



BOUNDARIES

*Learning to say “yes” to the right things
Learning to say “no” to the wrong things*

Boundaries are like fences. They help us to determine what we allow in our lives and what we keep out of our lives. Imagine a big backyard surrounded by a fence. The fence has a gate, and you get to choose who you let in and how long you let them in. You also get to choose who and what you do not let into your life. Your boundaries, or lack of boundaries, will determine who or what you allow to influence you and your family.

Boundaries are also like hedges, or ancient boundary stones, that determine where people's property ends and where their neighbor's property begins. Boundaries help determine “what's mine” and “what's yours.” The wise author of Proverbs wrote, “Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless.” (Proverbs 23:10) In other words, **know and live within your own responsibilities. Don't try to take over what God never intended to be yours.**

Most people have difficulties because somewhere in our lives we lack boundaries. We've said “yes” to too many good things. We've said “yes” to the wrong things. We've said “no” to the good things, or we've let others determine or control our boundaries. Our boundary problems are oftentimes a result of what we heard taught or saw modeled while we were growing up. Whether healthy or unhealthy, we tend to normalize whatever we experienced during our childhood and keep doing it throughout our lives. Underdeveloped or overdeveloped parental boundaries set up boundary problems for children. Families with underdeveloped or loose boundaries may let anyone or anything in to influence the family. Families with overdeveloped boundaries or walls may overly control who or what influences the family and constrict the family's development.

Healthy boundaries are needed in all areas of our lives: in our relationships, in our workplaces, with what we put in our bodies, with our entertainment, in how we express our sexuality, in how we dress, with our spiritual lives, with our marriages and families, with our language, with our spending money, with our use of time, and even with our hobbies.

Now let's talk about some of the boundary challenges we may deal with in our current situation...

- **When are you inclined to say “yes” to someone or something you should say “no” to?**
- **What happens when you try to say “no” to someone who wants their own way?**
- **When and where do you feel like your boundaries are being tested or violated?**
- **Where would you suggest we work together to improve our boundaries as a group?**
- **Since the Bible is God's Book filled with guidelines and boundaries to guide and protect us, why do we tend to ignore them and think they don't apply to us?**

Here's a good tool to help you decide what to say “yes” to and what to say “no” to.

1. Will it honor God and people and me?
2. Will saying “yes” help me to develop in the way God is shaping me?
3. Will it be good for me? (NOT will it feel good to me.)
4. Who will be impacted by my decision, and how will they likely be impacted?

“**Health Talks**” are designed to help us learn to talk and deal with one another in ways that build understanding and a healthy, growing, supportive, Christian community.