

Boundaries: When to Say YES; When to Say NO to Take Control of Your Life Study Guide

Boundaries: When to Say YES; When to Say NO to Take Control of Your Life by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

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Plot Summary

Boundaries explore the reasons for problems in one's life, such as anxiety, depression and dissatisfaction. The reason for such feelings, according to the authors, is a lack of boundaries. Boundaries allow a person to say no with a clear conscious. A person with proper boundaries, according to this book, possesses a clear view of his or her own responsibilities and desires.

Part one of the book defines boundaries. The reader meets Sherrie, a woman living a life without boundaries. Sherrie struggles in every area of her life, home, work and self. Any reader will see that Sherrie does not have an enviable life. The authors continue by defining certain kinds of boundaries, such as skin, physical distance, and emotional distance.

Dissatisfaction stems from improper boundaries; boundary problems often occur because someone has or meets a person who has a conflicting personality. Nonresponsive, complaints, and controllers are personality types that promote boundary problems. Through extensive descriptions of these personalities the authors seek to help the reader identify these types of people.

This section of the book also explains the ten laws of boundaries, beginning with the law of sowing and reaping. The authors point out that many people do not realize they have a boundary problem because someone else steps in the way and reaps the consequences of that person's wrong actions. Such "protection" hurts both people, just as too many sweets damage one's teeth. Other laws also come into play and deal with things such as power, love, and exposure. Lastly, in this section, the authors dispel common boundary myths, showing that only through proper boundaries can a person truly show love and respect.

Section two looks more deeply and specifically at boundary problems. It looks in depth at the areas of family, friends, spouses, children, work, self, and God. A formula is given for each area to help one identify the boundary issue that may be broken in that area, identify the need that boundary problem signifies, and solve the problem through proper steps and with proper support.

In examining the boundaries one sets with one's children, the book explains the early development of children as it relates to boundaries. Newborns, for instance, learn first about physical boundaries, such as clothes. However, the parent should concentrate at this time on bonding. Throughout the book, the author reminds the reader that bonding comes before boundaries. The steps taken in exploration for becoming more autonomous repeat in adolescence as well, as the child prepares to face the world on his/her own.

Finally, part three sums up ways to develop healthy boundaries. First, the reader learns to recognize resistance to boundaries, which may come from others, in the form of anger, or from inside one's self, in the form of guilt. The authors give eleven steps by



which to measure successful boundaries. One first feels guilt and apprehension, but after much practice, boundary enforcement becomes easier and more mature. The book ends with another look at Sherrie, who now has learned the principles of this book. Having applied the principles to her life, all areas previously in chaos now experience improvement. She receives a promotion at work when she stops taking responsibility for others. Her marriage and home life improves when she sets forth honest boundaries with her husband and children. She exemplifies a success story for the principles of the book, after much hard work.



A Day in a Boundaryless Life

A Day in a Boundaryless Life Summary and Analysis

The authors begin chapter one with a long narration of a woman living without proper boundaries. Sherrie lives with her husband Walt and two children, Todd and Amy. She awakens tired and worried. She quickly readies herself and her family, dealing with her children's demands and her husband's poor attitude. Furthermore, some chores remain undone due to a long, guild-ridden visit from her mother the night before.

Sherrie, likewise, suffers from a lack of boundaries at work. She takes on the duties others forget to do. During her break time, she counsels a friend over the phone, thereby taking on her problems as well. After work, Sherrie meets Todd's teacher, who informs Sherrie that Todd fails to follow rules and directions at school. In tears, Sherrie confesses that the situation mirrors Todd's actions at home.

Once home, Sherrie fails to say no to a woman from church who is begging for help for a retreat. That night, Sherrie laments her poor relationship, especially that of her suffering marriage. Furthermore, she recognizes that her quality of work suffers greatly from her ill-managed time. In tears, she turns to reading her Bible, but gains little comfort. Exhausted, she drifts to sleep.

Many readers relate to Sherrie's situations, the authors point out. She strives to help all she can, but fails to define her personal limits. Sherrie fails to realize what her job is and what it is not. Lack of boundaries on Sherrie's part also hurts others, as evidenced by the behaviors of her children. Simply trying harder, being nice for fear of hurting others, and taking responsibility for another's irresponsibility fail to work in Sherrie's life.

The authors frequently use a property line metaphor. A property with clear, visible boundaries brings satisfaction. If one were to defend a property, one must know the boundaries of that property. Yet, many Christians fail to set healthy boundaries in their lives, due to poor teaching and good intentions. One questions how boundaries may contradict a Christian viewpoint. Furthermore, one worries about upsetting others or of feeling guilty or selfish.

Many psychological disorders result from a lack of personal boundaries, the author's suggest. One needs boundaries to live a fulfilling life. This book aims to explain God's intentions for boundaries, as laid out in the Bible.

This book begins with an unashamed Christian viewpoint. The authors assume the reader not only believes the Bible to be true, but also holds a great deal of experience with the Bible. In addition, they assume the reader to hold the Christian God as the model for all healthy behavior. That said, they support their claims with scripture references in abundance. Should the reader agree with their viewpoint, he/she finds

sufficient evidence. The authors use little other references, however. Occasionally, they refer to their own counseling experiences.

The subject matter of the book relates well to many people. It promises control over one's life and such a theme echoes with many potential readers.



What Does a Boundary Look Like?

What Does a Boundary Look Like? Summary and Analysis

Once again, the chapter opens with a narrative example. One author counsels with the parents of "Bill". The parents explain the problems they perceive in Bill's life and their efforts to eradicate said problems for Bill. The author points out that Bill, in fact, suffers from no problems. In effort to help Bill accept responsibility for his actions, the author advises the parents to stop helping Bill.

He offers the example of a sprinkler. If misaligned, it falls on the neighbor's lawn, and the neighbor takes no action, because he owns a beautiful lawn, with no work on his part. However, if one fixes the sprinkler to fall only on one's own lawn, the neighbor lives in dust and may be motivated to care for his own lawn.

Bill's father, however, worries that such actions fail to demonstrate their love. The author points out that, so far, helping does not help.

In the physical world, boundaries appear obvious to the observer. However, on a spiritual level, they receive definition less obviously. The authors define potential for boundaries in several ways, beginning with "me and not me". In setting boundaries for one's self, one exhibits self-control. After all, one never hears of other's control. Once one defines one's self, one can more readily guard that self.

In addition, one must be responsible to others and for one's self. In this way, one should aid others when they suffer from a burden too large to bear alone. One must bear his/her own daily cares for one's self, however. Problems arise from an imbalance. The authors define a large burden as a boulder. They liken daily cares as a knapsack. Imbalance occurs when one suffers from burdens one refuses to share and likewise when one forces others to carry one's daily cares.

The next principle of defining one's boundaries involves letting good in and keeping bad influences out. Boundaries must be like a fence, with a gate. They must not be impenetrable, like a wall. The gate of the fence allows good in, in the form of love and advice. It also serves to keep bad out, such as harmful habits and negative comments. Person's suffering from abuse often operate their gates in reverse, keeping out good, healthy help and keeping in negativity, fear, and hurt.

Finally, one cannot define his/her boundaries without considering God's boundaries. God offers examples in himself. He defines himself as light, for example. In addition, he states what he disapproves of and refuses to abide by those who go against his wishes.

Next, the authors give several examples of boundaries. They first discuss the area of skin. One's skin defines where he/she begins. Phrases such as "getting under one's



skin" signify an annoyance to that person. Physical and sexual abuse blurs the boundary of skin.

Words also set boundaries. The strongest verbal boundary is "no". Setting such limits provides clear directions. Furthermore, the Bible supports a clear, firm "no". Some fail to use the boundary of "no", because they fear hurting their relationships with others. However, an honest relationship benefits from clearly defined likes and dislikes.

Acceptance of the truth also establishes boundaries. Denying the truth often proves harmful. One cannot deny the rules that govern the world. Satan, though, destroys reality for many people, in an attempt to destroy their relationship with God.

Geographical distance also sets limits and boundaries. The Bible admonishes one to remove himself from a harmful situation, bodily if necessary. Sometimes, such a separation is the only solution in situations of danger or abuse. Likewise, time apart from a negative situation proves useful. Time apart may aid in bringing boundaries to an out of control area of one's life.

