

*Picking up and Digging Deeper in the 'Spiritual Boundaries' study
(a study/resource of 'Snapshots of a Disciple')*

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

This little study is really just a re-collecting and expanding of my studies and conversations and thoughts from over the last 5 to 10 years, as I have been trying to re-establish (for myself and others) the careful and safe boundaries that we all need to have - boundaries that need to be set in our minds, because the world hates boundaries because boundaries prick their consciences about the evil deeds they do. You will notice a variety of subjects here... I'm sorry it's not more collected. At the moment, it's not yet a whole-picture view, it's just a scattering of topics, and I tried to include verses and/or verse references under each topic for further study. In time, I expect God will grant me the clarity to pull it all together better... for now, this is what I can see. And I'm sharing it because I see that this discussion, and the things included in this study, are needed in the genuine body of Christ today, in the US and worldwide.

"Boundary stones". That phrase doesn't mean much to us today, but back centuries ago, it was the only way to keep track of who owned what land, or to mark areas to stay out of, etc (Exodus 19; . Typically, boundary stones would mark the four corners of the property you owned and were (from what I've read) most often large rocks, that were identified and known as property lines. In the US today, we have surveyors who use GPS coordinates with satellites too numerous to count - some of which essentially do the same thing: marking boundaries and/or locating points on the earth. If you study into the subject of boundary stones, you will find that some evil people would move the boundary stones during the night (sometimes) to 'claim' (really steal) more land from their neighbors for themselves. Thus the phrase - "moving the boundary stones". But, I'm using that phrase for a deeper meaning.

Years ago, I heard a sermon that I have still remembered pieces of about how boundary stones were more than just stones marking the perimeter of the property. They were also a reminder of God's boundaries to mark the difference between what God says is right and holy, and what God calls sin and evil. Needless to say, today those 'boundary stones' have been moved... a lot. Let's look at this from a few different angles.

In 2nd Corinthians 6 and 7, God explains that He still calls some things 'clean' and 'unclean', but He's not talking about food or animals. He's talking about right and wrong, justice and injustice. You see, many of the things in the 'Old Testament' are types, shadows, and patterns in the 'New Testament', and we see this principle taught in a

variety of passages, here are four: Romans 15:4; 1st John 5:13; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 11. So, what does that mean today? Good question.

Today, we have so many varied definitions and teaching about everything, and sadly because so few people seem to know the core teachings of the Word, they believe what they hear from a variety of teachers - including many false ones. You see, we look to the world to define sin, they will always get it wrong. And, indeed, they do get it wrong all the time - always reducing sin to be less than God's Word defines it. For an easy example, look up any sin from the Bible - in the English dictionary. You will find for many definitions, they dictionary has no understanding of what the Bible is talking about when it talks about a sin. And, that's another thing I'd like to remind people - Biblical definitions.

Do you realize that God's Word is the best dictionary and commentary on the Bible? Who knew? :) Seriously, though, if you want to know the Biblical definition of a sin, don't go to a book or a teacher - many modern ones get it wrong, and sometimes very wrong. No, instead, pick up a Bible, and study out both the Hebrew or Greek word, and/or look up a few passages that use that word. Once you find a few clear passages on the topic, you will quickly see from the context what God's Word is defining that sin to be. The world always diminishes the sins in the heart and mind, and most often even diminishes all sins, except the '*7 Deadly Sins*', which then was reduce to the top 3 (adultery, hatred and greed)... and now is becoming "*they're just all mistakes, not actual rebellion against God...*" *sigh* The lies of this world never stop. But, another way to double-check your hypothesis on a Biblical definition is to share it and discuss it with those you trust. And if they don't see it, but you still see in the text, find a few others to ask, and keep studying yourself. With prayer and the clear text of God's Word, these things become clear, often-times pretty easily. One of my favorite tools because of its accuracy and ease-of-use is the free small-program you can download at www.Scripture4all.org . I recommend it to all my friends. I've been using it for years, and I consider it to be better than all the other Bible programs I've seen.

So, Biblical definitions are essential to understanding the Word, and so is context, and so is pattern of Scripture. It can take time to study - and taking notes and saving them can help too. :) Another key part in this is also realizing that God's definition will bring conviction on all people, not just some. Some people catch that easier than others.

