

Boundaries

Most of us find it challenging when it comes to setting healthy boundaries with others. We either find ourselves committing to things we should not get involved with, while avoiding things we should accept and pursue. The following lesson is a brief look at the importance of setting healthy, loving boundaries with the help from God's Word and the power and leading of the Holy Spirit working in those who follow Jesus Christ.

What is it?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines boundaries as "something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent." This may include physical boundaries such as the property on which you live. It may also include relational, emotional, moral and spiritual boundaries.

The Bible does not define the word boundaries per se, but it does give many examples of the importance of setting boundaries for our sake, the sake of others, and to develop a deeper love for, and faith in God.

Why is it important?

Physical space (as we move about), as well as material, relational, emotional and spiritual capacities are all **limited** because we are limited humans that have only so much we are able to have, to give, and to do. Therefore, setting healthy limits (boundaries) is critical if we are to use our time, talents, treasures and opportunities wisely, **and** for God's purposes. If we do not set healthy boundaries, our time, talents and treasures are misused or sucked away by others. Opportunities are missed for purposes that benefit ourselves and others, and that which also pleases and honors God.

How do we do it?

The following is a review of some of the Bible passages that describe the setting of boundaries for our good, the good of others, for God's purposes and for His glory. Keep in mind that God is love, perfect and holy. What He wants for us is also loving, perfect and holy.

Boundaries that apply to ourselves (to form Christ in us):

- Matthew 5:37 and James 5:12 teach to let your yes be yes and your no, no. Don't leave people hanging. Practice answering one way or the other (for the right reasons), and then keep your word (Matthew 5:33-36).
- Avoid that which is immoral as it affects our bodies that are temples of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)
- Watch your mouth! (Ephesians 4:29; James 3:2-12)
- When you are tempted, pray and watch for a way out which God promises to provide. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Guard your eyes (and ears too!). (Matthew 5:27-28; Job 31:1)
- Keep your thoughts on things that are good, and avoid things that are not. (Philippians 4:8-9)
- Don't conform to the patterns of the world. (Romans 12:2)
- Do what is good and productive. Avoid laziness. (Titus 3:14; 1 Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 10:4-5)

Boundaries with others:

- Always be careful who you are "yolked" (bound) with (deep relationships). (1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
- Avoid giving in to please others (to be liked) when it is not good for them **or** for you! (Galatians 1:10)
- Be careful not to cause someone else to stumble (sin) by what you do, but seek the good of others. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Romans 14:13)
- Don't associate with those who practice immorality. (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)
- Don't associate with those who are lazy and busybodies and don't do for others what they can and should do for themselves, but do not regard them as an enemy but warn them as a brother or sister. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-15) Instead, teach them how to do it for themselves. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)!
- Avoid trying to do everything for everyone! (See Exodus 18:14-23 for a lesson Moses had to learn for himself)
- When someone sins against you, confront the person privately. If that doesn't work, follow the principles taught in Matthew 18:15-17.

Boundaries to protect and nurture our relationship with God:

- Don't let anyone or anything take God's place in your life (idolatry). (Exodus 20:4; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 5:21)
- Seek regular quiet time to pray to, and to meditate on God just as Jesus did. (Luke 5:16)
- Stay in God's Word regularly. (Psalm 19: 7-11; Psalm 119:11, 105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Practice a heart of thankfulness to God in all circumstances. (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 5:1-6 = why)
- Obey God as He teaches and leads you. (John 14:23-24)
- Praise God at all times because He is worthy of our praise, even in our suffering. (Psalm 150:1-6; 1 Peter 4:12-19)

**Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God and not for men.
(1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23)**