



There's an old saying that "Insanity is genetic – it's inherited from your kids." Well, boundaries are not inherited. They are built. To be the truth-telling, responsible, free and loving people God intends us to be, we need to learn about limits.

Genesis 3:21-24

And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever'— therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

Reflections

There were many causes for the unclear boundaries in my family of origin, most linked to generations of alcohol abuse. I grew up trying to please everyone and keep the peace – a classic compliant. My older teen years were rough, as I started to realize that the chaos within which I was living wasn't normal or necessary. In response to a major misstep on my mother's part, I drew a harsh boundary with her that I later regretted. I learned that boundaries can be peppered with a lot of grace, mercy, and kindness. I not only forgave my mom, but was also able to reconcile with her, because she showed that she could be trusted and that she regretted her mistake. I restored that relationship with the help of others who were supportive and understood healthy boundaries.

My parents have been gone for many years now, but some of my extended family still lives in a world without boundaries. Their "crises" are often dramas of their own making, and while I used to

jump in and try to "fix it," I now first take a step back and assess whether I really have a role to play in the situation. Most painfully, I've had to learn to set boundaries with a family member who's truly in need. I finally figured out that there's only so much I can do for her, and beyond that, I can only empathize and pray. She has needs that I simply cannot meet.

I got to the point of realizing that I could not live out God's purpose for my life if I was constantly caught in a whirlwind. I discovered, painfully, that just because we're related by blood or have been friends for a long time doesn't give someone license to abuse me. I found that I had to let go of some relationships – even familial relationships. I refused to continue being controlled by angry people. Even though some people in my life didn't like or understand my new way of living, I found great freedom and power in having good boundaries, and life got better.

Being part of this faith community has gone a long way toward

healing childhood wounds and teaching me how to be a healthy adult. Here I've learned who – and, more importantly – Whose, I am. Through the people here, God is constantly reminding me of His timeless laws of life and relationships, and how to live out those principles. As I embrace the work that the Lord has given me, I enjoy the companionship of dear friends and family who understand good boundaries.

Colleen Palmateer

Great Resources

Take a few minutes to look at this video to prompt family or small group discussion:

"Sowing and Reaping with Boundaries"

<http://www.cloudtownsend.com/videoserver/video.php?clip=CCNT2052>

Worth the read :

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life.

Henry Cloud & John Townsend. Zondervan, 1992.

Readings

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

Sunday, September 30

Genesis 3:21-24 God created us with the freedom to make choices, and He gave us clear boundaries regarding right and wrong. Where are you in regards to boundaries? Do you understand that setting and maintaining boundaries is an act of obedience to God and thus good for you?

Monday, October 1

Matthew 7:3-5 It is essential to look inward to identify where *you* might be contributing to a boundary problem. Do you talk about a problem with everyone other than the person it concerns? Do you take responsibility for things that are not yours? Take the log out so you can see clearly.

Tuesday, October 2

Galatians 6:6-10; Proverbs 19:19 We will reap what we sow – it's one of God's basic principles of life. People without boundaries often interfere with allowing logical consequences to play out, thus enabling irresponsible behavior to continue. How have you experienced this principle playing out...or being interrupted? What was the result?

Wednesday, October 3

Matthew 7:7-12; Matthew 20: 1-15 Respecting others is another of God's basic life principles. Do you respect other people's boundaries and choices? Do others respect yours? How can guilt be used to try to tear down boundaries?

Thursday, October 4

Acts 20: 34-35 Living in the freedom to which God calls us allows us to give joyfully – this is another basic principle of life as God intended it to be. Are you worn out by your service and giving to others, or does it bring you joy? Why do you think this is so? What motivates your service and giving to others?

Friday, October 5

Ephesians 4: 20-27 Being honest is essential if we are to have genuine relationships. Having "secret" boundaries can seem so much easier than letting your boundaries be known to others. Is there someone from whom you have quietly withdrawn instead of openly expressing your hurt? Are you enduring the consequences of someone else's irresponsible behavior instead of telling them how their behavior has affected you? What other "secret" boundaries might you be living within?

Saturday, October 6

Proverbs 10:18 True intimacy comes when people have the freedom to disagree. Those who are accustomed to saying YES when they really mean NO need to practice saying "no" to something relatively insignificant, as they learn how to set boundaries with others. If you're one who needs to practice this skill, who is someone "safe" who could help you?

Summary of Boundary Problems		
	CAN'T SAY	CAN'T SAY
NO	The Complaint Feels guilty and/or controlled by others; can't set boundaries	The Controller Aggressively or manipulatively violates boundaries of others
YES	The Non-responsive Sets boundaries against responsibility to love	The Avoidant Sets boundaries against receiving care of others