

UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

2/4/12

* In the sermon today – I will discuss the proven concept of “boundaries” and show believers why it is applicable to them

* For the record – I discussed the subject of “boundaries” in a sermon (“The Greatest of These Is Love”) given on 5/9/09 – In the sermon today, I will discuss aspects about the subject of “boundaries” that I did not stress in that sermon

* Question – Why am I discussing the subject again?

(1) – I believe that the concept of “boundaries” is more important than many subjects you will ever hear in sermons

(2) – I believe that some believers do not understand the concept of “boundaries” because they think that the word “boundaries” contradicts the Bible

* Let’s quickly mention 2 reasons why people think the word “boundaries” contradicts the Bible

(1) – Some believers hear the word “boundaries” and conclude that the teacher is encouraging believers to be “selfish”

(2) – Some believers hear the word “boundaries” and conclude that the teacher is encouraging “division” and “isolation”

* The true concept of “boundaries” does not promote selfishness – in fact, personal boundaries should lead to mature love

Matt. 22:39	as you love yourself – self-respect
Phil. 2:3	esteem others better than yourself
1 Pet. 5:2	serve willingly – a ready mind
2 Cor. 9:7	do not give grudgingly – cheerful giver

* The true concept of “boundaries” does not promote division or isolation – in fact, personal boundaries should lead to mature unity

Eph. 5:28	a husband should love his wife, as he loves his own body – he that loves his wife, loves himself
29	nourish & cherish himself – and his wife
Gal. 2:6	Paul was not intimidated
7-8	different audience
9	the right hand of fellowship

* The following 3 problems occur among all people – including believers

(1) – People try to establish boundaries for others – they try to control other people

(2) – People allow other people to establish boundaries for them – they allow other people to control them

(3) – People don't establish boundaries for themselves – they do not control their own actions

In 1992 Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend wrote a popular book titled *Boundaries*. Part of the purpose of the book is listed as follows: "When to say yes, how to say no, to take control of your life." Here are the chapters of the book.

* What are Boundaries

1. A Day in a Boundaryless Life
2. What Does a Boundary Look Like?
3. Boundary Problems
4. How Boundaries Are Developed
5. Ten Laws of Boundaries
6. Common Boundary Myths

* Boundary Conflicts

7. Boundaries and Your Family
8. Boundaries and Your Friends
9. Boundaries and Your Spouse
10. Boundaries and Your Children
11. Boundaries and Work
12. Boundaries and Your Self
13. Boundaries and God

* Developing Healthy Boundaries

14. Resistance to Boundaries
15. How to Measure Success with Boundaries
16. A Day in a Life with Boundaries

The following information is taken from chapter 2 – "What Does a Boundary Look Like?"

On pages 35-40 (under the subhead "Examples of Boundaries), the authors listed the following eight characteristics.

* Skin – "The most basic boundary that defines you is your physical skin. . . .Victims of physical and sexual abuse often have a poor sense of boundaries. Early in life they were taught that their property did not really begin at their skin."

* Words – “The most basic boundary-setting word is *no*. It lets others know that you exist apart from them and that you are in control of you. . . .The Bible also warns us against giving to others ‘reluctantly or under compulsion’ (2 Cor. 9:7). People with poor boundaries struggle with saying no to the control, pressure, demands, and sometimes the real needs of others. They feel that if they say no to someone, they will endanger their relationship with that person, so they passively comply but inwardly resent.”

* Truth – “There is always safety in the truth, whether it be knowing God’s truth or knowing the truth about yourself.”

* Geographical Distance – “Sometimes physically removing yourself from a situation will help maintain boundaries.”

* Time – “Taking time off from a person, or a project, can be a way of regaining ownership over some out-of-control aspect of your life where boundaries need to be set.”

* Emotional Distance – “Emotional distance is a temporary boundary to give your heart the space it needs to be safe; it is never a permanent way of living.”

* Other People – “There are two reasons why you need others to help with boundaries. The first is that your most basic need in life is for relationship. . . .The other reason we need others is because we need new input and teaching.”

* Consequences – “Just as the Bible sets consequences for certain behaviors, we need to back up our boundaries with consequences. . . . Consequences give some good ‘barbs’ to fences.”

On pages 40-50, the authors listed the following 10 items that are within your boundaries.

* Feelings – “Feelings have gotten a bad rap in the Christian world. They have been called everything from unimportant to fleshly. . . .

“Feelings should neither be ignored nor placed in charge. The Bible says to ‘own’ your feelings and be aware of them. They can often motivate you to do much good. The Good Samaritan’s pity moved him to go to the injured Israelite (Luke 10:33). The father [of the prodigal son] was filled with compassion for his lost son and threw his arms around him (Luke 15:20). Many times Jesus ‘had compassion’ for the people to whom He ministered (Matt. 9:36; 15:32).

“Feelings come from your heart and can tell you the state of your relationships. . . .Your feelings are your responsibility and you must own them and see them as your problem so you can begin to find an answer to whatever issue they are pointing to.”

* Attitudes and Beliefs – “Attitudes have to do with your orientation toward something, the stance you take toward others, God, life, work, and relationships. Beliefs are anything that you accept as true. . . .People with boundary problems usually have distorted attitudes about responsibility.”

* Behaviors – “Behaviors have consequences.”

* Choices – “We need to take responsibility for our choices. . . .Setting boundaries inevitably involves taking responsibilities for your choices. You are the one who makes them.”

* Values – “What we value is what we love and assign importance to. Often we do not take responsibility for what we value.”

* Limits – “In reality, setting limits on others is a misnomer. We can’t do that. What we can do is set limits on our own exposure to people who are behaving poorly; we can’t change them or make them behave right. . . .We need to be able to say no to ourselves.”

* Talents – “Our talents are clearly within our boundaries and are our responsibility. Yet taking ownership of them is often frightening and always risky.”

* Thoughts – “Establishing boundaries in thinking involves three things. . . .We must own our own thoughts. . . .We must grow in knowledge and expand our minds. . . .We must clarify distorted thinking.”

* Desires – “Our desires lie within our boundaries. . . .We often do not actively seek our desires from God, and those desires are mixed up with things that we do not really need.”

* Love – “Many people have difficulty giving and receiving love because of hurt and fear. Having closed their hearts to others, they feel empty and meaningless. The Bible is clear about both functions of the heart: the receiving of grace and love inward and the flow outward.”

For the record – In 2010 Dr. Henry Cloud wrote a book titled *Necessary Endings*. Part of the purpose of the book is listed as follows: “The employees, businesses, and relationships that all of us have to give up in order to move forward.”

For the record – In 2011 Dr. John Townsend wrote a book titled *Beyond Boundaries*. Part of the purpose of the book is listed as follows: “Learning to trust again in relationships.”