Similarly, emotional distance may be required for a time. This solution must always be temporary. One should guard oneself emotionally, though, from past situations that have proven harmful. One should remain at a distance until legitimate evidence of change appears.

Other people also provide boundaries. One often needs the support of others to say "no". People suffering from abuse find that others offer the love and support that they feared they could only receive from their abuser. The authors point out that boundaries always need the support of others.

Lastly, boundaries result from consequences. Consequences provide needed support for boundaries as well. Biblical boundaries often state the consequence that results from not complying with that boundary.

Next, the authors reflect upon what lies within one's boundaries. They define the scope of one's personal boundaries with ten areas. First, though, they turn to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan exhibits good personal boundaries. He helped where he could, but did not over commit. Should he have stayed to help the injured man out of obligation, he may have suffered personally and come to resent the injured man. The Good Samaritan refused to allow the injured man to manipulate him into helping beyond his means.

The first area of one's personal boundaries lies in one's feelings. Many Christians believe their feelings hold no importance. However, the feelings motivate one to act. The authors state that one must own up to one's feelings. Likewise, one must own one's attitudes and beliefs. The authors define attitudes as one's orientation towards another person or situation. Beliefs are anything one accepts to be true. They may be hard to recognize, because they develop early in life. Furthermore, one may have a natural inclination to blame others for one's attitudes and beliefs.



The next two areas of one's person that affects one's boundaries lie in one's behaviors and choices. The concept of ownership arises once again. One must be careful in one's behaviors towards others, not to interrupt the law of sowing and reaping in another's life. In addition, one must admit that no one forces one's choices. In biblical examples of people acting out of duty and without personal responsibility, those people's gifts were not accepted.

Values and limits also serve as part of one's self in defining boundaries. The authors define values as anything one loves. People often lead dissatisfied lives when they value things that do not hold an importance. However, taking responsibility for wrong values serves as the first step to change in this area. Next, limits exist in two areas. The authors define the first as limits on others, though one must realize his/her inability to effect the actions of others. Therefore, the first rule is actually the limit to one's exposure to others who behave inappropriately. The supreme example of such behavior exists in God. The other area requiring limits is internal. The authors state one needs "self-control without repression". One must resist wrong or misplaced desires.

Following this, the authors describe the areas of talent and thought. Simply, one must take ownership of one's talents and abilities because he/she will be accountable for the use or misuse of them. In addition, one must take ownership of one's thoughts. The author's assert that only humans possess the ability to think and reason. Therefore, one must guard one's own thoughts in order to resist blind acceptance of the thoughts and ideals of another. Furthermore, one should strive to develop one's mind in knowledge, both spiritual and secular. Lastly, one must clarify one's thoughts. One's past experiences may shade views, but to think clearly, one must recognize this and change accordingly. After thinking clearly, one must communicate his/her thoughts clearly to others.

The last two areas discussed are desires and love. Regarding desires, one suffers dissatisfaction from a lack of self-control. The authors define lust as misplaced desires. For example, a sex addict may in fact desire love and affection, but the desire manifests itself in a less sincere lust. The Bible promises to fulfill one's desires, but his will only respond to desires that are in one's best interest, much like a father. The fulfillment of desires requires effort on one's own part as well. The exercise of love in relation to boundaries prevents weakness in the boundaries. Each person needs both an inflow and outflow of love. Loneliness often results from a lack of response to an inflow of love.

The book states that taking responsibility, or ownership, for the aspects of one's own soul does not happen easily. One must exercise much control in each area, however, to achieve proper boundaries in one's own life.



Boundary Problems

Boundary Problems Summary and Analysis

Many people experience problems, classified as mental disorders, anxiety, depression, and others, because they lack proper boundaries in their lives. Still others experiences hardship because they fail to respect the boundaries in the lives of others. The authors of this book classify those with boundary problems into four groups: complaints, avoidants, controllers, and nonresponsives.

First, the authors deal with complaints. They define a complaint as a person with fuzzy boundaries. This type of person says yes to circumstances that may harm them. The inability to say no leaves the person defenseless.

The authors introduce Robert, a man who cannot say no to his wife's demands. Robert shares experiences from his childhood in which his older sisters beat him. However, his parents taught him it was wrong to hit a girl. In doing so, they left him without a boundary in this area.

Due to their adaptive natures, the authors liken complaints to chameleons. Often this type of person fails to realize a relationship is harmful until it is too late. They fail to say no because they fear hurting someone's feelings, or they fear the anger of that person. Furthermore, they fear punishment and shame, or others viewing them as selfish, unspiritual, or overly critical. To keep from being this type of person, one should not habitually sacrifice while feeling inward resentment.

The next class of people with boundary problems is avoidants. This type of person says no to things that would be beneficial to him/her. As an example, the authors introduce Sarah, a woman hosting a church bible study in her home. Even in a safe environment of her own making, she fails to share her struggles and emotions with her friends.

This type of person builds what the authors term to be an impenetrable wall instead of a fence. Furthermore, they allow for no gating mechanism with which to allow positive things into their lives. God, however, teaches that one needs gates.

Not only do those with boundary problems fall into the given categories, but also some people meet the criteria for more than one type. Those classified as compliant avoidants suffer from reverse boundaries, in that they let the bad in, but keep the good out.

The third type of person with a boundary problem is a controller. Controllers fail to respect the boundaries of others. The example, Steve, demands that those under him at work put in long hours to cover Steve's lack of responsibility. He interferes with boundaries on time repeatedly. Controllers see "no" not as a boundary, but as a challenge. They only strive to wear the person down into a "yes". Controllers can be further broken down into two categories.



First, the aggressive controller runs over the feelings of others. They sometimes become abusive. One easily spots an aggressive controller as someone who bullies others to get their way. The second type, a manipulative controller, tries to persuade, seduce, or uses guilt in order to get others to agree. The authors cite the example from classic literature of Tom Sawyer, who had so convinced his peers that whitewashing a fence was indeed a great privilege that children lined up for the opportunity. Also, classically, in the Bible, Jacob manipulated his brother Esau so that in a moment of weakness, Esau sells his birthright. The authors point out that manipulative controllers fail to stop their behavior until confronted with their own deceitfulness.

Complaints and avoidants may also be manipulative controllers. They practice self-seeking love, which, upon investigation, is not real love. They do go only to get love in return. When the love fails to appear, they become petulant and offended.

Though controllers seem to be the ones causing the problems, they often suffer boundary injuries themselves. They never learned to deny gratification for greater satisfaction later on. Controllers also suffer from an inability to take responsibility. As a result, they often feel isolated and unloved; they fear, if they stop controlling, everyone in their lives will leave.

The last classification of people in this chapter is that of nonresponsives. This type of person fails to respond to the needs of others. By way of example, the authors introduce Brenda, whose concerns about parenting go unheeded by her spouse. Her husband fails to feel responsibility for his actions towards his wife. He fails to accept the biblically given responsibility to do good towards others that need and accept one's actions. Nonresponsives exist in two categories: critical spirit and self-absorbed.

Furthermore, controllers may also be nonresponsives. When this happens, they frequently seek out a compliant avoidant. Such an arrangement becomes a perfect way to cope with each person's lack of boundaries, because they suffer from complimentary conditions.

Lastly, in this chapter, every person who suffers from boundary problems needs to recognize the existence of both functional and relational boundaries. Functional boundaries involve tasks, meaning one must learn to commit only to tasks one can complete and must strive to have the character to complete any task one committed to it. Relational boundaries, as the name suggests, involve people. One must clearly communicate one's boundaries with people in one's life. Much of the makeup of one's boundaries, however, begins in childhood. The authors deal with this development in depth in the next chapter.

In the way of many such books, the material begins slowly. So far, the authors fail to mention how to fix a boundary problem. However, the book lays much groundwork so far. The framework, though, remains vague. The reader may be disappointed to see him/herself in many of the different personalities discussed in this chapter. The emphasis seems, though, to be on a person habitually in that personality and not only shortly. The promise of help remains in the chapters ahead.



How Boundaries are Developed

How Boundaries are Developed Summary and Analysis

The reader first meets Tim in the beginning of this chapter. Though Tim works hard at his job, his children call him Mr. Phantom. Through his fear of letting people down, he neglects his family's needs. Finally, when confronted by his wife, he confesses that, all his life, he feared letting people down. Often, the authors say, the answers to one's boundary problems lie in one's past.

