

Turning Boundaries Into Barriers

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalms 119:33-40

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Consider two words and their corresponding definitions: (www.m-w.com)
 - 1. boundaries : something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent
 - 2. barriers : 1 a : something material that blocks or is intended to block passage . . .
b : a natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action . . . 3 : something immaterial that impedes or separates : obstacle
- B. God has always established boundaries for His people.
 - 1. God told Adam and Eve which tree they were not to eat. (Genesis 3:1-13)
 - 2. God established boundaries for the Israelites. (Deuteronomy 6:1-3; 4:14-19 – forbade the worship of idols)
 - 3. Moses crossed the boundary when he struck the rock, not obeying the Lord's command to speak to the rock. (Numbers 20:7-12)
 - 4. When you consider all the examples seen within the Old Testament, you learn that people suffered punishment when they crossed God's boundaries.
- C. The purpose of this lesson is to answer the question: How do we turn God's boundaries into barriers that we cannot cross? We will answer this question in three parts.
 - 1. One must respect God's boundaries.
 - 2. One must choose to stay within the boundaries.
 - 3. One must know the boundaries.

I. ONE MUST RESPECT GOD'S BOUNDARIES.

- A. In order to respect God's boundaries, one must first respect God.
 - 1. One should respect God because He created this world, He created us, and He created the whole of the universe. (Genesis 1,2)
 - 2. One should respect God because He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that sinful man might be made free. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9)
 - 3. One should respect God because He has given us a law by which He will judge

all mankind. (2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1)

4. Consider an example of one who had respect for God. (Psalms 119:33-40)
- B. In order to respect God's boundaries, a person must recognize the consequences of crossing the boundaries.
1. Do not cross the boundaries of Him who can destroy both the body and the soul. (Matthew 10:28)
 2. When a person crosses God's boundaries, that person creates actions which God will judge at the day of judgment. (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:7-8)
 3. Those who have crossed the boundaries which God has set in place will be “punished with everlasting destruction.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)
- C. In order to respect God's boundaries, a person must respect himself. (We must have respect for ourselves.)
1. Respecting God's boundaries will make one a better person. For instance:
 - a. We will neither tell lies nor practice deception.
 - b. We will not use filthy language.
 - c. We will neither covet nor steal.
 - d. We will not engage in immoral behavior.
 - e. And so on goes the list of improvements brought about by one who respects God's boundaries.
 2. Respecting God's boundaries will keep a person in fellowship with God. (1 John 1:5-7)

II. ONE MUST CHOOSE TO STAY WITHIN GOD'S BOUNDARIES.

- A. Staying within God's boundaries must be a personal choice. Consider a few examples:
1. Joshua choice for him and his household to serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)
 2. Elijah called upon Israel to choose between serving God and serving Baal. (1 Kings 18:21)
 3. The Lord rebuked Judah for choosing not to hear the prophets of the Lord. (Micah 2:6-11)
 4. The apostles could not help but to speak those things that they had heard. (Acts 4:19-20)

- B. Just as Elijah told Israel to choose between God and Baal, so too must people choose to either believe in Jesus or not to believe in Him.
 - 1. During Jesus' life on this earth, some chose not to believe in Him while others chose not to follow Him. (John 12:37-43)
 - 2. When the apostles were preaching the gospel to the world, not everyone chose to believe in Jesus. (Acts 17:4-5, 10-13)
- C. Christians must choose either to obey the Lord or to disobey the Lord.
 - 1. Paul reminded to brethren in Philippi to “work out” their own salvation. (Philippians 2:12-13)
 - 2. The Hebrew writer issued a warning those who would willfully sin against the Lord. (Hebrews 10:26-31)
- D. In order for a person to turn God's boundaries into barriers, he must make his own decision to honor God's boundaries.
 - 1. One must make his own decision to honor God's boundaries. This choice generates true commitment.
 - 2. Pressuring someone to honor God's boundaries does not create commitment.

III. ONE MUST KNOW THE BOUNDARIES.

- A. Knowledge of God's Word is essential in a person's life.
 - 1. Recall that Hosea said that God's people were destroyed because they rejected knowledge. (Hosea 4:6; 6:6 – *God desired the people to have knowledge of Him*)
 - 2. Paul rebuked those of Israel for having a zeal for God, but not the knowledge. (Romans 10:2)
 - 3. Without knowledge of God's word, one will be subject to following the “gods” of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)
 - 4. For Christians, their growth must include knowledge.
 - a. Ephesians 4:11-13 – *of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man*
 - b. Colossians 1:9-10 – *increase in the knowledge of God*
 - c. 2 Peter 3:17-18 – *grow in the grace of knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*

- B. In order for a person to turn God's boundaries into barriers, he must have a knowledge of the boundary lines which God has drawn.
1. Study and learn God's commands regarding the various responsibilities assigned by the word of God.
 - a. Instructions for worship. (John 4:24)
 - b. Instructions for home life. (Colossians 3:18-21)
 - c. Instructions regarding those who are not Christians. (ex. 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12)
 - d. Instructions regarding one's brethren. (ex. Romans 12:9-21)
 - e. Instructions regarding one's enemies. (Matthew 5:43-48)
 2. Study and learn God's prohibitions, His teachings regarding those actions which are sinful, i.e. . . .
 - a. List of sins found in Romans 1:20-32.
 - b. List of sins found in Galatians 5:19-21.
 - c. List of sins found in Colossians 3:5-10.
 - d. List of sins found in Ephesians 4:25-31
 - e. List of sins found in 1 Peter 4:2-5.
 3. Truly, ignorance is not bliss. Refusing to learn the boundaries which God has established does not change the fact that the boundaries do exist and must be honored. As we have already shown, all mankind will be judged by God.
- C. Many people will attempt to redraw the boundaries which God has established.
1. Paul warned the churches throughout Galatia against those who would pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-9)
 2. Paul told Timothy that some people would seek those who would redraw God's boundaries. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)
 3. The apostle Peter referenced those who would twist the scriptures, twisting the boundaries established by God. (2 Peter 3:15-16)
 4. The apostle Paul warned the brethren in Corinth, saying, *“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you*

may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” (1 Corinthians 4:6)

CONCLUSION.

- A. God did not create barriers to keep His people from sinning. God established boundaries so that His people could willingly choose to walk faithfully within His boundaries.
- B. In order for a person to turn God's boundaries into personal barriers, he must possess the necessary attitude and will. Christians must train their minds in such a way so as to view these boundaries as impassable barriers.
- C. If you want to turn God's boundaries into barriers to keep you out of sin, then . . .
 - 1. Develop a respect for God's boundaries,
 - 2. Make the willful decision to always walk within God's boundaries,
 - 3. Study God's word so that you will know the fullest extent of God's boundaries.

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by John M. Duvall – September 13, 2009 – File #: 1289

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