

Boundaries in Community

Boundaries outside of the *ekklesia* are absolutely essential for harmonious living in relationship. They are needed because people normally focus on themselves and don't put others ahead of them. This produces weird incidents like: A person gets very angry because they can't do the good deed for someone that they want to because circumstances don't permit it. WEIRD!

We all know the societal outcomes caused by the lack of boundaries:

- Public Housing tenants trash government homes and are moved on to new residences only to trash them as well because the overseeing public servants don't enforce the boundary of duty of care.
- Children who don't have boundaries grow up as rebels both in the home and in society. That is, at least until they join the Defence Force or get a job where there are firmly established boundaries.
- Marriages without expressed boundaries are more than likely to end up in divorce because each partner has no idea of the expectations and limitations of their spouse which leads to fights, arguments and selfishness.

NOTE: *If you haven't learnt about boundaries, check out the References listed at the end of this document.*

A question arises from the above heading: “Why do members of a Kingdom Community need boundaries?”

The answer is simple: We haven't arrived yet at 'the fullness of Christ'¹ because we are still controlled by our soul and our mind. The Apostle Paul calls this “carnality”. Yes, followers of Jesus do live out of the selfish nature because of spiritual immaturity.² Paul also classifies this carnal mode as “enmity” with (hostile to) God³ and he easily identifies the symptoms as a continuous failure to control the 'flesh'⁴.

How does this carnality come into Community?

We bring it in all the time because we are not spiritually mature and we don't know how to 'leave it at the door' when we gather. So, carnality then comes into our group relationships and dynamics, and these are defects that need to be curbed.



If the 'flesh' of individuals isn't curbed, the 'leaven' of the one infects all of the members.⁵ This is the 'rotten apple' principle we know from our life in the world,⁶ but the Body is not immune to it. It's unfortunate, but we must remember that we still have our 'old man' in which our supernaturally regenerated spirit-man resides. None of us are free from slipping into soulish activity at any time, even when we gather. One only has to observe the interactions between spouses in Community group situations to realise we really aren't that spiritually minded⁷.

King Jesus rebuked the churches of Pergamos⁸ and Thyatira⁹ because they didn't eliminate unholy dimensions within their group. How did these ungodly ways come to take a dominant place in the churches and why weren't they removed? Simple. The elders didn't do their job of overseeing the group and dealing with the impurity when it first appeared. It was their job and they failed, so eventually, the whole church in the city was affected and had to come under the hand of discipline by the Head. When members cross accepted boundaries of righteous into unrighteousness, it's the responsibility of elders to bring the necessary correction.

1 – Ephesians 4:13

2 – 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

3 – Romans 8:7

4 – Romans 7:17-19

5 – 1 Corinthians 5:6

6 – We are familiar with the saying, “One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch”.

7 – Romans 8:6

8 – Revelation 2:14-16

9 – Revelation 2:20-23

The boundaries that need to be set in Community and by members of a Community are not needed to prevent lawlessness or anarchy developing, because a Community should never ever get to that point. Boundaries are needed to maintain peace and harmony so that the members can mature in unity and agapē for each other as the family of God.

Having said that, there can be incidents of various levels of independence, rebellion and lawlessness that must be dealt with when these ‘defects’ come in with members from the world system in which they live. For example: Situations where a member says something like:

- “You can't tell me what to do”, or
- “I won't do that, that's control”.

The boundaries that need to be set will create communal norms and protocols of operation that help to moderate the carnality of members so they can grow together and mature in the things of the Kingdom. These boundaries don't represent the Law or legalism, but are more in line with what pirate Captain Barbosa stated: “*The code is more what you'd call ‘guidelines’ than actual rules*”. These guide members in behaviour and speech so that unrighteousness is not encouraged to take root and flourish.

I have a number of boundaries in my life which I take into Community:

1. I don't permit anyone to speak into my life unless I invite them to do it.
2. I don't permit anyone to speak into my marriage, ever.