Okay, let's look at another area where the boundary stones are being moved - culture norms. The culture is constantly rejecting God's Word and using their actions and manners to push and promote sin - sometimes they are so spiritually deceived, they aren't even aware anymore that it is sin. But, satan uses what's 'common' to push Christians to back down and fall to the same sins as everyone else. And this happens

in one of two ways - either talking genuine followers of Christ to entertain themselves with sin (just like everybody else is doing), and the "Trash Vendor" (TV), the pagan movies, the pagan music, and pagan art, literature, and games, are all apart of helping everyone believe that more and more sin is 'normal', so apparently "*not that bad*". Another way satan accomplishes the lukewarm-deterioration of believers is by surrounding them with unbelievers and/or those who call themselves 'believers' while they live, speak, act, and think just like the pagans. America is a great example of this. All around us, here in the US, we are surrounded by many who are fighting for sin, but they call it 'normal'. Well, yes self-wants and sin-pleasures **are** normal for those who don't Christ, and aren't ransomed by His blood. But, it is **not normal** for those who are in Christ. For those who are "in Christ" need to "abide in Christ" and they will be quickly noticed to be set-apart "to Christ". If they are not set apart, there is a high likely hood that they are not Christ's, as explained very well in Romans 6, 8, and Hebrews 12.

Okay, now let's dig a little deeper. One key area where the spiritual 'boundary stones' have been moved is in the area of relationships. I have found this so many times over the dozen+ years of working with youth - many of them simply don't know boundaries because they aren't being taught. And what I found when working with the youth, is many adults who never learned these things as a youth, sometimes still don't know them as an adult, especially if they are just watching an almost-empty religious entertainer on Sunday mornings. If he's the lead guy at a 501c3 tax-exempt corporation, there are **many** things he cannot teach on, because of business bylaws, and the constantly-changing secret rules that are sent to these pastors every month or quarter, from DC. And, if he's also a freemason member, he simply won't teach much - just enough to make you feel warm, and then go out empty, having learned nothing of God's holiness, how to please God, or how to share the honest gospel of Jesus with those around you. Remember, in the Bible, the pastors were not to be focused on bringing in unbelievers to share the 'gospel' every week. No, they were to be training the believers what the Word said and how to follow Christ, so that the whole church body would be out sharing the gospel all week long... America's a far-cry from that one, huh? We need to get it back - and that means, one person at a time.

Did you realize that less than 25% of the content of the 'New Testament' gets taught in most churches today? Why is that? It's not right. Do you realize that most of Jesus' teachings do not get taught? Do you also realize that the whole gospel message that Jesus and the disciples taught is not understood by many who share the gospel? Did you also know that a half-gospel is just like a false gospel - no one can get saved with it or by it? These are huge gaps in what modern American churches (and their look-alikes around the globe) won't teach. Yes, I mean - they refuse to teach. But, there is good news. The home-church movement is growing - worldwide, and especially in the US. Many genuine followers of Christ don't realize that home-churches are the 2nd

largest denomination in the US, and that info is from 2003. I suspect now, in 2015 almost 2016, that the move of genuine believers to home-churches is getting pretty close to making it the #1 denomination in the US. And the lack of Biblical content in modern American 'churches' is why they are leaving the 501c3 corporations, and starting or joining home-churches.

Another aspect where the spiritual 'boundary stones' are being moved. Back in the mid-1900s, many people still knew what modesty was. And, they also knew what it takes to make a marriage, a family, and what working diligently and by the sweat of the brow looked like. Skip to today - definitions? Mostly gone. Why? They were never taught. Meaning? We need to pick up that baton that someone(s) before us dropped. In an age of social media, conversations can be too fast and too harsh, too quickly. Not only that, but 'dating' goes super-fast that way, and is a key part of why faulty marriages are made, and why the easy-divorce rate is so high, and why the not-going-to-get-married number is so high. Technology has created superficial connections that lack the genuineness of real human interaction. Am I suggesting to abandon social media completely? Nope. I use Facebook, Gmail, Twitter, and a little of Pinterest... but I do so with intention. I don't use it to kill time, but to post content to help others, and/or to interact with others and encourage them, the Biblical way.

But, also on this social media subject, this 'new' technology that has been created as I've grown up with it, has also been a key part of blurring boundaries too. Everyone is different, but some boundaries need to stay solid, all the time. Just like in dating and marriage, there are key rules to be put in place and held there to keep yourself safe, and your friends safe. But, then there need to be additional guidelines/boundaries to stay above reproach too. Some people also have more accountability than others, so it's not as much an issue as it is for those who have no one to see, stop and/or correct them when they are in a pattern of sin, or something that is spiritually hurting another person. A quick review, if I may, for all audiences on Biblical boundaries in relationships.

