

# **Boundaries**

**Office Lighthouse Discussion Materials**

# **BOUNDARIES**

## Chapter 1 - Defined

Boundaries define us. They define the essence of me – what I am and what I’m not. A boundary shows me where I end and where someone else begins, lending a sense of ownership.

Knowing what I am all about and take responsibility for gives me freedom. If I know where my yard begins and ends, I can feel free to do what I like with it. Taking responsibility for my life opens up many different options. However, if I do not “own” my life, my choices and options become very limited. (Boundaries by Cloud and Townsend)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are faced with the dilemma - too many options and not enough time and energy. Trying harder is not working, being nice is not working, and taking responsibility for others is not working. We can feel run over by a boundary-less life, to one degree or another.

Comment on the above.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Can I set limits and still be a loving person? Can you give an example?
- 2) What are legitimate boundaries?
- 3) What if someone is offended or hurt by my boundaries? Who needs to change? Why?
- 4) How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?
- 5) “Submit yourself to one another.”(The Bible) How do boundaries relate to submission?
- 6) Aren’t boundaries selfish? Can you defend your answer?

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### **Chapter 2 - Guilt**

A man telephoned his mother, and she answered the phone very weakly, with hardly any voice at all. Concerned, thinking she was sick, he asked her, "Mother, what's wrong?"

"I guess my voice doesn't work very well anymore," she replied. "No one ever calls me since you children left home."

No weapon in the arsenal of the controlling people is as strong as the guilt message. People with poor boundaries almost always internalize any guilt-message leveled at them; they obey guilt-inducing statements that try to make them feel bad.

Other Guilt Messages:

"How could you do this to me, after all I've done for you?"

"It seems that you could think about someone other than yourself for once."

"If you really loved me, you would make this telephone call for me."

"It seems like you would care enough about the family - to do this one thing."

"How can you abandon the family like this?"

"You know how it's turned out in the past when you haven't listened to me."

"After all, you never had to lift a finger around here. It seems like it's time you did."

"You know that if I had it, I would give it to you."

"You have no idea how much we sacrificed for you."

"Maybe after I'm dead and gone, you'll be sorry."

"You must have a spiritual problem to be acting this way." (Boundaries)

Can you relate to any of the above?

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How can you know if a message is meant for your own good or meant to manipulate and control?
- 2) Guilt senders would rather focus on you and your behavior than how they feel. (Boundaries) Why? Have you run into guilt senders? How so?
- 3) If guilt works on you, whose problem is it? Why?
- 4) “There is no condemnation in Christ.”(The Bible) How could this statement help with guilt?
- 5) If guilt messages are about the sender’s feelings, how should we respond to them? Give an example.
- 6) How are people that you know dealing with guilt?

## **BOUNDARIES**

### Chapter 3 - Values

What we value is what we love and assign importance to. Often we do not take responsibility for what we value. We are caught up in valuing the approval of men rather than the approval of God (John 12:43); because of this misplaced value, we miss out on life. We think that power, riches, and pleasure will satisfy our deepest longing, which is really for love.

When we take responsibility for out-of-control behavior caused by loving the wrong things, or valuing things that have no lasting value and when we confess that we have a heart that values things that do not satisfy, we can receive help from God and his people to “create a new heart” within us. Boundaries help us not to deny but to own-up our old hurtful values so God can change them. (Boundaries)

Values determine how we set boundaries. Our values come from our world-view. These world-views seem to dominate mankind: theism (God), transcendentalism (spirit energy), and materialism (material possessions). (Ken Boa)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) The origin of each is as follows: theism – a personal creator, transcendentalism – impersonal agency (energy), materialism – impersonal plus time and chance. How would you comment on the origin of each?
- 2) The purpose of each is as follows: theism – relationships (other centered), transcendentalism- self-actualization, and materialism- survival autonomy. What do you see as the benefits or negatives of a life purposed on such values?
- 3) The destiny of man is as follows: theism – unbounded relational life, transcendentalism - absorption (spiritual annihilation), materialism – physical annihilation. How would each view affect your value system?
- 4) Can you effectively mix and match the three world-views to determine your value system? What would that look like?
- 5) Can all three views be true at the same time? Why?
- 6) If truth is relative, how does this affect the best place to get our values? If truth is absolute, must we pick one world-view and reject the others?

