



Setting Boundaries: The Most Overlooked Element in the Good Samaritan Story

[Luke 10:25-37](#)

Second in a 3-part mini-series titled: *Struggle Bus*
Part of the larger 10-week *Family Bundle* series

Pastor Matt Friend – October 28 & 31, 2021
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– OUTLINE –

Notice the boundaries set by the Good Samaritan:

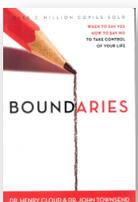
- #1 – His care had boundaries.
- #2 – His time had boundaries.
- #3 – His money had boundaries.

What's today's big idea?

Boundaries create a safe space for a lifetime of loving like Jesus.

How can we begin to set appropriate boundaries? What steps can we take to build these boundaries with our family, friends, colleagues, and ourselves?

- #1 – Let yourself be loved by God, just as you are, with no strings attached.
- #2 – See yourself as God's property, being responsible only to Him for how you take care of you.
- #3 – Try your best with the resources you have to meet the needs God puts in front of you, trusting God to meet the needs beyond your capacity.



Resource Recommendation

[*Boundaries: When to Say Yes & How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*](#)

By Henry Cloud and John Townsend



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– NOTES –

Introduction:

Jesus' story of Good Samaritan is one of the most famous Jesus ever told. I'll retell it for you here...

A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was mugged. The robbers stripped and beat him, leaving him half dead. A priest and Levite passed by on the other side of the road, ignoring the injured man, but a Samaritan took pity on him, bandaged his wounds, brought him to a hotel, and took care of him. The next day the Samaritan gave the hotel manager money and said, "Look after him, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

Just then, the injured man wakes up and says, "What? Are you leaving?" Yes, I am," the Samaritan replies, "I have some business in Jericho I must attend to." "Don't you think you're being selfish?" the injured man asks. "I'm in bad shape here. I'm going to need someone to talk to. How is Jesus going to use you as an example? You're not even acting like a Christian, abandoning me like this in my time of need! Whatever happened to 'Deny yourself?' as Jesus instructed? I'm so disappointed in you. You should be ashamed of your Christian witness."

So, the Samaritan reluctantly replies, "Why, I guess you're right. That would be uncaring of me to leave you here alone. I should do more. I will postpone my trip for a few days."



So the Samaritan stays with the injured man for three days, talking to him and making sure that he is happy and content, waiting on his every need (hand & foot). On the afternoon of the third day, there's a knock at the door and a messenger comes in. He hands the Samaritan a message from his business contacts in Jericho: "We waited as long as we could. We've decided to sell the camels to another buyer. Our next herd will be here in six months."

The Samaritan is furious! Like a volcano, the anger erupts from his soul and spews out his face. "How could you do this to me?" he screams at the recovering man. "Look what you've done now! Who do you think you are! You've caused me to lose those camels that I needed for my business. Now I can't deliver my goods. This may put me out of business! How could you do this to me?" The Samaritan punches the injured man in the face and leaves. The end.

Is that how the story goes, according to Jesus? Not even close. Let's read how Jesus told it...

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite,



when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” –Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

Jesus’ purpose behind this story was to teach us that authentic disciples love their neighbors as God has loved them. Throughout his Gospel, Luke reminds us that we are to care for social outcasts: for the immoral and for sinners that nobody else wants to get close to. We are not to marginalize the lower class or the upper class, men or women, young or old, or anyone for any reason regarding their race or unique sexual brokenness. We live out Christlike neighborly love when we love people who are the farthest from us. We need to love those who are the farthest from us, because God loved us when we were the farthest from Him.

I preached on this parable back on January 26, 2020, in a message titled, “Love our Neighbors.” (You can find it in the [Authentic](#) sermon series.)

However, today I’m taking a different approach. I want to point out an oft-overlooked element in the story: **boundaries**. I’ll highlight the boundaries set by the Good Samaritan and show how those boundaries actually enabled him to love the way Jesus wanted him to love.



