



Workbook & Devotional

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INTRODUCTION

Hello and thanks for taking part in **Boundaries: Liberation Thru Limits**. This is our Spiritual Growth Campaign for 2016 and I'm glad you are going to part of it.

Let me just briefly explain what this little booklet is all about.

First of all just about everything you'll need to take part in this Spiritual Growth Campaign can be found in this book. All of the devotionals and all the lesson outlines are here. Besides this booklet all you'll need is your Bible, the teaching DVD's and something that can play them, and a group of fellow believers to sit down with to go through them.

Oh yes, and you'll want to be in church every Sunday throughout this Campaign to hear the sermons as well.

This year I'll be preaching on the basic concept of Boundaries and how to draw Biblical boundaries in our lives on Sunday morning. We'll discuss how Biblical boundaries are, how to determine what Biblical boundaries are, acknowledging my need for them, and how to draw them.

Also new this year is how we're handling our Small Group videos. This year Amy and I will be team teaching each mid-week lesson. These lessons will focus on applying boundaries to different areas of your life. We hope you'll like this new approach and find it helpful.

The devotionals you'll find here are not designed to be in depth studies. Rather they are meant to get you thinking about the aspects of boundaries that I'm preaching on each week. They are short and to the point and I hope you find them helpful as well. Like last year you won't get any devotionals on Sunday so you'll have a day to catch up if you fall behind.

As always I'm looking for your feedback, Please let me know what you like and what you don't like, what you find helpful and anything that isn't helpful to you. I'm always trying to make our ministries better and need your feedback to do so.

Thanks again for taking part and God bless you!!

- Louie



DEVOTIONAL

Week One:

**Believe that Boundaries
are Biblical**



Week 1, Monday: *What Is a Boundary?*

Boundary: *a line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line; a limit of a subject or sphere of activity.*

⁶ *The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.* Psalm 16:6 (NIV)

Whenever I wonder where I should start something I always remember it's best to start at the beginning. So that's what we're doing with Boundaries: Liberation Thru Limits. You don't get any more basic than defining what a boundary is so that's what we want to think about today.

As you can see from the definition above a boundary at it's most basic is a line, a line that divides one person, place or thing from another. Here in Parker we live right next to a boundary the state line between Arizona and California. About two hours south of us is another, larger, boundary, the border between the US and Mexico.

It's important to note that those boundaries didn't just come out of nowhere. Unlike seeing them on a map you can cross them without knowing it as well. There's no big black line in the middle of the river showing the dividing line between California and Arizona now is there?

So a boundary isn't just a line, it's a line that divides and it's a line that has to be both chosen, put into effect (drawn) and then maintained by a person or a group of people. Unlike physical, natural boundaries, the kind of boundaries we'll be talking about for the next 40 days have to be put into place and maintained if they are going to do you any good.

Boundaries can indeed fall in pleasant places. But if they are to remain helpful and healthy for us we have to pay attention to them. We have to abide by them. We have honor, maintain and act on them when necessary. So this Spiritual Growth Campaign will be a journey that will demand courage from all of us. The courage to find and draw the right lines and then even more courage to live by those boundaries and make sure they stay in place in my life. **"Lord, give us the courage today to walk by faith, set boundaries in obedience to Your Word, & be empowered by Your Spirit."**



Week 1, Tuesday: *God Sets Boundaries*

²⁸ *A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.* Proverbs 25:28 (ESV)

"Boundaries aren't all bad. That's why there are walls around mental institutions." — Peggy Noonan

When you read the Bible with an eye towards boundaries you'll see that God has, almost from the very beginning, set and encouraged boundaries. Look what Job says, ¹⁰ *He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness.* Job 26:10 (ESV)

Job, and other verses as well, tell us that God has built boundaries into the very nature of the universe. We call these physical laws, like gravity, etc. but in reality they are boundaries God chose to create for us. Of course they make life possible for without them where would we be? The laws of the physical universe do limit us, but they also allow life to not just exist but to thrive within the boundaries they create.

People are funny in that many have an initial negative reaction to the concept of boundaries. We don't want to be limited so we say no to them. That's our good old fallen nature and ego sounding off. But everyone knows we not only need boundaries but *everyone sets boundaries somewhere in their lives*. If you don't then you are indeed like a broken and destroyed city. And as Peggy Noonan points out everyone *wants* some boundaries in place.

There's really no argument against boundaries, we just like to argue about *which ones* are needed.

That's why it's critical for a follower of Jesus to understand that God sets boundaries. Not only in creation but in nearly every aspect of our lives as well. That's why we are taught to forgive, love our enemies, pray for those who use us, share the Gospel of Jesus, help the poor, befriend the lonely, use our God given gifts for His glory, etc. Yes—all of those are not just boundaries, *they are boundaries drawn by God Himself*. Every command in Scripture is an example of God drawing a boundary. **"Lord, give me the grace today to see & understand where and how you have drawn good boundaries for me. May I walk within those limits so that I may be truly free as Jesus wants me to be. Amen!"**



Week 1, Wednesday: *The Positive Power of Boundaries*

Love can't exist without boundaries - Darlene Lancer

² *"Command the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance will have these boundaries: Numbers 34:2 (NIV)*

When people think about Boundaries they tend to conceptualize them in a negative way. We often think of them in terms of protection (which we'll talk about tomorrow). Today I want us to see that properly understood and applied far from limiting us Boundaries actually set us free.

In the quote above it's claimed that you can't really love without Boundaries and I completely agree. God is love and loves everyone yet He certainly has Boundaries. Just look at all the commands He has given us. What is more liberating than healthy love? Yet love, healthy, Godly, Biblical love, doesn't happen without Boundaries.

When Israel entered the promised land God pointed out them the Boundaries of their territory. He did this to help them understand that within those limits they would be completely free to love Him, obey Him, worship Him, live for Him and to live free from the chains of idolatry and all the other sins of their neighboring countries.

The boundaries of Israel were there to define their freedom. God is telling us that in this place the truth about God would be taught and celebrated. Here, in this place, He wanted to create a people for Himself, a people who would reflect His glory and grace to the watching world around them.

Sound familiar? It should because that's *exactly* what God wants to do in each of our lives as well. One of the main tools He uses to make this happen are Boundaries. **"Lord help me to celebrate your Boundaries today. Let me rejoice in the freedom your limits bring, and may my life be a witness of your truth to those around me. Amen!"**



Week 1, Thursday: *Boundaries Protective Potential*

"Good fences make good neighbors" - Well Known Proverb

¹⁷ *"Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"*
Deuteronomy 27:17 (NIV)

While Boundaries do bring us into Christ's freedom they also serve as a strong protection. Like any physical boundary would they limit our exposure to things could harm or mislead us. They also give us our own "space" which everyone needs.

That's why the proverb about good fences making good neighbors is found in many different cultures. It's universally recognized that people get along much better when they acknowledge and respect the rights and property of others. That's not just true of physical things it's also true of our belief's and practices as well.

God knows this of course. So in the Old Testament He strongly condemns anyone who would move a boundary stone. That's the modern equivalent of moving a property line. It was illegal under Mosaic Law as it is illegal today. To encroach upon your neighbors property or space is wrong and it always has been.

Boundaries help keep that from happening. They remind me that when someone is acting improperly I should just allow it to happen but I need to act in a Christ like manner to either remove myself from the situation or to inform them that this behavior will not be tolerated.

Abuse in all it's forms, physical, verbal, emotional or spiritual should never be tolerated and properly drawn biblical Boundaries will make sure we don't. Boundaries remind me of what's proper in God's sight and what's not. They also encourage me to *do* what's right and thus protect myself and others.

"Lord, help me to recognize and appreciate the protective power of Boundaries in my life today. Amen"



Week 1, Friday: *Boundaries Make Everything Better*

Appropriate boundaries create integrity. – Rae Shagalov

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.” Genesis 13:8-9 (ESV)

The story of Abraham (then known as Abram) and Lot separating is one of the earliest examples of people setting boundaries in order to solve a problem and improve their lives. In this case it was Abram who came up with the idea of the boundary so that there would no conflict with his beloved nephew Lot.

Something to notice here is that in Abram’s mind the boundary was about eliminating conflict, not enriching himself. So when he decided to make a boundary he actually allowed Lot to choose what side he would be on. That’s pretty remarkable. Of course Lot choose the land he felt was the most desirable and Abram didn’t complain.

He didn’t complain because he trusted God and didn’t care about what land he would occupy. He cared about peace within his family and he achieved it through the use of a well drawn and very generous boundary. I love this story because it shows how, in the right circumstances, you can be very generous in setting your boundaries.

Abram’s true character and integrity clearly shows through here, as does Lot’s lack of the same. Or to be generous let’s just say Lot wasn’t as mature as uncle Abram. Either way this boundary improved both their lives immensely and really did bring “peace in the valley!” (Sorry, couldn’t resist it!)

