



We have learned that boundaries are biblical. We have begun setting limits on others. We've moved from taking no or too much responsibility to taking just what is appropriate. But how do we begin putting boundaries on ourselves? Instead of just looking at the control and manipulation others may attempt to place on us, we continue our series by reflecting on our own internal boundary conflicts.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you knows how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrongs or exploits a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Reflections

When I was much younger, I smoked cigarettes, overindulged in alcohol, and did other things that I won't detail here. I also used my tongue as a weapon instead of as a tool to help and encourage people. I don't smoke or overindulge in alcohol any longer, but I still do not have control over my tongue. I'm making progress because I realize that I need to pay close attention to what I say and how I say it. I spent many years saying whatever came into my head and I didn't care that I hurt people. I thought that I was being honest and open not sarcastic and uncaring. Honesty and openness are positive characteristics when they are tempered with love and common sense.

The Bible tells us to treat our words carefully: "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but the prudent are restrained in speech" (Proverbs 10:19). According to *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, the

Hebrew word for **restrain** refers to "the free action of holding back something or someone. The actor has the power over the object." It's all about boundaries. We have the power to set boundaries on what comes out of our mouths.

Our words do not come from somewhere outside of us, as if we were a ventriloquist's dummy. They are the product of our hearts. We need to take responsibility for our words.

When we can't hold back, or set boundaries, on what comes from our lips, our words are in charge — not us. However, we are still responsible for those words. Our words do not come from somewhere outside of us, as if we were a ventriloquist's dummy. They are the product of our hearts. We need to take responsibility for our

words. "I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter" (Matthew 12:36).

As Pogo Possum, cartoonist Walt Kelly's popular swamp character says, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." In my case — I have met the enemy and it's my lack of restraint over my tongue.

Mickey Kibler

Resources

Boundaries: When to say yes, how to say no, to take control of your life. Henry Cloud & John Townsend. Zondervan, 1992.

Videos: *Develop Healthy Boundaries: Say No*
<http://www.cloudtownsend.com/videoserver/video.php?clip=CCNT2109>

Aren't Boundaries Selfish?
<http://www.cloudtownsend.com/videoserver/video.php?clip=cloudA1023>

Readings

Don't have a Bible? Access the readings at biblegateway.com.

Sunday, October 7

1 Thessalonians 4: 1-8

Why do we need to impose boundaries on ourselves? What happens if we don't do this?

Monday, October 8

Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 17:27

Rather than using restraint, do you use your tongue to gossip, make sarcastic remarks, express hostility, etc.? How can you apply restraint to yourself?

Tuesday, October 9

Ephesians 5: 8-11

God calls us to live in the light. What will you do to bring unacceptable behaviors out of the dark?

Wednesday, October 10

Romans 7: 15-19, 23-25

It's easier to set limits on other people than it is to set limits on ourselves. What internal problems do you struggle with?

Thursday, October 11

John 15: 1-6

What does the image of the vine teach us about the importance of being connected to God when we struggle with and confront boundary problems?

Friday, October 12

Galatians 6:1-10

As you work on boundaries, it is important to surround yourself with people who are loving and supportive, but will not rescue you. Why is an empathic friend more helpful and loving than a critical one?

Saturday, October 13

Ephesians 1: 3-14

In order for you to succeed at anything, you need to believe in yourself. God believes in you. Setting boundaries for yourself will be difficult, but with God's help you can do it.