

For several years I have use the Cloud - Townsend model of boundaries as a tool for relationship and parenting development. Many of our students and clients have been directed to purchase a copy of

- Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life (our textbook)
- Boundaries with kids
- Boundaries in marriage
- Boundaries in Dating
- Boundaries with Teens
- By Henry Cloud and John Townsend

I strongly recommend that you purchase the version of this book that best suits your situation or next level of developmental need.

As Christians, we look to the Bible for our guidance, and many of us are concerned about the concept of setting limits or boundaries, believing that doing so might restrict God's ability to work in our lives.

Our concerns look like this:

- The Bible teaches us to love everyone and to do so unconditionally, so how can I set limits on love and be compliant with the word?
- If I am going to set boundaries, how can I know biblically which areas of my life to effect with them?

- How do I deal with people who are angry or confused by my boundaries?
- The Bible teaches me to be a giver, so how can I limit how much of my money, time, energy, or love that I am willing to give to those who request them?
- The idea of setting boundaries makes me feel guilty, why?
- In my relationships, especially in marriage, will personal boundaries keep me and my counterpart from being collectively submissive to the Lord?
- Am I being selfish if I set boundaries?

Most of us can find many scriptures that tell us to give everything away and not give any attention to our own needs.

Let's look at a few:

Our Resources (money, goods, etc)

- **2 Corinthians 9:7** ESV - Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- **Luke 6:38** ESV - Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”
- **Luke 12:33-34** ESV - Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail,

where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

- **Proverbs 3:27** ESV - Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.
- **Hebrews 13:16** ESV - Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Our Person (Time, Energy, Talent, etc)

- **1 Peter 4:10** ESV - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:
- **Galatians 5:13** ESV - For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- **Mark 9:35** ESV - And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."
- **Matthew 20:28** ESV - Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".

Our Love

- **1 Corinthians 16:14** ESV - Let all that you do be done in love.
- **John 15:13** ESV - Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

- **John 3:16** ESV - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- **Ephesians 5:25** ESV - Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
- **Galatians 5:22** ESV - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness
- **Mark 12:31** ESV - The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- **John 15:12** ESV - “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you

It seems that the Bible is clear that we are to give, give big, and without any restriction.

Even in our counseling practice, I often suggest to those who are stuck that they would benefit from participating in acts of service. That one of the best ways to start getting over grief, pain, jealousy, or justice issues is to give to others.

How then can we imagine there being benefits to setting boundaries?

The truth of it is, it is the lack of boundaries or conflict with boundaries, which, according to Cloud & Townsend, cause:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders

- Eating disorders
- Addictions
- Impulse disorders
- Guilt issues
- Shame issues
- Panic disorders
- Relational struggles
- Marital disequilibrium

If you are like most people, you are feeling even more conflicted about the biblical and emotional ramifications of setting or not setting boundaries.

The Bible seems to say don't do it, but if I don't set boundaries and honor them I may go crazy. (and some of you can relate to this)

So let me take a bit of pressure off of you now and let you know that the Bible actually teaches us to set boundaries. We are going to get into this as we go through this reaching from Cloud & Townsend.

What is a Boundary?

I do not have to teach you what a boundary is in the physical context. We all know how a wall or fence sets a physical boundary, but what about personal boundaries? They are not as easy to recognize.

I like how Cloud & Townsend use the concept of a property line to indicate a boundary that one cannot necessarily see, but that it exists nonetheless.

More importantly, a property line is a boundary that the possessor clearly understands and accepts responsibility for, but to others, these boundaries may not be understood without them being presented in some form or another to everyone who enters a relationship with the boundary setter.

Like with a physical property where one might need to look up a deed or ask the property owner for the needed information before stepping on it; we must express our boundaries to our counterparts.

We might do this through:

- Conversation – the getting to know each other process
- Formal presentation - parenting, teaching, laws, etc.
- Body position or gesture – holding our hands out to indicate various expectations.
- Fight or Flight type reactions (exaggerated) – yelling “STOP” , running away, striking out.

In all of these cases there is a presentation of our boundaries being made to the other person so they know what we expect.

You might also be able to start recognizing how you have been setting boundaries all of your life.

Based on what we have mentioned so far: Tell me about some boundaries you have set in the past. (write them down here)

Spiritual Boundaries

What we are going to learn about today are spiritual boundaries.

These are the boundaries that define who we are, the ones Cloud & Townsend call intangible boundaries.

They are the boundaries that define

- who we are
- how we love
- and how we live our life – which includes how we do relationships.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Matthew Henry, in response to Proverbs 4:23 had this to say:.

There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all diseases of the soul. Keep thy heart with all diligence. We must set a strict guard upon our souls; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt. A good reason is given; because out of it are the issues of life. Above all, we should seek from the Lord Jesus that living water, the sanctifying Spirit, issuing forth unto everlasting life. Thus we shall be enabled to put away a froward mouth and perverse lips; our eyes will be turned from beholding vanity, looking straight forward, and walking by the rule of God's word, treading in the steps of our Lord and Master. Lord, forgive the past, and enable us to follow thee more closely for the time to come.

Boundaries define the IS

WHAT IS ME and WHAT IS NOT ME

One of my favorite quotes from Cloud & Townsend is this:

“A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership.”

We too often forget that we are a sanctioned being not defined by the people around us, but by God Who made us.

We are to live in such a way that our individuality points to the Creator. That who we are agrees with who God intends us to be, and that who we are glorifies God.

In that quote from the text it is said that with boundaries we can take ownership of who we are. After the recognition that we are created by God with a purpose, how we live – even who we are is our responsibility.

We are to take full responsibility for who we are. Our “IS”

We are not to allow people around us to determine who we are.
Our “IS NOT”

So, who are you?

Write it down...

I am -

_____.

One of my favorite exercises from a spiritual development class that I took in seminary was one which forced me to find my definition of myself in the life of Christ.

As we read the 66 books of the Bible we are led to Jesus Christ, Who clearly knew who he was. What we must be ready to

acknowledge it that we are created in the image of God, and
Who is that image?

Then who are we to emulate?

So if we are to start the process of setting the spiritual
boundaries that define our IS, we must start with

So let's get started:

To begin the process of becoming a boundaries defined person
you must first set a standard for your development. To do this
fill in the blanks below.

Definitional

I will be an imitator of _____; I will be a better
_____.

If we are to identify the Bible in our IS, we are going to need an
example to follow. That example is always going to be the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Did the Lord have boundaries? What were a few of them?

Can you find any boundaries that you can emulate in your responses to those set by Jesus Christ?

Your homework is to look at five areas of your life that you believe you need improvement in the area of boundaries and plug them into the blank below. Your objective is to locate in the Bible passages that show you, through the life of Jesus Christ or those who lived their lives for Him, examples of how the Lord lived. and what boundaries were set to accomplish the *IS* that can be you imitating Jesus Christ.

I will be an imitator of Christ; I will be a better

_____.

I will be an imitator of Christ; I will be a better

_____.

I will be an imitator of Christ; I will be a better

_____.

I will be an imitator of Christ; I will be a better

_____.

I will be an imitator of Christ; I will be a better

_____.

What you should get out of this lesson is that the Bible is filled with boundaries. God has many boundaries. Please know that having boundaries does not keep God from loving us fully. Therefore, if we emulate Jesus Christ, we will love fully and do so with boundaries.