

# Boundaries

## Study Guide

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last update = **17Sep2015**

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based on "Boundaries" by Dr. Henry Cloud, Dr. John Townsend

This document contains a summary of key points from each chapter of "Boundaries" as well as discussion questions. Additionally, there are exercises for some chapters which may occur before or after the chapter review and discussion.

Note: If you are leading a group study of the book and want to do the exercise for chapter 3, you'll need to bring enough apples so that each person has one. You will also need a container large enough to hold the apples.

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## Chapter 1: A Day in a Boundaryless Life

### Points to Consider

- You can't do everything.
- Part of being responsible and taking ownership is knowing what is your job and what is not.

### Discussion Questions

- Do you agree that you can't do everything?
- In what circumstances are you likely to take on more than is comfortable for you?

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## Chapter 2: What Does a Boundary Look Like?

### Points to Consider

<b>Boundary</b>	A limit beyond which an activity or function should not take place. Boundaries can be physical, spiritual, or conceptual. Pro 4:23
<b>Burden</b>	Excess that weighs down a person. God wants us to help others with what they cannot do themselves. Gal 6:2
<b>Load</b>	Cargo or daily toil for which a person is responsible. God wants each of us to carry his own load. Gal 6:5

- A boundary shows you where you end and someone else begins.
- Boundaries keep the good in and the bad out.
- The word "no" sets boundaries.
- God wants you to be clear about your "no" and your "yes." Mat 5:37, Jas 5:12
- Methods of boundary setting include geographical distance, time, and emotional distance.

- There should be consequences when someone crosses boundaries. 2The 3:10, Pro 16:26
- Avoid manipulating or falling prey to manipulation.
- Take responsibility for and pay attention to your: feelings, attitudes & beliefs-Mark 7:8, behaviors-Gal 6:7-8, choices-Gal 5:23, values-John 12:43, talents, thoughts-2Cor 10:5, desires-Jas 4:2-3, heart.

### Discussion Questions

- For you personally, what does it take to know God's boundaries?
- What is the danger of being unclear about God's boundaries?
- What is the danger of being unclear about your own boundaries?

Exercise: Boundary Free-association

**Purpose**

Practice discussing thoughts about boundaries.

**Participant Instructions**

<i>step</i>	<i>action</i>
1	When the session leader says, "begin." Write as many words as you can that relate in some way to "boundaries." <b>[Session leader says, "begin," gives participants 60 seconds then says, "stop."]</b>
2	Form sub-groups of 3 or 4. In your sub-group, agree on 4 words from your combined lists that you think best relate to boundaries. <b>[Session leader gives sub-groups 3 minutes for this step, then says, "stop."]</b>
3	<b>Session leader calls on each participant:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● State one of the 4 words from your sub-group.</li><li>● Briefly explain how the word relates to boundaries.</li></ul>
4	Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What apprehensions do you have about making changes to the way you manage your boundaries?</li><li>● In what setting (home, job, ministry, social) do you think you would be most comfortable beginning to clarify and firm up your boundaries?</li></ul>

## Chapter 3: Boundary Problems

### Points to Consider

Compassionate =	Compliant from the inside out
Sacrificial =	Compliant on the outside and resentful on the inside

God wants us to be compassionate, not sacrificial.  
Mat 9:13

Problem-1	saying yes to the bad
Problem-2	saying no to the good
Problem-3	not respecting other's boundaries, aggression, manipulation
Problem-4	being non-responsive

### Discussion Questions

- Of the four boundary problems, which causes you the most frustration in interacting with others?
- In what ways do your boundary problems harm your relationships with others?

### Exercise: Recognize Your Load

#### Purpose

Emphasize the challenges of and importance of recognizing what is your load and what is not your load.