We need to ask God to help us discover where in our lives well drawn boundaries would help us find the peace and order that so many desperately need today. It took courage and generosity on his part, but look how God blessed Abram for it. **“Heavenly Father I pray that you will help me to see where I need to draw boundaries, how they will improve my life, and that you will give me the courage & wisdom to do so! Amen.”**



Week 1, Saturday: *Jesus Commands Boundaries*

if we are going to be disciples of Jesus and make disciples for Jesus then we had better establish biblical boundaries -
Dr. Virgil Grant

¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven... ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matthew 5:16, 44 (ESV)

If there’s a better example of setting a boundary for myself I’d be hard pressed to find a better one that Jesus’ command to love and pray for our enemies. This is an entirely unnatural act. It is also an unwanted act by almost everyone. On top of that it’s an act that most of your friends will counsel you against taking.

Yes, even your well meaning but wrong Christian friends will tell you *not to do this!* They act this way out of love, but not God’s love. It’s that natural, protective kind of love that drives parents to encourage children to lie at times so they won’t get into trouble. That natural love that is willing to throw standards over board as long as the person we love can be protected. We see this today in our culture’s rush to throw away the last vestiges of Christian sexual morality.

What people don’t realize is where this is going to take us. In the end trying to “protect” people by encouraging them to violate God’s boundaries only exposes them to a far more deadly harm. Those who encourage this will be held accountable for this as well.

So, yes I should set a boundary and *force myself* to love and pray for my enemies. What I don’t have to do, *and must not do*, is to trust them again anytime soon. Forgiveness, love and prayer are all gifts we freely given within our Christian boundaries. Trust is a relational component that must be *earned*.

So as a follower of Jesus if I’m not setting and living within Biblical boundaries, I’m sinning. I need to repent and get busy setting Godly boundaries. **Father help me today to discover and draw Biblical boundaries in my life.**



DEVOTIONAL

Week Two:

Determine Biblical Boundaries



Week 2, Monday: Ask God to Help Me

I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.' - Billy Graham

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

Before I can really set any kind of Biblical boundaries I've got to have a clear understanding of who I am and where I'm at in my life. There's really no way to do this accurately without God's help. If we try and do this on our own or through the advice of friends we'll end up with a distorted picture. Only God sees us as we really are.

There are a couple of key words in the verses above. First comes "search." We have to ask God to search, and then help that search by saturating our soul in Scripture so that God can speak to us through His Word. The deeper I get into the Word the deeper I get into God.

Secondly is the word "try." That's an old Hebrew word used of testing the quality of metal, or to examine or investigate something. If you make this verse your prayer you are asking God to test you so that the real quality of your soul is exposed and seen. If that doesn't sound scary to you then I don't think you understand it correctly.

The "grievous way" actually means "way of an idol." So this verse is a prayer asking God to test me, stretch me, expose me to extreme situations so that the hidden idols of my heart will be exposed. Only then will I see where my boundaries really are and where they need to be changed.

This first step in making Biblical boundaries is a dangerous one. It's something most people run away from as fast as they can. Much to their own harm as without this testing we will continue to live in darkness. So before you ask God to help you perhaps you'd better make sure you are ready for the test to come, for that is the way He will help you.

While frightening, this is the spiritual adventure God calls all of His children to take. Do you trust Him enough to take it? **Lord, today I ask you to full search, test and try me. So me who I really am, so that I can change. Amen!**



Week Two, Tuesday: Taking Stock of Myself

I like pushing boundaries.—Lady Gaga

'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' - The Jesus Prayer (Eastern Orthodox)

As I begin to let the Holy Spirit test and try me I'll begin to learn things about myself. Some of that will be good and some of it won't be so great. In fact, a great deal of it will be down right awful. I'm going to learn that I was born with a nature that drives me to always test God's boundaries instead of trusting Him and the boundaries he sets.

Pushing boundaries is a good thing in many ways. But pushing God's boundaries isn't one of them. In the end when I push beyond the boundaries God has lovingly established for my (and others) health and protection I find only disaster waiting for me and those around me.

In short, the first lesson the Spirit teaches me is a simple one, I'm a sinner in need of grace.

That statement is neither positive or negative. It's just true. Like gravity it's a foundational fact of the universe and to ignore or deny it is to live in darkness and denial of reality.

No one ever asked me if I liked gravity because my opinion is irrelevant. Gravity is and I have to respect it or I'll pay a big price. My sin is as well. It's in me, it comes out of me, it's all over me and all over the universe I live in. Therefore the only sane response to this Biblical, historical and psychological fact is to accept it and then try and figure out where I go from here.

That's where the "Jesus prayer" quoted above shows the way. What better place to start than by admitting one of the fundamental facts of my life (another one is that I'm made in God's image and loved by Him), and then asking God for the one thing I need above and beyond all others—His mercy and grace? More than food, water or oxygen I need to be forgiven. I must have God's grace or else I die apart from Him. That is a fate too terrible to contemplate so I pray for grace and will continue to do so. **Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.**



Week 2, Wednesday: Getting Informed

"Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." - St. Jerome

⁴ *But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4 (ESV)*

As we continue to let God help us really understand and admit who we are we must turn to the Scriptures. Our search for Biblical boundaries should lead us into a deeper and more profound understanding the Bible. If it doesn't then it not likely to lead us anywhere we really want to go. As Jerome said, if we don't know the Bible we don't know Christ. Period.

So how does this work? It's fairly simple to do but very difficult to master. For example let's say that I've come to realize that I just don't do a good job of saying no to people. At heart I'm a people pleaser and just hate to say no because that will lead to a confrontation I don't want, displeasure I can't stand and quite possibly the loss of a relationship that I don't believe I can live without.

That will sound familiar to many of you. So what you do once you realize this about yourself?

Find out what the Bible says about it of course. As you search the Scriptures you'll find it actually says a lot. But wait you say, how do I do that Bible searching stuff? Well you can take our second Next Step Class and learn how to begin to study your Bible. But till then here's a few helpful hints.

Use the internet. There are some fantastic Bible Study sites, as well as some great apps for your phone or tablet or whatever you have. Here's a few: bible.org, biblegateway.org, biblehub.org, blueletterbible.org. As far as apps go there is YouVersion (youversion.com) and iDisciple just to name a few.

Find the verses that speak to your issue. In our example there are plenty of verses that call upon me to please God and not man. Tomorrow we'll talk about what to do with them. **Lord help me to know you through your Word today.**



Week 2, Thursday: Meditate on Key Verses

Meditate on what you read (Psm. 199:15). The Hebrew word for "meditate" means to be intense in the mind. Meditation without reading is wrong and bound to err; reading without meditation is barren and fruitless. - Thomas Watson

¹⁵ *I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.* ¹⁶ *I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.* Psalm 119:15-16 (ESV)

Once I've found those key verses that really speak to me what do I do? I meditate on them of course.

Now this doesn't mean I have to wear a diaper, sit on a mountain top with my legs crossed, while saying "ommmm" either. Bible meditation has nothing at all to do with eastern meditation. Most people relate meditation to transcendental or yoga meditation. But that's not what the Bible is talking about.

Far from emptying your mind (a key concept in all eastern forms of meditation and most others as well) the Bible commands us to *use* our God given minds because when we do that results in glory for Him and a more Christlike life for us. Bible meditation is cognitive, that is it's all about *using the mind to examine, probe and ponder the meaning of Scripture and how it applies to my life.*

Reading the Bible without meditating on what it says does indeed greatly weaken it's impact on our lives. I believe this is one reason why so many people who know so much about the Bible live so little of it out. I've know many people who's Bible knowledge was impressive yet they were joyless, judgement, angry and often bitter. How can you know the Word that tells you to not be all those things and yet be them? Because you are simply collecting facts and not seeking how to make them work in your life.

This is something we must avoid if we are to become disciples whose lives have been transformed to be more like Christ's. So pick a verse or two and start spending time pondering them today. **Lord help me meditate on your Word.**



Week 2, Friday: Don't Be Afraid to Get Help

Somebody help me, tell me where to go from here cause even Thugs cry, but do the Lord care? - Tupac Shakur

¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* Romans 12:10 (ESV)

If you are working through the things I'm talking about in the devotional you've probably discovered doing this takes more time than it does to read my little devotionals. So you might not be ready for this today but if you faithfully pursue Biblical boundaries at some point you are going to need some help. If you are wise you won't waste anytime getting it either.

You might need help in figuring out where you need boundaries or what the Bible says about them or how to apply that to your life. But at one or more points in this journey believe me you are going to need help. *Everyone does*, there's no shame in it so don't be embarrassed. Just make sure you are getting help from the right places.

That's why God, who is a community in and of Himself (the Trinity) created community for us as well. When we operate within community we are acting in a Godly fashion. God has put people within the church to help us. He's also put us within the church so that we can help others. Remember both of these facts for they are important. Refusing help is just as bad, if not worse, than refusing to help others.

We have to be humble enough to admit we need help and then seek it out. This is also why God put Elders and Pastors and teachers in the church. So that we can get the direction and encouragement that we need in our times of trouble.

I know many people refuse to reach out for help because they think they'll be judged or rejected if they do. That rarely happens and if it does it just means *that's the wrong person!* It doesn't mean you were wrong to seek help. No one can help everyone. I refer people to others if I don't think I can help them. There's no shame in that and a lot of wisdom. So if your friends can't help maybe a leader or a Pastor can. You won't until you try.

Don't let any pride or fear of rejection keep you from doing what God wants you to do. In fact this is a boundary issue because *being willing to get help when I need it is a Biblical boundary* we all ought to set for ourselves. So drop your fear and your pride and reach out to someone for the encouragement, accountability and help that you need. Let work in your life through others and you'll be amazed at what He can do. **Lord, help me to seek help & be willing to help others.**



Week 2, Saturday: Learn From Other's Mistakes

You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself.

