Godly Boundaries for Flourishing Lives

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[0:00] I don't know about you, but I think most people have a complicated relationship with boundaries.! We love them when they work in our favor, when they protect our peace and comfort,!

Managing this invisible line between what others have a right to expect from me and what I have a right to expect from others. Managing that line can leave you feeling drained of energy if you get it wrong, or if the other person gets it wrong.
And so many live in a constant state of emotional exhaustion because these lines are not often well defined. Let's picture a typical day lived without clear boundaries.
See if you recognize yourself in this person's life. You wake up and you have to prepare everyone's food for the day in your family, both the children and your spouse.
But only after you've cleaned the dishes from the night before because they were left unwashed by the person that was scheduled to clean them. You're late to work because the kids are never ready for school no matter how many times you yell at them.
[1:23] At work, a colleague asks yet another quick favor to help them with a report that's not really your responsibility, but they make sure to ask you in front of the entire team meeting, implying that you're not a team player if you say no.

Back at home, dinner is on the table, but no one comes when called. Earlier on, your mother-in-law dropped in unannounced.
She gave the children sweets despite your repeated requests not to do so, especially at dinner time and now no one wants to eat the meal that you've prepared.
Late in the evening, the phone rings. It's an emergency call to help a family member who has been in another drink-driving accident.
It's not the first time. But you feel you must say yes because Jesus taught us to go the extra mile.
And so later on, you crawl into bed utterly exhausted, hoping that tomorrow will be a different day.
[2:29] Well, living without well-defined boundaries can leave you feeling exhausted, resentful, guilty. Instead of feeling energized to serve others joyfully, you want to pull up the drawbridge around your life and isolate yourself.

The good news is there is help, and it comes from God's Word because it gives us clear wisdom because God Himself is the original creator of boundaries.
And so far from being restrictive and unloving, God's wisdom shows us that boundaries are woven into the very fabric of creation so that life can flourish.
And that's why we looked at Genesis chapter 1. So the first area we need to look at, before we talk about applying boundaries in our daily lives, we need to understand God's original design for boundaries.
And we get that from Genesis 1. It's not merely a historical account of creation. It reveals why boundaries are essential to life. So maybe if you've got your Bibles or your phone, just turn there so long.
[3:36] Genesis chapter 1. And what you'll notice is that as God makes the world, it starts off formless and empty and dark.

It's a formless void with no order, no laws, no boundaries. It's in a chaotic state. There's no structure.
And that's why there's no life on earth at that point. The Spirit is ready to give life, but there's no life to be had. It's only as God speaks and separates things and puts boundaries in place that life can begin to thrive.
You might, I don't know if you've noticed that, but notice how he separates light from darkness. Verse 3. God said, let there be light. And there was light. God saw that the light was good.

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And he separated the light from the darkness. And he called the light day and the darkness he called night. And that's when there's the first day. He also separates sea from the dry land.
[4:44] Look at verse 9. God said, let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear. And it was so. God called the dry ground land and the gathered waters he called seas.

And God saw that it was good. So only after order is established and boundaries are established can life begin to flourish. And that's why animals and mankind only created on day 6 of their count of creation.
Because man can't live in the sea and fish can't live on the land. We need light to see. We can't grope around in the darkness all the time. And that's when God blesses them and gives them this rule to live by.
Verse 28. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it.
Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. So humans are to take God's good order and extend it into all areas of life.
[5:55] But what I want us to notice is that boundaries are not meant to stop enjoyment of life. They're to increase enjoyment of life. They create the conditions for life to flourish with order but also with goodness and blessing.

The first clear boundary that God set for people was in Genesis 2 and 3, The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which they were not meant to eat from.
Sadly, Adam and Eve crossed that line and instead of freedom and joy and blessing, They get caught up in a world of regret and shame and guilt.
Genesis chapter 3 defines sin as fundamentally as a trespass, A crossing of a boundary that God has set up.
And so what we see is that boundaries are set up to enhance life, But failure to recognize the boundaries that God has set up in the world Will lead to broken relationships, to pain, and to conflict.
[7:01] And so if personal boundaries are this important to having life work well, Let's take a moment to think of the kinds of boundaries that we have got set up in our lives. We've all got a boundary in our life, whether we're consciously aware of it or not, Or various boundaries, I should say.

So what kind of boundaries do you have? Maybe picture your life as a house. What does your boundary wall look like?
What does your boundary wall between you and other people look like? Some walls are too low or not well maintained. They're easily crossed and easily breached and easily manipulated.
Maybe you find yourself not able to say no without feelings of deep anxiety. If that's the case, you could be operating from fear of losing a relationship.
You're operating from people-pleasing rather than a place of strength, of loving others. Maybe your walls are a little bit too high. Instead of a welcoming environment, it's more like a World War II bunker, keeping people out.
[8:17] Maybe you operate instinctively from anger or control or manipulation, shooting down anyone who threatens your comfort.

