



Kaley Olson:

Hi friends, thanks for tuning in to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast, where we share biblical Truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host Kaley Olson, and I'm here with my co-host, Meredith Brock.

Meredith Brock:

Well, hey Kaley, and hello to all of our listeners. We are so glad you tuned in for this special edition of *Therapy & Theology* with Lysa TerKeurst, her licensed professional counselor, Jim Cress, and our Proverbs 31 Ministries Director of Theological Research, Dr. Joel Muddamalle. Today, you'll hear the three of them unpack boundaries. And I'm just going to say this right now, some of you might have seen the title for today's episode and thought to yourself, "Wait a minute, having boundaries doesn't seem very Christian." But I am here to tell you that in today's episode, you'll learn that boundaries are in fact designed by God for our protection and our good.

Kaley Olson:

Yeah, yeah. And Meredith, before we jump into today's episode, I have a really exciting announcement. And I know that you know what this is, but I'm excited to tell our listeners, that is, Lysa TerKeurst has been working on her next book. It's always such an exciting season for us. And so can you guys guess what the title is of her book or what it's about? Meredith, want to tell them?

Meredith Brock:

I think it might be about boundaries, Kaley.

Kaley Olson:

Yes, yes. And it's called *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*. And while it doesn't release until November 2022, we want you to know that you can get on the interest list right now to be notified when the book is available to pre-order. Meredith, you and I have gotten a chance to get an inside peek into the content. I know ... let's just be the first official podcast reviewer of the book right now. I've gotten takeaways that I've already applied to my life. It's so good. But I know people are wondering, why do I need to sign up for an interest list to be notified when a book is available to pre-order? And so that's an interesting concept, right Meredith? But there's a lot that you get when you pre-order. So Meredith, want to run through the list?

Meredith Brock:

Yes. So here's the deal, here's why you want to be notified when the book is ready to order: It's because if you pre-order, you're going to get all kinds of great exclusive things. So here are the things that you're going to get. First, you're going to get the book at 20% off.

Kaley Olson:

Amazing.

Meredith Brock:

Deal, bargain. Second, you're going to get the first three chapters immediately to read, and you're going to get the first three chapters in audio format to listen to while you drive around town. Then you're also going to get — and we're not done yet folks. You are going to get never before heard, *Therapy & Theology* podcast recording from Lysa, Jim and Joel, that you can only get if you pre-order the book. And last, you're going to get access to the *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes* reflection journal. And I just don't want y'all to miss out on all that; that's a lot of goodness. That's a lot of goodness. So tell our people, how do they get on this interest list to be notified when to get the book?

Kaley Olson:

Absolutely. All you need to do is remember proverbs31.org/listen. That's where all of our show notes for our episodes are. And so you can find this episode's show notes, click the link to get on the interest list. Because I can guarantee you at the end of this episode, you're going to want to do that so you can get your hands on those pre-order incentives as soon as you can. All right friends, here are Lysa, Jim and Joel.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Hi, welcome to another episode of *Therapy & Theology*. I'm Lysa TerKeurst, here with Dr. Joel Muddamalle and also Jim Cress, who is a professional licensed counselor, and my own counselor, and my own theologian. So this is very exciting. Today we're going to be tackling the topic of boundaries. Now, if you're a note taking kind of person, today is a great time to just hit the pause button on this, go get something to take some notes and come back. Because I really think what we're going to be sharing today is going to be incredibly helpful. So if you are taking notes, then I want to give you three words to write down on your notes. First, I want you to write down the word *access*, then I want you to write down the word *responsibility* and then I want you to write down the word *consequence*. So once you have those three words written down, I want to just focus on first, these first two words, access and responsibility.

Lysa TerKeurst:

When I started studying the topic of boundaries, it wasn't because I'm an expert on boundaries. It's because I was struggling. I had just experienced the depth of a significant relationship. And that is what I'm referring to it as, because it was a relationship I thought would last a lifetime, and then it didn't. And the shock of that required me to do a lot of therapeutic work. And Jim, you and I have worked for years now, and met almost on a weekly basis for a really, really long time. So there was a lot that I had to work through, and that I had to walk through. And part of that was recognizing, I really am not good at boundaries at times. I'm good in some aspects, and I bet you are too. So let's first talk about where are you really good at boundaries? So Joel, today if I said, "I want you on this video to give everyone the password or the passcode to unlock your bank account access," would you freely give that to me and Jim and everyone watching?

Jim Cress:

Please?

Joel Muddamalle:

Probably not.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. Why? Why would you not freely give that?

Joel Muddamalle:

Because Brittany, my wife, would not be happy at all if I did something like that.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK.

