The importance of Understanding Human Nature, and Setting Proper Boundaries.

**Human Nature: Understanding Ourselves and Others.**

It is important that we understand why and how we are motivated by others and how they impact our lives. The more we understand about what motivates us as well as trying to understand what motivates people we come in contact with, will help us to maintain a positive attitude and live more successful lives.

Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth century poet wrote:

He who has so little knowledge of human nature as to seek happiness by changing anything but his own disposition, will waste his life in fruitless efforts, and multiply the grief which he purposes to remove.

**What a powerful and incite-full statement.**

First, we must ask ourselves how much do we really understand about human nature. What motivates people to live the way they live, do the things they do.

Do we really have a full and complete understanding of what motivates ourselves, and why. Why do we live the way we do? And why do we do the things we do? What motivates us to be driven to be successful in business, sports, or similar activities, OR adopt the attitude of, I can’t really do anything to help myself because someone else is responsible for my failure, and we accept the mindset that we’ll never be successful so why try. Or because I’m poor and feel I have no way out of the misery I’ve been born into. Therefore I’ll take the easy road and let someone else take care of me. OR become involved in some form of crime because it gives us a feeling of power and we can make some quick money, thinking we won’t get caught and not thinking of the potential consequences for ourselves and others we are surrounded by, family members and friends.

Secondly, Samuel Johnson is telling us that we should focus on the state of our own attitude, rather than pointing the old fickle finger of fate outwards, always blaming someone else for our plight in life. Are we not responsible for anything that happens to us? We must ask the question, Why do we think this way. Is it because that’s what we’ve been taught? Is it because of our surroundings, being poor and disadvantaged, or because of the culture we grew up in and past history?

Whatever the reason, Samuel Johnson tells that we’ll waste our live in fruitless efforts and will continue in our current state or make our lives worse by continuing down the path of blaming someone else for our present situation, or trying to change someone else to be what we want them to be.

Why is it that we look for happiness through someone else? We should learn to be content by ourselves first. Being content with ourselves gives us a security blanket that says we really don’t need someone else to provide our happiness. And also gives us the confidence to enter into relationships with someone else if we choose to do so.
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Having this security blanket allows us to establish sound and proper boundaries in any relationship we choose to become involved in.

Think about a person caught in quicksand. The more they struggle, the deeper they’ll sink. The moral of this scenario is to stop struggling and begin to seek a positive way out of your current situation. Seek help through counseling. And if you don’t have a personal relationship with GOD, then I urge you to begin to seek Him and ask Him to forgive you and to Come into your heart and begin the healing process, and gain the peace he so desperately wants for you. We should be careful who we surround ourselves with and who we choose to become involved with in relationships.

Setting Biblical Boundaries:

Boundaries impact all areas of our lives, Spiritually, Mentally, Emotionally, Physically, and Socially. God gave us free will to choose how we want to live, who to include in our lives, and who not to include. He also gave us the free will to choose Him as he has chosen us. Not doing so, that is not choosing God in return or choosing to live outside of his word, will cause unwanted and unnecessary consequences. It is our choice and our decision.

Healthy boundaries define expectations and show respect for others and reflect self control over our emotions. Without strong self-control over our emotions we would freely violate others personal boundaries and wouldn’t establish proper personal boundaries for ourselves. We communicate our personal boundaries to others through words and actions. Boundaries help us to know just where someone’s control begins and ends.

In their book Boundaries in Marriage, Dr. John Townsend and Dr. Henry Cloud tells us that Boundaries help us to realize our freedom once again. It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5: 1) NASB. Boundaries are not set for someone else, rather we established them for ourselves and want others to respect them. We communicate them through words and actions. When our personal boundaries are violated we should communicate them to the person or persons violating them and explain the potential consequences. Not doing so communicates to the offender that it is okay to continue to treat us in that manner. We are not accepting responsibility for our own actions (behavior), our own boundaries. We aren’t helping the relationship grow in a positive way.

The triangle of boundaries is Freedom, Love, and Responsibility. God created us free. And with that freedom, comes Responsibility He set us up as free agents and we are commanded to Love Him and each other. There will be consequences if we don’t.

