

Women & More

Setting Boundaries

Lesson 23: **April 16, 2015**—*attitude*

We need to make setting and accepting boundaries a holy ‘habit’. Scripture says that Jesus was in the habit of prayer: He guarded time with His Father! We are to be imitators of Christ, and, therefore, we will necessarily need to say ‘no’ to some things and focus our very lives on what Christ focused on. Paul tells us **what to think about and what to practice** in his letter to the Philippians in 4:8-9—“*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* ⁹*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.* And the God of peace will be with you.”

Psalms 104:7-9 rehearses the glory of God creating boundaries for the water after the great flood: “*But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them.* ⁹***You set a boundary they cannot cross,*** *never again will they cover the earth.”* And that brings us to the Exodus 9:13 Scripture passage where God set His bow in the clouds promising that He would never again flood the whole earth.

► **We must embrace the boundaries God makes for us:** In our trusting relationship with Him, we’re not building a wall to keep people out but we’re building a life lived for Christ. Look at the followers of Christ in the New Testament as their relationship with the Lord Jesus was built up and developed: Jesus first referred to them as **servants**; then **disciples**; and a little before His death they were **friends**. But after the resurrection they are called **brothers**. We can be anything in life or do most anything, but we can’t be and do everything, so Paul in Scripture reminds us: “This one thing I do.”

► **We mustn’t misjudge someone else’s boundaries:** Don’t look at another Christian and decide that they are not ‘socializing’ enough or not ‘serving’ enough or not ‘sacrificing’ enough—only God knows their heart and the boundaries that He has established for them. A pastor went to visit in a home. He knocked, waited, and then heard footsteps, but no one answered the door. So he left a card with this Scripture reference: Revelation 3:20—“*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock....*” Sunday morning, the lady whose home he had paid the visit handed a card to the pastor inscribed simply Genesis 3:10—“*...I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.*”

For some of His children, God has ordained the ‘boundaries’ of poverty, illness, a family member who needs constant care, or various trials. We are to take on the *attitude* that Christ displayed—always desiring to do the Father’s will!

Sometimes we think that we should have it all down here, right now, and that is not what God has promised. Remember the boundaries God set for the young girl Mary when He revealed to her that she would become the Lord's mother? Mary's *attitude* was one of acceptance of God's will for her life. It wasn't going to be an easy 'way'; there would be the boundaries of scorn and shame; poverty and pain, and being misunderstood and misjudged all over the place. But there would be God's blessing for life and supreme reward for eternity! Luke 1:45 "*Blessed is she who has believed that what the LORD has said to her will be accomplished.*"

"You'd be amazed at what you can do without," said Billy Graham. Then he listed three things that **we absolutely cannot do without**: 1) Without **the shedding of blood** there is no remission of sin—Hebrews 9:22; 2) Without **faith** it is impossible to please God—Hebrews 11:6, and 3) Without **Me** you can do nothing—John 15:5. There're so many things that we pack into our lives which keep us from doing the 'one' thing—the 'first' thing first—and following Christ closely! *Attitude* will determine our success or failure in everything, of course, but particularly in walking in the 'way' of Christ Jesus, our Lord!

REST and REFRESH—

In *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young said, "Stop trying to monitor My responsibilities—things that are beyond your control. Find freedom by accepting the boundaries of your domain." About when to push back the boundaries, she said, "Push back the boundaries of your life to **make space for time alone with Me**. The world is waiting to squeeze you into its mold and to crowd out time devoted to Me." Henry van Dyke warned that those who would see wonderful things must often be ready to travel alone. This would not be without the Lord at our side, but without human companionship for a time.

God scopes the earth to strengthen *ones* who live for Him intentionally—within the bounds He has laid out, and making some ourselves. In the Old Testament book of 2 Chronicles 16:9a we hear Hanani the seer say to King Asa: "*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*" And in the New we see *One* who was fully committed to the Father and His work—our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 8:42—**as he went**—"Our Master knows no limits of power or boundary of mission," said Charles Spurgeon. "On the way to raise a dead girl to life, Jesus works another miracle." And keep in mind that Jesus had just returned from a trip to the region of the Gerasenes where He had healed a demon-possessed man.

In everything Jesus did and said while he was on earth there was purpose and planning and carrying out of the plan, because it was the Father's plan. Jesus did not live haphazardly; He lived intentionally within the Father's bounds!

SETTLE IN—

Whenever God allowed Satan to buffet Job to test his fidelity, He set boundaries around the events that He would allow. Robert Jeffress, “God takes full responsibility for all human suffering, including the wrongs that others commit against us.” Henry van Dyke: “Happy and strong and brave shall we be—able to endure all things, and to do all things—if we believe that every day, every hour, every moment of our life is in God’s hands.”

“Trials and hard places are needed to press us forward, even as the furnace fires in the hold of that mighty ship give force that propels that great vessel across the sea in the face of the winds and waves,” said A. B. Simpson. Proverbs 22:28 *“Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your forefathers.”* What does this mean for us today? We’re not to tamper with God’s word, nor disregard the Constitution of the United States and our founding as a Christian nation.

