

Boundaries- Session 2

1. Guard Your Heart

“Boundaries help us to distinguish our property do that we can take care of it.”- Boundaries, 33

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23

How does one guard their heart? Having boundaries that keep things that nurture us inside (the good), and keep things that will harm (the bad) out.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:19-20

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Matthew 7:6

The Dilemma

Because we live in a broken world, people can have the boundaries reversed: having the bad inside and the good on the outside.

Question:

How does one open up our boundaries so we can let the good in and the bad out?

- Confessing pain and sin helps us to “get it out” and helps the process of stopping the bad from poisoning from the inside. (1 John 1:9; James 5:16; Mark 7:21-23)

- To receive the good, we need to...
 - a) Receive Jesus’ truth from God’s Word (Revelations 3:20; John 1:12)
 - b) Open our hearts to the good things from other people. (2 Corinthians 6:11-13)

<p>God’s Word reveals that we were created to not have walls from others who live for Him. John 17:11 says, “¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of^[a] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.”</p>

Question: What good things- from Jesus and his people- that a person needs to receive for their life?

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) is a model of correct behaviour when thinking of boundaries; when they should be both observed and when to practice grace.

Questions:

- When should a person should have shown grace instead practicing their strict boundaries?
- How was the Samaritan a good model of living out the balance of boundaries and grace?
- How did he practice grace? If the injured man woke up, how might he had taken advantage of the Samaritan to have him give him more than what he wanted to give?
- To avoid any lack of peace scenario's, we need to look at what falls within our boundaries, and what we are responsible for.

2. What Are We Responsible For?

a) Feelings

“Feelings should neither be ignored nor placed in charge. They are signals that alert us to be aware of the conditions of our heart. The Bible says to “own” your feelings and be responsible for them. You must see them as your property, so you can begin to find an answer to whatever issue they are pointing to. They can motivate often motivate you to do much good. (Matthew 9:36; 15:32; Luke 10:33; 15:20) (pg. 42)

Questions:

- What do you tend to do with your feelings—ignore them or let them be in charge? Why do you think you respond that way?
- What do you tend to do with feelings of anger?
- If you are nursing any feelings or anger right now, what problem that needs to be addressed are they pointing toward? What will you do about that problem?

b) Choices

“We need to take responsibility for our choices. Doing so leads to the fruit of self control (Galatians 5:23). A common boundary problem is disowning our choices and trying to lay the responsibility for them on someone else. Throughout Scriptures, people are reminded of their choices and asked to take responsibility for them (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 20:13; Romans 8:13; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Philemon 1:14) (pg. 43-44)

Questions:

- How often do you make excuses when you explain why you did or didn't do anything?
- What choices in your life have you failed to take responsibility for? Whom are you blaming for what circumstances of your life?

c) Behaviour

“You reap what you sow” (Galatians 6:7). The reality is that behaviour has consequences; good or bad. The problem comes when someone interrupts the consequences to another person's behaviour. A person must take

ownership to the consequences for their behaviour. The reality: to rescue people from the natural consequences of their behaviour is to render them powerless. Pg. 43

- When has someone interrupted the law of sowing and reaping in your life and protected you from consequences that could have been good teachers? What happened?
- When have you interrupted the law of sowing and reaping someone's life and protected that person from consequences that could have been good teachers? What happened?

d) Attitudes & Beliefs

Attitudes have to do with your orientation towards something, the stance you take toward God, others, life, work, and relationships. Beliefs are anything you accept as true. Although you may struggle to set limits and accept appropriate responsibility, know that doing so will save lives. (Proverbs 13:18, 24). (pg. 42-43)

- You are the only one who feels the effects of your attitudes and beliefs, and you are the only one who can change those attitudes and beliefs. Which attitudes and beliefs that you hold are causing you to make poor choices or experience pain? What will you do to get those attitudes and beliefs in line with God's truth?
- Do you tend to feel responsible for other people's feelings, choices, and behaviors? In what areas of your life do you do this? What will you do to gain better understanding of what you really are responsible for?

e) Limits

Two aspects of limits are important for creating better boundaries. First, setting limits and separating ourselves protects love because we are taking a stand against things that destroy love. Second, setting limits in order to establish an internal structure is an important component of boundaries and identity, as well as ownership, responsibility, and self-control. (pg. 45-46)