#### Participant Instructions

step	action
1	<p><b>[Session leader reads instruction in this step then says, "begin," gives participants 60 seconds then says, "stop."]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accept an apple from the session leader. This apple represents the load God has given you.</li> <li>● Get to know your apple. How does it look, feel, or smell? Embrace your apple. 😊</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>[Session leader collects all apples then places them randomly on a table.]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place your apple in the container that the session leader provides.</li> <li>● Find and retrieve your apple from the group of apples on the table. Be certain that you have the correct apple.</li> </ul>
3	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How were you able to recognize your apple?</li> <li>● In what way did the time you spent getting to know your apple help you recognize your apple?</li> <li>● In the metaphor of the apple as your personal load, what can you do to be sure you recognize the load God has given you?</li> <li>● What problems do you think you will face if you fail to recognize and accept your load?</li> </ul>

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## Chapter4: How Boundaries are Developed

### Points to Consider

1-Bonding	Loved enough by God and others to not feel isolated. Eph 3:17, Col 2:7
2-Separation & Individuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hatching: feeling safe enough to begin taking risks</li><li>● Practicing: feeling exhilarated with new experiences</li><li>● Rapprochement: becoming aware of limits</li></ul>

### Discussion Questions

In what ways can a parent's "good intentions" cause boundary injuries to a child?

### Boundary Injuries: What Goes Wrong?

- Parents who withdraw when a child attempts to set boundaries. 1Cor 13:8
- Parents who become hostile when a child attempts to set boundaries. Col 3:21, Eph 6:4
- Parents who over-control their children.
- Parents who fail to set limits.
- Parents who are unpredictable in setting limits.
- Trauma.
- Our own character traits.
- Our own sinfulness.

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## Chapter 5: Ten Laws of Boundaries

### Points to Consider

#### 1-Law of Sowing and Reaping

If you rescue an irresponsible person, you interfere with the Law of Sowing and Reaping.	Let the irresponsible person suffer the consequences of his behavior. Pro 9:8
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#### 2-Law of Responsibility

If you take on someone else's responsibility, you interfere with the Law of Responsibility.	Give to legitimate needs. Put limits on sin. Pro 19:19, Pro 23:13
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#### 3-Law of Power

You have the power to:

- Agree with the truth of your problem [confess]. 1John 1:9
- Submit your inability to God. Jas 4:7-10
- Ask God to show you your boundaries.
- Turn from the evil within you [repent].
- Ask God to meet your developmental needs.
- Make amends to those you have injured. You cannot change other people, but you can change the way you respond to them.

#### 4-Law of Respect

Respect other's boundaries as you want them to respect yours. Mat 7:12, Jas 1:25

#### 5-Law of Motivation

First, understand your freedom, then, serve out of love.

#### 6-Law of Evaluation

Consider how the boundaries you set effect others. Speak the truth in love. Eph 4:25

#### 7-Law of Pro-activity

- Don't use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature. Gal 5:13-15
- The ultimate expression of power is love.

#### 8-Law of Envy

Envy focuses outside our boundaries. Gal 6:4  
Focus on what is inside your boundaries.

#### 9-Law of Activity

- God will match your effort, but He will not do your work for you.
- God's expectation is that you will try. Heb 10:38-39, Mat 7:7-8

#### 10-Law of Exposure

- You need to make your boundaries visible to others. Eph 5:13-14
- God wants us to have an open relationship with Him and with others. Psa 51:6

### Discussion Questions

- Which of the above laws have you seen active in your relationships?
- If you picked one Law for focused self-improvement, which one would it be?

## Chapter 6: Common Boundary Myths

### Points to Consider

MYTH	REALITY
1-setting boundaries is selfish	Setting boundaries is part of being a good steward of your time, talents, and treasures.
2-boundaries are a sign of disobedience	God is more concerned with your heart than with compliance. Hos 6:6, 2Cor 9:7
3-others will hurt me if I try to set boundaries	If someone is unwilling to respect your boundaries, your relationship with that person is already poor.
4-if I set boundaries, I'll hurt others	Though your 'no' may cause some discomfort for another, there are times when a 'no' is necessary to take care of yourself. Mat 14:22-23, Gal 6:5

MYTH	REALITY
5-boundaries mean I'm angry	Setting new boundaries may uncover some anger from previous boundary violations. Once you recognize and get past anger, you can begin positive boundary setting. Don't get mad. Set a limit.
6-when others set boundaries, it injures me	Failing to respect other's boundaries is selfish. Mat 7:12 You are responsible for meeting your own needs.
7-boundaries cause feelings of guilt	When you receive something, determine if it is a gift or a loan. Repay loans. Show thankfulness for gifts and in turn show kindness to others. Col 2:7
8-boundaries are permanent	You own your boundaries. You can adjust them to fit changing circumstances. Jonah 3:10

### Discussion Questions

- Which boundary myth creates the most problems for you?
- What can a person do to overcome feeling that they must repay a 'gift'?

