

From **BOUNDARIES**
By Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

Here are some excerpts and summaries from this excellent book.

Boundaries can help us define what are our responsibilities, can save us time and energy, increase our love for others and save our life. We are commanded in the Bible to have self-control, not other control. We have to take ownership of certain aspects of our lives that are own responsibilities. We are expected to take responsibility for our own behaviors, attitude and feelings. Boundaries help us to live and love better.

Boundaries we need to have:

Skin- we are responsible for our bodies, how we take care of them and protecting them from others. You are separate from others. You will make choices of what your senses will see, smell, touch, feel and hear. You will decide how you will treat your body with food, diet and exercise. *Victims of physical and sexual abuse have a difficult time with this as others have invaded their bodies, doing whatever they wanted.*

Words- You can protect yourself with the word “no” to pressure to conform to ungodly ways or control. We are to confront people in love and not be afraid to say, “No, I will not participate in that”. Many passages of Scripture urge us to say no to others sinful treatment of us. (See Matt. 18:15-20). Sometimes people with poor boundaries struggle with saying “no” because they cherish their relationship with that person more than what is right or wrong. The Bible warns us against giving to others reluctantly or under compulsion in 2 Cor. 9:7. It is important to let people know where you stand and give them a sense of the edges that help to identify you from others.

Truth- Knowing the truth from the Bible about God will help you establish boundaries. God’s truth is to live in accord which makes for a better life (Ps. 119:2,45). Satan is a great distorter of truth and reality. We may often justify what we do. Eve started to justify her behavior and made an entire world fall to sin. Honesty about what you hold important gives you integrity, loyalty and personal strength.

Distance-The Bible says to flee from Satan. Removing yourself from a situation can help you maintain boundaries. By separating yourself, you may see things more clearly and that may lead to a change in your behavior (Matt. 18:17). *This may be very necessary in relationships that are abusive, exploitive or emotionally unstable.*

Time- Sometimes we need time away from our children, our job or difficult relationships to get renewed and work on issues. We should not run from our problems but take time to get recharged to work on them.

Other People- Many people are taught to say “yes” to every need of each person they meet. They are taught by their church or family that boundaries are un-biblical, mean or

selfish. We need to be able to prioritize our greatest responsibilities and if we cannot help someone, direct them to someone that can. We need to set limits on our exposure to people who are behaving poorly. Scripture is full of admonitions to separate ourselves from people who are acting in destructive ways. We need to set our own internal limits that says that despite the act, feeling, desire, or impulse, with God's help we can have self-control.

Thoughts- We must own our own thoughts. We need to examine our thoughts and "whatever is good, think on these things." We have a responsibility to grow spiritually and in knowledge. Ps. 119:20. We should clarify our distorted thinking if it doesn't go along with the Bible.

Desires-We are not to actively seek our own selfish pleasure. Or desire should not to be to make ourselves rich, powerful, proud or sexy. We need to know God to know what we should ask for and "he will give you the desires of your heart. Ps. 37:4.

REMEMBER:

- I have the right to define my own physical boundaries
- I have the right to feel comfortable and safe
- I can do what I need to do to keep myself comfortable and safe
- I have the right to ask, expect and insist that others respect my physical boundaries.
- I choose to spend my time in places and with people that make me feel comfortable and safe.
- I can protect myself from unwanted closeness and contact by saying no
- I have the right to determine how and by whom I want to be touched.

RESULTS OF NOT SETTING BOUNDARIES

When we do not develop healthy boundaries in childhood, we set up wrong patterns in our childhood that can last all of our adulthood. Here are some:

- inability to say no to hurtful people or set limits on hurtful behavior from others
- inability to say no to their own destructive impulses
- inability to hear no from others and respect their limits
- inability to delay gratification to accomplish goals and tasks
- tendency to be attracted to irresponsible or hurtful people and try to fix them
- try to take responsibility for other people's lives
- become romantically involved with someone you feel sorry for
- has difficulty maintaining closeness with others or a commitment to them
- experiences life as a victim instead of living it
- can be easily manipulated or controlled by others so you won't "hurt" their feelings\
- can find yourself attracted to those who are irresponsible or hurtful and think you can 'fix' them
- have addictions and compulsions
- disorganization and lack of follow-through

- has difficulty being honest with those they are close to

Boundaries can prevent many problems with which many adults struggle.