



WEEK NINE: FREEDOM LIVING IT & GIVING IT

God created us to live in freedom—to *think our own thoughts*, to *feel our own feelings*, and to *make our own choices*. This does not mean we should not influence or challenge one another in positive ways or—at times—hold each other accountable for our choices. However, it does mean we need to recognize and respect each person’s right to live their own lives without trying to control them with pressure, intimidation, or manipulation. If we want to love others well, we have to learn to live in freedom and to give freedom to others.

This week we will study several important passages of Scripture that illustrate the importance of both freedom and accountability in our lives. We will also read selections from the book *Boundaries* by Christian psychologists Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. Before starting your study, you may want to download the PDF from Week 9 on the lovingpeople.rockypeak.org website. Simply click on “Download Resource.” Both excerpts (“What Does a Boundary Look Like?” and “Boundary Problems”) are included in a single PDF.

DAY ONE

DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** Matthew 16:13-23
- ◆ **READ:** “*What Does a Boundary Look Like?*”, pgs. 29-33
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On the importance of healthy boundaries

◆ EXPLORE

As you start the study this week, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to create healthy boundaries in your relationships so you can love others well. Then read **Matthew 16:13-23** in the New Living Translation (NLT) and answer the following questions. (You can find this on YouVersion.)

- 1) How and why does Jesus affirm Peter in this passage?
- 2) How does Jesus respond to Peter’s challenge (16:21-23)?
- 3) Jesus cared deeply for others, but He never allowed them to set the agenda for His life. What do you think was the secret of His strength?

◆ READ

Today we’ll be reading from the book *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. They are both gifted psychologists and passionate Christ-followers. Read pages 29-33 in the “*What Does a Boundary Look Like?*” PDF. Start at the beginning of the chapter and end at the heading *Good In, Bad Out*. (You can download this PDF by clicking “Download Resource” on Week 9 of the lovingpeople.rockypeak.org website.)

◆ REFLECT

- 1) This section starts with the story of parents who are struggling with what to do with their 25-year-old son. How do you feel about the counselor’s advice? Do you think this advice aligns with Jesus’ teaching about loving others as we love ourselves? Why, or why not?
- 2) Physical property lines are not a hard concept to grasp, but sometimes emotional, psychological, or relational boundaries are harder to understand. How would you describe these kinds of boundaries in your own words?
- 3) On pages 32-33, Drs. Cloud and Townsend make a distinction between a *burden* and a *load*. How would you define the difference in your own words? How does this distinction help us to understand when to help others and when to allow them to do things for themselves?

4) Take a couple of minutes to jot down any key insights you learned today in your journal. Ask God to show you how to apply them to your life.

DAY TWO

DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** Matthew 18:15-17
- ◆ **READ:** “What Does a Boundary Look Like?”, pgs. 35-40
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On developing healthy boundaries

◆ EXPLORE

Read **Matthew 18:15-17** in the New International Version (NIV), and then answer the following questions.

- 1) What does Jesus say we should do when a brother or sister in Christ sins? Are you surprised by any of these instructions? If so, explain.
- 2) The respected New Testament scholar, Craig Blomberg, wrote a commentary on the book of Matthew. Regarding this passage in Matthew 18, he writes,

Ultimately, if the sinner remains recalcitrant, the entire church community must in some sense be made aware of the offense so that the rebellious individual has nowhere to hide. If even this procedure fails to bring repentance, then as a last resort Jesus commands the entire community to dissociate itself from the individual. Yet even this drastic action remains rehabilitative rather than retributive in design.

-Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, p. 279

What should be the ultimate motive and goal for this type of intervention?

- 3) What does this passage teach us about the relationship between love and accountability in the church?

◆ READ

Read pages 35-40 in “What Does a Boundary Look Like?” PDF. Start at the heading *God and Boundaries* and stop at the heading *Consequences*.

◆ REFLECT

- 1) What did you find most helpful in today’s reading, and why?
- 2) In today’s reading from “What Does a Boundary Look Like?”, Drs. Cloud and Townsend write,

People with poor boundaries struggle with saying no to the control, pressure, demands, and sometimes the real needs of others. They feel that if they say no to someone, they will endanger their relationship with that person, so they passively comply but inwardly resent.