In the 1960s, an aide to President Lyndon Johnson said, “Everything can’t be first.” And I’m sure that is often true in running a country. But as individual Christians, whatever we put first—give first place to—is our priority: the Good Samaritan put the injured man and his needs ahead of his own. Jesus put the Father’s will ahead of His own. In fact, **Jesus preached what He practiced!**

OPPOSITION TO OUR BOUNDARIES—

J. I. Packer warned, **“The Christian who is not conscious of being opposed had better watch himself.”** 1 Thessalonians 2:2 and 4b—*“We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.”* ^{4b} *“...We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.”* “Nothing can make us cheaper than being bought off,” someone said.

Spurgeon said, “The thought is full of consolation, that He who has fixed the bounds of our habitation, has also fixed the bounds of our tribulation.” There is no place that God is more with us than when we are being unjustly attacked by the enemy of our soul and his evil-doing cohorts. Psalm 138:7 *“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.”*

“The richest qualities of a Christian often come out under the north wind of suffering and adversity. Bruised hearts often emit the fragrance that God loves to smell. I have been through the valley of weeping, the valley of sorrow and pain; but the ‘God of all comfort’ was with me, at hand to uphold and sustain,” said Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, referencing Psalm 84:5-6. Joyce Meyer said, “Quit allowing Satan to take away everything the Lord Jesus died to give you.”

JUST SAY ‘NO’—

Do we want to be right, or do we want to be ‘right’ with God? When we find ourselves in a strange situation, we can ask God, “What’s wrong about this situation; this person?” Unless God tells us to stay—we’d better say ‘no’ and:

1. Run, retreat and release;
2. Back off from the situation (when there's something different in the relationship)—Proverbs 4:23 says, “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*” And Proverbs 12:26a—“*A righteous man is cautious in friendship—*”;
3. Talk with the person face-to-face or the Bible study group—speaking the truth in love, as Ephesians 4:15 commands—to see if the relationship can survive and be strengthened; if not, **let it go.**
4. Love with your eyes open—open to God’s signals to release! Obadiah 1:3 says, “*The pride of your heart has deceived you.*” If we get fooled, we must not get cynical. We need to ask God to help us know what only He can know—if someone is a poser.
5. Keep on doing what God has called us to do;
6. Be willing to ‘fight’—spiritual warfare—for God’s truth; and
7. Move on if we’ve been abandoned or betrayed.
8. Don’t miss an opportunity to reach out and be a peacemaker, and
9. Admit when we’re wrong—be a ‘righter’ in residence!
10. Forgive **as** He forgave—we’ll only extend the problem if we rehearse;
11. Refuse self-pity because it puts self on the throne—don’t extend your years in the wilderness, and
12. Listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings!

TEARING DOWN BARRIERS—

The founder of the women’s ministry, *Moms & Beyond*, in Colorado Springs, Laurie Keyes, shared: “Live your life, so that when people watch you, even when they see you blow it with your kids, they see you apologize. They see you live the life of asking forgiveness if you rip up your neighbor’s plants by accident when you’re taking weeds out in the piece of property that kind of links the two of you, like I did. And you go to your neighbor with new plants and you apologize and you ask to be forgiven. I want you to know that I noticed she was mad at me, and I didn’t go. I didn’t go for over a year. And I felt very like, ‘What does she think? I mean, this is ridiculous. I was taking weeds out and it happened by accident.’ And she held that against me and was very upset with me for months—went a little overboard on the negative with me, I thought.

“But God one day convicted me of the fact that I needed to bring some plants to her and ask her forgiveness for that. After a whole year of tension and of walls being built that was one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do. But we saw that woman melt her heart before Christ a few years after that event. And I just think **we never know what God might use in order to bring somebody close to us to Christ by the way we live.**” Henry van Dyke authored this poem:

“Nay, I wrong you, little flower,
 Reading mournful mood of mine
 In your looks, that give no sign
 Of a spirit dark and cheerless:
 You possess the heavenly power
 That rejoices in the hour;
 Glad, contented, free, and fearless—
 Lifts a sunny face to heaven
 When a sunny day is given;
 Makes a summer of its own,
 Blooming late and all alone.”

DONE WITH SIN (not sinless; but blameless)—

1 Peter 4:1—“*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.*” The sin nature is our inclination to sin; it is “not just isolated acts” as Puritan Jonathan Edwards explained: “The corrupt propensity was itself a fault, even before a sinful act.” The New England Primer’s first lesson was “In Adam’s fall we sinned all.”

READY TO GO—

Psalm 90:12 tells us to wisely number our days. Numbered days will cause our *attitude* to become more strategic, and we’ll live intentionally. Someone has said that when it’s your time to die, make sure that’s all you have to do. Recognizing that fact, **can our commitment to the Lord ever be out-of-bounds?** Can we do too much in the way of worship and walking? Scripture answers in 1 Timothy 4:8—“*For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*”

•**And verse 15**—“*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*” In Psalm 139:5-6 David says, “*You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*” Evangelist Manly Beasley said this about *attitude*:

“Sow a thought—reap an act;
 Sow an act—reap an attitude
 Sow an attitude—reap a destiny!”