If that's the case, you could appear distant or uncaring. God says he doesn't want people to live like that. That's a boundary that's either too low that's easily breached or a boundary that's too high that no one can cross over.
Biblical healthy boundaries are well defined, but they still have a welcome sign out front. They're protective enough to keep the chaos out, but open enough to let love and community flow in and out.
When boundaries are healthy, life flourishes and blesses those on the outside. And so we're going to drill down to some biblical wisdom with how to set up biblical boundaries to help us in our daily lives.
And we're going to go to the New Testament now and that letter of Galatians. And the New Testament letters were written to people who have realized that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, but they're still learning how to live better by minimizing the damage that sin causes, the damage that bad boundaries have, and they're learning to live in the freedom that the Spirit gives.

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[9:38] In particular, in the letter of Galatians, they're learning the benefits of self-control. So turn with me to Galatians 5, and we'll look at that for a little bit for the next while.

Galatians 5, verse 22 and 23. And we're looking at this law of self-control.
The law of self-control. And so Galatians 5, verse 22 and 23. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
Self-control is one that sticks out a little bit. You say, oh, okay, well, what's that doing to all these other nice things? We don't think of self-control as nice. It's a, you've got to do something on the inside.
Why is that a fruit of the Spirit? Well, self-control, when it comes to boundaries, is about focusing on controlling my own reactions, actions and reactions, towards others, but not being overly concerned with how they are going to respond to me.
[10:56] Focusing on controlling my own actions and reactions, not overly concerned with how others respond to me. The Greek word behind self-control is inside power.

It's the power to govern your own actions, but importantly your own reactions, how you respond, to govern your own words and how you respond with your words, to govern your own emotions and how you respond.
In your emotions towards others. Especially not being controlled by others' demands and expectations, but being controlled by the fruit of the Spirit, being controlled by love, by joy, by peace, and all those good things.
You're controlled by that, not controlled by what others do when they bash up against your boundaries, as it were. It's the ability that the Spirit gives only to Christians.
But what I want us to notice is that power and control here is aimed at you, at yourself. The Bible never calls us to control other people. We're responsible for ourselves.
[12:14] I mustn't take on their lack of self-control as if it were my responsibility. There's a good, healthy boundary to be maintained there. A Christian therapist I used to work with would often have to tell her clients things that they didn't want to hear.

When they got upset with her, she wouldn't let their emotions impact her, and she wouldn't respond with the same kind of uncontrolled emotions. She wouldn't let their emotions impact her, because they were not her emotions.
They were their emotions. And she would calmly say, well, I'm sorry that you're feeling that way towards me. Let's continue this conversation when you're feeling less upset.
And then she would continue on her day, not overly affected by the other person's emotions. That's the law of self-control in action. And so applying this law is immensely liberating, because it stops you from being easily guilted or manipulated into doing things based entirely on what others are trying to emotionally pressurize you into doing.
But here's a question. How do we grow this fruit? How do you gain control over your emotions when you feel others are crossing your boundaries?
[13:33] Galatians tells us what life is like when you don't gain control over your emotions. Verse 19 and 21, which we didn't read.

It's there, but that whole section starts a bit earlier. Verse 19 to 21 is a snapshot of what life is like without the helping control of the Spirit. It says this. The acts of the flesh are obvious.
That's your stuff that you do when you're not controlled by the Spirit. And it says, look at them, sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.
Maybe you recognized yourself and your response to other people's boundaries in some of that descriptions. How do you go from such uncontrolled emotions and uncontained behavior to having the power of self-control?
The answer is that it doesn't lie within you. Self-control is inside power, but that's not a power that you have automatically by yourself. We've all crossed this invisible boundary that God has set in our lives, and we've broken the ability to have the self-control that God wants us to have.
[14:56] Verse 22 gives us the answer. How you get self-control, you need to belong to Christ. Or verse 24. Let me double check.

Verse 24. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
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Jesus' death is so powerful that it gets at the root of the problem. Your uncontrolled passions and desires are nailed along with Jesus on the cross to die.
It's when you trust that Jesus has done this for you that you get the gift of the Spirit who then develops these fruits in you. Verse 25 says, We must keep in step with the Spirit.
And I think that means that as you practice this law of self-control, you will grow in your ability to do it. The fruit of the Spirit helps grow healthy boundaries, which in turn helps grow good relationships.
[16:08] But there's another law that's going to help us that we find in this text, and that's in chapter 6, and that's the law of responsibility. The law of responsibility.

The second law of boundaries is this law of responsibility. It says that, While I need to help carry others' burdens, I must not carry their loads. I need to help carry others' burdens, but I mustn't carry their loads.
There are things in other people's lives that they are meant to carry on their own, not me. And so you've got this, in Galatians 2, chapter 6, verse 2, it says this, We are to carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.
But notice verse 5 says that each one should carry their own load. You say, okay, I must carry each other's, other people's burdens, but each person must carry their own load.
So, what are we supposed to do with that? Well, I think we need to differentiate between burdens and loads. We are to help others carry burdens that are too heavy for them to carry alone.
[17:18] That's often related to their own sin, their own mistakes, but it could also be the effects of someone else's sin in their life. It could be the burdens of living in a broken world.