Joel Muddamalle:

But it's also, maybe, unwise. Because I know the both of you, I'd probably give it to you guys. But everybody, that's a little scary. I don't know everybody.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So you don't give that kind of access because you're not convinced that everyone can be responsible with that kind of access, right?

Joel Muddamalle:

Yeah.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. Jim, do you ever watch any kind of movies, or do you have any kind of service where you're streaming something on your TV and you have a passcode that prevents the whole world from accessing that streaming through the subscription that you pay for?

Jim Cress:

I would like to say yes, but mainly I just spend my time praying and reading the Word of God.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. Can we pause and shine Jim's halo please?

Jim Cress:

Of course I do, I have several like that. Yeah.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. So today —

Jim Cress:

My kids all want the passwords, but they —

Lysa TerKeurst:

Exactly, OK.

Jim Cress:

[inaudible 00:06:44] So they get a freebie. Yeah.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yeah. And so do you give it to them?

Jim Cress:

Sometimes I do, and sometimes ... Seriously, there are things that I'm willing to say, "Yeah, you can have that." I don't need to name the ones. But others will say no because sometimes it's already self boundaried by saying you get two or three. I have one that two people can use it. So if I give it out to two or three kids, suddenly I might turn on my television to watch a regular service, streaming service —

Lysa TerKeurst:

That you've paid for.

Jim Cress:

That I've paid for. And two of my kids are watching, but you only get two streams. Guess what? Daddy's not getting it. I'm cut off.

Joel Muddamalle:

I have a different issue. I've got little kids, and so whenever they get on my stuff, you know they have all these algorithms and they feed you what's next. So when my kids are on my stuff, all I get is Coco Melon everywhere.

Jim Cress:

You love that, don't you. Oh, I ... Sorry.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yeah. So giving people access to your passwords, your passcodes, even the screen on your phone is probably password protected, right? And so we're already doing this really well, because giving people too much access without the confidence or assurance of their demonstrated responsibility, leads to frustration at best or bankruptcy at worse.

Jim Cress:

And me not to be able, maybe seriously, to access what is legitimately mine.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Exactly. So we know how to use the words access and responsibility really well. In other words, we know how to do boundaries really well with certain things in our life. However, there are other areas where this starts to really fall apart. And for me sometimes in my relationships, because maybe it's the way I'm wired, maybe it's the role I played in my childhood home, maybe it is my desire to follow Scripture and I have a misunderstanding around some of the scriptures. Maybe it's what I've been taught, that I'm supposed to give and give and give, and never say no. For whatever the reason though, sometimes I give people too much access to me without requiring the right kind of responsibility. And oftentimes this happens in my closest relationships. And so I think it's really important as we look at these words, to analyze where in my life am I saying something has to change? I can't keep doing this —

Jim Cress:

Or won't.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Or I won't keep doing this. I think I'll start with: I can't keep doing this.

Jim Cress:

Well, that's a good start anyways.

Lysa TerKeurst:

But then I come to therapy and then you say, "Lysa, change can't to won't."

Jim Cress:

Or *Therapy & Theology*, either way.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Seriously, OK. Or I get to this place where I just think this isn't sustainable, this is sucking the life out of me, and this is bringing out the worst in me. If you've caught yourself saying any of those things, I wonder if this is what's happening. You have given, I have given, level 10 access to someone without requiring them to bring level 10 responsibility.

Jim Cress:

That's good.

Lysa TerKeurst:

And so what can happen then if I'm giving level 10 access and someone's only bringing about a level three responsibility, this tension, this differential here is going to be felt. An equilibrium is going to want to be achieved at some point, you can't live in a constant imbalance. And you're going to suffer the effects of giving too much access, without requiring the right amount of responsibility. So in the past, what I've thought a boundary is ... I thought wrongly that a boundary is something I need to place on the other person so that they will lift up their responsibility to the access that I've granted them. Now, how many times have you tried to control another person, or tell another person what they should do, or manipulate them, or demand of them, or even force a boundary on them and have them change from the heart? Maybe they'll change quickly, temporarily, maybe a slight behavior, but really have you ever

been able to really force a change on someone and have them go, "Absolutely, forever, I'm going to make this change"? It usually doesn't happen.

Jim Cress:

Maybe when they were kids — were like two — there was a level of power. And they grow up, there was a level of power. I look back — I have grandchildren now — and it's like, I feel like there is an interesting seductive level of power as a parent. You can actually, you're physically stronger, you can control. But as you get into these adult relationships and it's like — and you hinted at this — if I can control or I manipulate or say, "Hey, let me do this with the boundary," and the person seems to obey or honor my boundary for a little bit, and then they don't, I've got this false hope and false expectation. It really does a number on me to go, "Well, I thought they had totally changed and honored my boundaries." They weren't, they were behaving for a little bit.