Boundaries develop over the whole of one's life. Important stages occur in everyone's childhood that shape one's attitude towards boundaries for the rest of one's life.

The stages, beginning from birth, start with bonding. In the first months of life, an infant learns that a parent will care for the infant's needs. Wendy, another example, lacks the ability to say no to her mother. Without a relationship that supports her desire for boundaries, Wendy cannot develop them. Wendy serves as an example of an unhealthy relationship. A healthy relationship during the bonding stage develops a sufficient feeling of security in the child.

Following bonding, the child begins the three stages of separation and individuation. The authors call this the "construction of a soul". Toddlers desire more autonomy than an infant does. They begin to discover that they possess their own person; they and their mother are not the same.

The first stage of the individuation process is hatching. In this, the infant or toddler, from five to ten months, discovers that mommy and him/herself are not the same person. Babies become aware of their world and begin to explore. Adequate nurturing in the bonding stage allows the toddler to possess enough security to feel safe in exploring their world. Mothers who never experienced a sufficient hatching period themselves often suffer when their babies enter hatching.

Following hatching the toddler enters practicing, from ten to eighteen months. No longer does the child feel overwhelmed by his/her surroundings. In fact, they begin to feel invincible. The need for safe, fair, and consistent boundaries rises. Similar stages arise in adolescence as well; when adults remain in this stage, they often bring harm upon themselves.

In this stage, toddlers learn initiative. They enjoy boundaries that are neither too strict nor too lenient. Living in this way requires much energy from the toddler; he/she cannot continue in such a highly demanding way.

The final stage of development for the toddler learning about boundaries is rapprochement. They begin to realize they cannot do everything on their own. This



stage occurs anytime from eighteen months of age to three years. Reality sets in for the child. They begin to see cause and effect. They also realize things occur that are beyond their control. Once again, they begin to rely on their parent, but with a different personality. In rapprochement, they gather many tools valuable in the development of boundaries.

The first tool is anger. Though people often look down upon anger, the authors point out that anger identifies problems that need to be dealt with. One must deal with this anger appropriately. Following anger, the toddler learns about ownership. Such feelings are not always sinful. The toddler must learn what they own in order to sacrifice what they own for others.

The third tool the toddler learns in rapprochement is the power of the word "no". Parents, the authors point out, must encourage the child to set boundaries; the parent should respect the boundaries of the child. Likewise, the child must learn to respect the "no" of others. By the age of three, the child should "be emotionally attached without giving up self," say "no" appropriately, and take "no" appropriately. This same pattern of development occurs once again in adolescence. The young adult reenacts his/her toddler years as they prepare to move out on their own.

The extensive explanation of child development as it pertains to boundaries follows. Next, the authors examine why some people do not develop appropriate boundaries. Relationship and personalities cause injury to one's boundary development. The authors claim that the deepest problems often occur the earliest. Young children need to know that others will respect their boundaries. Though they may disagree with another, the shared love will not suffer.

To make one's love conditional upon their compliance creates what the authors call emotional blackmail. Furthermore, parents should not make children responsible for the emotions of the parents. Children, on their own, feel powerful enough to cause everything that happens around them. Another habit parents must avoid is forcing a child's emotions. "Or else" parenting develops boundary problems in a child. Discipline, according to the authors, teaches self-control. "Or else" parenting teaches the child to pretend to obey only when the parents may be aware of the child.

One type of parenting that produces boundary problems is that of over-control. Too strict rules create dependency and a lack of creativity in the children. The child needs to feel able to make mistakes in order to mature into a person with appropriate boundaries.

At the other end of the spectrum is that parent with a lack of limits. Overindulgent parents create a "spoiled" kid. Such a child turns into an adult that cannot delay gratification. This type of parent gets in the way of the law of sowing and reaping and only makes him/herself miserable. The parent suffers the consequences of the child's actions rather than the child him/herself.

The third type of unhealthy parenting is that of inconsistency limits. Inconsistency produces confusion on the part of the child. The starkest example of such parenting



occurs in the homes of alcoholics. Such parents provide a home with few limits when they do not drink. When they drink, however, they exhibit rage and intolerance not in keeping with their other self. The children of such a relationship never feel truly safe.

Finally, a trauma in one's life may affect the boundaries one exercises. Such an event occurs in one's life as a single event, not a pattern, like the previously mentioned parenting styles. The metaphor the authors use is that of a plant. A pattern of poor maintenance, like poor parenting, produces an unhealthy plant. An unhealthy plant also occurs from a traumatic event, such as lightning.

Trauma shakes the core of one's life. Prior to that, a child feels the world is safe and that he/she has control over what happens. Another thing that affects one's boundaries is that of one's personality. While much comes from one's surroundings, some of one's character is innate. The authors purport that people are born with a sinful nature, the nature to be selfish. Such tendencies develop problems, though they manifest themselves differently in different people.



10 Laws of Boundaries

10 Laws of Boundaries Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins with a scenario of an alien coming to Earth. The shock the alien feels towards Earth's gravity and monetary system illustrates the shock some adults feel in coming into contact with strong boundaries for the first time. The alien's arrest for failing to pay for food shows that, even if one does not know the principles of boundaries, the consequences are the same.

The first law of boundaries is that of sowing and reaping. Sowing and reaping uses biblical examples to illustrate plain cause and effect. However, someone may interrupt the law of sowing and reaping in the life of a loved one. A mother may cover for her children, taking upon herself the results of the actions of her children. Such behavior enables irresponsibility. The mother, a codependent, reaps for what others have sown.

Following this is the law of responsibility. The authors explain that one holds responsibility for himself, but only responsibility towards others. One must strive to treat others how he/she wants treated in return.

The third law of boundaries is the law of power. One must realize that he/she holds no power over others' reactions towards one's own boundaries. One has the power, though, to agree with the truth, to submit to God and ask help, to search and ask God and others to reveal healthy boundaries. In addition, one possesses the power to turn in repentance from unhealthy boundaries, to seek help for needs remaining from childhood, and to make amends.

Boundaries do not exist as an abuse of power. Boundaries only define that over which one has power. Once one realizes that he/she can only control his/her own boundaries, and not those of others or the reaction of others, one may see that other people envy one's boundaries and change accordingly.

Following this is the law of respect. One must make a habit of respecting the boundary of others, as one wishes to have one's own boundaries respected. Often, people judge another's boundaries by its effects on one's self. Such judging results in a fear of the same judgment upon one's own boundaries.

Fifthly, the law of motivation points out several wrong motivations that result in unhealthy boundaries. First is the fear of abandonment, which leads to a sense of martyrdom. In addition, the fear of another's anger leads to loneliness. Lastly, the fear of losing one's own "goodness" leads one to believe he/she must always agree.

Such motivations lead to much guilt. One feels the need to repay for every good deed received. He/she also seeks approval. Sometimes, such a person identifies too closely with the pains of another, because they still harbor their own losses. Wrong motivations such as these lead to wrong boundaries.



Next, the law of evaluation looks at the results of boundaries. Though one may fear hurting another with boundaries, the authors point out that hurt sometimes helps. They use the example of the dentist, in which administering a little pain in filling a cavity helps a person to have healthier teeth. Sometimes that which is enjoyable, such as sugary snacks, causes harm in the end in the form of rotten teeth.

To establish healthy boundaries one must practice the law of proactivity. Such practice allows one, especially in the case of abuse, to be removed from the boundary-less situation for a time, to gain more confidence. Such a phase should only be temporary, however.

The law of envy occurs next. Envy defines good as "what I don't have". An envious person despises those who have the desired thing. Such habits focus outside of one's boundaries. Instead, one must focus on one's self and realize that one may need to change habits in order to change one's circumstances.

Law nine is the law of activity. The authors point out that passive nature breeds or allows evil. Boundaries appear when that which is unallowable appears and pushes against them. The healthy boundary will push back and not allow the evil in. However, forgiveness is not inactivity, but rather it is healing.

Finally, the law of exposure encourages one to allow others to see one's boundaries. One's love may not be visible; therefore, one hinders one's relationships with invisible boundaries. In closing, one must follow God's principles for boundaries for a full life.