Notice the boundaries set by the Good Samaritan:

#1 – His care had boundaries.

The Good Samaritan didn't build impregnable walls (as did the other two men—the Levite and the priest—who walked past the injured man). He cared; however, his care had boundaries. Some of those boundaries were due to his own limits and the supplies he had available. He didn't have a portable operating room at his disposal, yet he did have clean rags to stop the bleeding, and a little oil and wine to clean out the wounds.

#2 – His time had boundaries.

He was able to stay one night at the hotel with the injured man, but his business required him to leave the next day. Thankfully, he delegated the injured man's care to the hotel manager, yet he was forced to get on the road to fulfill his commitments.

#3 – His money had boundaries.

Before the Samaritan left the hotel, he gave the innkeeper two silver coins. This was a very generous amount, but it wasn't three or four or ten. Perhaps two coins are all he had. Perhaps it was all that was needed. Perhaps, to be a good steward, he wanted to see receipts and reimburse the innkeeper when he got back. Jesus doesn't tell us the details, except that the Samaritan was a wise steward of his money.

What's today's big idea?

Boundaries create a safe space for a lifetime of loving like Jesus.

Today's big idea expanded:

Just as homeowners set physical property lines around their land, God invites us to set mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us distinguish what our responsibility is and what it isn't. Setting boundaries is the key to



sustainable ministry. Since none of us is Jesus, we'll always need to set appropriate boundaries to love like Jesus at a sustainable pace for a lifetime.

Here's what the experts say...

“When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated.” –Brené Brown

“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves even when we risk disappointing others.” –Brené Brown

“If someone gets mad at you for creating a boundary, consider that a good sign that the boundary was necessary.” –Jenna Korf

“When someone oversteps your boundaries, they're letting you know that what you want doesn't matter.” –Phil Good

“Givers need to set limits because takers rarely do.” –Rachel Wolchin

“Walls keep everybody out. Boundaries teach them where the door is.” –Mark Groves

“You're not required to set yourself on fire to keep others warm.” –Unknown

“The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say 'no' to almost everything.” –Warren Buffet

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What does God's Word say (which is eternally more important than what the experts say)?

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows



from it. –Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls. –Proverbs 25:28 (NKJV)

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. –Matthew 7:6 (NIV)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. –Romans 16:17-18 (NIV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is... self-control. –Galatians 5:23 (NIV)

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How are you doing in this area? Perhaps you...

- Pride yourself on always going the extra mile.
- Overextend yourself on multiple fronts.
- Are exhausted on more days than not.
- Have allowed your kids to commandeer your marriage to the point you can't remember the last time you got a babysitter, went out on a date, or had an intimate moment together.
- Have a hard time saying no because you're afraid that particular person may not like you.
- Have been told multiple times that you're a people-pleaser.
- Allow the whole world to access you via technology 24/7/365.
- Live life constantly afraid of hurting someone else's feelings.
- Live life constantly afraid of being seen as bad, subpar, or less than.



- Resent others for how needy they are and how you always have to clean up their messes.
- Have allowed someone to take advantage financially, physically, sexually, or emotionally.
- Believe that fixing or inspiring everyone is your responsibility.
- Have committed yourself to so many sports, clubs, meetings, committees, and boards that you have forgotten what having fun with the people that matter feels like.
- Have allowed someone to disrespect you without humbly (yet firmly) letting them know that their words and actions are inappropriate and off-limits.
- Have allowed someone else to set the agenda for you, your family, career, or life.
- Easily cave into passive-aggressive threats like, “If you really loved me, you would do what I want,” or “How could you say no to me after all I’ve done for you,” or “Maybe after I’m dead and gone, then you’ll be sorry.”
- No longer have time to exercise, or even to go for a walk, because you’ve given away your life to everyone but you.