Joel Muddamalle:

We actually recently just had an issue. I don't even think I shared this with you guys. But my youngest son, Lucas, we have in our house, we call it our boundary lines. So on the street, we know where you can go and where you can't go. Well, the other day I was actually on a theology study day, Brit's calling me panicked. "I can't find Luke, I don't know where he is. I've looked everywhere, I've gone everywhere." And she finally is getting ready to actually call the cops basically, it was that bad. She was just panicked.

Joel Muddamalle:

And he just strolls on in, "Hey Mom," like, "Where did you go?" And he went to a totally different street that we had no idea, because it was outside of our boundaries. And it actually created chaos for us, because now we didn't know where he was. And he didn't understand at that time, "Hey, here's the consequences of you not being within our eyesight. Here are all the things that could have happened: you could have fallen, you could have gotten hurt, worse things could have happened." And so those boundaries were really important for him. And yet he broke them, and it caused chaos.

Lysa TerKeurst:

I think that word chaos is a really important word. Where there is chaos in a relationship, usually that's a sign of a lack of appropriate and healthy boundaries. So when there is this level 10 access that you've given to someone and they're only bringing level three responsibility, you ultimately cannot control them and make them lift up their responsibility, if they're unwilling or incapable of doing it. You can make the request, and healthy people when you request that they consider moving up their level of responsibility, they may say yes, but their motivation is from within. They've made the decision, because they're willing and capable to do it.

Lysa TerKeurst:

But if someone is unwilling or incapable of doing that, then putting a boundary on them, it's not going to work. And so many times when I look back and I catch myself thinking, "Oh, boundaries don't work for me." It's not that boundaries don't work, it's that boundaries don't work when you try to place them on another person, to force them to do something that they're unwilling or incapable of doing. So instead, we have to put boundaries, safeguards in our life. And if they're only bringing level three responsibility, our boundaries need to facilitate diminishing the access down to level three, so it matches the level of responsibility that they are bringing. And then when there is a boundary violation, there has to be a consequence. Because a boundary without a consequence is —

Jim Cress:

Just a mere suggestion.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yes. A mere suggestion, or might I dare say a bad suggestion.

Jim Cress:

Yeah. Very good.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So that's why these three words are really important, so we've got access, responsibility and we've got consequences.

Jim Cress:

Did you make that seriously ... Did I ask you, did you make that spell ARC?

Lysa TerKeurst:

No.

Jim Cress:

There is an arc, there's a direction. That's my brain.

Lysa TerKeurst:

See, Jim is always picking up on these things.

Jim Cress:

I can't help it, that's the way my brain works.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. So carry that thought: it is A-R-C, an arc, so we're trying to move forward in how we [inaudible 00:15:07].

Joel Muddamalle:

It can also be an A-R-K, which is an ark like the Ark of the covenant or the Ark, you know —

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yeah, but it's not a K, so that's where yours falls apart.

Joel Muddamalle:

I know, but I'm just saying if we use Hebrew poetry, it was a boundary for safety.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Oh. See, there you go.

Joel Muddamalle:

I'm just saying.

Jim Cress:

I got you buddy. I like that.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yeah. So we can say an A-R-C that sounds like a K, could be ark in terms of like —

Joel Muddamalle:

Let's just stick with Jim's, because his is probably better.

Lysa TerKeurst:

OK. So here's what I want us to really focus on now that we've laid this foundation of boundaries. I think as a Christian woman, I have sometimes gotten tripped up feeling like, "Are boundaries really biblical?" Is God OK if we draw boundaries? And what about Bible verses that say we are to lay down our life for our friend? And then what about when we read certain verses that seem to encourage, like 70 times seven, forgive and forgive and forgive, 70 times seven? And so these were really tripping me up as I was trying to process, I knew I needed to put boundaries in my life, but then I would often feel guilty for it. So guilt was a part of it that was stopping me. I want us to address that.

Lysa TerKeurst:

The other part that seemed to stop me was, placing consequences where there were violated boundaries could potentially cost me something that I felt was too high a price to pay. And that's where I want to talk, and focus in on that. Because if I feel like, if I put this boundary in place and this other person doesn't want to stay in relationship with me, they get so frustrated, they walk away, then what is that absence going to feel like? Because maybe I was depending on them for something that they gave me, companionship or fun, or even a sense of safety or a friendship. But I've had to really unpack that and recognize if I'm feeling that putting healthy boundaries in place would make a person walk away, chances are that person's eventually going to walk away anyhow.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So I want to talk about those two dynamics: Is it even godly to have boundaries, A? And then the other side of this is what about the feeling of fear that if I put a boundary in place, then this relationship is going to not only change in healthy ways but could change in ways that I don't really want it to change? So let's talk about that. Let's talk about the guilt first. Is this really healthy?