-Boundaries, p. 36

Do you ever struggle saying no to others? If so, why?

3) In this same chapter, Drs. Cloud and Townsend write,

The other reason we need others is because we need new input and teaching. Many people have been taught by their church or their family that boundaries are unbiblical, mean, or selfish. These people need good biblical support systems to help them stand against the guilt that comes from the old "tapes" inside that tell them lies to keep them in bondage. They need supportive others to stand against the old messages and the guilt involved in change.

-Boundaries, p. 39

Have you ever experienced guilt when trying to implement new boundaries in your life? If so, explain.

Can you think of any people in your life who have helped you stand against old destructive messages and establish healthier boundaries? If so, explain.

4) What is one of the most helpful insights you gained from today's study? Take a minute to write it in your journal and then pray over it.

DAY THREE

DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15
- ◆ **READ:** “*What Does a Boundary Look Like?*”, pgs. 40, 45-46; “*Boundary Problems*”, pgs. 51-54
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On boundaries, accountability, and consequences

◆ EXPLORE

Read **2 Thessalonians 3:6-15** in the New Living Translation (NLT) and then answer the following questions. (You can find this on YouVersion.)

- 1) What does this passage teach us about healthy responsibility in the community of Jesus?
- 2) According to Paul’s clear teaching in this letter, how should we respond to believers who refuse to work?
- 3) Do any of these instructions surprise you? If so, which ones and why?
- 4) How does this passage illustrate the importance of healthy boundaries?

◆ READ

Read pages 40 and 45-46 of “*What Does A Boundary Look Like?*” PDF. Start at the heading *Consequences* and stop at the heading *What’s Within My Boundaries?* Next, start at the heading *Limits* and stop at the heading *Talents*.

Then read pages 51-54 in “*Boundary Problems.*” (This can be found towards the end of the PDF.) Start at the top of the page and stop at *Avoidants: Saying “No” to the Good*.

◆ REFLECT

1) In the chapter “*What Does a Boundary Look Like?*”, Drs. Cloud and Townsend write,

Just as the Bible sets consequences for certain behaviors, we need to back up our boundaries with consequences. ...

Paul is not kidding in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 when he says that if anyone will not work, don’t let him or her eat. God does not enable irresponsible

behavior. Hunger is a consequence of laziness (Proverbs 16:26).

-Boundaries, p. 40

Last week, we studied the importance of forgiveness. This week, we are learning the importance of boundaries and accountability. How do you think these important values work together in a life of love? For example, when should we simply forgive others for something wrong they have done? And when should we hold them accountable for their choices and let them experience the consequences?

2) In the chapter "Boundary Problems," Drs. Cloud and Townsend write,

When parents teach children that setting boundaries or saying no is bad, they are teaching them that others can do with them as they wish. They are sending their children defenseless into a world that contains much evil. Evil in the form of controlling, manipulative, and exploitive people. Evil in the form of temptations.

To feel safe in such an evil world, children need to have the power to say things like:

- "No."
- "I disagree."
- "I will not."
- "I choose not to."
- "Stop that."
- "It hurts."
- "It's wrong."
- "That's bad."
- "I don't like it when you touch me there."

Blocking a child's ability to say no handicaps that child for life.

-Boundaries, p. 52

Growing up, did your family empower you to say these kinds of things? Please explain.

3) In today's reading, Drs. Cloud and Townsend introduce the first of four main types of "boundary problems." The first is **compliance** (pgs. 51-54). Below is a quote, describing what compliance is and what it looks like in daily life.

*This type of boundary conflict is called **compliance**. Compliant people have fuzzy and indistinct boundaries; they "melt" into the demands and needs of other people. They can't stand alone, distinct from people who want something from them. Compliant, for example, pretend to like the same restaurants and movies their friends do "just to get along." They minimize their difference with others so as not to rock the boat. Compliant are chameleons. After a while it's hard to distinguish them from the environment.*

-Boundaries, p. 52-53

Do you ever struggle with this type of boundary issue in your life? If so, explain.

4) What kinds of problems and challenges can this type of *compliance* lead to in our lives and relationships?

5) What is your most important insight from today's Scripture or reading? Jot it down in your journal and process it with the Lord in prayer.

