



Boundaries Updated and Expanded Edition: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life

Henry Cloud , John Townsend

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This *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning book helps readers set healthy boundaries in order to be the loving people God created, and now offers a whole new chapter.

Are you in control of your life?

Christians often focus so much on being loving and giving that they forget their own limits and limitations. Have you ever found yourself wondering: Can I set limits and still be a loving person? How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money? Why do I feel guilty when I consider setting boundaries?

In this Gold Medallion Award-winning book and *New York Times* bestseller, Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend give you biblically based answers to these and other tough questions, and show you how to set healthy boundaries with your parents, spouses, children, friends, coworkers, and even with yourself. This updated and expanded edition specifically addresses boundaries in the digital age, online dating, single parenting, and the workplace.

Boundaries are personal property lines that define who you are and who you are not, and influence all areas of your life – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

Unpacking ten laws of boundaries, Drs. Cloud and Townsend show you how to bring new health to your relationships. You'll discover firsthand how sound boundaries give you the freedom to walk as the loving, giving, fulfilled individual God created you to be.

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Meredith says

A five-star book for those of us who just can't say no to others. If you need to learn how to distance yourself and protect your family from needy people in a moving way, check it out. It's ok to say no. It's ok to take care of your own needs sometimes!

Michelle says

This is an excellent book. I actually purchased and read a newer edition, with a white and red cover. This book could apply to many different troublesome situations. If you're a people pleaser that tends to get stressed out, there are some really helpful things in here. Or if you are liable to be taken advantage of. I like the Christian viewpoint, because it takes into account the fact that followers of Christ WANT to serve others and not be "selfish." Yet it also teaches why we must set boundaries so that we don't "run faster than we have strength." From a grief point of view, this wasn't as helpful as I had hoped. My therapist said to apply it to internal boundaries. I'm still trying to understand exactly how to do that. . . .

Nathaniel Turner says

My wife asked me to read this book, so that she could get my insights on it. I ended up liking the book; I think that it includes valuable information about taking ownership of your own life and divesting yourself of the notion that you can control others, or that your life somehow depends on others. At the same time, the book wasn't without its problems.

Like (almost) everything I review, there were a few typos--mostly the sort of thing that can't be caught by spell-check software (a B instead of an M in "my," for example), and all of them minor (context clues provided the correct meaning easily). But I feel obligated to mention them, all the same.

I found the lack of references in the book particularly jarring. In a lot of ways, "Boundaries" purports to be a scholarly work, something focused on psychological healing and spiritual development, but it doesn't mention any papers, or studies, or journals, or scientific inquiries. The endnotes in the book are reserved for "see also" suggestions. I gather that the authors were working from their own practice, but a few references to a little research would have gone a long way to earn my placidity.

The book contains a very large number of what I call "pastor stories." Probably, these vignettes come from actual examples in the authors' private practice, with the names and details changed to protect patient confidentiality... but they come across as those stories used by pastors to prove a point. You know the ones--anecdotes about people who only have first names, with no clear evidence to suggest that they are factual, but they perfectly (and conveniently) encapsulate the message that the pastor is trying to get across. I don't trust stories like these, and while the clinical experience of the authors lends a little credence to them, I'm still not a fan.

The authors have, in my opinion, an incorrect view of both love and marriage. They assert that love is primarily a feeling, rather than an action (indeed, that action without feeling is worthless in the case of love); this may correspond with their experience, but it implies that a marriage without "that loving feeling" should end. Marriages, while I'm on the subject, are also not relationships of unconditional love, according to the authors. (I do not mean only in practice, for definitely there are countless marriages that are not based on unconditional love, but I mean the authors suggest that marriages should not be so.)

There seems to be a misapprehension of why "work" is "bad" in the modern mind. The authors insist that work existed before the Fall (in a probable misreading of the poetic structure of Genesis 1-3, but I digress), but I am reminded of Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*: "It's not work unless somebody makes you do it." The reason "work" is unpleasant is that we define unpleasant tasks as "work." To fill the earth and subdue it may have been a great challenge, and an enormous task, but it wasn't "work" until the Fall. (You may find this a minor nitpick, but you get what you pay for with these reviews, and I don't recall being paid anything.)

In the vein of their "pastor stories," the authors also supply every story in the book with a happy ending. This strikes me as extraordinarily unlikely. Even moreso, I'm surprised that doctors with clinical experience would suggest this result. It's simply not possible that every story ends happily, but the authors imply that, no matter your circumstances, if you simply say "no," to your spouse/friend/parent/self, that person will eventually respect your "no" and become the person you've always wanted them to be. "Emotionally abuse husband? Tell him 'no' a few times and he'll realize what a wonderful person you are and treat you better!" Of course, because *no* emotionally abusive husbands become physically abusive when their victims exhibit signs of resistance. "Susie told Jack to do his own job and stop making her do it. Her boss figured out that Jack was the problem and told him to shape up. Jack did so, and everyone is happy." Of course, because *no one* has ever been blamed for somebody else's shoddy work, right?

I just don't see it being possible in every case.