- Sam Levenson

⁴ *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* Romans 15:4 (ESV)

One of the most difficult lessons in life to learn is that you ought to learn from others mistakes. How different would history be if we all did that? How different would my personal history be if I could do that? In fact, what would my life look like today if I had done that consistently in the past?

Who knows? We never get the answers to those "what if" questions now do we? At least not in this life, and I suspect even in the next one, largely because by then we won't care. When I'm with God in eternity why on earth would I care about what happened when I was on earth.

But I digress.

My point is simple. Look at other people you know and learn from their mistakes. Look at what happens when you don't draw boundaries and learn from it. Look at what happens when you do draw boundaries but you draw ones that aren't Biblical and learn from that. Watch how others draw Biblical boundaries but then *fail to keep them or even withdraw them*, and learn from that as well.

If we'd just pay attention to what goes on around us we'd could all get a PhD in boundaries in no time just from learning from others mistakes. Its clear that I'm going to make mistakes because everyone does. But if I can learn from others and minimize my mistake then I'm putting myself way ahead of where I'll be otherwise. And yes, that is the wise thing to do. So take a look around and a look back at your own past as well, and learn, learn, learn! That can make our lives much less difficult if we can just master this skill. **Lord, help me to learn from the past and not repeat it.**



DEVOTIONAL

Week Three:

Recognize My Need

For Boundaries



Week 3, Monday: Write Down My Areas of Need

"Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips." - Dawson Trotman

²⁷ *And the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." Exodus 34:27 (ESV)*

When you finally think you have a fairly firm grasp of what areas in your life need boundaries one of things you really need to do is to write them down in a list. Almost every time I say that to someone they come back right way with a one word reply. "Why?" It's funny how often we resist writing things down. Ever wonder why?

Well I don't think it's laziness though many of us are lazy. No I think it's something more profound than that. I think it's because when you write something down it somehow becomes more real to people. That may sound silly, in fact it probably *is* silly, but it's also true for most of us. There's something about writing things down that make them seem more real, or perhaps I could say more important, to people.

And that's exactly why you need to write them down. Of course writing them out also makes it easier to remember which is critical as well, but that's not why I'm urging you to do this. No, I think this is really critical because it's a step towards what we're going to talk about all this week.

My recognition and confession that I need to change can start, but not end, right here. Write it down. Then ponder it and a few days or weeks later rearrange it in order of what's most important and then write it down again.

Doing this is a powerful way to reconfirm my need for this and just how vital my need for boundaries in these areas is. Taking the time to write it down in order of urgency makes my decision to admit and deal with these things very real indeed. Why else would I take the time and effort to do this if I'm not really serious about it?

Talk is cheap and writing is only a bit more expensive. But it is a step forward and it's one that all of us should take. It's a way to show myself and God that I'm serious and acknowledge me need to change. **Lord, help me to write it out.**



Week 3, Tuesday: Evaluate Boundaries Impact

*"Choices made, whether bad or good, follow you forever and affect everyone in their path one way or another."
- J.E.B. Spredemann*

*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
Galatians 6:7-8 (ESV)*

One thing you have to remember is that when you draw Biblical boundaries in your life you are not the only one who's going to be impacted by this choice. In fact just about everyone you know will be effected and they won't always enjoy it either! So before you start you ought to be aware of what you are doing and be as ready as you can be for any push back you receive.

Remember you need to evaluate this but you must not let this stop you from doing what God is calling you to do. This is what often happens. When people realize that someone is unhappy with the change their making they let fear take over again and back off.

That's a huge mistake. One way around it to is expect it. People often panic when taken by surprise but if I'm expecting things to happen then I can react in a more calm and Christ-like manner.

You have to understand that even when people say they want you to change they aren't always being honest. Very often they don't want to change and so resent it when your changes make them change as well. For example most people will cheer you on if you say you are quitting smoking until you tell them you don't want them smoking in your house. They might get grumpy about having to go outside to slowly kill themselves (smoke) instead of staying in the AC like they used too.

So be aware that change—even positive change—is threatening to most people and not usually completely welcomed. Forewarned is forearmed, so be armed and ready as you being the process of being more like Christ.



Week 3, Wednesday: Admit My Lack of Control

Ministers are powerless people who have nothing to boast of except their weaknesses. But when the Lord whom they serve fills them with His blessing they will move mountains and change the hearts of people wherever they go.
—Henri Nouwen

¹⁰ *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* 2 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV)

This is the starting point for all true Biblical change. When I admit that I am not in control and that therefore I am not God, I begin to move forward. This is the way that I'm really making Jesus Lord of my life. If He is really Lord, not me, then of course he's in control.

I say of course but of course that's very easy to say and very hard to actually live out. How many of us live for years, decades even, chasing the phantom of being in control? Our culture likes to tell us that we can control everything just by being positive and making good choices. I hear that all the time. It's very strange that the same people who say that often also blame God when something clearly out of their control, like a natural disaster, happens. Hey, if you are in control then why aren't you blaming yourself instead of God? I thought you created your reality and that the universe returned your positive thoughts with positive outcomes?

I think the reason people do that is that deep down inside themselves they know they aren't really in control, all this new age "secret" stuff is just a game we play. But when it all comes down on us we know we live in a world where control nothing but ourselves and not even ourselves very often.

Instead of denying this or decrying it why not admit and embrace it? Why not turn your life and circumstances over to Jesus and let him really be Lord. Let's just quit trying to play God and worship and serve the real God instead. Life is so much better that way. **Father, I confess you are God and I am not! Take my life and use me according to Your will!**



Week 3 Thursday: Confess I Can't Change

I started off with nothing and I've still got most of it left.—Seasick Steve

¹⁵ *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.*
Romans 7:15 (ESV)

One way to describe Boundaries is that they are simply a recognition of reality and a confession that from here on out I'm going to try and live in accordance with reality.

So here's a piece of reality for you, not that you'll want it of course, but like all of us you need it. You can't change for the better without some help. Usually a lot of it. And always, whether recognized or not, the strength and wisdom to change comes flowing from God.

Like many people I love Romans 7 because Paul is so brutally honest in what he says. Instead of hiding behind his holy position as an Apostle he tears away the veil. Instead of "speaking in faith" about what he knows he should be like (as some teach us to do. There's another word for that kind of talk—**lying**) he's perfectly open and honest about his lack of ability to do what he knows God wants him too. He even goes beyond that and confesses that this reality mystified him for a while at least.

I don't know anyone who doesn't know the pain and frustration that comes from unsuccessfully trying to change and then failing over and over again.

The answer isn't to try harder, or (for the religious) having more faith, or thinking more positively or any of the human solutions you are constantly being bombarded with. No, God's answer is to confess the truth and the truth is **I can't change alone**. Without Christ's help, grace, power and love I will just continue to fail. So before I try and draw a boundary I need to get real and confess to myself and God (and others when appropriate) that without Christ I am helpless. **Lord, I admit right now I can't change, or do anything you want me to do, without your power & grace. Amen!**



Week 3, Friday: Jesus the Source of Real Power

“I have been seized by the power of a great affection.” — Brennan Manning,

⁵ *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5 (ESV)

Once I admit that I don't have the power to change then I can begin to rely on the one who does have that power—Jesus. He is the vine and I am only a branch. I know you've probably heard that before but it's a very powerful metaphor and one that deserves to be pondered a bit.

When you examine a plant it's the vine, or the trunk that is the main concern. If you have to you can always cut off a branch, or lots of branches. But the vine or the trunk *is the plant* really. If it's not healthy then the branches have no hope at all. They are an extension of the vine, but the vine can survive quite nicely without them. They, on the other hand, can't survive at all without the vine.

Whether we like it or not, and many of us don't, the same thing is true for us. When we are separated from God by sin we are cut off from the very life we depend upon. It all flow through the vine and then into whatever branches there may be. Branches can come and go, but the vine remains.

One boundary I need to implement in my thinking is that apart from Jesus I can do nothing and am nothing. Just a dead or dying stick on the ground that really only good to be used as a fire starter. That's not exactly how I'd like my life to go and I'm sure that's not what God wants to do with me either.

I can and will do more, so much more, but only with God help. Only by remembering I am totally dependent upon the vine that is Christ. I only grow and serve and reach others when I'm strongly connected to the vine. Apart from him I really am nothing. I need to not just remember this but to live it out every day of my life. Only then can I over come my inability to change through the limitless power of Christ that can and will change me. **Lord Jesus, help me to remember that you are all and that I must strengthen my connection to you if you are to be real in my life Amen.**



Week 3, Saturday: The Holy Spirit's Filling

Being filled with the Spirit is simply this - having my whole nature yielded to His power. - Andrew Murray

¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* ¹⁸ *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,* Ephesians 5:17-18 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit is tightly connected to power in the New Testament. Jesus said it in Acts 1:8. ⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* (ESV)

The question isn't does the Spirit have the power to change me and help me to live within healthy, Godly boundaries? The real question is how do I get that power flowing in my life? Part of the Biblical answer is to be filled with the Spirit. Now this is a huge topic (we did an entire Campaign on the Spirit years ago and I'm currently trying to make time to turn that into a book) so we won't be able to cover much of it here.

