

The premise of this series is the following

- We have been designed and created by God. He knows us and knows how we tick.
- In his word he has given tools, skills ideas, guidelines and commands all for our best.
- We can choose to use these and abide by them, and consequently flourish, or ignore them and reap the consequences of a life lived outside of his best for us.
- In that sense there is some real wisdom for living in the Bible that will indeed change our life for good if we were to adopt it and live by it.
- They are God-ideas, they often go against the grain of what we've been taught and what the world thinks is best, and they will change our lives for good.

5 God Ideas that will change your life for good

1. Sabbath
2. Boundaries
3. Sacrifice
4. Forgiveness
5. Love

BOUNDARIES

We continue our series called '[God Ideas that will Change your Life Good](#)'

This is not hyperbole - exaggeration - to attract attention.

These concepts will truly change your life, and they are Biblically based but draw on general wisdom of the age. At the heart of this teaching is that we were created by God and he knows how we tick. In many senses this Bible is like the manufacturers manual. We can ignore it but mustn't then complain that we don't work very well. HAYNES MANUAL ppt

When I prepare sermons I sometimes ask myself questions that people might ask. In this case it was 'where does it say this in the Bible?' because what we're doing today isn't straight out of the Bible, but it is IN the Bible. As you shall see. And wise living, which this is part of, was given a whole book called Proverbs, and is a theme that runs through the Bible.

We want God's best for us, we want to be more like him, we want to apply wisdom that will help us access the full and wonderful life Jesus invited us into.

Let's Pray

In Genesis 2 God, having created a place of safety and peace for mankind in the Garden of Eden, gave Adam an instruction.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Our God Idea today is boundaries.

Definitions -

dictionary definition:

A line which marks the limits of an area; a dividing line.

psychologist definition:

“Boundaries define what is me and what is not me,” psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend write. “A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Known what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom.”

In the simplest sense it is a property line. It marks where something begins and something ends. Boundaries help us understand who owns what, and when that is established it helps us take responsibility for things - feelings, problems, consequences, attitudes, choices, limits, desires, thoughts, values, love, talents.

And it can be understood as an ethical or moral divider between right and wrong.

Here in Genesis, right at the heart of creation, God set boundaries. Boundaries are both healthy and appropriate. They are also necessary.

In the garden of Eden we see God create a geographical boundary around the Garden of Eden, and a moral one - an instruction or rule - don't do this.

We're going to explore the issue of boundaries this morning, look at what they are and how a better understanding of boundaries can help us healthy, functional, Christ like individuals. Because at the heart of God's established order, at the heart of the living God's way, is blessing, peace and well-being. Not only do we as individuals want to live lives of blessing, peace and well-being, we want to grow this community into health where others can come and find peace and health for themselves. In other words if we want to tell our friends about Jesus and bring them along we want a half decent community to bring them along to don't we?

Boundaries are an important tool with which to build healthy communities, as we'll see...

Have a look at these three pictures. The first shows no boundaries whatsoever. This sheep has no idea where his land ends and he has no protection. Pic 2 clear understanding of boundaries here and lots of protection, but he can't move, it's unhealthy and clearly dysfunctional with no in/out and no freedom. And here is the healthy situation.

a) Me and Not Me

look again at the gate and the fence. These are physical boundaries explained, but boundaries can also be emotional, spiritual - they define me and not me. Essentially boundaries are all about WHERE I STOP AND SOMEONE ELSE BEGINS, especially if we are talking at a relational level and a spiritual and emotional level.

b) To and For (Gal 6:2-5)

We are **responsible to others** Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

and **for ourselves** v 5 for each one should carry their own load.

c) Good in/bad out Look at the gate again

Prov. 4:23

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Prov 25:28

28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

Boundaries are God's idea - part of us growing up in his image as stewards over creation and responsible for our own actions.

Examples of boundaries

1) skin - this is the essential starting point with children. They begin to experience where they end and the outside world begins as soon as they leave the womb. Gradually children separate physically from their mother and begin to own their own bodies. We need to reinforce this (and not break these boundaries), teaching what is OK, what is appropriate - both for others in their interaction with them, and with their interactions with others. As these becomes well understood and maintained boundaries in children it helps them understand and build up good and appropriate boundaries in other areas.

