

THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR MARRIAGES
Job 38.1-11

INTRODUCTION: *Since we have been married we have lived in a gated community on three occasions. When we were stationed in China we lived in an apartment building that was surrounded by a fence in an area called a diplomatic compound. There were several other apartment buildings in the compound where people from others embassies lived. The purpose of the fence was to keep unauthorized Chinese out, foreigners could come and go as they pleased.*

We lived on Naval Base, Yokosuka, Japan which was defined by a fence.

When we were stationed in Hawaii we lived on Hickam Air Force Base, and the base was surrounded by a fence that designated the base from the rest of the area. On one side of the base, Hickam Air Force Base is separated from Pearl Harbor Naval Base by a fence: one side is the Air Force Base and the other side is the Navy base.

We live our lives day to day with boundaries. The house or apartment you live in is defined by boundaries called walls; the property your house is on is defined by boundaries called property lines. You live on a street or road that is a boundary that separates parts of the city or county where you live. There is an invisible boundary called the city limits and based on where you live you either live inside or outside the city limits. We live with boundaries and we need boundaries, it puts definition to our lives; without boundaries life would literally be chaos. And so if boundaries prevent chaos, if boundaries put definition in our lives, then our marriages and relationships need boundaries too.

Think of the human body. God made the human body with many types of boundaries.

Arteries and veins are boundaries for blood to flow through the body. What would happen if

there are no arteries and veins and blood just went everywhere inside our bodies? Your skull is a boundary for your brain, it also protects your brain. Your skin is a boundary for your organs; think what would happen if you had no skin? I'm no doctor but that would probably be a deadly condition.

The very definition of a missionary involves boundaries. A missionary is simply someone who crosses a boundary or barrier with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Streets can be a boundary, language can be a boundary or barrier, cultures can be a boundary.

We live with boundaries, our lives in some respects are controlled by boundaries, boundaries give definition. If our marriages and relationships are going to survive and thrive, they need boundaries too. That's what we are going to discuss this morning, the importance of boundaries in our marriages and relationships. To do that we are going to look into the Old Testament Book of Job so learn what God taught Job about boundaries, and how we can apply that to our marriages and relationships today.

[SCRIPTURE: JOB 38.1-11]

We're studying this morning the importance of establishing boundaries in our marriages and relationships. There are boundaries you need to have in your own life that will strengthen and preserve your marriage and there are boundaries you and your spouse or partner need to establish to strengthen and preserve your relationship. And boundaries may be added as the years go by or they may be taken away; some boundaries are temporary and some are permanent and I'll explain that in the message.

To get a proper understanding of boundaries, first let's look at:

I. THE BIBLICAL PICTURE OF BOUNDARIES

First, let's understand Job. Scholars believe Job could be the oldest book in the Bible based on the language that is used. Job loved the Lord and honored the Lord in his life. One day the devil came to God and accused Job of loving the Lord only because God protected Job and did good to Job. God told the devil that Job loved him, and to prove that, God allowed the devil to attack Job but not kill him. So Job lost his farm, his family, everything he owned, but he never lost his faith in God. Then the devil came to God and accused Job of loving God because God kept Job from physical harm. Again God said Job was a righteous man and that physical distress would not affect his faith. Again God allowed the devil to attack Job in his health but not kill him. Job was afflicted with painful boils over his entire body, but Job never lost his faith. That's just in the first 2 chapters! The rest of the Book of Job, up to ch. 38 is an on-going dialogue between Job in his pitiful physical condition and three of his so-called friends. Each one of them would give Job their opinion about what was happening and Job would respond. And back and forth they go through most of the book. While Job never loses his faith, he does complain to God because he had no idea why all this was happening to him. Then, in ch. 38, God speaks and sets the record straight. Beginning in ch. 38 and in ch. 39 God asks Job a series of questions:

Where were you when I created the earth? What kind of power do you have to tell the sea where it can and cannot go?

v. 4: where were you when I created the earth?

Notice vv. 8-11: God asks Job where he was and what kind of power he had to tell the sea where it could and could not go.

Notice in v. 10 the word BOUNDARIES.

Here is my definition of a boundary:

A boundary is anything physical or invisible that gives definition to life.

God was giving Job a lesson in creation. God had and has the power to tell the ocean where it can and can not go; that is creation power and only God has that.

God set boundaries when it comes to creation.

v. 11

this verse is simply an example of God's power over nature; He is the one who told the sea how far it could go and no further.

There are other examples in the Bible of God giving specific boundaries to creation:

PS. 74.17: *You have established all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter.*

Prov. 8.29: *When we set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth.*

JER. 5.22: *Do you not fear Me? Declares the Lord. Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, an eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.*

There are other examples in the Bible that teach us how God used boundaries in the lives of people:

Numbers 34: God gave specific instructions to the Hebrews on where the boundaries of the nation of Israel will be in the promised land.

JOSH. 13: Joshua set specific boundaries based on God's word for each of the tribes in the promised land.

JUD. 13.4-5: Samson's mother was told not to drink wine or strong drink nor to eat anything unclean because of the child she was carrying, and that when he was born no razor was to touch his head.