The Ten Laws of Boundaries:

1. The Law of Sowing and Reaping  
   Gal. 6: 7- 8, Prov. 9: 8
2. The Law of Responsibility  
   Gal. 5:13 – 14, John 15:12, Phil 2: 12-13
3. The Law of Power  
   Rom. 7:15, 19, 23, 1 John 1:8
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4. The Law of Respect
   - Matt 7:1-2, 2 Cor 3:17, Jam 1:25
5. The Law of Motivation
   - Jos 1: 6-9, Prov 3:5-6
6. The Law of Evaluation
   - Eph 4:25
7. The Law of Proactivity
   - Rom 4:15, 5:20, 7:5, Eph 6:4, Col 3:21
8. The Law of Envy
   - Jam 4:2, Rom 12:6
9. The Law of Activity
   - Heb 10: 38-39
10. The Law of Exposure
    - Eph 4:25-26, Eph 5:13-14

Examples of Personal Boundaries:
- Can I set limits and still be a loving person?
- What are legitimate boundaries?
- What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?
- How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?
- Aren't boundaries selfish?
- Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?
- Is it okay to physically discipline my children?
- Should there be consequences if my boundaries are violated?

Examples of Relationship Boundaries:
- Is it okay to live with someone out of marriage?
- What financial arrangements have been agreed to?
- Should we discipline someone else's children?
- How and when can you discipline their children?
- Should you treat your partners children differently than yours?
- Is okay to have multiple relationships while living with another person?
- Who is responsible for making critical decisions for the integrated families?
- How do you integrate families and maintain harmony?
- Is it okay to give into someone all the time?
- Should you share bank accounts?
- How open should you be about your past life?
- Does your partner feel threatened when someone from the opposite gender calls you?
- Who is going to be the primary bread winner vs decision making?
- Who will be responsible for what activities if both partners are required to work different shifts?
- How well do you know your partner's behavior patterns?
- Are you compatible?
- How well do each of you communicate?
- Is one an extrovert and you are an introvert?
- Do you both have the same or similar faith (spiritual) backgrounds?

Some reasons why we are sometimes afraid of setting proper boundaries:
- Fear of losing love
- Fear of a spouses anger
- Fear of being alone
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- Fear of being a bad person
- Fear of one's guilty feelings
- Fear of not reciprocating someone's love
- Fear of losing the approval of others
- Fear of hurting one’s spouse because over identifying with his or her pain

God respects our boundaries and we need to respect his. First, he leaves work for us to do that only we can do. And he allows us to experience the painful consequences of our behavior so that we will change. He takes no pleasure in our destruction (2 Peter 3:9, Ezek 18:23). He wants us to change for our own good and his glory. It hurts him deeply when we don’t. But at the same time, he does not rescue us; he wants us to work it out for our own good. He will not violate our wish to be left alone, although he will plead with us to come back to him.

Second, he respects our no. He tries neither to control us nor nag us. He allows us to say no and go our own way. Think of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32) Or the story of Joshua and his people (See the book of Joshua). Joshua was anointed as leader of the Israelites to lead them into the promised land. In the example of Joshua, God gave him a choice to say no but he freely and willingly accepted the responsibility placed upon him.

Repentance, remember the Prodigal Son, he spent all his inheritance where he had nothing left and after suffering a long period of time, decided he would go home and ask his father for forgiveness. His father loved him so much that he forgave his prodigal son and celebrated his return. God will forgive and celebrate our return even more so. So great is his Love for us.

Titus 2: 12 NIV Tells us that …. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Boundaries can be used in healthy and unhealthy ways. How can we know which boundaries are healthy and which are unhealthy or sinful in nature. When establishing boundaries we should examine our motives. Are they biblical? We need to examine our current emotional state and the circumstances and events of each relationship and define a set of boundaries for each. Approaching defining boundaries in this way will help to keep unwanted or worldly influences out of our lives.

Once again, a firm foundation with strong core values will help us when setting or establishing proper boundaries. It’s important that we learn to persevere, remain focused, go to God in prayer, and learn to listen for his response.

In their book on boundaries Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend tell us that boundaries are anything that helps to differentiate you from someone else, or shows where you begin and end. Boundaries clearly define accountability and responsibility. Enforcing boundaries sometimes exposes ourselves to risks or a cost, particularly in
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relationships where emotions run high. How badly do we want the relationship? Are we willing to sacrifice (boundaries) who we are for the sake of staying in a bad relationship (codependency)?

Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend have written many books on boundaries as well as video and audio curriculum for the critical subject of establishing different types of Boundaries on How to define, establish, and enforce proper biblical boundaries. They offer biblically-based answers to these and other tough questions, showing us how to set healthy boundaries with our parents, spouses, children, friends, co-workers, and even ourselves. I strongly recommend everyone to read their book on boundaries. The web address is as follows: http://www.cloudtownsend.com/

I strongly urge all who hear this message to take stock of your lives. Examine your attitudes. What and who motivates or inspires you? Perform a review of the boundaries you have in place, and examine what areas of your life where change needs to take place, and have the faith, strength, and courage to make them.

Be Blessed and God Speed.