Lysa TerKeurst:

As I was digging into the Bible asking the question, "Is it OK as a Christian to have boundaries?" What I realized in all of my research is boundaries are not just a good idea, they're actually a God idea. And right from the very beginning, God established boundaries in creation. So Joel, I know you'd love to talk about this and we can see what boundaries are, is a separation between this and this. And so even as God established creation, before humans and relationships were even formed, let's look at some of the boundaries from Genesis 1 that were established.

Joel Muddamalle:

Yeah. And so have these two words in mind: disorder and order. I think those are important words. And so right off the bat, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [And] the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water."* (Genesis 1:1-2) That's another really important ... Just background information, waters in the Ancient Near East, always were symbolic of chaos, disorder and destruction. The sea was a dangerous place to be near. These are the very first things that God does in all of creation. *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.* (Genesis 1:1-3-4a)

Joel Muddamalle:

And catch this: *"And God separated the light from the darkness."* (Genesis 1:4b) And then we go later in verse 6, *"And God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of waters.'" And then He does this, "let it separate [the waters] from the waters."* In verse 9, *"And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear,'" so we have the separation between water and land. And it goes on and on, from the heavens and the skies, and Earth creatures and sea creatures. And so right off the very bat, we have this painting, this picture of a God who cares about order, a God who is always taking the chaos of creation and turning that chaos into a type of creation that is rightly ordered. And it seems here, that the means by which He does this right off the bat is through the principle of boundaries. He's separating then He's creating guidelines for them.*

Lysa TerKeurst:

And then we go on into Genesis 2 and we see in the very first reported conversation that God has with Adam, he says to Adam, "You are free," because God isn't establishing boundaries in the context of restriction, He's not a restrictive God, He is a God of freedom. So He's establishing the parameters of freedom. And within those parameters of freedom, God says, "You are free to eat from any of the trees in the garden, but you must not eat from this one tree that is in the center of the garden and is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2: 16-17) This boundary or this restriction that God gives in the middle of freedom, is not because He's a killjoy God, it's out of protection for Adam.

Lysa TerKeurst:

And so there's one mindset that I want us to shift right away. When we establish a boundary in a relationship, when we put a boundary on what we are and are not willing to accept, or what we are or are not willing to give in a relationship — recognizing that we are not limitless, only God is limitless — it should never be for the purpose of restriction and to punish another person, or to push another person away, or to shame another person, or to even control or manipulate another person. Because we don't want to set these boundaries with the intent of restriction. What we're trying to do is establish safety and trust.

Lysa TerKeurst:

In other words, it should be done for the purpose of protection. We need to protect what is limited, so that we can keep ourselves from becoming bankrupt. When I become bankrupt emotionally — I'm just way spent emotionally — you will not get the best of who I am. And that's also showing that I am not exercising self-control. And one of the evidences of God's Spirit in me, should be self-control. So boundaries are for protection, not only protection over me, so I can keep the best of who I am front and

center in my relationships with other people, but also protection over this relationship. We don't want to protect what is toxic, we want to protect what is healthy.

Joel Muddamalle:

So good. And I think an important thing that you talked about with boundaries is that boundaries always have consequences. And again, it's just these principles, that we have to keep in mind that God is a God who is kind, He speaks in a language of freedom. And it's like, yo, of all the things, you could do everything. But the one thing you can't do, is this one thing. And I know we're going to talk about this later, Lysa, but the consequence of sin, of breaking the one boundary that was there, led to their being sent out — Adam and Eve being sent out of the garden of Eden. Now catch this in Chapter 3, verse 24, "*He drove out,*" it could be said, "*He sent out the man, and at the East of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life.*" And so here we have another boundary that's set in place.

Jim Cress:

That's a pretty big one.

Joel Muddamalle:

A pretty massive one. But here's where I think this is so important, is that again, if every boundary that God puts in place is for the purpose of order and our ultimate good, here this cherubim isn't a sign of their never returning to Eden in a negative punitive way, purely, there is consequence. But it's also a protection, lest they eat of the tree of life and live in eternal separation from God. So the boundary was once again placed for their ultimate good.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yeah, because we have to remember, there were two trees in the center of the garden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were told not to eat from that. There was also the tree of life, and they were allowed to eat from that. The tree of life perpetuated them in their state when they were in perfection, and in connection with God. It perpetuated that state for eternity. So once they chose to violate the boundary and they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, now sin has entered in. And out of God's mercy, He says they must not also stay in the garden and be allowed to now, in this state of separation from God, and sin and the consequences of sin. God in His mercy didn't want them to be perpetuated for all eternity in that. So He said, "They must not be allowed to take from the tree of life now." So God sent them out of the garden and protected them from, in that current state, taking from the tree of life.

