

Healthy Boundaries – Part II

Healthy boundaries in marriage will help both the missionary and the mission. Henry Cloud in his book “Boundaries In Marriage”, shares 10 laws for a healthy marriage (his “boundaries” books have sold over 10 million copies). This week we’ll consider the last five “Marriage Boundary Laws”.

Law #6: The Law of Evaluation

This law in essence says that we need to evaluate the pain our boundaries cause others. Do they cause pain that leads to injury? Or do they cause pain that leads to growth? It is unloving to set limits with a spouse to harm them. Pain is not always bad in a relationship it can be good if there is a need to confront, give a warning or set a consequence. But the responsibility and motivation of our actions rests with us. The Law of Evaluation keeps us bound to understanding our spouse and the effects our boundaries create in their lives.

Law #7: The Law of Proactivity

The Law of Proactivity is taking action to solve problems based on your values, wants, and needs. Proactive people solve problems without having to be “reactive” and blowing up emotionally. The Law of Proactivity has three facets: 1) Reactive boundaries are a necessary part of growth and marriage. Many people, who have been victimized or feel powerless, need the freedom that comes from strenuously protesting some evil or bad thing. 2. Reactive boundaries are not sufficient for growth. Impulsive screaming matches aren’t adult behaviors. Love can be lost, and a lot of damage can be done when a spouse doesn’t grow out of their “victim” role of constant protest. That is why 3. Proactive boundaries maintain love, freedom and reality in relationships. Proactive people can disagree and confront issues in marriage, keep the love they have for their spouse, and avoid getting caught up in an emotional storm. They have worked through their reactive stage.

Law #8 The Law of Envy

The most powerful obstacle to setting boundaries in marriage is envy. The Law of Envy states that we will never get what we want if we focus outside of our boundaries on what others have. Envy is devaluing aspects of our relationships, possessions and environment, thinking it’s not enough. And then we focus on what others have, all the while resenting them for having good things we don’t possess. Envy is miserable because we’re dissatisfied with our state, and feel powerless to change it. Don’t confuse envy with desire. Desire involves wanting something and becoming motivated to take action to possess it. You cannot set limits in marriage until you are looking at yourself as part of the problem and as a great deal of the solution. Acquire desire by appreciating what you do have and focus on the good things that you want to add to the marriage. By seeing your part, you can understand what you can change to move the marriage forward toward your solution.

Law #9 The Law of Activity

The Law of Activity states that we need to take the initiative to solve our problems rather than being passive. When both spouses are active in boundary setting, when they both speak the truth, solve problems, and set goals, they will both grow. Their love grows and deepens, as they are always moving toward each other. Each of you can always assume the first step is yours.

Law #10 The Law of Exposure

The Law of Exposure states that we need to communicate our boundaries to each other. God designed boundaries to promote love and truth. Spouses need to make clear what they do or do not want. They need to work on understanding what their spouse is saying about their boundaries. When boundaries are unexposed, spouses are less emotionally present in the marriage, and love struggles. When we expose our boundaries to the light of relationship, we can be fully connected to our spouse. We can resolve problems and we can take a stand to actively love our spouses by risking conflict for the sake of the relationship. Exposure is the only way for healing and growth to take place.

Apply the boundary laws to your relationships and especially to marriage. See how they change the way you relate to each other. Remember, you can't break laws without negative results. We either live in accord with them and succeed, or defy them and pay consequences. Through healthy boundaries you can receive more of God's blessing and provision in relating to one-another.

Being fully-funded one week at a time,
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