This topic has been quite confusing for me over the years, because of a variety of factors - and maybe you can relate. You see, I have been blessed to have grown up in a family where my Dad, Madre, my bro and I have sought the Lord a long time and we encourage each other, and pray with each other many times, and talk through many things Biblically. It's a wonderful atmosphere to have. :) Sadly... I'm finding many don't have that luxury.

Life-bongs/covenants

So, for me, understanding the 'boundaries' of communication with many of the people around me has been hard - because many of them were taught evolution, and had a

broken family structure, so no boundaries were clearly defined. Over the years of talking with youths and their parents and families, and general church folk, I've seen more personalities types than I can count - each person being a unique individual to themselves. And with the world and its constantly-evolving 'definition' of "love", many have a very hard time figuring out how to balance it all. But, over time, I've also started to figure out what God's boundaries are that do apply to everyone, as we see briefly taught in 1st Corinthians 10:13 and other passages like Matthew 13, and Galatians 5 and 6. So, if it's fuzzy for you, as it was for me, please allow me to review what I see in God's Word that helps clarify the puzzle. Let's start by looking at the home.

Family Bond- This is the one category in which almost all activity and conversation are not only okay, but need to happen in a God-fearing manner. There are still boundaries, but very few - though each family understands and holds to only what they know from the Word, or the world. Biblically speaking, the Dad needs to lead in teaching, correction, and example in working hard in his job, and being active in the Word and ministry - and every Dad can do that in some way. If the Dad is shunning sin and loving his family and teaching them, in partnership with his wife, that is a stable home, and the children can learn from their parents and partner with (when older) and they can all grow together. That is how God intended it to be, and that's what we need to re-teach (or even teach) those who haven't heard it or who have forgotten it. God established the wife/Mom to be home with the children and working with her husband to be teaching her children, taking care of the home, and partnering with her husband as time and life allow. The Lord did not intend for the home to be built around sin-pleasures or the sinful distractions of this world. Where there is sin, it causes division in the home and those consequences won't stop, until that sin is kicked out of the home for good.

Marriage Covenant - This is the only type of relationship that is deeper than the family. A husband and wife need to be actively getting to know, hear, and understand each other in all aspects and in all subjects. That means the husband learning to be a man his wife can respect, and learning to take care of her needs and work together on their wants, in accordance to God's will explained in His Word. And the wife needs to make sure that she shows respect to her husband and doesn't let any other relationship get between them. Patience is needed on both parts, as they learn and grow together. And, both the husband and wife need to not have their pet-sins which are off-limits to the other one. Keeping each other growing in purity and holiness is a team-effort. If they are becoming one, as Jesus explained, then they can be the honest salt and light in this world, teaching and explaining God's Word as they take care of those God puts in their path.

New Covenant - The covenant with Christ is sadly not understood by many, but it is rich for those who love it and treasure it. God is the only One who can handle all of the topics of life, all the time. He isn't a resource to be consulted when there's a problem. He's a Person who wants a spiritually intimacy and gives wisdom in all subjects when seeking Him is an active and ongoing focus all day long.

So, now reversing them, the order looks like this:

- › New Covenant with Christ
- › Marriage Covenant
- › Family bond

From there, the other relationships can work. But when there's a conflict at the core levels, those need to be addressed first, or else the rest won't work. Everyone else in our lives needs to fit somewhere in a lesser category.

Home-church family - this category is similar to the adopted family and close friends categories - and it has its boundaries. God intended for the genuine believers to get to know each other, exhort, show grace, pray for, discuss the Word and life, etc - not many know God's form of 'church' today, though. Most only know the modern confusion about a 501c3 system - a very far cry from God's model for the church family.

Adopted family - Some people have 'adopted family' - this can be good (I have some too), but it isn't the same as family we grew up with, so it has it's cautions and boundaries.

Close Friends - Those that are likeminded in the Word and with whom we can pray with and for

Casual Friends - This group can be more random, and probably will be - but we need to make sure that those we hang out with from time to time aren't dragging us back into our old ways of sin.

Acquaintances - People that we may see once, or a few times. Or talk with once or a few times. We can pray for them, but we also need to remember what role they are in our lives.

Strangers - In a sense, no one is a stranger to a follower of Christ... but we need to handle them that way, other than making sure they know the gospel - if we get time.