Once again, the laws of boundaries rely heavily on a Christian worldview. However, many of the points of this chapter appear readily in life and society. One will relate to several of the points personally. Not only may one gain insight into his/her own life, but also one may more clearly understand the motivations of those around him/her.



Common Boundary Myths

Common Boundary Myths Summary and Analysis

The authors define a myth as fiction that appears true. They begin by telling about Teresa, who feels selfish in setting boundaries towards others. A proper definition of selfishness, however, would be the fixation on one's own desires to the exclusion of the desires of others. In contrast, boundaries allow Christian to care more responsibility for others.

Boundaries require, though, that one be responsible for one's own needs. God promises to grant all of one's needs and a few of one's wants or desires. In doing so, he makes an investment in one's life. Setting proper boundaries protects that investment.

The second myth, after selfishness, states that boundaries signify disobedience. Often the truth is just the opposite. A lack of boundaries allows one to say "yes" when they honestly mean "no". Having boundaries to follow clarifies one's motivations. However, one must be careful, because unhealthy boundaries will prevent having things in one's life that are beneficial.

Thirdly, some believe boundaries will allow others to hurt them. One must realize and accept one's inability to control the emotions of others. Those who truly have one's best interests in mind, however, will love and respect one's healthy boundaries. Furthermore, one must be in a social setting, such as a church, that supports one's boundaries. Sometimes, though, boundaries will cause pain necessary for proper healing.

Next, the authors discuss the myth that boundaries hurt others. On the contrary, boundaries provide one with a defense system. With boundaries in place, in a supportive social network, any one person can suffer an "off day" without letting someone down, because the network allows for a division of the labor.

Neither do boundaries signal anger, as is discussed next. Rather, emotions signal that someone violated one's boundaries. Anger itself exists timelessly. It may surface when boundaries are first set, even if the violation happened some time ago. The more beneficial reaction for the angry person is to confess the anger honestly and move on. Over time the anger dissipates, if dealt with properly.

The sixth myth states that others' boundaries may hurt one's self. In truth, wrong boundaries may hurt others and create a lack of boundaries in adulthood. However, a lack of respect for the boundaries of others may signal overdependence, also called idolatry. The authors point out that no person should be so important as to devastate one's emotions; one should only trust in God completely. Moreover, one needs several close relationships to prevent such overdependence.

Following this, the authors discuss the myth that boundaries create guilt. This arises when one grows up believing that love comes with a price. In other words, for every



favor or act of love, the recipient owes the giver. True love, however, must be free, as is the biblical example. God presents his salvation as a free gift that man cannot earn. Such love motivates one to love others. Therefore, true love multiplies itself.

The final myth states that boundaries must be permanent. One may fear that boundaries set now would sever friendship ties forever. One must take ownership of one's boundary, however. Thus, one is free to negotiate and customize one's boundaries as times and friendships changes. In a biblical example, in the Old Testament book of Jonah, God vowed to destroy the city of Nineveh until they repented. After their repentance, God renegotiated his boundaries.



Boundaries and Your Family

Boundaries and Your Family Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins part two of the book: Boundary Conflicts.

Boundary violations within one's family take many forms. First, the authors discuss "catching the virus" in which one takes on the unhealthy boundaries after contact with one's family. Such habits affect one's immediate family by proxy, because the unhealthy boundaries towards one's relatives take time from one's spouse and children.

Another boundary problem that occurs with family members, defined as one's family of origin, is that of "second fiddle". One's immediate family feels left out, because the family of origin jeopardizes so much time and/or attention.

In the areas of time and money, boundaries suffer as well. First, in what the authors describe as "allowance", the new family receives a bulk of their regular financial support from the family of origin of one of the spouses. Such an arraignment undermines the individuality and self-respect of both adults. Likewise, in "where are my socks", an adult child spends too much time at the home of the family of origin. Often, this hurts the person's other adult relationships. This individual fails to learn to plan for the future. In order to be a responsible adult, one must be independent from one's parents financially and geographically.

In "three's a crowd", two family members who are arguing pull in a third, currently uninvolved, member. Neither realizes the other already spoke to the third party. The subsequent gossip, usually inaccurate, hurts all three relationships. Scripturally, one must deal with disagreements face to face.

Irresponsibility on another's part causes problems in the next to familial conflicts. In "who's the child", childish parents insist their children care for needs for which the parents themselves should be taking responsibility. Though it is good and right for an adult child to care for his or her aging parents, the parent should not insist upon this care before it is actually necessary. Moreover, the child must establish healthy boundaries that will define how and for how long he/she is able to offer the care. In "But I'm your brother", a childish sibling refuses to grow up. Similar to childish parents, the brother or sister feels pressured to care for the mistakes of an irresponsible sibling.

In families, boundary problems often exist from childhood. Furthermore, the appearance alone of a family member may trigger bad boundary habits. To care for such problems, one must first be aware of where and how the problem exists.

The principle of adoption states that one should move from parental control to God's authority in developing a healthy adulthood. One can keep relationship with one's family of origin, but cannot let the family interfere with the development of a healthy plan. This plan, ordained by God, provides one with a basis for happiness and fulfillment in one's



own life and the lives of those one meets. Solutions to boundary problems, in any type of relationship, follow the same pattern.

To resolve boundary problems with one's family, one must first identify the symptoms; one must look for the point at which one lost control. Next, one must notice the conflict or see where the problem might occur in one's own life first: that is, take responsibility. Thirdly, one should identify any needs in one's life that cause the conflict. One should seek to allow God to meet the needs instead of one's family members.

Next, one should learn to receive love honestly. Following this, one should practice enforcing one's boundaries in a safe environment, among the support of honest friends. Furthermore, one should resist allowing bad into one's life, using boundaries to protect against this. One should avoid those one knows will be hard to refuse until one has practiced more in the safe environment.

In addition, one must forgive. Forgiveness cancels the debt, thereby preventing one from feelings of getting even. It also ends one's own suffering and breaks the control of the other person in one's life. Lastly, one should learn to respond with control, rather than to react with emotion. Such a plan allows one to practice true and free love, without the chains of guilt.

Family conflicts arise in nearly everyone's life. Surely, such conflicts as the author describes will resound with many readers. Regardless of one's personal convictions, many of the principles mentioned here may prove useful in relating to one's family.



Boundaries and Friends

Boundaries and Friends Summary and Analysis

According to the authors, friendships symbolize a meaningful life. Friendships are relationships that one enjoys without other connection, such as a job, marriage, church, etc. Furthermore, these relationships are not intimate, unless otherwise stated. The conflicts in friendships results from a conflict of boundary personality, as discussed earlier.

The first type of conflict is a friendship between two compliant personalities. When neither person can say no, neither friend enjoys a happy relationship. To diagnose and fix all of the conflicts discussed in this chapter, the authors follow the following plan.

First, one must recognize the symptoms of this type of boundary conflict. In this instance, both friends experience dissatisfaction with the friendship. Next, the root of the problem the two people develop is a habit of saying yes to keep others happy. The boundary conflict itself, the first step, lies in the fact that both friends deny their own boundaries. Following this, both must admit responsibility for the conflict and the friendship, in the fourth step, thereby taking ownership.

Next, the friends need to realize what they need for a healthy change. In this case, each person needs a support network in which to practice healthy boundaries. Boundaries then begin when both friends get honest with one another; they realize that to set proper boundaries they must communicate openly with one another. In the final step the two friends commit to being more separate in their ideas.

Another type of boundary conflict in friendships occurs between a compliant and an aggressive controller. Such a conflict exhibits classic boundary conflict symptoms. In an extreme case, the aggressive controller stops asking before he or she steps past the other friend's boundaries. The specific symptoms of this type of conflict are that the compliant feels controlled and resentful.

The root of the problem lies in the compliant's habit of avoiding conflict by giving in. The aggressive controller disregards boundaries because he/she never learned to delay gratification. Boundaries exist in conflict because the compliant sets no limits and the controller shows no respect for the possibility of limits in others.

The aggressive controller must take responsibility for his/her lack of respect for the boundaries of the compliant. The compliant must own up to the fact that he/she gives control to the controller. To solve this problem, the compliant needs a supportive network in which to practice healthy boundaries. This, along with honest feedback from the aggressive controller, proves a healthy place to begin.