And so in terms of boundaries, we need to learn to differentiate which are burdens that need our help versus which are loads that we must let other people carry for themselves.
Many years ago, our youth group planned a three-day hike in the Boland Mountains. But we had to do some training hikes to get fit to go on this long three-day hike.
On the training hikes, one of the girls manipulated the boys to carry her backpack for her. In fact, you could tell which were the popular girls.
The more popular girls carried less and less, and the boys carried more and more. But when the actual hike arrived, this girl had hopelessly overloaded her backpack because she didn't know what she should and shouldn't pack.
[18:25] She'd never carried it before, so she just threw everything in there. So as we started the hike, she needed some help taking some of the load off so she could do the hike, so her backpack could be lighter.

But within hours, she was complaining that even her lightened backpack was too heavy. She simply could not do the hike because she was not given the responsibility of carrying her own load in the training hikes leading up to it.
And so, one application of this is to make sure you're not making your responsibilities someone else's burden. Make sure that you're not making your responsibilities someone else's burden.
The own load that you're to bear is taking responsibility for things in your life that fall within your control. Your emotions, your feelings, your thoughts, your attitudes, including your plans and actions.
It's the stuff of daily life that you need to do to make sure your life is working well. Like maintaining your car. If we're in a car accident, if you see someone in a car accident, absolutely go and help them with dealing with that accident.
[19:41] But you're not then also automatically obligated to help them maintain their car. That's their responsibility. The law of responsibility means you are responsible for what lies within your boundaries, but it also releases you from taking responsibility for what lies inside someone else's boundaries.

Jesus is our example of doing this well. We bear one another's burdens because Jesus first bore our burdens on the cross. If you notice in verse 2, it says, carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
He took all our boundary-breaking sins and dealt with them on the cross. Not because he was forced to out of fear or compelled by manipulation, but out of love, knowing that we're for our ultimate good.
But at the same time, Jesus gives us our freedom back so we can become the responsible people we were originally created to be. Jesus' work on the cross frees us from carrying what we cannot

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carry, all our sins, all our mistakes, but it empowers us to carry what we should, the things of everyday life so that I don't become a burden to other people.
This is how we fulfill the law of Christ, not through guilt or control, but through the same love that Jesus showed us. It does take wisdom and it takes a number of conversations if you're going to get this setting boundaries correct, especially if you've got boundaries in your life that are not set up properly.
[21:26] You're going to have to start having conversations with people, but you must let Jesus and the Holy Spirit give you that solid foundation so that you're not easily manipulated. Your boundary must not be so high that you're not interested in having any conversations and helping people, but neither must your boundaries be almost non-existent or so broken that any guilt trip sends you on a frenzy of activity.

You've got to be grounded and have your wall, your foundation wall, your boundary wall solidly set by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Let's return to the person that we looked at from the beginning and see what a day with biblical boundaries looks like.
So here's boundaries done well potentially. See if you can recognize yourself or aim for some of these things. You wake up and miraculously the dishes are done.
They're done because you've called a house meeting and explained that the dishes will remain unwashed until they're done according to the roster. Yes, it got a bit yucky during the week, but you thought ahead and you kept a clean plate for yourself while the dishes piled up.
And eventually everyone realized they've got their responsibility to take care of those dishes. The kids now make their own lunches. Especially after a couple of hungry days at school taught them the responsibility that you're not going to do it.
[22:52] You've explained to them that it's their responsibility. At work you politely decline the extra task that you were asked to do after you involved management to clarify roles.

Now the pressure is on your colleague to be a better team player and not burden others with their responsibilities. Back at home you had an honest conversation with your mother-in-law about unannounced visits.
You explained that visits are welcomed but with planning in advance and the treats are also welcomed just not at dinner time. And when the call comes in to help your drunk family member out yet again you tell them that you will help them but you're no longer helping them pay for things like electricity or food but you're happy to help them look for a rehab facility.
They're very upset at you but you're not manipulated into feeling guilty because the offer of help is there it's just not the way that they want to do it but it is help that will actually help them in the long run.
Putting biblical boundaries in place takes time it takes prayer it takes some difficult conversations it may involve short term discomfort even hurt feelings but hurt is sometimes necessary to prevent long term harm.
[24:25] When you keep in step with the spirit you become this fruit bearing life giving person that God intends you live more freely you serve more sustainably and you reflect the ordered goodness of God who set these boundaries in place and your life hopefully will become less frenetic less disturbed you'll feel less guilty and you'll be able to share the goodness of God more freely with others.

It does take prayer so I'm going to do that for us as we end our time together. Lord Jesus we do ask you for your help to understand how boundaries work that they are there Lord to give us freedom and enjoyment of life to know where our responsibilities lie and to give responsibilities to others that belong to them.
Lord these are difficult things to do on our own help us Lord to ask each other for help to pray about these things but above our Lord to trust in you to know that you bore our burdens on the cross we can help others with theirs and to know Lord that you give us your Holy Spirit that you give us this gift of self control help us to use it to help ourselves and to help others Amen Thank you.
Thank you.

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