This is serious! Psychologists tell us that a lack of boundaries can lead to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addictions, impulsivity, chronic guilt and shame, panic disorders, and marital breakdown. Cloud and Townsend write, “A life without boundaries is no life at all.” However, thankfully...

Boundaries create a safe space for a lifetime of loving like Jesus.

How can we begin to set appropriate boundaries? What steps can we take to build these boundaries with our family, friends, colleagues, and ourselves?

#1 – Let yourself be loved by God, just as you are, with no strings attached.



The number one objection to this boundaries concept goes something like this: “Pastor Matt... Aren’t Christians supposed to be the most loving people on earth? Aren’t you preaching a gospel of selfishness?” Not at all. Appropriate boundaries actually increase our ability to care about others, and definitely over the long haul. After all, it’s the “good and faithful servant” who gets rewarded (Matthew 25:23).

Additionally, it’s important that we distinguish between “selfishness” and “stewardship.” Selfishness has to do with a fixation on our own wishes and desires to the exclusion of our responsibility to love others. Stewardship is passing along what we have received from God to love others at the appropriate time, in the appropriate way, and in the appropriate doses.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.
–1 John 4:18-19

Know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. –Ephesians 3:19 (NIV)

- If you made a mistake this week, this year, this decade, or this century... you need this!
- If you grew up under hard religion... you need this!
- If you’re competitive & believe you always have to earn your victory party... you need this!
- If you’ve ever felt rejected, roasted, refused, or repulsed... you need this!

Christian, say to yourself, “In Jesus I am loved, with no strings attached.” (Seriously, say it to yourself. It will feel awkward at first, but you need it.)



Imagine how our lives, our world, our families, and our faith would be different if we believed this!

#2 – See yourself as God’s property, being responsible only to Him for how you take care of you.

In the physical world, boundaries are easy to see. Fences, signs, walls, moats with alligators, manicured lawns, and hedges are all physical boundaries. They give the same message: “THIS IS WHERE MY PROPERTY BEGINS.” The owner of the property is legally responsible for what happens on his or her property. Nonowners are not responsible for the property.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. –1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Love your neighbor as yourself. –Matthew 22:39

Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. –Philippians 2:4 (NLT)

Do you see the difference this makes? If you belong to everybody else then it’s your job to please everybody else; however, if you belong to God then it’s only your job to please God. This gives you a new sense of authority. You can say yes to what God says yes to and no to what God says no to. When you know you belong to God, you can say when needed, “I respectfully disagree” and “I choose not to.” When you know you belong to God, you can tell someone to stop when they are hurting you or push back in a conversation when someone crosses a line.

Perhaps you’re thinking, “But Matt. What happens if I set up a boundary and it makes someone mad, or they no longer like me?” I propose that boundary was a litmus test for the quality



of your relationship to begin with. True friends will respect your boundaries.

Imagine how our lives, our world, our families, and our faith would be different if we believed this!

#3 – Try your best with the resources you have to meet the needs God puts in front of you, trusting God to meet the needs beyond your capacity.

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. –Psalm 16:5-6 (NIV)

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. –Proverbs 3:27 (NKJV)

Try your best with the resources you have to meet the needs God puts in front of you, trusting God to meet the needs beyond your capacity.

What does this look like? It might look like...

- Saying a prayer today, opening your hands to heaven.
- Pointing a needy individual to someone one else (or to an organization that can help).
- Having an honest conversation about why you can't fulfill a particular person's desires.
- Waking up to the fact that you're not Jesus and that you can't fix everything and everybody.
- Cutting back on your commitments.
- Going to bed earlier and sleeping in a little later.
- Letting your kids cry with the babysitter when you leave to go on a date with your spouse.
- Not letting the kids crawl in bed with you and your spouse



every. single. night.

- Coming to grips with the fact that a certain someone will probably never like you.
- Letting someone else fail because you can't do your job and theirs.
- Being home a few more nights per month.
- Having a frank conversation with someone who has hurt you or creating boundaries with someone who can't respect your limits.

Why do these three things? Because...

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