DAY FOUR

DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** I Corinthians 5:1-13
- ◆ **READ:** “Boundary Problems,” pgs. 54-59
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On *Avoidants* and *Controllers*

◆ EXPLORE

Read **I Corinthians 5:1-13** in the New Living Translation (NLT). (You can find this on YouVersion.) This is one of the most important passages on the topic of accountability in the New Testament. In the church at Corinth, a man was having an affair with his stepmother and the church was doing nothing about it. Read what the Apostle Paul has to say about this, and then answer the questions below.

- 1) How was the church responding to this situation?
- 2) What is the point of Paul’s yeast illustration (5:6-7)?
- 3) Paul had written them a previous letter, but they had misunderstood his instructions. What did they think he meant (5:9-10)?
- 4) What did he actually mean (5:11)?
- 5) Why is this high level of accountability (with consequences) important for the person?
- 6) Why is this high level of accountability important for the church?
- 7) What lessons can we learn from this passage about what it means to live a life of love?

◆ READ

Read pages 54-59 in the “Boundary Problems” PDF. Start with the heading *Avoidants: Saying “No” to the Good* and stop at the heading *Nonresponsives: Not Hearing the Needs of Others*.

◆ REFLECT

- 1) In the reading today, Drs. Cloud and Townsend introduce the second major type of boundary problem: **avoidance**. Below is an explanation of this problem and what it looks like in daily life.

*This boundary problem is called **avoidance**: saying no to the good. It's the inability to ask for help, to recognize one's own need, to let others in. Avoidants withdraw when they are in need; they do not ask for the support of others.*

-Boundaries, p. 54

Do you ever find yourself struggling with this in your own life? If so, explain.

2) On pages 56-57, Drs. Cloud and Townsend describe the third major type of boundary problem: **control**. How would you describe this problem in your own words? Do you ever find yourself struggling with this in your own life? If so, explain.

3) Take a few minutes to journal and pray over any important insights you gained today.

DAY FIVE

DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** Mark 10:17-22
- ◆ **READ:** “Boundary Problems,” pgs. 59-61
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On “Nonresponsives”

◆ EXPLORE

Read **Mark 10:17-22** in the New Living Translation (NLT), and then answer the following questions. (You can find this on YouVersion.)

- 1) How did Jesus feel about this man?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus let him go and did not try to change his mind?
- 3) Are there any lessons we can learn about relationships from this encounter? If so, explain.

◆ READ

Read pages 59-61 in the “Boundary Problems” PDF. Start at the heading *Nonresponsives: Not Hearing the Needs of Others* and stop at the end of the PDF.

◆ REFLECT

- 1) In the reading today, Drs. Cloud and Townsend introduce the fourth and final type of major boundary problem: **nonresponsiveness**.

Remember, boundaries are a way to describe our spheres of responsibility: what we are and are not responsible for. While we shouldn't take on the responsibility for other's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors, we do have certain responsibilities to each other. ...

*...we are responsible to care about and help, **within certain limits**, others whom God places in our lives. To refuse to do so when we have the appropriate resources can be a boundary conflict.*

-Boundaries, p. 60

How would you summarize this boundary problem?

Can you think of any examples of how the concept of “boundaries” might be used inappropriately to excuse a lack of care or concern for others?

2) This week, we have explored four types of major boundary problems. (See chart on page 61.) Which of these four is the biggest challenge for you, and why?

- The Compliant
- The Avoidant
- The Controller
- The Nonresponsive

How would developing the right boundaries in these areas help you love others better?

3) Take a few minutes to review your journal from this week. Wait before the Lord in prayer and ask Him if there is anything He wants to show you, or any new steps He wants you to take. Jot down any insights that come to mind and process them with the Lord in prayer.

WEEKEND MESSAGE REFLECTION

After you listen to the ninth message in this series (*Freedom . . . Living It & Giving It*), answer the following questions.

1) What was your favorite insight, principle, illustration, or quote from this week's message, and why?

2) This weekend, Pastor Michael ended the message with two final questions:

- Are you living in freedom?
- Are you giving freedom?

Which is the harder challenge for you, and why?

3) Are there any new steps you need to take in response to this message? If so, explain.