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### Chapter 4 - Resist or Surrender

Imagine you are living in Nazi Germany prior to World War II, and you can clearly foresee the eventual catastrophe of the mad adventure of the Third Reich. You are faced with a dilemma, do I resist or do I surrender to this madness that will destroy my country?

“It’s not always the strong who win, as the realist imagine. Nor it is always those whose argument is the most reasonable, as idealists would think. It is a well-known fact that little dogs bark more than big ones, and sometimes scare them off by sheer noise. The strong can afford to give in majestically, for they have no need of victory in order to gain prestige; the weak become desperately obstinate in order to assert themselves. They will argue against plain logic and even against their interests, because they cannot stand the possibility of being defeated.” (To Resist or to Surrender? Paul Tournier)

Throughout our lives, several times a day, we are faced with having to decide whether or not we will give in to certain demands. This is a challenge to our boundaries and thus may define who we are.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Reflect on the dilemma of moral people living in Germany prior to WWII.
- 2) Do you agree or disagree, “The strong always win over the weak? How so?”
- 3) In your own life, what relationships are challenging you to make the decision to take a stand or to capitulate? Why is this difficult?
- 4) Are you more inclined to base your decision on logic, emotion, or a moral code? Is there another choice?
- 5) “It rains on the good and the evil and the sun shines on both.” (The Bible) Based on this statement, can we be content that everything will work out for the good? Why?
- 6) Where can we find the strength to make the right decisions and not lose the self identity that our boundaries have established?

## **BOUNDARIES**

### Chapter 5 - Identity

“Who I am may be defined by what I have and by what people say about me.” (Henri Nouen)

“We know ourselves and each other in a superficial way, but we do not grasp who we are at the core of our being. Like a man who has forgotten his name, we can wander about the streets of life without knowing our true identity.”

In order to know who we are, we may need to answer the following questions:

Regarding origin: Where did I come from?

Regarding purpose: Why am I here?

Regarding destiny: Where am I going?” (Ken Boa)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Can we set boundaries that are effective if we don't know who we are? Why or why not?
- 2) Can I know who I am by my accomplishments? What is the down side of this method?
- 3) Who do people say you are? Do you believe them? Do they really know you?
- 4) “But as many received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” (The Bible) How would being a child of God answer the question of who you are?
- 5) What possessions do you have that define your identity (Who I am)?
- 6) What boundaries are you imposing on yourself because of your possessions?

## **BOUNDARIES**

### Chapter 6 - Relationships

People present a challenge to our boundaries. The type of people we invest our time in influences the results. Who we choose is a form of boundaries, in that, some we let into our lives and others we keep away from.

“Gordon MacDonald observes that we encounter five kinds of people. First, there are the **very resourceful people (VRPs)** who add to our lives and ignite our passion. These are mentors, and they are often older men or women who are willing to build their experience and wisdom into our lives. It is wise to search for such people prayerfully, since they are less likely to search for us. Second, there are the **very important people (VIPs)** who share our passions. These people love us enough to ask us tough questions and keep us honest as they work together with us and share our vision. Third, there are the **very trainable people (VTPs)** who catch our passion, and these are people into whose lives we have been called to make an investment. Fourth, there are what MacDonald calls the **very nice people (VNPs)** who enjoy our passion, but do not contribute to it. These people make up the large majority of people we encounter, and most programs focus on accommodating them and their needs. Finally, there are the **very draining people (VDP’s)** who sap our passion by causing conflicts and constantly looking for comfort and recognition. If we are not careful, the VNPs and VDPs we encounter will absorb the majority of our available time. This does not mean that we should not treat them with dignity and compassion, especially since it is possible for such people to change.” (Ken Boa)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How do you find very resourceful people? Why would VRPs want to spend time with you?
- 2) How important is transparency with very important people? Is accountability important? Why?
- 3) How much time do you have available to invest in very trainable people? What will be your payback?
- 4) How much time do you spend with very nice people? What are your boundaries with VNPs?
- 5) What do your boundaries look like with very draining people? What can you do if the VDPs are in your immediate family or you must work with them?
- 6) “Jesus ministered to those who were sick, suffering, curious, and critical, but he spent the majority of his time with his Father and his disciples.” (Ken Boa) How can I follow His example in my own life passions?