Perhaps my biggest struggle is the authors' tendency to blame absolutely every poor character trait on the parents of the unpleasant person. No one ever made a bad decision for themselves, it seems, but everything bad about you is your parents' fault. Only you can fix it, of course, but they're the ones that made you this way--they didn't teach you good boundaries, or they tried to control you with guilt or anger, or they only looked out for themselves and did not respect your needs or boundaries, or... the list goes on. As a child myself, I can recall times that I made my own bad decisions, and I cannot trace my current problems to my parents. They weren't perfect, of course, but they aren't to blame for all of my hardships. As a parent myself, I find it hard to believe that every bad decision my son makes will rest on my head when judgment day comes--it's just not a reasoned position to take here.

As I said, I eventually ended up liking the book (which may be hard to believe, at this point, but it's true). The final few chapters, especially, have very good points that are important to internalize if you have any boundary problems at all (and most people probably do). The practical advice finally starts kicking in and the nebulous examples take a backseat to a more informative style. There are a lot of insightful directions to help you set boundaries in your life, and it really is useful.

Yet, I must admit sadly, there are even problems in these final sections. For one thing, there are a few glaring omissions from their practical advice and examples--extended family and in-laws come to mind most readily. Both extended family and a spouse's family can be tremendous violators of boundaries, but since they had no effect on your childhood development, they don't get their own chapters (unlike parents, friends, spouses, and self, which can all be traced back to poor parenting by your own folks). The second major problem in this section is assumptions: "Go to your support group," they write, as if support groups were in every church, or grew on trees, and could be trustworthy and reliable wherever they may be found. Assumptions like these make the practical advice more difficult, but other, simpler advice must first be sought out (like *How to Find or Develop a Support Group* 101).

As I said, I did like the book. I think it's a good resource--but you don't have to read every page and paragraph, either. Look for the good; if you start getting bogged down in it, I don't think you would miss much to skip ahead a few paragraphs, or a chapter. Look for what is most relevant to your situation, and I think you would do well.

sharon says

I'm not a huge fan of "Christian-lite" self-help writing because it so often feels formulaic, especially when the authors start each chapter with cheesy anecdotes from their own practice. However, I'm giving Cloud and Townsend a pass because the ideas put forth in *Boundaries* have so completely revolutionized my view on the subject. The authors give solid Biblical backing for why boundaries are important, how they are formed, and how to set them in your own life. I especially appreciated that they tackled several key myths about boundaries (i.e. "Won't I hurt others if I set boundaries?" "Aren't Christians supposed to be generous and self-sacrificing?" "Isn't it selfish to think about yourself?") Even the anecdotes felt useful in this book as they gave practical and clear examples of the boundary-making process. Despite being written from a Christian perspective, I think this book would be useful for anyone who struggles with boundaries in his or her life (whether setting and maintaining them, feeling guilty about having them, or having trouble respecting the boundaries of others).

Christine says

One of the most life-changing books I have ever read.

Judgmental people BEWARE: Do not mock this review. No, not even in your head. If you have come here to gloat and feel superior to someone you think is an idiot for liking something so clearly beneath your Literature IQ, do me a favor and stop reading right now. I mean it. Go away.

Are you gone?

Ok, good.

As I was saying, this book is one of the greatest, most life-changing books I have ever read. People who are critical of that statement have never been in the place I was when I was seventeen years old. No really, they haven't. Because if they were, they would understand the reason why someone like me would need a book like this so badly. When I was on the brink of adulthood, I possessed zero knowledge of the skills one needs to lead a healthy, mature life. Like many of the people used as examples in this book, I had been victimized my entire life by people who had no concept of what respecting others entails. I had little concept of self-respect, personal rights and responsibilities, and when I should use the word "no." In short, I had no boundaries.

This book taught me everything my family of origin and religious leaders had failed to teach me: that I deserve respect, and that there are skills out there I need to learn to get it. Now, three plus years later, I still reference this book in times of need. As with all self-help books, this guide can only show you the way, it

Katy says

I'm not done reading the book yet, so I may update this later. The fact is, if I wasn't reading this book for a book group, I don't think I would go any further, or gotten as far as I have.

The thing I hate the most in this one is how much scripture is quoted. The authors feel like they have to back up every sentence they write with scripture in order to make what they just said okay. To accomplish this they often end up twisting the words of the original authors and take things out of context. I hate it when people do this.

The other thing is.. how they betray Christians in terms of boundaries.

I will use the example of one of the portraits they present in the book. Apparently "Debbie" was working weekends at her job and not getting paid. That wasn't her issue. Her issue was that after setting her boundary she felt angry and she was worried about the anger. Who in their right mind would do that? And who would honestly feel guilty about feeling angry about it!?! Honestly to read the book "Boundaries" you would think that all Christians are total morans just standing in the middle of the other highway of life, begging to be run over by a fleet of fully loaded 18 wheelers.

I feel like screaming at these people. I guess if you have severe boundary issues and can't say no to anyone for anything, this book is for you.