So let's just cut to the chase shall we? To be filled with the Spirit has nothing to do with emotion or a certain kind of experience or what kind of spiritual gift you manifest. To be filled with something means that you are allowing that substance to control you.

That's why Paul says don't get drunk ie. don't let that drug control you; instead let the Holy Spirit control you by allowing him to fill you. To be filled with the Spirit means that I am allowing him to have sway over my mind, will and emotions. That I seek to follow his Word and will and not my own.

This is the secret to real power. This is how you can not just set good boundaries but stick with them and finally lose that weight, stop being a manipulator or being manipulated, quit smoking, start forgiving, etc. It all hinges on seeking the filling of the Spirit. Paul says this in the present tense, which means this should be a continual action. So we should be seeking his filling, control, power, every single day and every moment of that day. **Lord, please come and fill my life, not with emotion or experiences, but with your Spirit so that his power can make me more like Jesus. Amen.**



DEVOTIONAL

Week Four:

Activate Boundaries

In My Life



Week 4, Monday: Prayerfully Prioritize

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.—Stephen Covey

³ *"You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3 (ESV)*

When it comes time to start drawing those Biblical boundaries in your life there's a lot of different approaches you can take. This week we'll be looking at one way to approach this that I believe can be very helpful to you. It's very often true that the way you begin something will determine whether or not you'll be successful. We want to be successful at this of course so let's look closely at a wise plan to draw boundaries.

We start off with prayer because God is almost always the right place to begin anything in our lives. From almost the very beginning of the Bible God has made it clear that the proper place for him in our lives is to be number one. That's why he told us not have other gods, or anything else, before him. He demands to be first in our lives because as our Creator he *is first!*

Putting Christ first in our lives is a simple recognition of reality. It's not a noble act that ought to be thought of as brave or unusual or heroic. It just admitting that there is a God who created me and that I'm accountable too and that therefore He deserves first place in my life.

Once he's on first then we need to ask him to guide us towards place our boundaries in the right order and the wisdom to tackle them one, or maybe two, at a time. If you try and set up ten different boundaries in your life at the same time I can almost guarantee you that you'll fail. So we must prayerfully seek which one to tackle first and once we've got that one stable then we can look at putting another in place.

Remember this isn't a race. The goal isn't be the first with the most. The goal is to become Christ-like and to make these boundaries last a *life time*. So slow and steady is the way to go. **Lord, help me to discover which boundaries are most important and guide me into setting them up wisely so that they'll last my lifetime. Amen.**



Week 4, Tuesday: Take Time to Get Ready

The will to succeed is important, but what's more important is the will to prepare.—Bobby Knight

¹² *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. Hosea 10:12 (ESV)*

Once I've got an idea of which boundary ought to be first then it's time to jump right in right? Maybe, but probably not. I always advise people to take a moment to catch your breath and make sure you are really ready before you set out on a major and life changing undertaking. Think of it this way. Before you jump out of that plane you want to be absolutely sure your parachute is properly attached and you know that you know that you know how to work it right?

Are you really prepared? You need to be rest up, prayed up, studied up and have your strategies on how to maintain your boundaries when they are pushed ready to go *before you begin*. If you don't your charge out of the gate and right into a disaster. Like the old saying goes, "that first step is a doozy!" So get ready.

I'm not suggesting you procrastinate either. Just that you've take enough time to be fully prepared to not only establish your boundaries but that you are also ready to *maintain them*. Drawing a boundary without being ready and willing to maintain that boundary is both foolish and a waste of time. Worse than that it'll discourage you and might provide the excuse you're looking for to never try that again.

So be ready and be rested as well. Don't start on your boundary journey exhausted or frustrated and angry. Anger doesn't really help you maintain boundaries in the long run. Human anger does not do the work of God well. I have to be calm and full of love and faith to maintain boundaries in a Christ like manner. To do so means I have to take the time needed to be able to do just that.

Biblical boundaries can break up the fallow (hardened, unused) ground of my heart. But that's only going to happen if I'm seeking the Lord before, during and after I draw them. So make sure you're spiritual compass is pointing true north and that you are fully ready to set sail before you shove off.

Lord, help me to be rested and settled in your love as I prepare to draw this boundary. It's a scary thing Lord so help me to do it fully motivated by your great love, which casts out all fear. Amen.



Week 4, Wednesday: Develop A Support Network

"I'll stand by you forever. Or at least until noon, and then I'll go stand under the cabana. Isn't love amazing?"
— Jarod Kintz

² *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* Galatians 6:2 (ESV)

One thing that you'll almost certainly need if you're going to successfully draw and maintain Biblical boundaries is a support network. And this group of friends need to be people who are not just convinced you are drawing a proper boundary but people who are really committed to you. Unlike the quote above you need people in your life who won't run for the cabana after a few hours. When the going gets tough often the people who said they were tough are the first ones getting going. That you don't need.

Setting up a strong support network is something that usually takes some time. If for no other reason it takes time to tell who's really serious about supporting you and who isn't. A lot of people say they'll stick with you, who unfortunately won't. So be wise and take a bit of time to know who's in your corner.

Of course this isn't a one way street. If you expect people to support you then you'd better be fully committed to supporting them as well. If not then you have a boundary issue right there. Life isn't all about you and you have to be willing to not just take but to give as well. Being always taking or always giving isn't Biblical and isn't healthy either.

That's why Paul says to bear "one another's burdens." I help you and you help me. It's a two way street. That's what Jesus wants for his children, to be helping others yes, but also being willing to accept help when you need it. That requires both the honesty to admit I've got a problem and the humility to gratefully accept it.

So setting up a support network takes both humility and a willingness to both help and be helped. When it works both ways you can see the Body of Christ in action just as God has planned. **Lord help me find those who can support me and help me to support them in as many ways as is right for me to do so. Amen.**



Week 4, Thursday: Pick A Day To Activate

Success is simple. Do what's right, the right way, at the right time.—Arnold H. Glasow

⁶ *For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him.* Ecclesiastes 8:6 (ESV)

Now that we've got our priorities settled and our support network in place and we've made sure we're ready to really commit to this new boundary it's time to finally say when it will all begin.

You might be thinking, "*Well why not do it right away?*" That's a good question and usually that's what you'll do. Once you are ready you can jump on in. But not always. There are times when it's better to wait and choose just the right moment to let the people involved know about your decision. (More about announcing the boundary tomorrow.)

So it's time to be wise and strategic about when to begin. Here's a few ideas that might help you do this. Of course every situation and person is a bit different so all of these might not apply. Perhaps none of them will. But I believe that for most of us most of these ideas can be a big help.

Pick a day when both you and the people your boundary impacts most will be in a fairly good place (mood, whatever). This can't always be done of course, but if you can find a time when stress and tensions are lower than normal that's better than dropping a bomb in the midst of a storm.

Most important of course is that you are ready as we covered before. But it's wise to try and make sure the other person can be as receptive as is possible (yes, that might not be much but every little bit helps!).

Pick a time when you can calmly explain the new boundary. This should be rehearsed so that you do everything you can to clearly and correctly explain what the boundary is, why you are drawing it, and make it clear you aren't going to argue about it either now or later. The boundary is your new reality and everyone, including yourself, now has to deal with it.

Pick a person to back you up if necessary. If they don't go with you make sure someone will be there afterwards to debrief you and encourage you. You'll probably need it. **Dear God, please give me the wisdom to choose just the right and place to set in place this boundary that you've been preparing me to make. May I do this as wisely. Amen.**



Week 4 Friday: Let People Know

“No one loves the messenger who brings bad news.” — Sophocles,

¹⁴ *When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" ...¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. Exodus 18:14,17 (ESV)*

One of the hardest parts of setting boundaries is when the moment comes to actually set them. That very tough time when you sit down face to face with the person or people involved and give them the bad news that things are changing whether they like it or not. You aren't attacking them and you won't argue with them. Rather you are informing them of a decision you've *already made* and hoping they'll respect your choice and you.

Some of you might be thinking, “*Good luck with that!*” Many times you are right to be skeptical. Most people don't like change especially when it involves news they consider to be bad. So you have to be prepared for responses that will often be less than positive and receptive shall we say. There are times, like with Moses, when the bad news resulted in him hearing and setting up for himself good boundaries. But that isn't always going to happen. Frankly it isn't even going to happen very often.

I don't say this to scare you but to help prepare you. Remember this is what you've been praying and preparing for. You are ready. You just have to do it calmly and in a Christ like way, sticking to your guns when and if you hit opposition, and you'll be okay.

That support network is sounding a lot better now isn't it? This is the moment when you bravely launch yourself out of the airplane door and into the brave new world that your boundary will help create. This is why you needed to be prayed up so you don't fall down.

Lord, give me grace courage and clarity as I seek to communicate your boundary. Amen!



Week 4, Saturday: Remember Why I'm Doing It

“Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future.” --*Elie Wiesel*

²⁴ *and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:24 (ESV)*

Whenever you start something new it's often difficult. Boundaries tend to be very difficult because you are not just dealing with yourself but others as well. All next week we'll be talking about not withdrawing your boundaries. But for today I want you to remember *why*. Often stress robs us of remembering the reason why started something in the first place and so discouraged we quit. That's not what ought to happen with Biblical boundaries so today take a few moments to remember.

