences are taken seriously.
 - When we hold and live by healthy boundaries and hold reasonable consequences, the people in relationship with us see and understand that this is serious for us: we want to live a good life and be safe from harm.
 - If you cause me harm, there are consequences.
 - You may not like them, but that's up to you to deal with.

OUR BOUNDARIES //

So what falls within our boundaries?

1) Feelings:

- Feelings have gotten a bad rap at times.
 - I think we're genuinely worried they'll lead us astray or that they'll play into the problem...
- If we're being honest though, a lot of the bad and hurtful behaviours we've seen or lived out ourselves are due to hurt feelings or being "offended."
- Neglecting our feelings can lead to depression and loneliness and a whole slew of other issues if we're not careful.
- So here's the reality: feelings should neither be ignored or in charge.
 - We need to "own" them and be aware of them.
 - Many times Jesus "had compassion" on people and worked accordingly... (Matt. 9:36; 15:32).
 - The father in the story of the prodigal son was filled with compassion and ran to his returning son (Luke 15:20)
 - The Good Samaritan took pity on the injured Israelite (Luke 10:33)

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Feelings can tell us and others how our relationships are actually doing.

- But again, we need to take responsibility for them and find the solution to the problem so far as we can control the situation/put boundaries in place.

2) Attitudes/Beliefs:

- Attitudes is about your posture towards something or someone.
- Beliefs are anything you accept as true.
 - Often we don't look into these when there are issues of offence or tension in relationships...
 - We blame others like Adam and Eve.
- Just like feelings, we need to own our attitudes and beliefs.
 - We are the ones who feel their effects and we are the only ones who can change them.
- The challenge with attitudes is that we learn them early on in life.
 - They play a pivotal role in shaping how we live and how we think about everything and everyone.
 - But people who have never questioned their attitudes and beliefs can fall prey to what Jesus referred to as holding on to "human traditions," instead of the commands of God (Mark 7:8; Matt. 15:3).
- People with boundary problems often have a distorted attitude towards responsibility.
 - Some feel like holding people responsible for their feelings, choice and behaviours is mean.
 - Others feel like their feelings, choices and behaviours are out of their control because of their circumstances.
- And while neither are healthy or true, both are extremely common when we don't let the "good" of God's truth and our friend or family's perspective in to challenge the way we're thinking and acting.

3) Behaviours:

- As we talked about from Paul's words to the church in Galatia, a person "reaps what they sow."
- What we do does something to us both for the good and for the worse.
 - If we worked hard at studying we will get decent or even good grades.

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- If we exercise and eat well, we will feel better.
- If we are loving and kind to the people around us, they will like us (usually) and we will get to have close and helpful relationships..
- If we spend most of our time isolated and on our phones, treat others with disrespect, and get bad sleep, we're going to be a bunch of grumpy pants that no one wants to be around...
- The problem comes here when some should reap what they sow but don't because their family is trying to "protect" them or their reputation.
 - The correction of this is truth with love. Not just truth, not just love.
- On the topic of offence, we can be entirely truthful but totally offensive. And, opposite to that, we can be entirely loving but not helpful because we're enabling - instead of challenging - someone's bad behaviour.

4) Choices:

- We need to take responsibility for our choices.
 - A common boundary problem is not owning our choices...
 - "I had to".. "She made me do it.."
- We need to realize that we are in charge of our choices no matter how we feel.
 - Joshua, in speaking to the people of Israel said to them, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15).
- The prodigal son's brother...
 - Chose to stay home and serve, but became resentful.
 - The father reminded him that it was his choice to stay home and not take his inheritance yet.
- Paul says in Romans 8:13 that if we "choose to live by the Spirit, we will live; [but] if we choose to follow our sinful nature, we will die."
- Making decisions based on what others say or think of you, or what you think they'll say or think of you is a product of insecurity and fear.
- To set and keep healthy boundaries, we need to take responsibility for our choices.

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5) Values:

- What we value is what we love and assign importance to..
 - Often values go unspoken but when they're crossed, we can easily be hurt or offended.
 - Other times, our values are out of place and we care too much about the approval of others rather than the approval of God (John 12:43) as Jesus talked about.
 - Sometimes we can put unhealthy values on money, success and pleasure and that can lead us the wrong way.
- This takes some honesty before God and others to lay down what you think you need and invite the Holy Spirit to give you a new heart and a perspective.
- Boundaries help us not to deny but own our old values so that God can change and redeem them.

6) Limits:

- This involves setting limits on others but not in the sense where you control others... it's about managing your exposure to others. God does this with us because while he has set the standard for what is or isn't sin, he doesn't make us live according to his rules. But if we don't live the way he calls us to, there are consequences we have to endure.
- The other aspect to limits is setting our own internal limits.
 - We need to have spaces inside of ourselves where we can be honest with our feelings, impulses or desires without faking it til we make it. But rather, where we can process it and pray about and talk about it with people we trust.

