



Limits

2 Cor 10:13-15

Paul was well aware of his area of work and for what he was responsible.

When I was young I went abroad with my parents for the first time. I remember finding it exciting and a very special experience. For the first time we crossed the border into another country.

Later I had to make many long journeys for my work. Sometimes it was very difficult to enter a country. Once I was interrogated for almost an hour before I was allowed into the country. Only then will you learn that national borders may not always be so clearly visible, but they are there!

We know many of those boundaries in our lives. When I look out through my window, I see the neighbor's fence and the wall in the other neighbor's garden. Everyone knows that as soon as you pass the fence or wall, you enter the other person's territory. Both gardens look very different. One is very neat and well cared for, the other looks messy. Both neighbors own their land and are responsible for its maintenance.

This is exactly the case in a country. Once you cross the border, the monarch or government of the country is responsible for running the country properly. The people are deployed to maintain the land.

Our personality also has boundaries. We are responsible for taking care of ourselves. First, our parents and educators help us define these boundaries, but ultimately we are responsible for knowing and protecting the boundaries.

Jesus and borders

Matt 15:21-28

Matt 22:17-21

One day a Canaanite woman comes to ask Jesus for help, but Jesus at first refuses to help. He says He has been called for the Jewish people. He has to take care of this first.

In the OT and from the laws of the Jewish people we learn that it is important to take care of your property, but also to have respect for the property of others.

Jesus also knows that you have to pay taxes to the emperor.

Jesus knows there are limits. He defines what is His and takes care of His; and what is of another He respects this. However, Jesus also shows that satan has crossed the boundaries of men and rulers.

He shows that this is illegal and how that can be restored: by setting people free from satan's power.

Personal Limits

There are limits for everyone personally, so you know who you are and for what you are responsible. It also tells you who you are not and for what you are not responsible.

Just like my one neighbor who takes good care of his garden because he owns it, I can see myself as the owner of my life and take responsibility for it. Just like my other neighbor who also owns his garden, but does nothing about it, I can see myself as the owner of my own life, but not accept any responsibility. Here you see a very important point, God gives us examples from the beginning of creation and a CHOICE of following those examples or not. You can take or reject responsibility for your life, your territory.





What was Jesus' command?

Matt 22:37-39 (love God and your neighbor as yourself)

Jesus recognizes the value of loving yourself. God loves you and gives you His love. Taking care of yourself is also loving yourself. From this we can love others.

We have responsibility to others, but we are primarily responsible for ourselves.

Matt 6:41,42

(pay attention to your own mistakes)

Gal 6:2-5

(bear each other's burdens, but also your own burdens)

Ports

In the Netherlands you can still find these beautiful old castles in some places. I think one of the most beautiful parts of such a castle is the drawbridge and the gate. Such a drawbridge and gate had a very clear function at the time. They kept the evil people, including the enemy armies, out of the castle. The good ones, however, were allowed to enter through the gate.

Luke 11:45,46

Jesus tells the disciples about protecting your "fortress", your heart. Pay close attention to who you listen to, for example. Don't listen to people who ask you to do everything, but don't do it yourself! It is important for us to have those gates in our lives. You have to learn to keep bad things out. Let in the good things. Again, we must learn what to let in and what not to.

Your eye, ear, mouth, skin, are basically old-fashion gates. They keep out the bad and let in the good. They have a direct connection with your heart.

For example, with your voice you can clearly say "no" to indicate a boundary if you don't want something.

If someone cares for you and you like it, you can approve and open yourself to that affection.

If someone wrongly says ugly things about you, you can stop it by not listening to that person anymore and by making it clear that you don't accept it.

Matt 5:37

Pro 4:23 (watch over your heart)

Gates protect our hearts.

Example of how to put out evil.

1 John 1 7-9 (confessing sin leads to purification)

Jam 5:16 (confessing sin leads to forgiveness, healing)

When I was a teenager I did not know Jesus and I went one night with my friends to steal something. It was fun to do. Later, when I had accepted Jesus into my life, this point kept coming up in my prayer. I sincerely regretted it. One day I wrote a letter to the person I had robbed from and asked for his forgiveness. I was also able to pay for the damage.

When I came to faith, I spent less time with "friends" who kept encouraging me to do evil.

Example of how to let the good in

Col 1:10,11 (knowledge of God)

By walking with God and opening your gate to the knowledge of God, your relationships will also flourish.

Zacchaeus let Jesus into his house. This changed his heart.

God has limits

God has clear boundaries. He communicates what He thinks, what He feels, what He intends, what He does and does not allow, what He loves and what He hates.

1 John 2:15-17

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Yet they each have their own responsibility. It is a wonderful example of good cooperation and unity. For example, in creation we see the Holy Spirit floating over the earth as God speaks His word. In this way He creates man and the Spirit gives the breath of life. We never see a conflict between these three. There is a clear goal, each fulfilling their task to achieve that goal.

Respect for the boundaries of the other

Gen 3:1-7

Jos 7 1

Acts 15:36-39

In these three examples, we see that there are those who cross God's boundaries or disagree with each other. God does not intervene! He respects man's choice, even though it has serious consequences such as divorce, breaking up, even death.

The remarkable thing is that God sets limits for people, but He does not intervene when people make wrong choices. But then there are consequences that are not pleasant.

This is exactly the case with our relations. If we respect everyone's boundaries, our relationships will grow stronger. If we don't, the relationship will weaken and sometimes be damaged.

GROUP EXERCISE:



Discuss how you have viewed the "gates" in your own life. Was it easy to let negativity enter you? Or have you learned to embrace the positive?



Discuss with each other how we in a group can stimulate this process of setting boundaries and opening or closing gates. Think of practical steps to set good boundaries in this group and to build yourself up.