Remember the **personal reason** you started this. Just about everyone draws boundaries because of personal pain. Things aren't right, I am not happy and might even be miserable, so I finally decide to pay the price to change. You need to *never forget* what it is that is motivating you to do this. If you remind yourself of what got you started you'll be more motivated and won't quit. So remember! (Cue Star Trek 2 Wrath of Khan video!)

Remember the **Biblical reason** you are doing this. You have to remind yourself you aren't just doing this for yourself, you are doing this because God wants you to. This boundary is part and parcel of my obedience to God so I can't let it go without letting go of God. And *no one* or *no thing* is going to make me do that! Don't forget this.

Remember the **relational reason**. Just about everyone would love to have relationships that are both stronger and more loving. These kind of healthy relationships bring so much happiness in our lives when they work right. But they bring misery when they don't. Remember you are trying to heal a relationship so that it'll be more Godly and function as it was designed too. Whatever you do don't let go of that.

Lord, keep me mindful of why I'm doing what I'm doing. Help me to never forget! Amen!



DEVOTIONAL

Week Five:

Withstand the Pressure

To Withdraw



Week 5, Monday: Remember it's By Faith

I am still far from being what I want to be, but with God's help I shall succeed.—Vincent Van Gogh

⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

One of the very first things that will probably happen when you start to draw Biblical boundaries in your life is that you'll face very strong pressure to withdraw them. Some of that pressure will come from those around you and some of it will come from within you. If you're going to be faithful in keeping the boundaries God wants in your life you are going to have to rely on God or you will most likely fail.

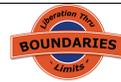
Remember we all have an old nature and that nature won't like your new boundaries if they are Biblical. My old self is usually quite comfortable living in the chains of addiction and dysfunction and denial that I've created in my life. Part of me *actually likes it*, which is why I continue to act in ways that I know are wrong or destructive.

So this battle isn't me as the hero facing down all those bad guys out there. I'm sorry to say but this battle to keep God's boundaries in my life is first of all against *me* and then everyone else. I have to remember this and not neglect dealing with myself as well as others.

In the end it's a spiritual battle. As Paul says "out battle is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). There is a spiritual component to this because the devil doesn't want you to succeed in doing anything that will please God or make your life better or draw you closer to God. Since having functional Biblical boundaries in my life does all of that and more Satan is dead set against them.

So in the end much of this comes down to faith. I can only please God by acting in faith. So I have to choose to do what the Word of God says even when I don't want to and sometimes it just feels *wrong*. It feels wrong because I've gotten so comfortable with my bondage I think that's the right way to live. But it's not and I have to stand on the Word by faith and not give into the pressure that comes against me and my new Biblical boundaries.

Lord, help me to discover what it's really like to live by faith, trust in you, and not give in to myself or others.



Week 5, Tuesday: Don't Fight About It

I tell the kids, somebody's gotta win, somebody's gotta lose. Just don't fight about it. Just try to get better.—
Yogi Berra

⁹ *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.* 1 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

Boundaries are not about fighting and this is especially true about Biblical boundaries. Again our natural desire is to fight for what we think is right or against what's wrong. But that's exactly the wrong approach to take as you seek to maintain your boundaries.

I'm constantly counseling people *not* to fight about them. The people in your life who are boundary pushers and breakers will almost always try and get you into a "discussion" or an argument about your boundary. They might say they are trying to understand what your boundary is but it's far more likely what they are attempting to understand is how they can get you to withdraw or modify your boundary. Of course the modification they want is one that will allow them to continue what you are trying to stop.

It's not a mistake to clearly explain your boundary, that's good and we should always do that. But it's almost always a mistake to either defend them or to try and get others to agree with them. Winning them over isn't your job. In fact your desire to do that is probably a sign of the very sickness in your soul that Biblical boundaries can help cure.

So— *don't debate or argue or argue about your boundaries*. Never ever do that. Just set them up and then go about your life. If people don't like your boundaries that's ok too. Remember—we're trying to please God here *not people!*

Father help me to see that my desire to defend or win people over or make them happy is part of my problem. Guide me & help me to set your boundaries in my life & leave the work of changing others to you. Amen.



Week 5, Wednesday: No Compromise

All compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on mere fundamentals is a surrender. For it is all give and no take.—Mahatma Gandhi

¹⁷ *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* James 4:17 (ESV)

Here's another trick that you need to be watchful about when it comes to maintaining Biblical boundaries—compromise. Now that sounds like a very fair and reasonable thing to doesn't it? And many times compromise is exactly that. But as Gandhi pointed out above when it comes to your core principles and fundamental beliefs compromise is deadly. If you compromise on the Word of God and the truths it reveals you will, at the very least, do great spiritual damage to yourself.

If you compromise on Biblical principles you can destroy relationships. Let's just take one example—lying. From the very beginning God has condemned lying. It's never good to lie and God is never pleased when I do lie. A lie isn't just something untrue that I say. If I withhold something in an effort to mislead someone, I'm lying to them. Webster used to define lying as "any kind of designed deception." That's a great way to understand what lying is really all about.

If you compromise on telling the truth and being an upright and honest person you will begin to undermine not just your relationships but your own soul as well. Because once I start deceiving others I also begin to deceive myself. To lie leads to darkness and you should *never* compromise on that Biblical boundary.

Or any other Biblical boundary for that matter.

So, when you feel pressed to "be reasonable" or fair or whatever remember this devotional. If you've done your homework before setting your boundaries then you shouldn't need to change them. Don't cave into pressure and destroy what God wants to see in your life. Stand strong and don't compromise!

Father help me to never compromise my faith in you or living according to you Word! Amen.



Week, Thursday: Opt Out of the Game

With some people, the only way to win is to refuse to play. - unknown

²³ *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.* 2 Timothy 2:23 (ESV)

Being the humble guy that I am I decided to make the title for today's devotional is a quote from myself. I say that all the time to people when it comes to boundaries. It is especially apt for any boundary drawn within a family, church, workplace or other kinds of groups.

Any time you have a group of people you're probably going to have one or more people who try and play games with people within the group. For example many of you know people in your family who don't get along very well. Instead of going to each other (as Jesus commanded) and working things they out what do they do? They go to you! They tell what the other one did or said, and try and get you to be on their side and make that other person fall in line.

When you find yourself being the "middle man" (or woman) in a dysfunctional relationship there's only one thing to do. Don't take sides take the door and *get out!* I don't mean leave your family I mean leave the game. Opt out of the game. You don't have to condemn or criticize anyone. It's not helpful to give a big lecture on why you're opting out. No preaching needed here.

Just tell the parties involved that from now on they'll have to deal directly with each other because you are not going be a go between any longer. You are opting out of the game.

Ah, can you feel the relief? Many of you would if you would only *do it!* If those people need help then let them see their Pastor or counselor but as for you—opt out of the game and don't get sucked back in again either. It really is that simple. It's a classic boundary and while it's not easy to do, and you'll be criticized for doing it, it's absolutely the right thing to do.

Lord, help me to do what I know I need to do & to deal with the storm that will create. Amen.



Week 5, Friday: Look For the Good

I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter.
—Walt Disney

⁸ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*
Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

In the midst of all the struggle don't forget to be on the look out for all the good God and Godly boundaries will create in your life. Yes there will be stress and discomfort. Sure a lot of people will misunderstand you, because they are in need of their own boundaries and just don't know it. But it's not going to be anywhere near all bad or all tough either.

Most people find that even the midst of setting Biblical boundaries they have an almost immediate sense of peace. They can finally breath a little deeper because they've let go of things they were never meant to carry in the first place. When you let go of that load it can be such a relief. When you stop trying to "fix" everyone and give up the fantasy that God put you on earth to fix everything it's quite a load off that's for sure.

Beyond yourself be looking to see what's happening to those around you. Often those around will be helped by your own lack of stress and peacefulness. You might notice them smiling more or just being a bit more relaxed around you. Why? Because you've lost a lot of tension you didn't even know you were carrying and now they can relax. Isn't it amazing what small changes can do?

Be sure to also look for the good God can do in your ministry and your own spiritual life as well. Biblical boundaries make it easier to draw closer to God because I'm no longer carrying things that keep me distant from him. Another huge relief and blessing God wants to work in our lives.

Father give me eyes of faith that I can see what you are doing through boundaries in my life. Amen



Week 5, Saturday: My New Normal

Constant change is the new normal.—Rick Torben

¹⁸ *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

To make some of the changes you've been making in your life permanent is a tough assignment. Most people who lose a lot of weight don't keep it off for long. After a few years they not only gain it all back but actually add a few more pounds as well!

Today I just want to get you thinking about one thing. If I change the way I think about myself and my life it's going to be a huge asset in not going back.

Or in other words: **Living out Biblical boundaries is my new normal.** This is just how I am now. It's not odd or a passing fad or anything other than the way I live now. It's *normal* for me to opt out of the games people play, to be open and transparent and to stick to my boundaries no matter what.

Neither I nor anyone else ought to be surprised by any of this. It is, by the grace of God, just the way I am. It's my new normal and I'm not going back to my old sin and dysfunction either. Because going back would be *unnatural* for me, because I've been transformed and this is how I am now thanks to Jesus Christ working in my life.