K.M. Weiland says

This book is life-changing. Turns out a discussion of boundaries is really a discussion about every single relationship in your life, your personal self-worth and discipline, your childhood, and your religion. The good doctors come at this from a Christian perspective, but they pull no punches in addressing the massive problem Christians, in particular, have with these issues. At every turn, they are brutally honest, logical, and biblical. The end result is the encouragement and empowerment to live a centered life, free of guilt and balanced in God's will.

Sandy says

Not in my normal genre so I can't give this 5 Stars...SCREW THAT!!!! 5 Stars, 5 Stars, 5 Stars! 100 Stars if I could give 100 stars! *Sigh* Oh well, 5 Stars it is.

This is a book that every human being alive or dead should be required to read. Christian or Non-Christian alike. Yes, Cloud and Townsend relate the idea of Boundaries to God. However, this idea of boundaries and how we apply them to ourselves and other people is universal. And it blew my mind. I never thought about this idea of boundaries and I have already been working since reading this book on establishing strong, clear, biblical boundaries with myself and others.

I can see boundaries every where now. Perhaps just as easily seen as established boundaries are the lack thereof. And even though I have only just begun practicing better boundaries, and I have by no means "arrived," it's so easy for me to see where others could benefit from establishing their own boundaries.

And as with anything else, because this is truly the way God intended things to be, it is so easy to see how much better life would be with properly established boundaries.

I truly want to thank these authors for breaking this down for anyone and everyone who might take the time to read this book. And I want to thank my friend, Kay, for introducing me to this book and opening up a whole new world to me. I will say that I will be investing in the other books they have written on boundaries (Boundaries in Marriage, Boundaries with Kids, Boundaries with Teens, etc.).

I really don't know what else to say about it. Honestly, this is one of those books that I could probably go on and on and on about, but I'd just end up repeating myself. Only other thing I'll say on the subject of this book (other than YOU MUST READ THIS!!!) is that it's totally okay to take your time with this book. Read it slowly, soak it in. You'll be glad that you did.

Jim says

This book is just a bunch of Christian psycho-babble about how to 'say no'. the author drones on and on with example situations about a working mom driving the kids to soccer practice, being asked to volunteer at church, all the while juggling her career with the needs of her jerk of a husband and bratty / whining kids. Really, it's not much more than a book created to give people excuses for making bad choices in the first place.

the book could be summed up in a few sentences:

- 1) if you want to have a demanding career, don't choose to have children.
- 2) if you want to be happy in marriage, choose a spouse who is supportive.
- 3) if you don't want to be volunteered for your church's building program by fund raising with a cookie drive, don't be 'that person' who always says 'yes'.
- 4) grow a spine.
- 5) grow some peaches.
- 6) grow some walnuts.

the problem i have with this book is that it is the complete opposite of QBQ ... it teaches people how to avoid personal responsibility instead of accepting it.

one more for the wood pile.

Tatiana says

Having issues with setting boundaries, I was really excited to start reading this book based on all the wonderful reviews on amazon.com. Imagine my disappointment when I did start and found it utterly ordinary. In fact, it was rather difficult to finish. I feel like half the book was about understanding the

different ways you are not setting boundaries. OK, I get it: to find a solution, you need to know the problem. But that was a lot of background.

Then, there are chapters for each type of relation that you may be having issues setting boundaries: with parents, children, spouses, at work, with yourself, and with God. But they were all the same: started off with a story about Nancy and Nick, or Billy and Susan, Janice, Shareen, etc. Then a listing of how boundaries could be a problem in this relationship (didn't we just spend the first 50% of the book going over this?) and finally some ways to address these boundary issues like "you need to know your worth," or "find a support group." In fact, the one thing I did get out of this book is that for me to set boundaries, I need a support group, I can't do it myself.

The book then ends with an example of how setting boundaries makes your life so much better. I understood that, hence my purchasing of this book. In all, rather disappointed by the book.

Mary says

This book really helped to clarify for me that it is not selfish or unChristian to get your own life in order using boundaries. Keep pushing forward with defining your boundaries, although others may react negatively. That is their problem with boundaries of others, not yours.

I think the authors secretly spied on me and all my interpersonal relationships to write this book! But seriously, reading this and using my bible as help...lots of scriptural references to how God wants us to set our boundaries so we will be able and available to love/help others. Will definitely keep this as a reference book to go back to and maybe read some sections again.

Karina says

... Not what I expected. I decided to read this after seeing some glowing reviews. So I opened the book, read the introduction "A Day in a Boundaryless Life" describing a day of a lady who's unable to refuse anyone but feels resentful and guilty about her resentfulness, and a couple of pages on the book. Then skipped to the end, "A Day in a Life with Boundaries", describing the same person who has successfully set boundaries, and doesn't hesitate to say "no" anymore. Well, it's not for me. In my view the person by the end of the book has went from one extreme to the other. Sure she may not have been able to handle all the tasks she took upon herself in the beginning, but surely she can sometimes make sacrifices but by the end it didn't look that way... I was sort of irritated with her both times. So I guess I don't really struggle with the boundaries; I know that there are times you need to make time for yourself ("take care of yourself, so you can better take care of others" principle). Indeed, I think I may be too much on the other side, of saying "no" too much (sort of).

Not going to read further...