7) Resources and Gifts:

- The parable of the talents where a master gives 3 servants different degrees of wealth illustrates this perfectly and simply:
 - We need to take ownership and responsibility for what God has blessed us with..
 - Whether it's our jobs, our time, our gifts and abilities, our money..
 - God says they're all a gift and we need both steward and be generous with those gifts so that they stay in their place.
 - Making them secondary instead of primary in our life and purpose.

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8) Thoughts:

- We are the only creatures called to love God with "all of our mind" (Mark 12:30)
- Paul wrote about taking "captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).
- Establishing boundaries in thinking involves 3 things:
 - A. We must own our thoughts...
 - We take in other people's thoughts and culture trends without realizing they are actually now our thoughts.
 - We need to weigh things against God's truth and let the relationships in our lives sharpen us.
 - B. We need to grow in knowledge and expand our minds...
 - We need to let God teach us and be teachable both by the Word itself and the Spirit at work in us.
 - Life experience and stretching ourselves in different ways helps with this as well.
 - C. We must clarify distorted thinking.
 - We all have a tendency to not see things clearly.. To think and perceive in distorted ways.
 - The easiest distortions to notice are in our personal relationships.
 - We rarely see people as they really are...
 - Our perceptions are affected by our past relationships and experiences...
 - We do not see clearly at times because to the own "logs" in our eyes (Matt. 7:3-5).
 - After everything is said and done with our thoughts, we need to make sure they're talked about and expressed...
 - Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 2:11 "For who can know a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them?"

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9) Desires:

- We have good desires and bad desires...
 - God-given desires, and selfish desires.
 - God cares about our desires – so much so that we read in numerous places, especially the Psalms, about God granting us the desires of our hearts.
 - We need to grow and learn about the good and healthy desires God wants to grant...
 - Marriage and family,
 - A good job or a house even...
 - It takes time and it takes discipline to root out the bad and let the good in.

10) Love:

- "Our ability to give and respond to love is our greatest gift"
 - Love is essential to life and living it the way God designed us to...
 - Many of us have difficulty giving and receiving love because of the hurt and fear we've come to know too well in our lives.
- The Bible is clear about what needs to happen though...
 - We need to receive God's grace and love for us inwardly so that our hearts can soften and give that love and grace to others.
 - Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37, 39).
- Our loving heart, just like our physical one, needs an in inflow and an outflow of love to function the way it was meant to.
- Love concealed and love rejected will do nothing but keep us isolated and alone.
 - Many people do not take ownership for how they resist receiving or refuse to give love.
 - We need to take responsibility for how we let love in and give it away.

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TEN LAWS //

1. Sowing and Reaping: The Bible teaches us that we reap what we sow. (Gal 6:7-8).

- It's not punishment by God, but the reality of life.
- If we don't learn this because someone else reaped the consequences for us, we just enable others to be people-pleasers and we fail to learn for ourselves.
- Boundaries force the person doing the sowing to also do the reaping.

2. Responsibility: While we're supposed to love each other sacrificially, we are only ever responsible for ourselves.

- What the Bible does say though, is that we need to give "to" needs and put limits on "sin".
- Boundaries help us do that.

3. Power: While we don't have the power to deal with our sin and struggles, we have the power to:

- Agree with the truth about our problems
- Submit our powerlessness to God
- Search and Ask God and others to reveal more and more about what is within your boundaries.
- Turn from the evil to God.
- Humble ourselves and ask God and others for help.
- Seek out those who we've hurt and make things right.
 - We DO NOT have the power to change others... all we can ever do is INFLUENCE others.
 - If someone doesn't want to change, you can only ever change yourself in response.

4. Respect: Treating others how we want to be treated when it comes to respecting our "no"...

- Freedom begets freedom.

5. Motivation: Doing things out of the right motivation (Freedom) is more important than doing things out fear...

- Fear of loss of love/abandonment
- Fear of other's anger...

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5. Motivation: (continued)

- Losing the "good me" inside
- Guilt
- Payback
- Approval
- Overidentification with other's loss.

6. Evaluation: Making sure we evaluate the effects of boundaries and that they're actually accomplishing a goal that is productive vs. destructive.

- The right consequences can be helpful, but the wrong ones can be hurtful.

7. Proactivity: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. When we're a people pleaser for so long, and we bottle up our feelings, eventually it all comes out and explodes... (reactive)..

- We're called to be proactive as we show others what we love, want, who we are, and what we stand for. (different than being known for what you hate/against).

8. Envy: Tells us that we're lacking something and this it is something that someone else has that isn't ours...

- Our responsibility is to figure out what we're missing and deal with that with God

9. Activity: Humans are responders and initiators... sometimes we have boundary problems because we lack initiative... in childhood, we learn when we're challenged and push against that...

- The problem here is failing to try, not trying and failing.
- Boundaries can only be created by our being active and aggressive...

10. Exposure: Your boundaries need to be made visible to others and communicated to them in relationship. When we don't we secretly make boundaries and become afraid of saying no to someone we love and secretly, resentment develops...

The Bible stresses the importance of speaking the truth in love.

The path to real love is truth spoken in love.