2) words 'No' is a fence. Yes is a gate in the fence. They tell people who you are, what you believe, what you want, what you don't want.
Your words, or lack of them, define you to another person.

3) distance - emotional or physical - removing yourself. When a couple get married they leave and cleave - this will often be a geographical leaving. For children to be removed to a different room this is a very clear boundary enforcement.

4) Truth

God's truths are important boundaries for us to live by and when we are honest and truthful ourselves it creates strong, consistent boundaries in any relationship.

5) Consequences

For ourselves or for people breaking our boundaries. We need to live in the knowledge of the consequences of our actions, and we need to establish and communicate consequences for others in their dealings with us - enforceable ones that don't cost us.

6) time time apart and delay are both very useful boundaries. Allotted time to sort out a situation, period of trial or cooling off, or an ultimatum.

Boundaries are not about how much you take on and what you can manage to do with your time. We sometimes take the concept of boundaries and reduce it to a cliché that we hold up as an excuse for saying no. What boundaries help us with is understanding that sometimes no is fine and sometimes yes is fine, but to be able to make those choices freely and healthily.

What's within my boundaries?

We can both have our boundaries violated, or we can be the boundary breaker.

Someone asks you for something and you respond by giving - be it time, energy or money - in this instance time - you offer to help out at an event. But then you find yourself manipulated into signing up for the next week and soon you are on a rota every Saturday morning. You are giving more than you wanted to give? You are left feeling resentful and angry, and worse off than if you had never given at all. It may not even have been the other persons fault, but you were responding out of their need and felt obliged.

Having a good sense of boundaries helps you to say yes and to say no. knowing where you end and the other person begins means that you can respond to someone's need without fear of getting sucked into that need. And you can avoid feeling guilty on the one hand and resentful on the other. And if someone strops out because you have said no then it isn't something that you need to worry about - they are responsible to themselves for how they behave.

On the other hand you may find yourself breaking the boundaries of other people.

You may push too hard with a request for money. You end up upsetting someone because you pushed too far or crossed lines you shouldn't cross. And then when you need to ask again, and that person does or doesn't help you, you are left confused and uncomfortable because you don't

know whether they are helping out of love or compliance - giving into your pressure. Or maybe you respond badly to other people's no's, which causes problems in relationships - in particular anger or self-pity in you.

Maybe it is because you have issues around boundaries and not being able to close your gate to bad stuff from others - their stuff, their reactions, which means you can't sort out conflict when it occurs - you can't approach someone else and say that their behaviour has hurt you.

What's within my boundaries?

Feelings

Feelings should be neither ignored, nor placed in charge. They let us know the state of our heart and the state of our relationships, but they are our responsibility and we must own them so we can begin to find an answer to whatever issue they are pointing to.

Attitudes and beliefs

We need to own our attitudes and convictions because they fall within our property line - we are the ones who feel their effect and we are the only ones who can change them (if they need changing).

Behaviours

Behaviours have consequences. To rescue people from the natural consequences of their behaviour is to render them powerless. In the church this is where we see many people breaking other people's boundaries out of misplaced kindness - cutting in and rescuing people to save them from short term suffering. Parents do it too. Don't.

Choices

We must take responsibility for the choices we make - even if we think God told us to do it. How many people blame god for the mess they themselves get into because they haven't taken responsibility for their own choices in life?

Values

If someone thinks that power, riches and pleasure will satisfy them (when actually their longing is for love) then they will miss out on life. I will tell you from the front that these things are a con, but you are responsible for whether you allow your life to be shaped by the values of the world or by the values of the God (who knows the best for you). And for what it's worth I think most Christians are listening to the world more than God.

Limits

You can't set limits on others to make them behave or respect your boundaries. You can only set your own internal limits on what you take on, what you allow in, how much you expose yourself to sin - yours and other people's.

Talents

We are all accountable for how we develop and use the gifts God has given us.