Joel Muddamalle:

And just from the Adam and Eve standpoint, you've taught me this, Lysa, is think of the humanity of it. If I'm Adam and Eve, when I'm walking out of Eden, as I look over my shoulder and I see that flaming sword and the cherubim right there, I am thinking, how cruel is God? That's the human tendency, that stinks, I'm never going to be back. And yet a right shift of mind is, how kind of God to protect me from going back to a place that could ultimately be my total ruin, everlasting ruin.

Jim Cress:

And I want to connect to that in this way, practically. That's why I love how you put that, because that is what we do I think with people. Which is if you have a boundary, and you think of agape love, of seeking

the other person's highest good. And if someone has a boundary, they're not boundary-ing me as we've said, but they put a boundary up actually loving me well. By saying, "You don't get to," I mean, it's a strong word here, "You don't get to sin against me, so I'm going to have this boundary up." Then like you said, they were looking at it like how awful that God would do that? People will do that all day long, and go, "How dare you have that boundary with me? You shouldn't do that. Or is it biblical?" So what happened there in Eden, what I love, is what we'll do with people. Just a manipulating and controlling person has never met a boundary they liked, or they didn't want to try to get across.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Right. And so another part of this, we asked the question, "Is putting a boundary on yourself to create safety and protection within the relationship, is that biblical? So yes, it is biblical. Boundaries are not just a good idea, they're a God idea. The second part of that, is what about verses that seem to sort of go against that? And one of them that I really had to wrestle through is the fact that Jesus laid His life down. And the Bible even says we are to lay our life down even for a friend. So as I was studying this though, it occurred to me, Jesus did not lay His life down to enable bad behavior or sin to continue. Jesus laid His one life down for the sake of a high and holy purpose.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Sometimes people will ask us to lay our life down to enable sin that should not be enabled, or to try to force us to tolerate behaviors that should not be tolerated, or to force us to agree with unhealthy tendencies and patterns in a relationship that should not be agreed with. You see, a lot of where this tension is coming from, I've discovered in relationships, and you taught me this, Jim, health cannot bond with un-health. And one time ... I want to show this glass of water here. OK, see if we can get this on camera. Do you see here, how water is seeking its own level? So the water on this side of the glass is seeking the same level on this side of the glass. You don't see a glass of water sitting on a flat surface, and have it tilted in such a way like this.

Lysa TerKeurst:

But what have we been describing here? We've been describing when you're giving so much access, and someone's not bringing the right level of responsibility to that kind of access, there's a tilt here. And so the tension is we're trying to achieve an equilibrium in this relationship that's healthy, but if you are seeking what is healthy, and the other person is refusing, unwilling or incapable of healthy, then of course there is going to be this constant tension. And your choice at that point, is either to sink down to their level of unhealthy, or to require parameters in place that either they need to get healthy, or you will have to reduce the access, lest you become as unhealthy as them.

Jim Cress:

And as we've said, it is not arrogant to say instead of, "You need to quit smoking," or, "You need to quit doing this, and stop the verbal, emotional abuse." I, it's a big letter I. I am over here. And if you want to be in a relationship with me, here's what is OK with me, here's what is not OK with me. And here's what I'm willing to negotiate. Because if I co-sign someone else, again, if I'm allowing them to have this access to me, almost like anything is not of faith is sin. If I know, nah, I shouldn't be doing this, and I allow people to do that, I'm constantly training them how to treat me. And we've talked a long time ago, that every relationship has a contract, every relationship. So I begin to —

Lysa TerKeurst:

Even if it's an unspoken one.

Jim Cress:

Even if ... Most are unspoken, I think. So to say, "This is no ..." People get into counseling, they do Bible studies, they get in the Word, they get disciplined, and I realize that I've allowed this to go on. And when you know better, you do better. And now I know better to say ... Little children explain, and here's the reason why ... Adults which is what we want to be, is adults, inform. And to say, "I am no longer OK with you talking about dirty jokes or gossiping," or pick your whatever. And say, "Are you calling me late at night? Are you just calling to dump all your problems? I'm no longer OK with that. So if you're going to be in a relationship with me, I won't be in a relationship with someone who does this. And I need this, if I'm going to be in relationship."