## Chapter 7: Boundaries and Your Family

### Points to Consider

- When your relationship with one person affects your relationships with others, it is a sign of boundary problems.
- A person who does not stand on his own financially is a child.
- Triangulation is failure to resolve a conflict directly by involving a third person to take sides. God wants you to resolve your conflicts directly and in private. Mat 18:15
- Boundaries can prevent resentment about giving to parents. 2Cor 12:4
- To grow spiritually, you must leave the authority of your parents and put yourself under God's authority. Gal 4:1-7, Mat 23:9, Mat 10:35-37



*Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.*

*Law of Power = You only have the power to change yourself. You are responsible for how you relate to a 'problem' person.*

### PLAN FOR SOLVING FAMILY BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

1	Identify your discomfort.
2	Identify the boundary violation that is causing your discomfort.
3	Identify the need you are trying to meet that makes it difficult to set boundaries.
4	Reach out to God and His family to meet your need.
5	Practice boundary setting in a safe environment.
6	Protect yourself from boundary violations.
7	Forgive past boundary violations. Expect nothing from the violator. Let it go. Move forward.
8	Begin today to respond rather than react. Make a conscious choice within your boundaries.
9	Learn to love in freedom and responsibility, not guilt.

### Discussion Questions

- If you were to use the plan above to solve a boundary problem, at what step would you begin to struggle? Why?
- What can you do to make it easier to successfully complete the difficult step(s) in the plan?

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## Chapter 8: Boundaries and Your Friends

### *Points to Consider*

- Generally, a compliant in a relationship will deny his or her boundaries in an attempt to keep the peace. This leads to the compliant becoming resentful and dissatisfied.
- Because the compliant is the one experiencing the discomfort, the compliant is the one responsible for addressing the problem. Matthew 18
- Before taking action, it is generally helpful for the compliant to seek support from God and responsible members of His family.
- The necessary action for the compliant is to tell the truth, clearly identify boundaries, and follow through on appropriate consequences.
- Staying connected to God and His family gives you the grace to resolve boundary conflicts.
- You need to be comforted before you can comfort others. 2Cor 1:4

### *Discussion Questions*

- Outside of ministry and family, do you have friendships?
- In what way might clarifying your boundaries improve your friendships?

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## Chapter 9: Boundaries and Your Spouse

### *Points to Consider*

- You are responsible for communicating your feelings to your spouse.
- You will not get everything you want. Sometimes your wants will conflict with the wants of your spouse.
- Give freely, but not past the point of love. 2Cor 9:7  
You are responsible for setting the limits.
- If your spouse crosses limits, you must let him/her suffer the consequences of those actions.
- Set boundaries for how you will behave in certain situations. You can't control how your spouse behaves, but you can control how you behave.
- It is important to communicate your boundaries clearly and lovingly then follow through on the consequences you have established. Mat 18:15, Jas 2:14-26
- Submission is the free choice of one person to another. Eph 5:21 [167]

### *Discussion Questions*

What behaviors from you are likely to make it easier for your spouse to make the free choice to be submissive?

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## Chapter 10: Boundaries and Your Children

### Points to Consider

Discipline = an external boundary designed to develop internal boundaries

- Discipline includes
  - ▶ Pro-activity, prevention, instruction, Eph 6:4
  - ▶ Correction, chastisement, consequences, Pro 15:10
- The lessons we learn from discipline help us not repeat mistakes, Heb 2:10
- Take responsibility for your needs and teach children to take responsibility for their needs

Step 1	Identify your needs. Help children learn to express their feelings and needs.
Step 2	Initiate responsible care-taking for yourself. Allow children to experience age-appropriate consequences for what they do. Heb 5:14 If you choose to _____, you're also choosing to _____.

- Teach children to delay gratification, Pro 6:6-11, Luke 14:28.
- Teach children that the world does not revolve around them. They must learn to accept 'no' from others.
- Learning to respect others' boundaries helps us develop empathy for others. This gives us a foundation to learn to love God and others.
- A person with well-developed boundaries has an internal sense of motivation.

### Discussion Questions

- Regarding discipline, what success have you had with being proactive (prevention, instruction)?
- What are some challenges with corrective discipline?