Keeping these categories (or similar) in our minds will help us to remember what level of connection the person is and how to handle them. All of these categories need to hear the gospel from us - if at all possible, because we might be the only ones they hear it from.

Sexual immorality - how does it lure us? What do we do?

Changing gears, Let's talk about a tough issue - lust/sexual adultery. Let me start by noting that I have worked with youth for many years. I got to see a side of life that is very sad - many children with parents who are so busy chasing the trinkets and sin-pleasures of this world, or where only one parent was involved, etc. Very heart-breaking - which is why I reached out to so many of them. In the process, I started to learn about the cycle of sin, and the cycle of abuse from Scripture so I could help them not repeat it. And, I also realized that I needed to teach them about God's Word and healthy boundaries so they could avoid some long-term pain, despite the glitter of potential 'fun' it might have. So, this next section is a key piece that I wish I could pass onto them, but it might also help you too.

Many do not realize how sexual immorality starts. I had a few people ask me this recently. Sexual immorality, whether it be during marriage (adultery) or outside marriage (fornication), they leave long-term baggage of pains, guilt, sorrow and fear, and this sin is the only one that hurts deeply, on the inside (1st Corinthians 6:17-20). So, in a way, all sins are equal... but some carry lifelong baggage that others do not. It's not a 'curse', it's consequences for a deeper more vile sin. Even if the world makes it look 'easy' and/or 'normal', sexual sins always wound deeper and hurt longer. The world loves to reduce sexual immorality during marriage as an 'affair' - it sounds less greivous. But, many in the world and the body of Christ don't realize where sexual adultery starts. It starts by the husband (usually) looking at and thinking about another lady(s) sexually, and it is caused by lust and/or porn, which is in most movies today, many commercials, and online (*in abundance - thanks to the perverts on top*), and fantasy novels for ladies. When the husband stops cultivating a healthy, genuine love for his wife and fighting for his life-covenant with her, that is when his heart starts to wander to want another woman than the one he has. And that is why lust is so destructive. Once a husband has lusted after, grown fond of, and then been sexually immoral with another woman, Jesus said that marriage can be undone right there - Biblically. And often-times, once a man has done that against his wife, he can't unlearn the sin-paths, and won't learn to hate it and flee it. You see, sexual immorality of any type is not a 'big sin' as much as it is a collection of little sin-steps. Also, though it's less common, sometimes a woman is unfaithful on her own, when she lets her heart move away from the man she made a life-covenant with, to go to another man. And secrets and wanting attention are often two common lures from what I've heard and seen many times. And, by the way, all modern movies, unless they are Biblically based, do use the lust of sin (including sexual sins) to pull and attract both men and women - it's another form of lust, and it hurts both the husband and wife individually. As you can see, lust and sexual immorality are equally involved - which is why Jesus equated them in Matthew 5:27-30. Sexual immorality is indulging in sex outside of God's-arranged marriage covenant. And it's sin always, and wounds the same as if done during marriage. One key note - private chatting (in person or online) without

accountability often leads to more sin. It's easy to flatter or over-extend warmth that just keeps the out-of-control emotions spiraling. When you see it, stop it as soon as you can, and you can save yourself - and typically others, some pain. If you don't know how to stop it, find a like-minded person of the same gender (or a few) to ask their advice - sometimes a team effort, and a team prayer, can help us escape temptation. Also remember, turning from sin or the leading-to-sin is going to require us love holiness and God more than that sin. That is something we always need to be growing in.

An easy way to avoid sexual sins is to do what God commands us to do: flee it. ~

¹⁸Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. ¹Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. ²Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." (1 Corinthians 6:18-7:3) ~ Notice, Jesus identified 'lust' as key in the adultery in Matthew 5, and this passage notes another piece: physical touch. Handshakes and hugs can be fine between those of opposite genders, but too much can stir the emotions and hormones toward sin, which is why God warns to avoid it. Funny enough, warmth of character, caring, and prayer are all that's needed for most situations, and will keep us all within safer boundaries. Expressions of caring and genuine love are not wrong - especially if understood by both parties. But too much is where temptation and sin enter in. It's best to notice the temptation or sin as soon as possible and to adjust the relationship and boundaries as necessary to keep the core relationships and covenants strong. If I could tell every youth that I've met those key things on relationships, I know it would help many of them... praying God gets the info to them another way.