Jim Cress:

Now, if you kicked that up to what about divorce, and how long do you do all that? That's a little nuanced and a little different, but I don't need anyone to co-sign my boundaries. And I want to say this, because I know we're going to shift back to the theologian, our good doctor friend here. But I believe, I've never said this, so here we go. I've never said it to you. But I believe the road to Calvary, where Jesus died on the cross, I believe as biblically as all get out, that the road to Calvary was paved with Jesus' boundaries.

Jim Cress:

Because Jesus was the most boundaried person ever. They tried to stone Him and He got out of the crowd. "Peter, Caesarea, Philippi, you're not going to the cross. Get behind me, Satan." If you look all the way before He got ... He said by the way, as you know, "No man takes my life. I lay it down." (John 10:18) I've had people say, "Jesus was a classic codependent, He laid His life down." No, no. So that whole piece is to go the road all the way before you get to Calvary is Jesus allowing what would come in, and boundary-ing things. Even [inaudible 00:31:46] miracle at Canaan, "My hour's not yet come," or chill out, or I've got this, or, "I must be about my father's business," what, at age 12 in the temple? So there was all these boundaries, but the energy was Him fulfilling His mission that His father, God, had called Him to. It was not to say — to you all, people will do that — "This is my boundary. I dare you to cross it." That's not the energy of it at all.

Joel Muddamalle:

Right? I mean, Jesus has 12 disciples. Think about how many people were probably chasing after Him —

Jim Cress:

They wanted in the club.

Joel Muddamalle:

"Let me be in one of the 12." There were 12, of the 12 there are three that are the inner three. And Philip gets a bad rap, because he's kind of the fourth wheel. Normally it's the third wheel, we'll call it the fourth wheel.

Jim Cress:

Yeah, that's true.

Joel Muddamalle:

And so I think again of Jesus, how does Jesus pick and choose like, "Hey, on this one, Peter, James and John, y'all are rolling with me to the transfiguration. Sorry Phillip, you got to chill back ..." You know? And so yeah, Jesus had ... But this is again, very important. There's nothing that Jesus does without intentionality. Jesus knows that the establishment of this boundary is both for the good of the disciples that stay back, there's something for them to learn in this. Simultaneously, there's something unique from the life of Peter, James and John, they're going to have to learn from this experience with me. So the boundary of whether you're in or out, or whatever that might be played out, there's a meaning for both audiences. I think they're, and Jesus examples this pretty perfectly because He's Jesus.

Lysa TerKeurst:

I like how you phrased that too, Jim, when you're communicating the boundary, "I am no longer willing to accept." So you're not commanding that other person, "You must stop this behavior," or, "You must stop this activity." You're saying I'm no longer willing to give you access, to bring that activity or that pattern, or that behavior into a relationship with me where it is now affecting me. So you're an adult, if that person is an adult, you're an adult, you get to make your choice and I get to make mine. My choice is not that. So if you bring that into this relationship, I will have to reduce the access down to the responsibility that you are demonstrating. And I think when we're thinking through this and now that we see, OK, boundaries are biblical. They're not means of control or manipulation, when done right, and we're talking about healthy appropriate boundaries, it is for the sake of the relationship. It is for the sake of keeping the best of who you are front and center.

Joel Muddamalle:

The establishment of peace between people.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yes. And the establishment of peace. So the other side of this is, OK, now that we've discovered ... OK, now boundaries are a good thing. God modeled it, Jesus modeled it, and so why would we think that we shouldn't also live this out in our life? But sometimes where our boundary is going to fall apart is putting a boundary in place in a relationship, could cost me something.

Jim Cress:

I think most of the time it will cost you something. I say that the reason a lot of people — I've been now convinced of this — they will not put boundaries in place and then keep the boundaries in place, is grief. Because the grief, you say grief, why? Because it will cost me something, and I'll have to grieve that people will judge me, or they will get by, they'll leave and go in another relationship or something else. But I think that a size of the boundary shows what does it cost you, at least initially. I think that's what I see.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So I want to talk about this a little bit. Because I think that ... I don't think, I know, that at times I struggle with people pleasing. But when I dig around, my people pleasing isn't just because I want to keep everybody happy. Sometimes my people pleasing is because I feel like I have a need that, that person fulfills. So my motivation on the surface is I want to keep them happy, which could look like people pleasing. But in reality, I'm actually afraid of losing what I feel like I want or need from this other person.

Therefore if I'm afraid, if I put a boundary here and now I'm risking this person being unhappy. And if they're unhappy, they may take with them the thing that I feel like I need.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So a good exercise is for us to really assess, am I just really trying to keep this person happy? Or am I needing something from them, that I fear if I put this boundary in place, they take that away, then I may not feel OK in this world? And that gets into a whole nother set of considerations for boundaries.