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## Chapter 11: Boundaries and Work

### Points to Consider

- Whatever we do, God calls us to work as unto the Lord, Col 3:23
- Don't justify why you won't do someone else's work. Avoid bailing out irresponsible people.
- Set limits on yourself. Spend time on the most important things. Say, "no" to the unimportant, Exo 18:14-27.
- Avoid arguing with or trying to gain approval from a supercritical person, Pro 9:7-8.
- The workplace is not where you should resolve your unmet childhood needs.
- Avoid letting work issues emotionally control your life.
- Work with God to find out who you really are and what kind of work fits the SHAPE He gave you, Rom 12:2, Psa 37:4-5.
- God holds you accountable for what you do with the time, talents, and treasures He gives you, Ecc 11:9.

### Discussion Questions

- How can you be sure you are clear which tasks are important and which are not?
- How can you be sure you know which responsibilities are yours and which are not?
- When you face a supercritical person, what do you plan to do?

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## Chapter 12: Boundaries and Your Self

### *Points to Consider*

- Money isn't the problem; it's the 'love' of money that's the problem, 1Tim 6:10. Learn to say, 'no' to unnecessary spending.
- People who don't manage their time inconvenience and frustrate others.
- Those who fail to complete tasks or finish them poorly have boundary problems.
- It is important to set boundaries on your tongue, Pro 10:19, Pro 17:27, James 3:9-10, Mat 12:36.
- Though it is difficult to admit your problems to others, God designed us to need encouragement from others, Ecc 4:10, John 15:1-6, Eph 4:16.
- Will power is not sufficient to control self, Col 2:20-23.
- Even if your boundary problems are not your fault, they are your responsibility.

- Isolation makes you spiritually vulnerable, Luke 11:24-26].
- When others in our support system let us know how our lack of self-boundaries hurts them, love rather than fear becomes a motivator.
- You need people in your support group who will be loving and supportive without rescuing you. They must understand that rescuing you is not loving. God teaches through consequences, Gal 6:1.

### *Discussion Questions*

- When you get the urge to rescue someone, what can you do to resist the urge?
- For whom can you serve as an accountability partner to encourage without rescuing?
- Where can you turn for encouragement?

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## Chapter 13: Boundaries and God

### *Points to Consider*

- God allows you to experience the consequences of your behavior.
- God respects your 'no.' You have a choice. God prefers that you be honest with Him. Ecc 5:5, Psa 51:6, John 4:23-24
- God insists you respect His boundaries. He will not always do what you want Him to do.
- God wants to know what you think, Isa 1:18. He takes that into account as He decides what to do. God wants you to stay in relationship with Him regardless of what He decides.
- Boundaries help you be the best you can be – in God's image, John 17:20-23. You need to be clear about your responsibilities and about God's responsibilities.

### *Discussion Questions*

- In what way is it difficult to be honest with God?
- In what way is it difficult to accept a "no" from God?
- What can you do to be sure that you stay in relationship with God even when you are in conflict with Him?
- What can you do to be sure you know which responsibilities are yours and which are God's?

## Chapter 14: Resistance to Boundaries

### Points to Consider

God has defined who you are and your limits, Psa 16:5-6. Maintaining your boundaries is hard work. One reason is the resistance you will encounter.

Anger, Pro 19:19	Speak the truth in love. Avoid becoming angry yourself.
Guilt, Pro 25:28	You don't owe a guilt sender an explanation. Be a good listener, but don't take the blame.
Counter-moves, Psa 18:34	Know what the other person is likely to do when you set boundaries. Be prepared for a battle. Lean on God for resolve.
Physical Violence	Seek help immediately in the case of physical violence.
Pain of Others	Even though you will feel sad to see their pain, your firm boundaries may help the other person begin to take responsibility.
Blame	Stick to your boundaries. Try to help the other person see that he is responsible for himself.
Real Need	If the other person's real need is beyond your limits to satisfy, try to help them find others who can help. Always pray for real needs.
Forgiveness vs. Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Always forgive. Forgiveness takes one-you.</li> <li>● Only reconcile when the other person has proven that he has made changes to be trustworthy. Mat 3:8 Reconciliation takes two.</li> </ul>
Your Unmet Needs Unresolved Grief or Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Admit you have a problem.</li> <li>● Realize that you are afraid to set boundaries. Rom 7:15, 19</li> <li>● Seek help from God and others.</li> <li>● Identify what (who) it is that you must let go. 2Cor 6:12</li> <li>● Let go. (Expect to experience a grieving process.)</li> <li>● Move on. Seek God's plan for your life.</li> </ul>
Fear of Anger	When a person responds to you in anger, avoid responding back with anger, but stick to your boundaries.