Following this support, the compliant must first set bounds. He/she does not offer an ultimate, but provides limits with clear and honest consequences. This forces the



controller to take responsibility for his/her own actions. In the future, one may renegotiate boundaries if the relationship continues in a direction agreeable to both parties.

A third type of boundary dispute in friendship is that of a compliant and a manipulative controller. In such a friendship, the compliant feels resentment, because the controller takes advantage of the friendship unjustly. The symptoms stem from the manipulative controller's childhood, where he/she grew up in an overly forgiving place. The compliant fails to set limits out of fear of losing the friendship.

Often, the manipulative controller creates a boundary conflict when he/she fails to plan ahead, thereby creating a crisis. The compliant needs to recognize overindulgence towards his/her friend; likewise, the compliant, because he/she is suffering from the conflict, owns the most motivation for change. To make changes, the compliant, once again, needs a supportive network in which to practice healthy boundaries.

Through honest confrontation, positive change should result from the manipulative controller. With honest boundaries, the friendship will probably grow.

Boundary conflict also arises in a friendship between a compliant and a nonresponsive. Symptoms exist on both sides: the compliant feels resentful for putting in more than half the effort and the nonresponsive, also recognizing the imbalance, feels guilty. Such conflict arises because the compliant person has learned to work instead of love. In addition, the nonresponsive fails to see how much work a friendship can be.

Unbalanced responsibility led to this boundary conflict. The compliant, who has made it too easy for the nonresponsive in the relationship, needs to take ownership of the problem. Both friends need objective support forth problem. They also need unconditional love. To begin, the compliant practices with his/her supportive network. Then, the compliant informs the nonresponsive that the next move belongs to the nonresponsive. If that person fails to respond, the relationship will die, but the compliant will grow from the experience with healthy boundaries. Either way, the relationship will change permanently.

In the entire above example, the reader recognizes that to be a compliant in a friendship offers the largest possibility for problems. Therefore, a person without healthy boundaries cripples a friendship, especially when in tandem with another person with boundary problems.

The authors next discuss the questions that arise, in their experience, from boundary conflicts in friendship. The first worries the friendships are easily broken. The person with this concern operates under the assumption that other relationships exist because some institution, such as work, church, or marriage, holds them together. The authors point out that the institution alone does not guarantee a successful relationship. Moreover, it is love, not obligation, which must connect people. God, as the ultimate example of love, serves as the strongest link between two people. Boundaries strengthen love in a healthy friendship.



In the next question, the authors explore the boundaries of romantic friendships. First, they admit these relationships are tricky. In most instances, dating serves to test a person for future marriage. Thus, these relationships will not heal a person's existing emotional problems. To exhibit healthy boundaries in a romantic relationship, one must already establish a habit of healthy boundaries in other friendships.

In addition, in romantic relationships, limits are necessary. The authors, in their counseling experience, share that when a couple always agrees, they often have been less than honest with one another.

The third question involves close family as close friends. While one can be on friendly terms with one's family of origin, one must also strive to leave one's family and enter the outside world. To limit one's relationship to one's family of origin limits one's influence on the world. By the authors definition, this limits one's effectiveness in God's plan for spreading his love throughout the world.

Finally, the authors discuss how to set boundaries with needy friends. One must realize that ministries are not the same as friends. One's friends should both give and receive. If one finds one's self giving and never receiving love and support in return, one may be in a ministry instead of a friendship. Not everyone one meets qualifies as a friend.

In closing, boundaries strengthen friendships. Furthermore, they define true love and allow it a place to grow.



Boundaries and your Spouse

Boundaries and your Spouse Summary and Analysis

The marital relationship causes the most difficult of boundary conflicts. Biblically, when two people marry, they become one flesh; therefore, seeing the boundaries between the two personalities becomes difficult. However, the lack of boundaries causes many failed marriages.

In a marriage, each spouse has unique abilities apart; they also have unique things they can only do together. The Bible uses the marriage relationship as a metaphor for Christ and the Church. All relationships, even one's relationship with God, however, stem from an individual choice. Boundaries that violate emotion, behavior, choice, or values are wrong.

When couples fail to respect boundaries on one another's feelings, the intimacy of the relationship suffers. Responsibility for one's own emotions, not relying on others, brings further intimacy. Strong feelings, such as anger, call for a response. The person feeling anger must therefore act first, though they may be in the right.

Likewise, each person in a marriage is responsible for his/her own desires. Furthermore, they are responsible for seeking the fulfillment of those desires, according to the authors. One task of marriage is to work out conflicting desires. When one feels one's spouse has selfish desires, often there are self-serving desires on both sides.

Finally, in marriage, one must recognize the limits of what one can give his/her spouse. This prevents resentment from growing towards one's spouse. Each spouse holds responsibility for his/her own limits and enforcing them. To create such boundaries, the authors look at the laws of boundaries, as listed earlier, in respect to marriage.

In the law of sowing and reaping, the authors point out that a spouse must make their response appropriate to the action. A wife who responds to verbal abuse by becoming more loving only enables the habit further. Instead, the spouse exhibiting the problem behavior needs to suffer the honest effects of his/her actions. Such actions are not manipulative, but are instead natural consequences to hurtful behaviors.

Next, the law of responsibility asserts that confrontations are responsible. Limits in marriage show true and honest love and prevent evil from entering the relationship. Likewise, the law of power accepts the power one has in the relationship. It also gives up power over another's feelings and actions; this power is only imaginary. No one can cause another to truly and honestly act in a way that person does not wish to act on their own.

The third law, the law of evaluation, shows that boundaries are about one's own actions, not the actions of others. Finally, the law of exposure explains that boundaries must be visible in marriage. Passiveness does not bring intimacy. In all areas of boundaries,



such as skin, location, time, and others, one must show respect for one's spouse. The spouse must be honest in speaking the truth, even when it disagrees with actions of the other spouse. In addition, they must clearly state reasons for needing space. All people in a marriage need time apart, sometimes for emotional healing. Furthermore, couples without healthy boundaries may need support in establishing them, from a counselor, pastor, or group. Finally, the couple must have firmly stated consequences that they follow consistently.

Some may argue that such boundaries do not line up with traditional biblical viewpoints of submission within marriage. In response, the authors point out that the Bible commands both husband and wife to submit to one another. In addition, true submission must be voluntary; forced submission is really slavery. Often, a wife's boundaries will show immaturity in her husband, which he initially resists. Over time, consistent boundaries will bring change to the marriage.

In creating boundaries, each marriage needs balance. The authors explain that there should be a balance of attitudes such as togetherness and separateness. When one spouse takes on too much of an attribute, such as togetherness, the other spouse reacts with its opposite, to create a skewed balance. However, when both spouses shoulder equal amounts, the space creates longing for togetherness from both parties.

To diagnose any boundary problem within marriage, each spouse must identify the problem and the boundary needed and agree to fix it. Then, they must seek the origin of the conflict, sometimes deep within one's childhood. If necessary, the spouse may seek support from a group or counselor, to allow good into the marriage with healthy boundaries. As was mentioned before, one should first practice boundaries in other relationships, where love is unconditional.

Furthermore, forgiveness must be given for a wrong, even when it has not been sought, which will release control on another over one's life. With these steps in place, one may become proactive in one's boundaries. This brings more control to that spouse. Finally, the spouses should learn to love freely and responsibly, respecting each other's boundaries. Healthy boundaries in marriage bring further intimacy.



Boundaries and your Children

Boundaries and your Children Summary and Analysis

According to this book, the most crucial boundaries of one's life develop in childhood. Boundaries enforced in childhood, whether good or bad, will influence one's character, schooling, friends, career, and values. Furthermore, God chose the family structure to establish these boundaries.

One of the most important things children need to learn in establishing boundaries is what is and what is not their responsibility. Like many aspects of life, teaching these principles early proves much easier than trying to repair unhealthy boundaries later in life. Furthermore, responsibility and boundaries create autonomy in children.

Proper discipline is also key in teaching healthy boundaries. Children learn that their actions produce consequences. A truly loving parent will allow his/her child to suffer the appropriate consequences for their actions, like how that child will experience consequences in adulthood. The parent should employ both positive and negative discipline. In addition, discipline differs from punishment. Punishment looks backward and allows no room for error; discipline looks forward, encouraging more mature behavior in the future.