I have to adjust to this as the new normal. Not relax or get over confident. I know I can go back, more than that I know I *will go back*, unless I stay focused on following Jesus and maintaining his boundaries in my life. So today why not give thanks for the new normal that God is building in your life? It's a blessing so let's all be thankful for it.

Lord, thank you for the work you've done in my life, there's so much more to do but I thank you for what's been done so far. And rejoice that you've only just started making me like Jesus. Amen.



DEVOTIONAL

Week Six: Internalize My Boundaries



Week 6, Monday: Setting Boundaries Is Worship

The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. - Billy Graham

¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

You may not have ever thought of it this way before but setting Biblical boundaries is worship. Boundaries are lines we draw in our lives and are designed to help transform us into being more like Jesus. As Paul says above in Romans that's what worship is!

This is even more clear when we remember that worship means "service." Real worship is an act of service to God. And when I set God's boundaries into my life and follow them I am serving and worshipping him. Just think about that. When you think of it in those terms that means you can actually worship God continually by living according to his boundaries. In this way my whole life becomes an act of worship to God.

It doesn't get much better than that now does it?

The reason this might seem odd at first is because we have linked worship with service and only think about worship when we think about being in a "worship service." Of course you can worship at a worship service but just because you are at one doesn't mean you are worshipping either. It depends on where your mind and heart is at.

That's true of our everyday living as well. If my heart is open to God and my mind is settled upon living according to his boundaries then my very life becomes an act of worship, a hymn of praise, to the God who loves us so much.

Father how I praise your great wisdom that transforms an act of obedience into the most beautiful act of worship. Make my life one unending worship service until I stand before on the day I die. Amen.



Week 6, Tuesday: Why I Need Boundaries

The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.—Albert Einstein

⁷ *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*
Psalm 19:7 (ESV)

We've talked about this before but it's a good time to remind ourselves just why all this boundary stuff is so important. Because if I don't see it as vital I'm very likely to give it up when it gets hard to hang on to them. So here's why Biblical boundaries are so important in just four words:

Because I'm a sinner.

Well that's pretty simple isn't it? But it's something we need to be reminded of quite often. Yes, I'm a sinner, in spite of saying I'll do my best I often do my worst. I need Jesus, I need salvation, I need lots of help which means *I need Biblical boundaries!*

Without the right boundaries I'd mess my life up even if I was the last person on earth. So the real reason I need boundaries isn't other people or relationships or anything else. It's me. I'm the real reason I need boundaries and I might as well admit it and accept it.

This is a real dose of reality. What accepting this does for me is not make me feel condemned but liberated. Now I'm free to enter into boundaries fully because I know I need them. It's in my best interest to establish and keep Biblical boundaries. This ought to be a powerful motivator in all our lives.

Lord I ask you to keep the truth about who and what I am ever before me. May I always remember so that I can also always exalt you as my one source of hope, love and grace. Amen,



Week 6, Wednesday: Boundaries Are About Me

You cannot change others. More people suffer from trying to change others than from any other sickness. - Boundaries

⁵ *You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Matthew 7:5 (ESV)*

Now that we've admitted we need boundaries there's something else we have to realize. I can only set boundaries to change *my own behavior—not other's*.

I hope you get this because it's the biggest misunderstanding of boundaries I deal with. I've heard many people say something like, "I'm establishing a boundary and you can no longer do this or say that to me!" Ta Da! Instant proof that the person speaking had missed the whole point about boundaries! Congratulations bunky!

That's not establishing boundaries, it's using the concept to further your sick and sinful need to *control other people*. God is in control not you and not me. You can't tell other people, "You can't do that because I've set a boundary." Or to put it another way, your boundaries don't apply to me, don't change me and really have nothing to do with me.

My boundaries only effect *my* behavior. So I can't set a boundary that prevents my friends from gossiping. But I can, and should, set one that prevents me from even listening to gossip. They get to do what they want and I get to choose to leave and not encourage their bad behavior.

I hope you get this concept. It's simple to say but sometimes hard to put into action. It just seems natural for most of us to want and change others (for their own good we tell ourselves) by setting boundaries, But that's not a boundary it's just an excuse to sin.

God help me to focus on my need for change and not worry about changing others. Amen.



Week 6, Thursday: Good Habits Are Biblical Boundaries

"Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going." - Jim Ryun

¹⁶ *But he [Jesus] would withdraw to desolate places and pray. Luke 5:16 (ESV)*

What's a habit? It's a way of doing or thinking or speaking that becomes so ingrained in us that we usually don't think about it at all. The ability to form habits is both a blessing and a curse. Aren't you glad you don't have to think about how to tie your shoe or walk across the room or drive your car?

On the other hand there are all those bad habits of mine. Those things I do often without even thinking about it that I know I shouldn't do. Once formed a habit can be a powerful tool for either good or bad in my life.

Habits are really just unconscious boundaries. So forming good ones is a great way to instill Biblical boundaries in my life. When I was young I was taught to say "Yes Ma'am," or "Yes Sir," when I talked to adults. It became a habit and even today at my age I will often say that when speaking to someone older than I am who I respect.

That showing of respect is both a habit and a good boundary. The one can, and usually does, become the other. The great news in this for us is that as we work on our boundaries we can look forward to the day when we'll be doing them without thinking. It used to be very hard for me to say no in many situations. Today it still is at times, but nothing like it used to be and often I have no problem at all saying no.

So your ability to form habits is a tool if you take advantage of it. Make it work for you as God intended and not against you as the Devil would like. Set those boundaries and be diligent with them and as the months roll by you'll discover that what was once a struggle is not just second nature. Another good habit/boundary established in my life!

Heavenly Father I ask you to guide me as I do the hard work of setting good boundaries in my life. May they become good habits soon so that like Jesus I'll regularly do what you are calling me to do. Amen.



Week 6, Friday: Impacting My Thoughts & Feelings

Learn to live with the “dis-ease” that comes when you stop something and practice new behavior, the feelings will pass
- Al Anon

⁵ *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)*

Setting Biblical boundaries is about a lot more than just my thoughts and feelings as we’ve discussed through out this devotional. However that doesn’t mean boundaries don’t impact the way I think and feel. Obviously if boundaries change me for the better then that has to apply to my emotions and my feelings.

As you can see from 2 Corinthians above Paul understood how vital it is to have our thoughts and emotions line up with what we say and what we believe. My boundaries must change how I feel about things. As that change happens, and it’s gradual, I begin to realize that I don’t dislike this new behavior as much as I used too. I’ll also slowly become aware that I am beginning to feel better.

My emotions and thoughts will follow my will and my choices. They almost always do. But the pace of change can be torturously slow so don’t get discouraged when your thinking seems stubborn and your emotions even more so. As many have said we didn’t into the situations we are in over night and we won’t get out of them over night either.

As I like to say, **There’s no substitute for time.** This is true in almost every area of life and is certainly true when it comes to changing how we think or feel. It can be slow but the good news is this: *the change will come sooner or later.*

So have to learn to be patient. There’s another good boundary for you, learning to take the long view of life not the short one. Looking at things from a longer perspective is very healthy. After all God’s not in a hurry because he knows both we have all eternity to become like his Son. We know that too but truth is sometimes we just forget it.

Part of the challenge of boundaries is to let the truth of my boundaries trickle down into heart and mind. Then I’m not just changing what I say or do, but I’m changing how I think and feel. That’s complete holistic change as it’s best!

God help me to feel what’s really happening to me and to think with the mind of Christ. Amen.



Week 6, Saturday: Changing How I Do It

“Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people.” — Spencer Johnson

¹⁵ *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)*

For our final devotional about Biblical boundaries I want to ponder that boundaries don’t just change how I think or feel or what I do. Real Biblical boundaries also radically impact *how I do what I do (or don’t do).*

In other words, authentic Biblical boundaries are all about love.

If you are constantly trying to control someone you don’t really love them and certainly don’t love them the way God does. He could control us and unlike you or I God is always right. His control would be good for us and everyone else. Yet he refuses to do this. God respects our free will even when we horribly abuse it as can be seen in all the evil throughout history.

Why does he do this? Because he loves us so much that he respects our free will. Boundaries are about doing the same. So all boundary setting and maintenance must be done in a humble and Christ like spirit. Because boundaries are just out growths of God’s love. To try and draw a boundary in anger or hatred is to deny the very nature of the boundary in the first place.

That’s one reason I’ve used the expression Biblical boundaries in this devotional. There’s lots of different ways to draw boundaries, but what we’re concerned about is doing it in a way that’s Biblical and Christ honoring. This isn’t about ourselves it’s about obeying God and becoming like Jesus. So I have to be patient and loving and strong with my boundaries or else I might as well not do them at all.

Lord, as the campaign ends help my growth in boundaries continue to grow that I might be like Jesus. Amen.



Small Group Discussion Guide

GROUP HOST GUIDE LINES

Thank you so much for agreeing to host a small group for our **Boundaries: Liberation Thru Limits Campaign**. I know this is a step of faith for many of you and that you are a bit nervous. That's completely understandable and hopefully the few ideas I'll present here will help you.