Thoughts

We must own our own thoughts. We must grow in knowledge and expand our own minds, decide for ourselves what is true and what isn't. And this doesn't generally come from lying on the sofa watching footy or eastenders.

Desires

We are not victim to our desires - they do not rule us. We can nurture and grow godly desires and by not feeding them we can starve bad ones. And when satan plants them in our hearts it is up to us to prick out these weeds when they are small.

I believe that my marriage is important. I nurture my feelings towards Sarah the fruit of which means that I find her more attractive now than I did when I married her. It helps that she is foxy, but it also helps that I find her foxy. By not dwelling on the attractiveness of other people's wives I can help this process.

Love

Our ability to give and respond to love is our greatest gift. The two greatest commandments are Love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself. Don't go with the flow of how you feel. It is your responsibility to develop love in your heart for God and for others.

Some key ideas to help us restore healthy boundaries

- if you find yourself getting upset by others because of the decisions you find yourself making or the situations you get yourself in,
- if you are resentful or feel everyone else is to blame for how you feel,
- if you upset others by your behaviour, or keep crossing the line of appropriateness, or abuse friendships and relationships,

then you need to address boundary problems in yourself or how to respect other people's boundaries.

1. response-ability (being proactive)

The key concept behind proactivity is that although there are many factors that come into play in any given situation, between stimulus and response is a fundamental power that sets us apart from animals and in some sense reflects God's image as talked about in Genesis; between stimulus and response is the freedom to choose.

Look at the word responsibility - 'response-ability'. **Proactive people** recognise and take ownership of that freedom to make choices. They are no longer the victims of circumstance and don't seek to blame conditions or conditioning for their behaviour.

Reactive people by contrast have abdicated this responsibility, and the language used betrays this.

Have a listen to these commonly heard phrases and see how the language shows up the reactive controlling narrative that exists below the surface...

'That's me. That's just the way I am' I am pre-determined. There's nothing I can do about it.

'He make's me so mad!' I'm not responsible. My emotional life is governed by something outside of my control.

'I can't do that-I just don't have the time!' something outside of me - limited time - is controlling me.

'If only my wife were more patient.' Someone else's behaviour is limiting my effectiveness.

'I have to do it.' Circumstances or other people are forcing me to do what I do. I'm not free to choose my own actions.

Reactive - have's - if only I had, if I could just get more... The problem is out there

Proactive - be's - I need to be, I can be... a character focus of outside in. I can change.

2 circle of influence

We all have a circle of influence - things over which we have a degree of control - we can do something about.

An important concept with boundaries and ownership is that we can tell the difference between something we own (it is within our circle of influence) and that which we have no ownership over - it is outside our circle of influence, for example other peoples responses.

Two common responses of someone who has their concept of ownership and responsibility muddled are blame and control.

Understanding proactivity puts an onus on action and change, empowers the individual and removes the sense of helplessness and blame. Understanding our circle of influence helps us decide what we can affect, and the stuff we can't change we don't try to change.

So much emotional energy is wasted on trying to change stuff that is outside our circle of influence - outside our ability to change.

3. Freedom

God designed the entire creation for freedom - freedom of choice as we respond to life, to God, to other people and to ourselves. Much of that freedom has been stolen from us through the work of Satan since the fall, but an understanding of boundaries helps us become aware of that freedom once again - where someone's control begins and ends.

We need our hearts set on Heaven, where freedom will be established in perfection once again. In the meantime we initiate heaven on earth by establishing healthy freedom both for ourselves and for others. Boundaries is all about becoming free.

4. God can restore and rebuild your boundaries

This will take work - beginning to understand where you end and others begin, valuing yourself and where you have worn paths out of the garden of God's love - either in actions or thoughts or values, then new habits need to be developed.

Psalm 119: I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Taking the story of Nehemiah we have the powerful image of the walls of Jerusalem being rebuilt - a picture for the walls of our own heart and also the safety of the whole community - somewhere people can come to enjoy safety - so we need to help each other rebuild, and also not tread over other people's walls.

5. We can help others in this process

Respect people's boundaries - help others to rebuild theirs and work at building a healthy boundary culture.