Boundaries in childhood also provide self-protection. In this, children learn to respect both their own needs and the needs of others. Too much focus on one's self would produce a selfish child; however, too much focus on others overshadows the needs of self. Boundaries allow children to express their own desires and opinions, even when they differ from the family norms. In addition, children can express anger and grief without fear or disagreement.

Because of healthy boundaries in childhood, children will learn to depend upon themselves for success. Furthermore, they will realize they hold the responsibility for their own actions and the blame for their own problems. However, parents must use age appropriate consequences to instill the principles of boundaries in their children. Younger children must learn to budget time for homework; then, as adolescents, they can learn to budget money.

Having clear boundaries for one's children allows the children to feel a sense of control over their own selves. Too much protection toward the children weakens this control. Delaying gratification also exhibits control. After the second year of life, a child should be able to put off gratification for a greater good later.

In addition, children with boundaries learn to respect the limits of others. They realize that they are not the center of the universe. Furthermore, the limits teach love. They realize their actions have consequences for others as well. Also in this chapter, the



authors discuss in detail age appropriate boundary training. They encourage parents to consider the age of the child to avoid asking too much or too little of the child.

From birth to five months the parents do very little to establish boundaries. The child learns attachment to his/her caregiver; this provides bonding and safety. Items such as clothing provide tangible boundaries for the baby. Practices such as going by the adults schedule or delaying gratification punishes the infant that cannot help himself.

From five to ten months the child learns that "mommy and me are different". The parent should encourage the child's exploration of his/her world and interaction with other people. Such separation often proves difficult for mothers. A child of this age, however, does not yet understand "no".

Between ten and eighteen months, the child begins to understand "no" in setting boundaries. He/she also learns to walk and talk. Age appropriate consequences should occur without quenching the adventurous spirit of the child. From eighteen to thirty-six months the goals for the child should be to encourage emotional attachment with others, to learn to say no without fear of losing love, and to take no from others without withdrawal.

At this age, the child becomes more autonomous. The parent should chose battles wisely. The author's plan for discipline at this age is as follows: first offense, the parent should say no and offer an alternate activity. On the second offense, the parent says no and states the consequences. On the third offense, the consequence occurs and the parent explains why. They fourth step is to comfort and reconnect with the child, expressing love.

From three to five years the child enters sex-role development. They identify most closely with the same sex parent, often feelings themselves to be in competition with that parent. In this stage, parents should be careful not to attach shame to sexuality. They should also avoid being inappropriately close to the child physically or emotionally. Between six and eleven years, the child identifies with school and same sex peers. They begin to understand self-discipline and budgeting of time and money.

Sexual maturity occurs between eleven and eighteen years of age. A parents control turns to influence. Adolescents must suffer the real consequences of their actions. Some youth, however, suffer from real problems that require professional counseling. Types of discipline previously used will not prove affective. They should relate to the infraction in severity and provide the goal of internal motivation. Although the above guidelines provide a framework, no parenting strategy has a guarantee. However, every person in their adult life will need boundaries.



Boundaries and Work

Boundaries and Work Summary and Analysis

Contrary to some Christian viewpoints, work itself is not bad. In the Bible, Adam worked even before the fall of man. However, the sin lies in humankind's rebellion against work. Work itself provides valuable character development. Every person should see his/her work as a calling of God to develop his/her talents and character. Often in the workplace, responsibility for one's self eliminates corporate problems.

One of the most common boundary problems at work stems from being stuck with another's responsibility. This leads to resentment of that person. However, one must own responsibility of one's own feelings. If one feels resentment, one must take action. One may explain to the coworker that one's help will cease. One must be firm in the no, not justify the reasons why. A lack of boundaries in this area hurts both parties; if someone genuinely needs help, the feelings should be love, not resentment. In addition, giving of one's time should cause the other person to be better for it.

Another problem in the work place is that of too much overtime. One must realize that too much work to complete in the allotted time is the boss's problem. One should set boundaries and decide ahead of time how much overtime is appropriate. Also, one can review one's job description, if applicable. Next, one should prioritize one's monthly tasks. One should make an appointment with one's boss to discuss the job description and priorities. According to biblical principle, if the meeting fails to yield results, one should talk to the boss with another coworker present. If change does not occur, one may need to consider looking for different employment. In short, one must take responsibility for one's own schedule.

The third work place problem discussed here is misplaced priorities. One must know one's own limits. Many times feelings of frustration occur when one does an unimportant thing well and fails to receive the expected praise. In addition, a prescheduled limit upon one's time allows one to prioritize and even accomplish more. One will not waste time if one adheres to a carefully planned schedule.

Difficult coworkers also cause boundary problems as work. One must realize that he/she only has power over himself. Therefore, a change in attitude is often the only solution. Likewise, critical attitudes poison the workplace. Internalizing the negative attitudes of others creates unhealthy boundaries. One should begin by confronting the person with the negative attitude. If no change occurs, one should limit one's exposure to this person. One cannot gain the approval of a constantly negative person.

The sixth type of boundary problem in the workplace stems from conflict with authority. Often this occurs out of transference, when one fails to face problems with authority from one's past. Needs elsewhere in one's life may also cause the seventh problem,

which is expecting too much from work. Work will not fill needs childhood or family should fill. Work will not to provide emotional fulfillment, only honest pay.

Bringing work stress home also shows a lack of boundaries in the workplace. However, one should not repress emotions caused at work. On the contrary, one should deal with the emotions immediately and place limits on one's time. Realize that the work never ends, unless one places such restrictions.

Finally, sometimes one does not like one's job. One must own one's talents and not pursue the dreams of others. In establishing one's identify, one should seek a fulfilling career. In doing so, one must assess one's talents and limits and follow God's leading.



Boundaries and Your Self

Boundaries and Your Self Summary and Analysis

Often, in boundary development, one's greatest enemy lies within one's self. An out of control soul manifests itself in ways such as eating habits, money, time, and task completion habits. Some people use food as a false boundary, blocking people from getting close. Others allow irresponsible spending to give control away to their creditors. Still others mismanage their time. They appear chronically out of time. They feel one of four things about time. Some feel omnipotence; they always say yes, expecting much from themselves. Others feel too much responsibility towards others; another type lacks realistic anxiety about time. They fail to plan. Finally, some minimize the inconvenience to others for their mismanaged time. None of the above people experience satisfaction at the end of their day, because they failed to plan accordingly.

Some without proper self-boundaries fail to complete tasks once they take them on. This occurs for a variety of reasons. Some resist structure itself. Such habits inhibit task completion. Some fear success, because success causes envy in others. Still others lack follow-through because they become bored with the mundane aspects of the task. In addition, some are easily distracted, showing poor concentration development. The inability to delay gratification also prevents task completion. Lastly, the inability to say no to new tasks can cause the person to be overwhelmed and therefore no task receives adequate attention.

Another area in which one needs boundaries is the area of speech. The authors refer to a "talk net", in which one learns to curb the amount of speech. One must realize that only one's self controls one's tongue.

Sexuality also requires boundaries. Most people suffering from sexual obsessions feel shameful about the habit. They strive to hide it. As the authors often state, new boundaries require the support of a group. One should seek help so that the habit does not become the master in one's life. Equally destructive and more visible, alcohol and substance abuse easily become master as well. Such habits are especially harmful in the boundary development of children.

The authors state three reasons why one's "no" does not work with one's self. First and more basically, one's self is one's own worst enemy. Also, out of shame, many withdraw from the support of others at a time when such support is most crucial. Lastly, many try to survive new boundaries on willpower alone, fooling the "just say no" mentality. Such attitudes unnecessarily idolize one's self-will and rarely work for the long term.

To establish boundaries with one's self, the authors employ a familiar checklist. First, one must recognize the symptoms of the lack of boundaries, such as depression or anxiety. Second, one must seek the root of the lack, such as distorted need, unmet emotional needs, or repressed emotional hurt. Next, one should name the boundary in



conflict. Fourthly, one should take ownership for the lack, though not necessarily the fault. Following this, one names what one needs for the boundary. Support often helps in establishing boundaries, even with one's self.