There are important boundaries that need to be set for all members to prevent them from damaging their relationships with other members. Some possible examples are:

1. Each member's life outside of Community is private and should be respected as such.
2. Another member's peculiarities and foibles are not to be a focus for unloving attitudes.
3. Emotional connections to persons of the opposite sex are off limits if you are married.
4. Personal giving, in all areas of supply, is the private concern of each member.
5. A person's responsibilities are their own and should not be encroached on, except in emergencies.

There are also important boundaries which are needed for the community to handle group dynamics. For example:

1. New believers should spend considerable time listening and learning before launching out to give their opinions or expound teaching.
2. The oversight function must never be usurped by super-spiritual members.
3. Married couples should leave their marriage relationship behind when they come into Community as individual members of the local Body.
4. Praying for someone in the group should be carried out with their approval, not as a free-for-all.
5. Issues between members should be dealt with in private.
6. Gossip is not to be tolerated.
7. Information shared in Community is not to be shared outside of it, unless permission is given.
8. Each person is responsible to share doctrine, but only that which is are totally within the bounds of what we believe aligns with Heaven.
9. Spiritual manifestations are not essential and are distracting.

The question now is: But why do we need boundaries if we follow the Law of Love? If everything we do is loving, how can we overstep the mark with members of the group?

There are two simple answers to this:

1. **Not everyone acts out of *agapē*, and not everyone receives out of *agapē*.**¹⁰ This is the carnality that Paul wrote about. Such soulishness causes friction between soulish members.
2. **Not everyone knows how to operate in *agapē*.** Most people deal with love on an emotional level and miss the concept that *agapē* is not emotionally based, although emotion can come out of it. Emotion at all levels is the soul which must be placed in a subordinate position to a person's spirit.

What a person thinks is a loving action when it emanates from an emotional feeling can very often be a personal offence to another. For example:

1. An older woman match-making for a young man.
2. A member being given a meal containing an ingredient they are allergic to and responding in an unloving way to the giving person's loving gesture.

IMPORTANT: *Agapē* always analyses the emotions or 'feelings' to check that they are not offensive to another person before an action is undertaken.

So, we need to work with personal and corporate boundaries to build harmony in Community. Submitting to boundaries, like submitting to each other, is about removing ourselves from the #1 spot – the main blockage of harmony. For this to work, boundaries need to be appropriate and changeable because the members and the group are teachable, growing in maturity. We all need to support the boundaries and be prepared to halt those who go beyond them. How we do that is a process of trialling it and then modifying it.

Whether or not a Community needs to write up a set of boundary recommendations is up to the individual group. Such lists may end up becoming rules or laws that breed legalism, which is to be avoided at all costs. However, **no boundaries is a recipe for disaster.**

[See the resource list on the next page]

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RESOURCES

- Henry Cloud “Boundaries Kickstart Guide” [free]
(www.boundariesbooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Boundaries-Kickstart-Guide.pdf)
- Henry Cloud “Control Freaks Make Great Leaders” [free]
(www.boundariesbooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Control-Freaks-Make-Great-Leaders.pdf)
- Henry Cloud “Boundaries Leader's Guide - Cloud Townsend Resources” [free]
(www.cloudtownsend.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Boundaries-New-Revised-DVD-Facilitator-Guide_-Revised0812.pdf)
- Henry Cloud “BOUNDARIES: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life”
(cwjc.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Boundaries.pdf)
- Henry Cloud “Boundaries Builder 5-Day Challenge” [free]
(www.boundariesbooks.com/articles/boundaries-builder-5-day-challenge)
- Henry Cloud & John Townsend “BOUNDARIES: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life” (Amazon or Koorong)
- Henry Cloud “Boundaries for Leaders” (Amazon or Koorong)
- Henry Cloud & John Townsend “Boundaries with Kids” (Amazon or Koorong)
- John Townsend “Boundaries with Teens: When to Say Yes, How to Say No...” (Amazon or Koorong)
- Henry Cloud & John Townsend “Boundaries in Dating: How Healthy Choices Grow Healthy Relationships” (Amazon)
- Henry Cloud & John Townsend “Boundaries in Marriage” (Amazon or Koorong)
- John Townsend “Beyond Boundaries: Learning to Trust Again in Relationships” (Amazon or Koorong)