LUKE 1.15 the angel told Elizabeth her son, John the Baptist, would drink no wine or liquor because he would be the Lord's messenger.

Probably the best example of boundaries given by God for men is the 10 Commandments, boundaries that define our relationship with God and our relationships with our fellow man. Boundaries are Biblical, given by God in creation, given by God in establishing the nation of Israel, given by God in establishing the lives and ministries of men of God.

II. THE ACTUAL REALITY OF BOUNDARIES

What is the purpose of boundaries?

Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me¹.

When both spouses are active in boundary setting, when they both speak the truth, solve problems, and set goals, they will both grow².

There are four key reasons for boundaries:

¹ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, "What do you mean by boundaries?", www.cloud-townsend.com (internet, accessed Feb. 7, 2019).

² Ibid.

1. Boundaries PAINT.

Boundaries paint a picture of what our marriages and relationships should look like.

Now, for this to work, there has to be an equal partnership between both spouses.

Boundaries must be established even before the wedding because even relationships cannot survive and be healthy apart from established boundaries.

2. Boundaries PRESERVE:

Boundaries are set to preserve and protect marriages and relationships, not as a line that, when crossed, signals the end of the marriage or relationship.

Why are boundaries so important? Well, let me ask you this question:

Who is responsible for and in control of your marriage or relationship? You are! Of course you are responsible in concert and on the direction of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. the point is, someone else is not responsible for and in control of our marriage, youyou're your spouse are. If you let society control it, it will. If you let your friends control it, they will; if you let social media control it, it will.

You and your spouse must take responsibility for your marriage.

Think about your finances: would you give control of your finances to a stranger? Of course not. Would you give control of your finances to society, or your friends? Of course not. Then you had been must the same attitude towards your marriage because you have made a commitment to your spouse to stay together till death parts you.

3. Boundaries PROTECT

Here is one of the most important keys to effective boundaries: you have to know yourself.

ROM. 3.23: *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

ROM. 5.19: *for as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

You and I have to agree that we are sinners, we have a sin nature, and we are capable of sin, temptation, and doing something that absolutely does not honor God. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit, it takes a commitment to follow the Lord, in order to maintain healthy relationships and healthy marriages. If you think that just because you are a Christian you are immune to temptation and sin you are seriously fooling yourself. You have to and need to set clear boundaries in your relationships and even in your marriage if you want them to survive and thrive.

Relationships and marriages without boundaries are disasters waiting to happen.

4. Boundaries PROMOTE

Having boundaries promotes healthy marriages and relationships and gives you a powerful testimony to the value of boundaries.

III. THE PRACTICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF BOUNDARIES

WHAT kind of boundaries do you need to set?

Healthy marriage relationships thrive on two important facts: mutual respect for each other and selfless living with one another.

It must be this way or it will not work.

Use this guideline when determining boundaries;

Boundaries must be;

1. GROUNDED in a relationship with the Son of God.
- 2, DEFINED by the Word of God;
3. LED by the Spirit of God;

I want to offer four suggestions on the types of boundaries you need for your marriage or relationship; the first two really go hand-in-hand:

1, FAITH

Even before you get married, faith must be a boundary that defines that relationship. What is within this boundary? A daily time with the Lord in prayer and scripture study, regular church attendance and involvement in church, having the same church home before you get married if possible.

2. FELLOWSHIP: to be in fellowship means to have something in common, and you have nothing in common with a lost person. Dating and/or marrying a lost person violates a biblical standard for God's children as outlined in 1 Cor. 6.14-15.

It also means not going to bed angry with your spouse; get it worked out because if you don't it will come back and normally worse than before.

3. FIDELITY: don't do anything that would cause your spouse or partner to question your commitment to them; don't do anything that would put your marriage in danger. Watch what you watch, listen to, and read. Be careful the emotional bond that forms between people, they are the toughest to break. If you are having extended text conversations with a person

of the opposite sex who is not your spouse and not a relative, cut it out. Protect your marriage at all costs.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil. Prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

(1 Pet. 5.8)

4. FINANCES: a majority of arguments in marriage involve finances. Money should never come between you and your spouse. Sit down and work those issues out.

In marriage, if you focus on what you want and desire and just stay angry and disappointed that you are not getting it, you will remain there. but if you focus on cultivating the garden instead of demanding the fruit, then your garden will yield a huge harvest³

Now one more word of caution and you need to listen very carefully:

Boundaries are never to be used to decide when a marriage will end – ever!

In his book, *The Storm-Tossed Family*, Dr. Russel Moore wrote this and listen to this carefully:

If divorce is an option for you—even a last resort—it will happen⁴.

INVITATION. The ultimate boundary in life, in all of eternity, is the boundary that separates heaven and hell. In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of a beggar named Lazarus and a rich man. Lazarus would beg for scraps under the table of the rich men. Both Lazarus and the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Russell Moore, *The Storm-Tossed Family* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 176.

rich man died; Lazarus went to heaven, the rich man went to hell. Listen to how Jesus described the ultimate boundary:

LUKE 16.24-26 [READ]

The boundary between heaven and hell will never be crossed. That is one boundary you cannot mess around with or take lightly; you must have that decided in your life today. Only by faith in Christ will you be forgiven of your sins and have life eternal.