Fear of the Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pray, asking for God's guidance.</li> <li>● Read the Bible, Pro 3:5-6.</li> <li>● Develop the gifts God has given you.</li> <li>● Get encouragement from your support group, Ecc 4:9-10.</li> <li>● Add some structure to your life.</li> </ul>
Unforgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forgiveness is difficult because you have to let go of something you believe someone "owes" you.</li> <li>● Realize the past wrong cannot be undone; however, if you forgive, you make the wrong powerless, Col 2:14, Col 3:13.</li> <li>● Once you forgive, protect yourself with boundaries until the person proves he is trustworthy. Mat 3:8</li> </ul>
External focus	Stop expecting others to fix things for you.
Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God wants you to do right out of love, not guilt, 2Cor 7:10.</li> <li>● Fill your head with God's Word to push out the unhelpful guilt messages.</li> </ul>
Fear of abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stay close to God (pray, read the Bible, be an active member of a church body)</li> <li>● Work to form healthy Christian relationships.</li> </ul>

Expect trials. Being the person God desires you to be is worth the battle. James 1:2-4

## Chapter 15: How to Measure Success with Boundaries

### Points to Consider

- A sign that you are beginning to develop boundaries is a sense of frustration or anger when someone violates your boundaries.
- God created you free so you can love and be in a meaningfully close relationship with Him and others. Col 3:14
- You love because He first loved you. 1John 4:19
- Guard the treasures God has given you. Pro 4:23
- When you respect the boundaries of others, you work against the self-centeredness that is part of your fallen nature. Gal 5:14
- When you are boundary-developed, you honor your promise freely and gladly or you don't make the promise.
- Learn not to promise before you have counted the cost to you spiritually, emotionally, and materially.
- The ultimate goal of learning boundaries is to free you up to protect, nurture, and develop the life and resources God has given you.

### Discussion Questions

Where do you see yourself along the boundary development scale?

1 > 2 > 3 > 4 > 5 > 6 > 7 > 8 > 9 > 10 > 11

1=feel anger over violation	2=feel drawn to boundary lovers	3=join a boundary family
4=treasure your treasure	5=practice baby no's	6=rejoice in guilty feelings
7=practice grown up no's	8=rejoice in absence of guilt	9=love others' boundaries
10=freely say no or yes	11=set value-driven goals	

*Exercise: Boundaries Self-assessment*

For each statement below, indicate a number from 1-10, where "1" means you strongly disagree and "10" means you strongly agree.

It is easy for me to tell when someone is violating my boundaries.	disagree ————— agree 1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I enjoy being around others who set boundaries.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I have a support group that encourages my boundary growth.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I take my role as steward of the time, talents, and treasures God has given me seriously.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I say, "no" in circumstances where I know people will respect my "no."	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I recognize when I get a twinge of guilt for setting boundaries that are appropriate that if I persist, I am making progress.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I say, "no" in circumstances where I know people will not react well.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I follow through without guilt on my boundary enforcement.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I honor others' boundaries and support them in setting boundaries.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I count the cost before I say, "yes." When I say, "yes," I honor my promise.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I set value-driven goals and set my boundaries to achieve those goals.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10

**Things to Ponder:**

- As you carefully consider your responses, which areas are you ready to address in your growth as a healthy boundary-setter?
- As you consider your responses overall, where in your life will you likely have the biggest struggle in setting boundaries?

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# Chapter 16: A Day in the Life with Boundaries

### Points to Consider

- Setting boundaries is hard work.
- There will be rewards and there will be struggles.

### Discussion Questions

- In what way does the “day in the life” change in this chapter seem realistic or unrealistic?
- How much effort in boundary setting are you willing to do to see a significant “day in the life” change in your own life?

### Exercise: Personal Action Plan

Create a personal action plan to apply a lesson you learned from this book.

My Lesson to Apply:
My Accountability Partner: (Person who will ask about my consistency, encourage me, urge me to continue, and praise me for progress)

### Specific Behaviors I Commit to Demonstrate as I Apply My Lesson

Behavior	Where	When