First of all remember you are *not teaching* – I'll do that on the Video. All you have to do is ask the questions and guide the discussion after the video has stopped. A word on the videos – the DVD's we are providing should work just fine in your DVD or Blu-Ray player. However, please test them first to make sure. If they don't work and you have a computer you should be able to stream them off the church internet site – we'll announce more on that at church.

Snacks It's completely up to you and your group if you want to have snacks or not. If you do I recommend you keep them very simple, and rotate who brings them so no one person (especially you host or hostess) is overwhelmed.

Length of time. You should probably plan on most meeting going around 90 minutes and not let them go much past two hours even if people are enjoying themselves. We don't want to wear people out, but that's for you to determine as the discussion rolls along.

Topics. What we'll be doing in our groups this year is discussing the major different types or kinds of prayer. Louie will teach for about 10 minutes and then he and Amy will discuss what he's taught and the type of prayer under consideration. We're leaving you a bit more time than usual so that your group will actually have more time to **pray** since that's what we're trying to do this year.

The questions. As you can see I've provided you with an opening question to ask before the video and then several to talk about afterwards. Don't feel obligated to do all the questions if the group is really into one. You don't have to force them to complete them all.

Getting Off Topic. One of the most difficult things for people to handle is what to do when someone asks a question or makes a point that's completely off the topic under discussion. As host it's up to you to help steer things back on topic unless there's a real need to go off topic to help someone in the group at that moment.

Sometimes you'll have a person who does that regularly. Here's what I do. I'll say something like, "Thanks, that's a good point for us to discuss later but right now we are dealing with..." Or, "Well I don't know but let's get back to the question..." It's usually not hard to redirect the conversation and if you find someone who is regularly disruptive you might want to talk to them privately. You can call me for help on that one.

Prayer Time: You are free to pray as you wish. We hope you'll encourage everyone in the group to pray and to give them time for that without pressuring them to pray. In the back of this booklet there's some information on Conversational Prayer if you wish to try that. If not please use whatever form of group prayer seem to work best for your group.

Thanks again, God bless you! May you develop powerful Biblical Boundaries!

- Louie



WEEK ONE: Understand Your Families Dynamics



OPENING PRAYER



OPENING QUESTION:

How much do you know about boundaries? Do you think they are important and do you consciously use them in your life?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

Boundaries are _____ I draw in that _____ some things from and _____ other things in, my life.

1) God Says: _____ comes before family harmony.

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." ⁴⁸ He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:46-50 (NIV)

² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Luke 18:2-8 (ESV)

2) God Says: Put your immediate family _____

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

You've got to _____ before you _____ !

¹⁴ For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; Psalm 94:14 (ESV)

3) God Says: _____ help others escape their _____

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)

²⁵ What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself. Ephesians 4:25 (MSG)

• Don't get caught up in _____

• _____ OF THE GAME!!

• Helping others avoid their responsibilities is _____

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load. Galatians 6:2-5 (ESV)

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-8 (ESV)

4) God Says: _____ spiritually by making Christ #1 in your life!

⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. Matthew 23:9-10 (ESV)

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Galatians 4:1-6 (ESV)

¹ Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, Hebrews 6:1 (ESV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you have a clear understanding of what a boundary is? If not, or if you're not sure (which is the same thing) discuss it as a group and try and formulate your own definition.
- 2) When it is ok to disrupt my family harmony for the sake of truth? How do I know when it's the right time?
- 3) What kind of truth are we talking about here? Political? Opinion? Current events? Spiritual or Gospel truths?
- 4) How often have you been caught up in triangulation in your family? How about at work, church, etc.? How does being involved in this type of situation make you feel?
- 5) How do you "opt out of the game?" What do you say and what kind of things do you have to do to actually carry this out in your life?
- 6) In the lesson they talked about growing up spiritually? How do you know when you are growing up spiritually? What kind of signs are there to help you know you are making progress?



PRAYER TIME



WEEK TWO: NAVIGATING YOUR FRIENDSHIPS



OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION:



Do you think you have a lot of really good friends or only a few? How important are your friends to you?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

1) I must be _____

¹⁷ *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Proverbs 17:17 (ESV)

¹⁰ *Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.* Proverbs 27:10 (ESV)

2) I must be _____

¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* Romans 12:10 (ESV)

Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Rom. 12:10 (Message)

²⁶ *It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*
²⁷ *and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,* ²⁸ *even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Matthew 20:26-28 (ESV)

¹⁹ *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."* Matthew 11:19 (ESV)

3) I must practice full _____ - "Just as I am."

⁷ *Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.* Romans 15:7 (ESV)

⁹ *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.* Proverbs 17:9 (ESV)

³² *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

4) Be _____

⁶ *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.* Proverbs 27:6 (ESV)

⁹ *Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.* Proverbs 27:9 (ESV)

¹⁷ *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.* Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)

5) Never _____

¹⁸ *And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* ¹⁹ *And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”* ²⁰ *You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”* ²¹ *And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”* ²² *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* ²³ *But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.* ²⁴ *Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Luke 18:18-24 (ESV)*

⁷ *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)

6) Really make Jesus my _____

¹⁵ *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* John 15:15 (ESV)

²⁴ *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* Proverbs 18:24 (ESV)

²³ *and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.* James 2:23 (ESV)

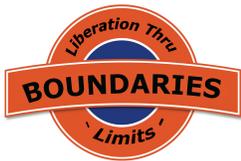


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would define a real friend? How many of them do you have in your life? How many are local? Do you need more friends and why or why not?
- 2) If I'm not faithful to my friends am I being a friend at all? Just how far does your faithfulness to your friends go?
- 3) If I seek to serve my friends and they seek to serve me is that equality in action? How well does that work out in real life? Many people are only comfortable in an unequal relationship – as leader or the one who always needs help – is that real friendship? Why or why not?
- 4) We hear a lot about accepting others today. What specific issues or problems in others make it hard for you to accept them? Are there any acts that ought to be unacceptable and thus end a friendship, and if so what are they?
- 5) Just how honest is honesty supposed to be? Do I have to tell my friend *everything*? If you have to walk on eggshells with a friend are they really a friend at all?
- 6) When are you tempted to manipulate your friends? Do you allow your friends to manipulate you? How is this issue of manipulation tied into being honest?



PRAYER TIME



WEEK THREE: MARRIAGE



OPENING PRAYER



OPENING QUESTION:

Do you think most marriages suffer from boundary issues? If you're single why should you care about this anyway?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

1) Ask the right _____ & _____ your marriage.

²⁶ *Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.* Proverbs 28:26 (ESV)

- What boundaries does my marriage _____ ?
- How will my _____ react & how should I respond?
- Which of my spouse's _____ do I need to respect more?

¹⁶ *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.* 2 Corinthians 5:16 (ESV)

2) Take _____ for...

- My _____

¹¹ *We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.* ¹² *You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.* ¹³ *In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.* 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 (ESV)

◇ You can never honestly say, "You _____ feel..."

- Your _____

¹ *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?* ² *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.* ³ *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* James 4:1-3 (ESV)

- Your _____

² *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—* 1 Peter 2:2 (ESV)

3) _____ **Boundary principles.**

- _____ & _____

⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.* Galatians 6:7 (ESV)

• **Personal** _____

¹⁹ *A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.* Proverbs 19:19 (ESV)

3) **Personal** _____

²⁰ *The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.* Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV)

4) **Don't be afraid to EXPOSE MYSELF**

²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

Three Ways I Need Exposure:

- **Expose** _____

- **Expose** _____

- **Expose Myself to** _____ – **open your life to Christ!**

¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1) We began this lesson talking about evaluating your marriage. What practical steps can you take to do that? Is it a good idea to get an outside perspective from a Pastor or counselor?

Why or why not?

2) Which of your spouse's boundaries do you need to respect more? [Note: only answer this if you are quite sure it won't cause conflict with your spouse. Otherwise talk it over first.]

3) The lesson says you can never honestly say, "You make me feel..." Do you agree or disagree and why? Isn't it true that your spouse can sometimes drive you crazy? How is that different from making you feel a certain way?

4) How does the law of sowing and reaping work in your marriage? Give both good and bad examples.

5) Are you afraid of exposing more of your real thoughts, feelings and boundaries to your spouse? Why or why not?

6) What can you say or do to help your mate be more willing to be open to you? How can you create an atmosphere of trust in your marriage?

7) Did it bother you to be taught this lesson by two unmarried people? What would you like to say to Amy & Louie? [Speak the truth in love folks!]



PRAYER TIME



WEEK FOUR: TEACH YOUR CHILDREN



OPENING PRAYER



OPENING QUESTION:

Do you think our culture is doing a good job of teaching our children proper, Biblical boundaries? Why or why not?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

1) The Church is _____ Family.

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)

2) God should be our Parental _____

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Matthew 6:9 (ESV)

3) The goal of a good family – _____

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)

3) You Apply Boundaries Through _____

• Discipline = _____

⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:9-11 (ESV)

• Discipline's Positive Facets – _____

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)

◇ _____

◇ _____

◇ _____

- **Discipline's Negative Facets** – _____

¹⁰ *There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.* Proverbs 15:10 (ESV)

◇ _____

◇ _____

◇ _____

4) Boundary Benefits

- _____ your children from harm.

