

Faith and Relationships

Introduction

In the book *Boundaries*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend define a boundary as follows: “A boundary is a personal property line that defines who you are and who you are not. It helps you determine what you are responsible for and what you are not responsible for.” Boundaries are essential for maintaining healthy relationships. Fortunately for Christians, the Scriptures have a lot to say about them.

In Colossians 3:1-17, Paul instructs believers to “set your hearts on things above” and to “put on the new self.” He outlines behaviors to adopt and avoid, such as showing “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,” and addressing “anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language.” These instructions help Christians set boundaries that align with their spiritual values, protecting their emotional and relational well-being.

John 17:20-26 captures Jesus' prayer for unity, where He asks, “that all of them may be one,” and emphasizes that this unity reflects “the glory that you gave me.” This unity respects individual differences and does not eliminate personal boundaries. Jesus' prayer supports the idea that boundaries help maintain personal identity while fostering a unified and respectful community. Together, these Scriptures affirm that boundaries don't prevent unity—they strengthen unity.

Read Your Bible

- **Colossians 3:1-17**
- **John 17:20-26**

Apply God's Word to Your Life:

1. How can setting our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2) help us establish healthy boundaries in our relationships?
2. Colossians 3:5-8 lists behaviors to avoid. How can avoiding these behaviors contribute to maintaining respectful and loving relationships?
3. What does 'putting on the new self' in Colossians 3:10 mean for the boundaries we set that reflect our faith values?
4. How do virtues like compassion, kindness, and patience in Colossians 3:12-14 guide the boundaries we establish with others?
5. How does the call to forgive in Colossians 3:13 impact our ability to set and respect boundaries in relationships?
6. John 17:21 emphasizes unity among believers. How can we balance maintaining unity with setting personal boundaries?
7. What boundaries do you need to clarify in your relationships?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Gracious God, thank you for giving us relational boundaries in your Word. Help us set limits that honor you and respect others. May our relationships reflect your love, honoring the individuality you have created in each of us. In Jesus' name, Amen.