To begin, one should address the need and allow failure, as this is a part of learning. Also, one must listen to feedback of one's support group because one often fails to see one's own faults. Consequences are opportunities to learn. One must constantly surround oneself with support, though not supporters that simply rescue one from the consequences. Such rescuing does not help in establishing new, healthy boundaries.

A person who suffers as a victim of another's abuse has the hardest time setting personal boundaries. The authors define a victim as someone injured while helpless. Such a person lacks trust, even in him/herself. Boundaries can aid the victim, though, in redefining his/herself. Often, professional help is required for full healing for the victim.

Boundaries and God

Boundaries and God Summary and Analysis

According to the authors, the Bible is a book all about relationships, including those between people and those between a person and God. In the Bible, one learns that God leaves work for humans to do alone, and he allows the consequences of their actions in these areas. Also, God accepts and respects the "no" of people.

The authors ask the reader to consider the story of the prodigal son, in which one son rejects the father's boundaries and demands his inheritance, subsequently wasting it on pleasurable living. Another son stays home, but resents the father's unconditional love towards the irresponsible brother. Such as story shows that God prefers as honest "no" towards his boundaries rather than a resentful "yes".

God also has the freedom to do what he wants, yet he allows for input from petitioners. The Bible gives examples of men that seemingly changed the mind of God through their prayers. Furthermore, God always takes responsibly for his boundaries, not relying on others to meet his needs. He offers a gospel of relationships to fulfill the needs of humankind and reconciliation, which allows for relationship regardless of one's past.

Resistance to Boundaries

Resistance to Boundaries Summary and Analysis

Chapter fourteen opens the final section of the book, part three: developing healthy boundaries.

The authors admonish the reader that developing healthy boundaries takes work. Often a fear of loss prevents one from enforcing needed boundaries. However, every person must battle others and themselves for their personal freedom.

First, one must consider outside resistance. In order to face any outside resistance, one must gather loving support. One may face angry reactions from selfishly motivated people. First, one must recognize that the angry person has the problem, that the anger only exists inside that person and cannot hurt one's self. Third, the anger of others should not cause one to act. In the face of anger, one should seek the help of one's support system. Furthermore, one must resist getting angry in return. If necessary, use physical distance to remove one's self from the source of anger.

Another type of outside resistance is that of guilt messages. Such resistance is often strongest in breaking boundaries. First, one must learn to recognize guilt message. One will also see that guilt is really anger in disguise; guilt hides sadness and past hurt. However, one must see that, if the guilt message works, it is one's own problem, not the person dealing out the guilt. To resist a guilt message, one should not justify or explain one's boundaries. While empathizing with the person, one should make the problem about that person's needs and not one's self.

In considering the implementation of new boundaries, one should plan to be proactive. One must honestly face the potential for loss of friends and support. Sometimes the actual withdrawal is only temporary; when the other person realizes the strength of the boundaries, he/she may return to the relationship. If not, one should strive to make up for the loss in some other way. One should realize that beginning is the hardest part. In the face of physical resistance, in the form of abuse, one should take action and get support. Such cases often require outside help.

The pain of others also prevents new boundaries. One should realize that such hurt will help others in the end by teaching them responsibly for themselves. Likewise, blamers make setting new boundaries difficult. They blame the boundary setter for their problems, which do not represent legitimate needs. One must confront such people.

Even in the face of real needs, one must set boundaries, realizing that one cannot help every needy person. The most helpful thing to do is often to emphasize and pray.

In the face of outside resistance, one must reflect upon forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness lies within one's self and releases another from debt. It requires only one

person and looks only at the past. Reconciliation, however, looks toward the future. It requires action on both parties. Only forgiveness is required for boundary setting.

One must also anticipate internal resistance in setting new boundaries. One must fulfill needs inside of a safe support group, not through new relationships, such as romantic friendships. One should also consider unresolved grief and loss. By not hanging on to one's past, one can let go of much of the bad in one's life. Once again, such moves require ownership of boundary-lessness and must have support.

An internal fear of anger also stands in the way of new boundaries. The authors suggest much support once again. In addition, practice with boundaries in a safe environment allows for progress. Furthermore, one should plan to be proactive and not respond out of habit.

Another inhibitor of boundaries is the fear of the unknown. Change is scary to anyone. However, successful people make a habit of placing themselves outside of their comfort zones. To cross this threshold, one should pray, read one's Bible and develop one's gifts. In addition, one should once again seek support and learn from others with similar problems. Structure and confidence also help in developing boundaries past one's fear of change.

Also, guilt prohibits new boundaries. The authors define guilt as internal condemnation. Actions should be motivated out of love, not guilt. Guilt is always learned and often wrong. Guilt, the authors explain, is an internal state, not an emotion, and not sometimes caused by another person. To deal with one's guilt, one should own up to the guilt, seek support, and find the source of the guilt, which is often anger. In addition, one should forgive the controlling person in one's life and practice boundaries frequently. Often, learning the truth will release the hold of guilt in one's life. One should practice doing those right things that cause one to feel guilt and expect grief in the process.

One may also feel a fear of abandonment in setting new boundaries. One should remember that boundaries only occur after bonding, at any stage in life. New boundaries do not occur easily; they take much strength. Encountering resistance often signals that needed boundaries are being set.



How to Measure Success with Boundaries

How to Measure Success with Boundaries Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, the authors set forth steps to measure this success of one's boundaries. First, one must recognize resentment as a warning that something threatens one's boundaries. Resentment at its heart is anger. The next step mandates changing one's tastes; including finding a group that supports one's new boundaries. Such a move may require significant change. Along with that, the third step encourages attachment to one's support group or "new family".

In step four, one defines one's treasures and mandates guarding the treasures. One must realize the impossibility of loving without receiving love as a biblical principle. Next, one must practice baby "no's", as training wheels for more important boundaries later. Contrary to instinct, one can rejoice in feelings of guilt, because they show progress. After this, one can move to grownup "no's", which deal with one's biggest boundary problems and guard one's most precious treasures.

Next, one learns to rejoice in the lack of guilt, as the ease of enforcing boundaries becomes stronger. In addition, one will love the boundaries of others, which in turn shows an increase in love. Finally, one will feel free with both one's "no" and one's "yes". One should realize that erring on the side of caution is best. It is easier to ease up on strict "no's" than to pull back after the fact. Mature boundaries bring about value driven goals in one's life.

A Day in a Life with Boundaries

A Day in a Life with Boundaries Summary and Analysis

The authors once again describe a day in the life of Sherrie, as they did in chapter one. However, now that Sherrie enforces healthy boundaries in her life, she enjoys a much more fulfilling day. She awakens refreshed and reflects on her previous day, in which she enforced boundaries with her mother.

She encourages responsibility in her family around the house and recognizes healthy lifestyle changes as self-stewardship. One time for work, she enjoys a promotion, in which her former boss is now her assistant, because she quit taking responsibility for others.

All areas of Sherrie's life appear to be in control, from home to work, children and husband, because she followed the principles set forth in this book. Perhaps the authors should once again state, as they did in the chapter on boundaries and one's children, that no formula comes with a guarantee.



Characters

Sherrie

Julie

Bill

Robert

Tim

Alien

Barry

Susie

God/Christ/Trinity

Satan

Shannon

Adam and Eve

Sarah

Jean



Objects/Places

Bible

The authors use many Bible references throughout the book. They assume the reader holds the Bible as a perfect guide by which to follow in everyday life. They use both the old and new testaments to support their claims for boundaries. They point to many well-known characters in the Bible as examples.

Fence

The authors compare healthy boundaries to a fence, which allows a person to interact with the world around him, yet maintain a distinct line around his property that he can defend. In addition, the fence should include a gate, to let in some good, but to keep the bad out.

Wall

The authors compare unhealthy boundaries to a wall, which keeps out everything, both the good and the bad. Often victims of abuse have wall-like boundaries. Walls also keep bad in, preventing healing for that person.

Gate

All good fence-like boundaries must possess a gate, with which the owner can determine to allow good influences into his life and keep bad influences out. The owner of the fence must accept responsibility for controlling the gate.

Boulder

Burdens in one's life that require the help of others are boulders. One should never try to carry a boulder alone. Everyone needs a good support group. Such a group appears in places such as counseling or church. A person with boundaries that are too strict will attempt to carry her boulder alone.