- The first aspect is setting limits with others. That means setting limits on our exposure to people who are behaving poorly, and God is our model for doing so (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13). We can't change other people or make them behave right, but we can gain some distance from them. Where in your life today would you do well to limit your exposure to someone? Why would that be a wise move? What is keeping you from doing so?
- Like setting limits with others, setting our own internal limits helps us create better boundaries. We need self-control without repression. What destructive desires do you need to learn to say no to? What good desires do you need to learn to say no to because the timing isn't right?

f) Resources & Gifts

Although it uses money as an example, Matthew 25:14-30 clearly illustrates our God-ordained responsibility for ownership and stewardship of our resources, talents and gifts. Our talents are within our boundaries and are our responsibility, yet taking ownership of them is often frightening and always risky. It takes work, practice, learning, prayer, resources, and grace to overcome the fear of failure that can keep us from exercising our talents, but we are accountable—and much happier—when we exercise our God-given gifts and are productive. (pg. 46)

- What talents, gifts, and abilities has God given you? If you're not sure, ask someone who knows you well to help you identify them.
- What talents, gifts, and abilities are you currently exercising? How do you feel about what you are doing?
- What talents, gifts, or abilities are you afraid to exercise? What is the root of those fears? What steps will you take to overcome those fears?

g) Thoughts

Our minds and thoughts are important reflections of the image of God. We are called to love God with all our mind (Mark 12:30), and we are to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). We must have our own thoughts, we must keep learning about God, we must clarify any distorted ideas, and if we want others to know what we're thinking, we must tell them. (pg. 46-47)

- We must own our own thoughts. Do you think things through for yourself, or do you tend to accept other people's ideas and let them do your thinking for you? Why? Name one area in your life where you would do well to think through some issues for yourself?
- We must clarify distorted thinking, and the easiest distortion to notice are those in personal relationships. Consider past relationships. Where do you see now that you had distorted ideas about the person involved? Where might you now be failing to see people as they really are?
- We need to make sure we are communicating our thoughts to others. After all, "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). Whom are you expecting to be able to read your mind? What do you think keeps you from doing so?

h) Desires

Each of us has different desires and wants, dreams and wishes, goals and plans, hungers and thirsts—but few of us are satisfied. Our reason is that we lack the internal structure that boundaries provide to enable us to define and then take specific steps necessary to reach our goals. Furthermore, we often do not actively seek our desires from God (Ecclesiastes 11:9; Matthew 7:7-11; Philippians 2:12-13; James 4:2-3). Yet God is truly interested in our desires. He made them, and "he fulfills the desires of those who fear him." (Psalm 145:19; 21:2-3; 37:4) (pg. 48-49)

- What desires are you currently pursuing that your heavenly Father, wise parent that He is, is probably not interested in giving you?
- Consider the desires, dreams, and goals that you are currently pursuing. Make them the focus of some prayer time, asking God to refine your ideas and redirect you where necessary.

- When have you experienced the fulfillment of a God-given desire? Be specific about the circumstances and your feelings?

i) **Love**

Our ability to give and respond to love is our greatest gift. The heart of God has fashioned in His image is the centre of our being. Its abilities to open up to love and to allow love to flow outward are crucial to life. We need to claim our hearts as our property and work on our weaknesses, whether we are weak receiving, or weak giving, love. Doing so will open up life to us. (pg. 49-50)

- Why might you have difficulty giving and/or receiving love?
- Our lives need to be edified through godly relationships. What healthy, godly relationships nurture you?
- We are to “love our neighbour as ourselves”. Where are you giving to others the kind of unconditional love God has given you?
- What do your answers to the previous two questions tell you about the condition of your trust muscle? Are you resisting love and/or failing to give love because it’s hard for you to trust?

Reflection:

Feelings, attitudes and beliefs, choices, limits, thoughts, desires, and love—all of these lie within our boundaries. We therefore need to take responsibility for all of these areas of our soul.

- In which of these areas are you doing fairly good job taking responsibility?
- In what area will you start working to take responsibility this week? What will you do? Be specific.

* Resource: Henry Cloud & John Townsend, “Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life”