

# Boundaries, Fear, Guilt, Forgiveness, & Reconciliation

Message 4 of 4 in the series: "Boundaries"

**Boundaries** = dividing lines that clearly define our identities, responsibilities, and privileges.

## A. Boundaries help us live godly lives.

1. Good boundaries keep us away from ungodliness and help us develop self-control. **"For the grace of God has appeared** that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..."  
Titus 2:11-13 (NIV)
2. Good boundaries help us focus on being God-pleasers rather than people-pleasers. "But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him... Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. **For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.**" John 12:37 & 42-43 (NLT)

## B. Boundaries help us maintain healthy relationships.

1. Good boundaries define who/what we're responsible for and who/what we're NOT responsible for. "Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved... Peter asked Jesus, **'What about him, Lord?'** Jesus replied, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, **what is that to you? As for you, follow me.**" John 21:20-22 (NLT)
2. Good boundaries help us clearly communicate our expectations so we can work well together. "The **Valley Gate** was repaired by the people from Zanoah... They also repaired the **1,500 feet of wall** to the Dung Gate. The **Dung Gate** was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab... The **Fountain Gate** was repaired by Shallum son of Col-hozeh... He rebuilt it, roofed it, set up its doors, and installed its bolts and bars. Then he repaired the **wall of the pool of Siloam** near the king's garden, and he rebuilt **the wall as far as the stairs** that descend from the City of David... Above the Horse Gate, the priests repaired the wall. **Each one repaired the section immediately across from his own house.**"  
Nehemiah 3:13-15 & 28 (NLT)

## C. Sometimes we are reluctant to set boundaries.

1. We may be reluctant to set boundaries because we're afraid of others' reactions. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.' Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that **his face became distorted with rage**. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. **Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.**" Daniel 3:16b-20 (NLT)

**Important:** Before implementing new boundaries, we should count the cost. **"But don't begin until you count the cost.** For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!'" Luke 14:28-30 (NLT)

2. We may be reluctant to set boundaries because we feel guilty. Sometimes we've lived without healthy boundaries for so long that enabling a loved one to continue in his/her addiction or overcommitting to please others feels normal and dealing with our problems feels wrong. This is especially true when the people who have benefitted from our lack of boundaries want to make us feel guilty for changing the status quo. **"There is a way that seems right** to a man, But its end is the way of death."  
Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

**Important:** Establishing and implementing healthy boundaries requires wisdom. It is important to seek wise counsel and the support of Christian friends, especially when boundaries are long overdue. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." Proverbs 15:22 (NIV)

#### D. Forgiveness, boundaries, and reconciliation:

Forgiveness = letting go, choosing to not collect on past debts or seeking revenge for past wrongs.

1. Forgiveness is an essential part of the Christian life. "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

**Important:** "Dear friends, **never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.** For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord. Instead, 'If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.'" Romans 12:19-20 (NLT)

2. It is wise to forgive AND set boundaries. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)
3. Clear boundaries are vital for reconciliation.

Reconciliation = the process of two alienated parties coming to peace with each other.

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For **God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them.** And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NLT)

**Important:** Forgiveness requires one person. Reconciliation requires two.

"So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, '**Come back to God!**' For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (NLT)

#### E. Now is a good time to start establishing healthy boundaries.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)

**Important:** "But don't just listen to God's word. **You must do what it says.** Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." James 1:22 (NLT)

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#### Connect Group Questions:

1. In what ways have boundaries helped you live out your Christian faith? (Titus 2:11-14, John 12:42-43)
2. How did Jesus demonstrate healthy boundaries with Peter? (John 21:18-22)
3. How did healthy boundaries help the Israelites rebuild the wall around Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 3:13-15 & 6:15)
4. Discuss the following reasons we may be reluctant to establish boundaries:
  - We may be reluctant to set boundaries because we're afraid of others' reactions (anger, payback, rejection, etc.). (Daniel 3:16-20, Luke 14:28-30)
  - We may be reluctant to set boundaries because we wrongly feel guilty ("I'm being selfish/judgmental", "I'm hurting them", etc.). (Proverbs 14:12 & 15:22)
5. How do healthy boundaries help us forgive/reconcile with each other? (Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:31-32)
6. React to the following statement: "Forgiveness requires one person, reconciliation requires two." (2 Corinthians 5:17-22)
7. What boundaries do you need to put in place this week? What's been holding you back? (Ecclesiastes 3:1, James 1:22)

**Great Resource:** "Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life." By Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend, Zondervan, 2017.

**Bonus verses:** "Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. **The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;** surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Psalm 16:5-8 (NIV)