Knapsack

The authors compare everyday responsibilities to a knapsack. One person can easily carry such a load. People without healthy boundaries seek for others to carry their knapsacks.



Talk Net

Finally, in discussing the destructive power of the tongue, the authors introduce the talk net. A person who receives feedback from his/her support group for talking too much should employ a talk net. Such a metal image allows the person to limit what and how much one talks.

Boundaries

As the title suggests, this whole book seeks to define healthy boundaries. Boundaries exist around every person and define that person's space and area of responsibility. Positive boundaries increase responsibility for one's self, limit responsibility for others, and readily appear to other people. Healthy boundaries also promote feelings of love, intimacy, and empathy.

Unhealthy boundaries, however, cause one to allow either too much into one's space or too little. Loose boundaries, allowing too much in, cause one to take responsibility for other's work or give in too easily to the demands of other. Tight boundaries refuse to allow the help of others when needed.

The Family

Several families appear in this book. One's family of origin consists of one's parents and siblings in one's house in childhood. One's own family means one's spouse and children, apart from extended family. The church family also appears, as a picture of an appropriate family.

In a healthy family, members mutually respect the boundaries of others and honestly set boundaries of their own. Often, problems in one's family of origin cause lifelong boundary problems.

The Church

By the term "the church", the authors refer to the body of Christian believers as described in the New Testament of the Bible. In this setting, the Bible exists as the guide for the church's order. A healthy church honors the boundaries of the members. It preaches that boundaries are healthy and necessary, not selfish or sinful.



Themes

Boundaries Bring Satisfaction

Boundaries, as the title suggest, are the focus of the book. A healthy boundary, in which one possesses a clear view of one's responsibilities and the responsibilities of others, brings satisfaction to one's life.

Proper boundaries solve some personal issues, such as depression and anxiety. The lack of such problems also allows one to live a better, more fulfilling life. Boundaries help in this area by allowing one to place limits on the investment of one's time and resources. With such limits in place, one feels less pressure to submit to every demand that comes along. Furthermore, when one knows that one's time is limited, one chooses tasks more carefully and invests time into task more efficiently. Thus, tasks that receive greater attention are more chance for completion, which in turn leads to satisfaction.

Boundaries also bring satisfaction in relationships. When one makes boundaries clear and honest, other people often respond positively. At least, others will quit making unnecessary demands upon one's time, because the honest boundaries are in place and one enforces them consistently. If the people in one's world do not respect one's boundaries, one should consider seeking out a more supportive group that honors the boundaries of others.

Finally, boundaries bring satisfaction in their inception. When one realizes that he/she has set forth healthy boundaries and kept them, he/she feels satisfaction at the accomplishment of limits within his/her life.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

The law of sowing and reaping appears as the first law of boundaries. The authors mention it multiple times throughout the book. Simply put, sowing and reaping describes the process of cause and effect. Biblical parables about sowing and reaping lead to the name of this principle.

One must realize that one's actions bring consequences. Everything one does brings ramifications, not just for one's self, but for others as well. Young children must learn this principle to develop proper boundaries. Learning the law of sowing and reaping encourages empathy in children, as they learn how others feel.

The actions of others also bring consequences that are not limited to that person alone. When one sees a loved one suffers from unwise decisions, the inclination is to save that person from the consequences. To do so, however, proves unhelpful for both parties. The person who steps in suffers consequences for actions they never performed. Furthermore, the person who deserves the consequences never receives them and continues in the destructive habits without motivation to change.



Boundaries Show Love

The authors point out many ways in which Christians avoid boundaries because they desire to show love towards other people. However, the authors give several principles showing that such actions do not, in fact, show an honest love.

First, relating back to the previous theme, getting in the way of the consequences for another's actions prevents that person from maturing. Such interference, though it feels like caring, does not act in that person's best interest.

Also, a lack of boundaries fails to define one's own property. The authors purport that, without clear definitions of what one owns, one cannot honestly give that away. Therefore, with proper boundaries, one honestly possesses all that one has. Once such boundaries are in place, one is freer to give of oneself

Finally, the authors look to God for the ultimate definition of love. They point out that, though God loves people, he never forces them to act; he respects their boundaries. Respect of another's boundaries shows love. Giving love furthers God's love in the world. One cannot truly love without first receiving love. When one accepts God's love, one should, in turn love others, as God loves him/her.

Style

Perspective

The authors of the book, Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend, possess years of experience in counseling. They also counsel in hospitals, where they lead individual and group therapy sessions. They use several of their experiences in such counseling in this book.

The authors wrote this book to give a Christian perspective from the Bible on setting personal boundaries. Many Christians reject boundaries as unloving and therefore unbiblical. However, the authors set forth substantial support from the Bible and from their own experience, showing that boundaries are not only in line with the Bible, they also aid in furthering the message of it.

While anyone may gain insight from reading this book, the intended audience is a professional Christian that believes the Bible as a guide for all of life. Verses and principles from the Bible appear throughout the book as finite rules for all of life. Such a person will gain much help from the principles of the book. Setting boundaries as described by the authors gives one power over one's life and choices. The example of Sherrie shows the expected impact of the book. When Sherrie, a fictitious character, employs boundaries in her life, she experiences much more peace, harmony, and satisfaction in her work and home.

Tone

The authors employ a conversational, subjective tone in this book. They share the personal experiences of many of their clients, though they do so anonymously. Such tactics allow the reader to relate to the information that is set forth.

The use of second person, you and us, draws the reader into the material and makes it more personal. A tone of hope pervades this work. The authors encourage the reader to try to make changes in his/her life. Easy, step-by-step directions encourage baby steps towards progress in one's boundaries.

Structure

The book begins with an example of a life without boundaries. It ends with a similar story; this time, one with boundaries in place. Such a contrast makes a powerful point for boundaries in one's life.

The authors split the book into three parts. The first, what are boundaries, defines many of the terms used throughout the book. It looks at boundary problems, including personality conflict, and boundary myths. The second part, boundary conflicts, looks

specifically at how boundaries appear in situations such as work, family, friends, and marriage. Finally, part three discusses setting up healthy boundaries.

Often, parts of the book relate to previously mentioned material. Such a tactic proves useful to someone reading the whole work. However, should a reader try to read just a few interesting chapters, confusion may result.



Quotes

"Sherrie suffers from severe difficulties in taking ownership of her life." p. 27

"As we see in Sherrie's many struggles, the inability to set appropriate boundaries at appropriate times with the appropriate people can be very destructive." p. 27

"This book presents a biblical view of boundaries: what they are, what they protect, how they are developed, how they are injured, how to repair them, and how to use them." p. 28

"The first is your most basic need in life is for relationship." p. 37

"We need self-control without repression." p. 31

"When parents teach children that setting boundaries or saying no is bad, they are teaching them that others can do with them as they wish." p. 50

"Controllers believe the old jokes about training top sales people: no means maybe, and maybe means yes." p. 54

"In other words, good parenting isn't emotionally bludgeoning the child into some close or ideal of the perfect child." p. 63

"No matter how much you talk to yourself, read study, or practice *you can't develop or set boundaries apart from supportive relationships with God and others.*" p. 64

"You must first determine who you *aren't* before you discover the true, authentic aspects of your God-given identity." p. 66

"Developing children need to know their boundaries will be honored." p. 74

"When God tells us that we will reap what we sow, he is not punishing us; he's telling us how things really are." p. 84

"Since you cannot get *them* to change, you must change *yourself* so that their destructive patterns no longer work on you." p. 89

"Power is not something you demand or deserve, it is something you express." p. 96

"Boundaries are a 'litmus test' for the quality of our relationships." p. 108

"She will encourage the "hatching" of her baby, knowing she is preparing him or her to be equipped to "leave and cleave."" p. 186

"Limits on good things keep them good." p. 201

"There is no unity without distinct identities, and boundaries define the distinct identities involved." p. 235

Topics for Discussion

What areas not mentioned in the book require boundaries?

How would the principles need to be modified for a non-Christian?

Which personality type, controller, compliant, nonresponsive, do you most relate to? Explain.

Which area mentioned in the book do you feel you may work on?

Do the authors possess enough authority on this topic? Explain.

Do you perceive any bias in this book? Explain.

Describe a situation in which you would recommend this book to someone.