¹¹ *discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you,* Proverbs 2:11 (ESV)

- **Learning to** _____

⁶ *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.* ⁷ *Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,* ⁸ *she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.* ⁹ *How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?* ¹⁰ *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,* ¹¹ *and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.* Proverbs 6:6-11 (ESV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) We talk about how the church is God's family. But honestly now, do you *really* think of CCR as your family? Are you as committed to CCR and the people who make part of it as you are to your family? Why or why not?
- 2) How is viewing God as our parent helpful in our struggles to be a wise parent? What specific kind of things can you learn from God in the Bible that will help you be a better parent?
- 3) As an adult do you look at discipline as teaching? When you were a kid how did you view it? What kinds of discipline are helpful and effective in teaching your children?
- 4) We discussed using discipline as a carrot and stick in the lesson. Do you think this approach is valid? Is the carrot just another way to say "bribe?"
- 5) How important is it to teach our children to act not react? How can you teach and model that behavior? Were you raised to be that way?
- 6) In the lesson three different aspects of using discipline as the stick were discussed. Which ones do you think are most effective and why? Does it bother you to use what might be called "negative" discipline on your children or grand children?
- 7) Do you think the way you live, and the way most Americans live today, do a good job of modeling the importance of delayed gratification? If not what can you do to better model and teach this?



PRAYER TIME



WEEK FIVE: WORK BOUNDARIES



OPENING PRAYER



OPENING QUESTION:

How difficult is it for you to maintain proper boundaries at work or church? Is this harder for you than maintaining personal boundaries?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

7 Work Boundaries:

1) Fulfill your _____

DON'T GET STUCK WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S WORKLOAD!

⁶ And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' ⁸ And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" Luke 13:6-9 (ESV)

2) Fix your work within proper _____

DON'T WORK TOO MUCH OVERTIME!

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

3) Focus on your _____

MAJOR ON THE MAJORS – DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN!

¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone.... ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶ And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Exodus 18:17-18, 25-26 (ESV)

4) Figure out how to _____

LEARN TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT CO-WORKERS.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Col. 3:13

• Bear = _____

5) Don't be _____

DON'T GET CAUGHT UP WITH CO-WORKERS WHO ARE TOO CRITICAL.

⁷ *Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproveth a wicked man incurs injury.*

⁸ *Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Proverbs 9:7-8 (ESV)*

6) Free yourself when you _____

LEAVE AS MUCH WORK STRESS AT WORK AS POSSIBLE.

⁸ *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8 (ESV)*

6) Feel good about your JOB.

WHAT YOU DO REALLY DOES MATTER!

²¹ *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 1 Corinthians 12:21-26 (ESV)*

7) Work Is A _____ Activity

²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, Colossians 3:23 (ESV)*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:



1) If you are going avoid getting stuck with other people's workload what is the one little magic word you'll have to say? Is it hard for you to say it, why or why not?

2) Why is it so hard for so many to not become a workaholic? Is that hard for you, why or why not?

3) What can I do to make sure I don't lose focus and end up majoring on minors?

4) What can you do to bear with (put up with) that person at work who really irritates you? Does it help to pray for them, why or why not? What does it mean to put up with someone?

5) Do you find yourself becoming more critical and less forgiving when you hang around people who are really critical?

6) Do you tend to take work problems home? What happens when you do? Can you really avoid doing this or is it just a fact of life we all have to deal with?

7) Do you think most people understand that work is a spiritual activity? Have we lost the old tradition of any honest job being dignified and if so how can we restore this? When you do something well do you feel as though that's pleasing to God?



PRAYER TIME



WEEK SIX: BRAVE COMMUNICATION



OPENING PRAYER



OPENING QUESTION:

Do you consider yourself a good communicator? How many communication problems do you have in your marriage, friendships, etc.?



NOTES ON VIDEO:

The Goal: You are able to _____ what you say and _____ what you hear.

Useful for when I hear or have strong emotions, problems, or confusion.

If I don't have an attitude of _____ when communicating in conflict, the other person will pick up on that.

FEELINGS: the dirty little secret of communication

⁴⁵ *A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.* Luke 6:45

Feelings are not “the real and deepest you” as the enemy and some people would have us believe. Rather, they are only a part of you. You can think about feelings, judge them, ignore them, enjoy them, or choose to do other than you feel.

Your head will often lie to you about what you are feeling- _____

Anytime you hide a significant feeling from someone you create a “hidden agenda” and you block communication and growth with that person in that area.

Intimacy is NOT “He knows exactly what I’m feeling without me having to say it”. Rather, intimacy is “I trust him, and our relationship, enough to tell him what I feel” and “He makes me feel safe so I want to tell him what’s on my mind.”

- Sharing feelings _____

THE “I” MESSAGE AND BUILDING INTIMACY

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

The “it” message

“It would be really great to come home to a clean kitchen some night”

“It must be nice to come into work whenever you want.”

These messages point to a sender who is afraid, insecure or not able to own their own opinion. Lots of people use sarcasm when using an “it” message.

The “you” message

“You didn’t do the dishes again.”

“You are late.”

If your goal is to make someone defensive, use lots of “you” messages. They will produce a volley of “you” messages right back. It builds no intimacy, and in fact creates more division. The “I” message: “I feel upset when you say you’ll do the dishes and you don’t.” “I am frustrated that you are late again this morning because it makes me feel like you don’t value your job or me.”

These messages are direct. The sender takes responsibility. They let the other person know how their behavior has affect you. It elicits discussion rather than defensiveness.

The “I” Message has 3 parts (4 if you are feeling brave):

The feeling “I feel _____”

The non-blaming description of my observation or problem “when _____”

The effects of the behavior, response or attitude on me “because _____”

“So I need _____.” Or “So could we _____.”

I feel hurt when you make sarcastic remarks about me, because it feels like that’s what you really think about me. So I need you to consider that I don’t always know that you’re joking.”

HEAR LIKE YOU’VE NEVER HEARD BEFORE!

“To answer before listening—that is folly and shame.” Proverbs 18:13

Seek to understand and then to be understood.

What’s going on? Oh no, what happened?

I’m confused... Would you walk me through your thought process...?

Find out what’s going on with this SUPER POWERFUL, SOLID GOLD PHRASE: **“I’m wondering if...”** Instead of being suspicious of them, be highly suspicious of your ability to know someone else’s thoughts or motives.

_____ first, then give content if needed. The point of confrontation is to strengthen connection.

If you value the person then you must _____,

Active Listening

Listen to the _____ first, not the content.

Reflect the emotion to see if you’ve got it right. “You seem hurt.” “You sound frustrated?”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) Which part of Brave Communication (Feelings, Codebooks, The “I Message, Listening) resonated most with you and why?
- 2) Describe a time when you used any of these communication tools and it went well.
- 3) Why do you think the majority of people struggle to communicate what they really mean during times of conflict?
- 4) Where did you acquire most of your communication skills (good or bad) and how has it affected you?
- 5) When communicating with someone who doesn’t have honor or respect for the relationship in mind, what kind of boundaries do you think should be set?



PRAYER TIME:

Conversational Prayer

The five Essentials of Conversational Prayer

- 1) There is no need to take time to discuss prayer requests before the group starts to pray. These naturally arise in prayer. It is OK to take time to clarify these requests and needs in the midst of the conversational prayer.
- 2) Never pray around the circle. This will make guests and those who have not prayed publicly very uncomfortable. It also means that individuals will prepare their speeches, rather than listen carefully to the prayers and thoughts of others. Foster interaction.
- 3) Address one topic or theme at a time. This is like in any meaningful conversation with friends. Listen carefully and respond to the prayers of others. Affirm others with “Yes!” and “That’s right!” etc.
- 4) The leader prays first and models conversational prayer. When a group is learning, it will be best to have a leader. When a need is mentioned, this person can support and affirm. If the group starts praying around the circle, the leader can interrupt the ‘circle’ by praying!
- 5) Each person can pray briefly and often – or choose to remain silence and just enjoy the conversation with God. It is like a good conversation around a table.

Teaching a new Christian Conversational Prayer

1. Points to remember –

- Don’t make prayer complicated.
- This is talking with God.
- It is OK to talk with each other – while also talking with God.

2. What could you say when leading a person to prayer for the first time –

When with a person is not used to praying, you could say: I would like to pray with you. Prayer is talking with God – and He is right here with us. Prayer is like a conversation and so we can share this together. We can just share short sentences or just a word or two. It’s very easy. I’ll lead.

Then just start to pray. People will follow your lead. You could say: Father, we are glad that we can talk with You. Jesus, we are glad you are alive and present by your Holy Spirit. It is really good to be with my friend/s – and we want to spend a few minutes talking with you.

You can then lead – perhaps by saying: The first thing we would like to do is express our thanks. I want to thank you for ... And I know my friends have things to thank you for as well. And so (name your friends) – you may like to say ‘thank you’ to God. Some may like to just be with God – in His presence ...

3. Give people time to reflect and pray –

- Remember to affirm what they say.
- Listen carefully to each other and pray about what the previous person raised.
- As the prayer leader, interrupt any ‘going around the circle’.

If a person wishes to change the topic/theme and you sense that all who wished to speak on the previous theme have prayed, affirm the person and move to the next theme raised by that person. If you have never prayed conversationally – you are about to start on an exciting journey of deep spiritual fellowship. You will find it as easy to pray as to sit around a table to speak on any theme.

Reading: Rosalind Rinker, PRAYER Conversing With God (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 1972)