Jim Cress:

I want to know who the subject really is. Because what I teach and believe on this, is the number one person I'm trying to really please when I'm a people pleaser, is myself. It's vampiric. I'm literally vampiric, sucking the life out of the person. See I'm OK if you're OK, if you're OK with it, and if I'm not OK, if I don't do this for you, then maybe you'll cut me off and I lose something, because you do bring some good things to me from time to time. So when I'm people pleasing, the idea of admitting that it's really in the end about me. I'm trying to self-regulate, and I can be OK if you're OK.

Jim Cress:

And so if I say, "You know what? No, that's a boundary violation." I think the more you get into boundaries, plus the Spirit of God living in us, you'll know stress. Again in a relationship, stress is when your gut says no but your mouth says yes, or stress is when your gut says stop but your mouth says go. You begin to, I think, recognize it more and more. And on the boundaries issues, biblically and otherwise Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes, and your no be no." And it is my job to, not the other person. We say around some of the therapy community, don't take their inventory, "What are they doing? Should they be doing all that?" We do a little of that, but what do I need to be doing?

Jim Cress:

And then to count the cost, that if I have a boundary with this person, they may write me off. They may gossip about me over here, and I may lose something. And then we're back to where we were in the stages of trauma— and grief and healing — is to grieve through that and say, usually I find that a good boundary will cost you something. But there is such value on the other side of that, of my life being healthy. There's a payoff but it often takes time to get there.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Because healthy relationships appreciate healthy boundaries. It's in unhealthy relationships, where boundaries are not respected. And so maybe I am trying to get a need met in an unhealthy way or in an unhealthy relationship. And so I have to do an honest assessment of my needs. And sometimes what I've discovered is if I'm living in fear of this person walking away from me, chances are that person is the kind of person that will walk away, and eventually will walk away. So I could spend years suffering through chaos in a relationship, hoping to get this person to meet this need, and maybe for a while they do. But if they're eventually the kind of person that will walk away, they're going to walk away.

Joel Muddamalle:

They'll find a reason.

Lysa TerKeurst:

And so it's better to establish what is healthy and what is not healthy, what I'm willing to accept, what I'm not willing to accept, what I have to give and what I don't have to give, in the form of putting a boundary on myself, on my decisions. Guardrails, protection, so that if that relationship is going to fall apart, it's better for it to be in a situation where I've established a boundary, that person has chosen not to respect the boundary. And it takes some of the intensity of drama and trauma, and if that relationship is going to fall apart, eventually it's better for it to happen in a situation where you've declared health, so you don't get sucked into years of unhealthy. And I know this is hard, but something that I've really been also challenging myself, is sometimes I wrongly have a need from another person based out of a fear of what I feel God will never give me.

Jim Cress:

Boy, that's powerful. That's right, cuts to the chase.

Lysa TerKeurst:

And so I have to ask myself if this is a legitimate need or is it a desire? So separate out that, I can have a desire, a desire is different than a need. So is it a legitimate need, or is this just a desire? And then the next step is, is this a need that is supposed to be filled by God Himself? And am I placing this need on somebody else, asking them to meet this need because I'm too afraid that God won't meet it?

Jim Cress:

And that's a perfect place, just real quick, of Jeremiah 2:13 in this book, God says, "*My people have committed two sins...*" (NIV) And I want us to think this in the context of relationships, both vertically with God, horizontally with people. He says, I'm almost going to make it real simple, Jeremiah 2:13 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible as I work with people. They've committed two sins. One, "*they've forsaken me the fountain of living water...*" I'd better get to the point to say, I am saying, "God, you're not enough." That's getting back to Oswald Chambers who said, "I sin because I have the suspicion that God is not good." He says, "*They've forsaken me the fountain of living water...*" But they don't just stop with that, they then "*dig out cisterns, broken cisterns in the ground that can hold no water.*"

Jim Cress:

So the idea is in that cistern. We grew up in our backyard, there was a cistern. We've talked about onsite, there was a cistern in there at onsite, it's old. And the idea is later, they put Jeremiah into this broken cistern up to his armpits in dirty, nasty water. But the sense is, "God, I don't think you're enough. You won't give what I need in this relationship." Or if this relationship I have boundaries, there will be a vacuum there and you won't fill that. And I don't want to wait for you. But I'll just get busy over here in the broken cistern of yet another relationship that might seem good at the moment. Well, this person seems so good upfront. I don't vet it, I don't give myself time. You're not doing enough, God. So I'll go to another possibly toxic relationship that feels good in the moment.

