

Boundaries- Session 3

1. Setting up Biblical Boundaries

“God’s world is set up with laws and principles. Spiritual realities are as real as gravity, and if we do not know them, you will discover their effects. Just because we have not been taught these principles of life and relationships does not mean they will not rule. We need to know the principles God has woven into life and operate to them.”- Boundaries, 86

a) The Law of Sowing & Reaping

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 6:7-8

Remember: When God tells us that we will reap what we sow, He is not punishing us; he’s telling us how things really are.

Question:

- What does Paul teach about sowing and reaping?
- What, if anything, have you sown to your own flesh (overreacting, acting out, overspending, selfishness, ignoring of God’s commandments, etc.), and what did you reap as a result?
- What positive seeds (eating right, exercising regularly, budgeting weekly, etc.) have you sown in your life, and what are you reaping as a result?

* Sometimes we don’t reap what we sow because someone steps in and reaps the consequences for us. This law can be interrupted, and it is often people who have no boundaries who do the interrupting. Boundaries force the person who is doing the sowing to also do the reaping (pg. 87)

Today, we call a person who continually rescues another person a co-dependant. A Co-dependent people bring insults and pain onto themselves when they confront irresponsible people. In reality, they just need to stop interrupting the law of sowing and reaping. (pg. 88)

- Where do you need to stop interrupting the law of sowing and reaping in someone's life?

b) The Law of Responsibility

People react in various ways to a talk on boundaries and taking responsibility for their own lives. Some respond with, "That's so self-centred. We should love one another and deny ourselves." Other people set out on a selfish and self-centred life, and still others begin to feel "guilty" when they do someone a favor. (pg. 88-89)

- Which of these unbiblical views of responsibility reflect your initial response to the idea of boundaries?

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:12)

* Any time you are not loving others, you are not taking full responsibility for yourself: you have disowned your heart. Problems arise when boundaries of responsibility are confused. We are to love one another, not be one another. We can't for instance, grow for one another.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)

- What biblical mandate for personal growth do you find in Philippians 2:12-13?
- What are you doing to take responsibility for your personal and spiritual growth?
- Where are you taking responsibility for someone else's personal and spiritual growth?

¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

- How do boundaries enable us to respond to Jesus' teaching from Matthew 7:12?
- How are we to respond to people whose boundaries aren't well defined?

* Another aspect of being responsible to someone is setting limits on that person's destructive and irresponsible behaviour. When you rescue someone from the consequences of their sin, you'll only have to do so again (Proverbs 19:19). Throughout its pages, the Bible stresses that you are to give to needs and put limits on sin (Proverbs 23:13-14). Boundaries help do just that. (pg. 89)

- Where have you seen this truth evident in real life?
- When have you been hurt or hurt someone else because limits were not put on behaviour?

c) **The Law of Power**

- Which, if any, of the following questions have you asked yourself:
 - Am I powerless over my behaviour?
 - If I am, how can I become responsible?
 - What do I have the power to do?

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[a] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. (Romans 7:15-23)

- What phrases can you especially identify with from Romans 7:15-23?

- What specific struggles do the phrases you listed bring to mind?

* Both the Bible and the Twelve Step Program teach that people must admit that they are moral failures. The law of sin is at work within us, and we lie when we deny that fact (1 John 1:8). (pg. 89)

Though you do not have the power in and of yourself to overcome your sinful patterns, you do have the power to do some things that will bring fruits of victory later.

- 1) You have the power to agree with the truth about your problems (confession)
- 2) You have the power to submit your inability to God and turn your life over to Him, that Doctor who can do what you are unable to do—bring about change (Matthew 5:3, 6; James 4:7-10; 1 John 1:9)
- 3) You have the power to ask God and others to reveal more and more about what is within your boundaries.
- 4) You have the power to turn from the evil that you find within you (repentance)
- 5) You have the power to humble yourself and ask God and others to help you with your developmental injuries and leftover childhood needs.
- 6) You have the power to seek out those whom you have injured and make amends.
- 7) You have the power to forgive those who have hurt you.

- Which power(s) listed surprise you? Encourage You? Intimidate You?
- Which powers do you need to begin exercising in your life?
- What is the first step you will take to exercise one of the powers you just listed? Whom will you ask to help you?

* Besides clarifying what you do have power over, boundaries help define what you do not have power over—everything outside of them! You can work on submitting yourself to the process of clarifying your boundaries and on working with God to change you. You cannot change anything else: not the weather, the economy and especially not other people. (pg. 90-91).

- What sources of worry are outside your boundaries
- Those who would love to see change... with the understanding you cannot change anyone, what can you do to positively influence those people instead of trying to change them?

- What can you do to change yourself—specifically, your way of dealing with them—so that those with destructive patterns no longer work on you?

* You need the wisdom to know what is not you. Pray for the wisdom to know the difference between what you have power to change and what you do not. As the Serenity Prayer says, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” (pg. 91)

d) **Law of Respect**

When we think about setting boundaries and trying to live by them, we fear that others will not respect them. We focus on others and lose clarity about ourselves. (pg. 91)

Sometimes the problem is that we judge other people’s boundaries. The Bible says whenever we judge, we will be judged (Matthew 7:1-2). When we judge other’s boundaries, ours will fall under the same judgment. If we condemn others’ boundaries, we can expect them to condemn ours. (pg. 92)

- Have you been caught up in this fear cycle and therefore been afraid to set the boundaries you need to set?

* We need to respect the boundaries of others in order to earn respect for our own. We need to treat their boundaries the way we want them to treat ours. (Matthew 7:12)

- Whose boundaries do you need to have more respect for?

e) **The Law of Motivation**

It is important to set boundaries behind what motivates us to do something. We would like to think that everything that we do is motivated by love. However, doing and sacrificing can also be motivated by fear. Example:

- Fear of losing love: Life experiences have taught some, “love will be removed if you don’t do what someone wants”.
- Fear of Anger: If I say no, this will lead to angry confrontation.
- Fear of Loneliness: If I set boundaries, I will become lonely

Other False Motives...

- Thinking that to love means always to say yes
- Thinking that good people always say yes
- Trying to overcome the guilt inside and feel good about yourself
- Paying back all that you’ve received

- Trying to gain people's approval, especially from those who represent parents whose approval is withheld.
- Overidentifying with other person's loss, and feeling the sadness you think your no would cause them.

* However, we are called into freedom, and His freedom results in gratitude, an overflowing heart, and love for others. God calls us to love one another, and love is the only true motive for what we do. (pg. 94)

³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " (Acts 20:33-35)

- When have you experienced that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive? Be specific about the circumstances and your feelings.
- In general, do you experience gratitude, an overflowing heart, and love for others when you say yes to requests? If not, what kinds of emotions do you feel instead?

* If your giving is not leading to cheer, you need to examine the Law of Motivation, a law that says, "Freedom first, service second." If you serve to get free of your fear, you are doomed to failure. Let God work on the fears, resolve them, and create some healthy boundaries to guard the freedom you were called to. (pg. 94)

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