Another key and core question to cover, since we're on this subject - what is love? Do you realize how many different versions of 'love' you see around you? Do you realize that almost all of them are not the agape-love of the Bible? Study 1st Corinthians 13 - study it deeply. It will deepen your understanding and practice of Godly love. ~ Along with this, it needs to be said that Showing affection isn't the only form of love - and that's a key place where confusion creeps in. You see, kind acts, simply praying, keeping in touch, encouraging words, even loving correction words, fellowship in the Word, etc - there are many ways to express God's love to people. Some people are too hardened to catch the nuances... sometimes. But even the hardest recognize some extensions of love that are not physical affection.. Physical affection needs to

be a big part of the marriage covenant and family bond, and then limited somewhat as it gets to the home-church, close friends, and adopted friends categories. And then even more limited with casual friends, acquaintances and then almost nil with strangers. Did that make sense? These are not hard fast rules, but a gentle reminder limiting physical affection to the type of relationship you have with that person. These types of boundaries will help each of us guard our hearts and other people's hearts from sin. It's a team effort. And we also need to remember that when we exhausted or grieving or a few other emotions, we can tend to lose track of these boundaries - it's okay. Stop it where you see it, and get it back on track. It's that simple. When your pattern is honorable, people can move past a one-time error, especially the body of Christ. However, with that said, let us not have our guard completely down, especially with those in a religious leadership position. If someone makes an out of place crude joke or flattery to us, or to our wives (or husbands), we need to drop our respect level. If they're open, gently confront them on how that was wrong. If they correct it - great. If they excuse it, we need to have our guard up more around them. One note - husbands, if you see another guy giving flattery to your wife and drawing her heart away, find a way to address the issue and stop it. Sometimes when the activity is being done to us - we can't always see it. But when a husband and wife are one and sin is being kicked out and kept out of the marriage (and family, etc), sin is more easily noticed and can be guarded against more quickly and easily. Above all - pray constantly for wisdom and God's fear on everyone you know, and study God's Word and share what you are reading with those around you. That kind of prayer and that kind of activity can help to rescue many people of all walks of life, no matter what kind of past they have had (abuse, etc).

Monkey see - Monkey do

Moving on to the next topic. Sort of going back to a topic I covered a little above - mimicking others. Many of those reading this are in the US, and some are in other countries with big cities. We may or may not realize it, but we do copy those around us - if we are not careful. The people we associate with become a part of our world and we learn and pick up words, thinkings, and patterns from them - sometimes unknowingly. If you think about it for a couple of minutes, you'll likely remember words you got from your close friends or family as well as other likes or dislikes. Who we associate with will shape who we are and what we do. God's Word says it this way:

³³**Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'.**

(1st Corinthians 15:33) ~

So next questions: How wisely do you pick your friends? Do you abandon those who are trying to strongly drag you back into sins that you have left behind? Another question - do you shut off the voices that make sin look 'normal'? Please, allow me to expand this - Do you still have a "Trash Vendor" (TV) in your home? If so, do you or

your family watch it? If so, how much? Be honest with yourself and God – dishonesty only hurts you and your family. If you are spending any amount of time with it daily or weekly, there's a high chance that what you are watching is whittling down your definitions of sin, moving you away from God, and getting you in more trouble as the cloud of consequences silently builds. Spot it early and correct it, and you'll save yourself some pain. God's holiness doesn't change, and when we agree with the world's definitions and laugh at the world's jokes, God is grieved and angered, and He has to discipline us if we are His... or let us go off silently to judgment with the rest of the world. But, more than that, close to 100% of the stuff coming out of that one-eyed-monster these days is toxic for the soul, even the 'teachers'. Between 2004 and 2008, GW Bush signed changes that allowed the FCC to force all TV companies to go high-definition digital, meaning the honest TV programs couldn't afford it, so all that's left is the garbage of the world. You don't need it – it's hurting you all the time it's on. Think on it, and may the Lord show you the truth. If you want to see it in living color, get a note-pad and pen and write down every time the show you like breaks the 10 Commandments. If you do that for very long and are honest with the Word, you will be changing your life to protect your children and your family from the sins coming out of that box. Again, be careful who you hang with – because the active sins of other's lives encourages sin in our lives. A little leaven (sin) spreads sin throughout the loaf (1 Corinthians 5:6). Cast out the scoffer and strife will cease – it's a promise from God (Proverbs 22:10).

Essentials of the gospel and how many of them are taught commonly.

church structure in the organized and home-churches