Jim Cress:

And then I go on, I just love that verse, I tell people, "I want you to, in this time, I want you to feel, not fill." Do you hear that? The empty cup, that's that Greek word, epithelium, a crucible, an empty cup, for lust, for whatever, temptation and loneliness feels the emptiness of the cup, but lust tries to fill it. Demand tries to fill it. And often we just need to be with God, and that emptiness that's like the manger at Christmas to say, "God, would you come be born? Bring Him the emptiness and fill it, instead of you filling it on your own terms."

Joel Muddamalle:

And I think, what if we were to do a little bit of continuing to peel out to the very bottom? What we're describing is ultimately at the end of the day, trust issues.

Jim Cress:

Totally. Yeah.

Joel Muddamalle:

It's a trust issue, in Jeremiah 2:13, where water is the true necessity for life in the ancient world. And so to have a broken cistern, to not have a fountain of water is equivalent to death. But Lysa, you said something that I think is really important. And one of the questions I've asked myself is, "Where's the object of my faith? What is the object of my faith?" And I'm going to use a phrase that Jim just used. And it's simple, but it's not simplistic. We know that the object of our faith should be the Messiah, Jesus Himself, and yet living that out in the midst of trust issues, and relationships over long periods of time that were there, and then all of a sudden they're not, is much more difficult than just saying, "Hey, just put your faith in Jesus."

Joel Muddamalle:

We know that to be true, but living it out is different. And you're talking about desires, and here's one of the things that I'm becoming more ... I'm trying to remind myself of, is that the desires are not wrong, typically. Typically the desires are not wrong, the challenge is we have a picture of what the destination is supposed to be, and the means by which we're supposed to get to the destination. And Lysa's already said this. So then, we attribute that to God, as if God has to be limited by meeting the desires of our heart by our means. You see what I'm saying?

Jim Cress:

Absolutely.

Joel Muddamalle:

A sovereign God works outside of our means. And so this is the place where trust and faith, and an assurance of the goodness of God come into play, and an openness to maybe, just maybe, God will meet those desires. That the boundaries are going to actually demand that, Romans 12:14, I think, or 17, Paul says, "*If possible, so far as it depends on you, pursue peace.*" (Romans 12:18) So it's a conditional clause. If possible, means that it might not be possible. And the condition to pursue peace might be by you walking away from that relationship. Now, in the midst of the loss of that relationship, there is this place of trust that God may fill it in an uncanny way but we have to keep our eyes open on how God moves.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So good.

Jim Cress:

Love it.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So as we wrap up today's discussion, you may have a question, "OK. I see that boundaries are biblical, I see that there's a need in some of my relationships for boundaries, but I don't know how to communicate these boundaries." I want to recommend a resource that I've been working on for two years now. And Jim has walked me through this message, Joel has been right beside me in this message. Both of your fingerprints are all over it. There's even some therapeutic language that you bring to this message, but it's a new book I've written called *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*. And this isn't a book about shoving people away. This isn't a book about piecing out or tapping out, where we are supposed to be responsible in relationships. This is a book about learning to love others really well without losing the best of who we are.

Lysa TerKeurst:

So it's called *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*. And in this book, so much of what we've been talking about is folded into the various chapters. But also some of my favorite parts of the book, I provide a lot of scripts — ways for you to communicate your boundaries, and then ideas of also how to keep and maintain boundaries. And sometimes we need to establish a boundary and then over time, if behaviors change, attitudes change, if responsibilities are increased, then we can lessen the boundary. But it also gives you an indication, when is it OK to do that, and when is it not OK to do that. Plus an amazing biblical theology of boundaries, and a lot of verses that people take out of context, and how to rightly better understand the verses that sometimes we misunderstand which can be tripping points for healthy boundaries. So if that sounds like a book, a resource that could be helpful to you, it's called *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*, and I'd love for you to pick up a copy. Joel and Jim, thank you so much for all this helpful wisdom today.

Joel Muddamalle:

You bet.

Meredith Brock:

Well friends, I don't know about you but after hearing that episode, I am ready for more content about boundaries, because I need them. It was so helpful.

Kaley Olson:

Yeah. Y'all heard Lysa share about her new book coming out this November at the end of the episode, so I know you don't need me to tell you once more about it, but I'm going to do that just so you remember. Go to proverbs31.org/listen to get on that interest list that you can sign up for when *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*, Lysa's new book, is available to pre-order. We'll open those up in early September, and so you can get immediate access to the first three chapters, and all the good stuff Meredith told you about at the top of this episode.

Meredith Brock:

Yeah. Don't miss out, there's a lot of goodies in there. And just thank you so much for tuning into the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast. We believe when you know the truth of God's Word, and live out that truth, it really does change everything.