

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
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a resource in:

Relationships

Boundaries In Relationships



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

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Boundaries In Relationships

Theme Verses: *Mark 12:30-31 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."*

You can either think about male-female relationships in a "rule-focused" way or a "heart-focused" way:

- The **Rule-Focused** approach says, "How far can I go without getting into trouble?"

- The **Heart-focused** approach says, "Am I being Christ-like in all that I do?"

The Relationship Self-Examination Survey:

- **For Girls:** If you were a Christian guy who was struggling to stay sexually pure in your thoughts and actions, what kinds of things might be tempting to you?
- **For Guys:** If you were a Christian girl who was struggling to find her emotional security, self-worth, and identity (including her body image) in her relationship with Christ, what kinds of things might be tempting to you?

Levels of Communication:

Level One	"Just the Facts"
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- Conversation involves sharing of facts and information and the ideas and opinions of other people.
- It requires the least amount of vulnerability and intimacy. Little of oneself is disclosed.
- This kind of communication is done most frequently overall and is done with a large number of people.
- Examples: Talking about your major and the classes you are taking. It could also involve discussing what a minister said during a sermon or what a family member shared with you.

Level Two	"I think"
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- Sharing your own ideas, opinions, goals, and aspirations.
- A greater amount of openness is involved in this type of conversation.
- You reveal your own thoughts about a situation or circumstance.
- Example: You might share what you believe about something and why you think the way you do.

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Level Three	“Sharing”
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- At this level you share personal preferences, beliefs, concerns, experiences, and personal memories.
- Feelings of closeness significantly increase.
- Sharing life experiences (both good and bad) with the intent to share more of your life with the person you are talking to.
- This involves “opening up.” It feels very good to share at this level and to be understood and affirmed.
- At this level, one person in the relationship may be sharing more information than the other.
- For example, one may be trying to help and support the other or one may be trying to open up to another person.
- Sharing emotional things with someone draws the two of you closer. This is natural and normal. God designed us that way so we would share/bear burdens. *James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*
- However, sharing too much with the wrong person can be dangerous; especially in male-female relationships.

Level Four	“Mutual Sharing and Increasing Trust”
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- This level is an expansion of Level 3.
- Involves increasing self-disclosure of personal issues, beliefs, concerns, and experiences by both parties.
- Emotional intimacy surges significantly at this level. The amount of disclosure at this level increases trust, vulnerability, and openness.
- Boundaries drop significantly.
- Feeling connected and understood fuels more sharing and mutual discovery.

Level Five	“This is me”
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- A complete opening up of yourself occurs at Level 5.
- You share inner feelings, fears, preferences, hopes, and dreams.
- Sharing of painful, shameful issues and events may occur.
- The conversation may include emotional expressions from the heart and the disclosure of inner thoughts, ideas, and experiences.
- A feeling of “oneness” occurs.

Steps Toward Intimacy- God’s Design for a Covenant Marriage:

- **As relationships develop through ongoing communication, it is a natural progression for them to deepen over time.**
- **As you progress down the levels, boundaries are lowered, emotional intimacy increases, and desire for physical closeness increases.**
- **This process produces a wide variety of emotions from exhilaration to fear, from frustration to fulfillment, etc.**
- **God’s design for this progression is based on purity and holiness in accord with the Bible.**

Boundaries In Relationships

Boundaries: Protecting God's Design

- It is important to guard against letting emotions drive a relationship to the point where Biblical values are compromised.
- People using healthy boundaries (ex. fence with a gate door) can set limits (ex. say 'No') when appropriate, but can also relate to others in an appropriate, Christ-like manner.
- Healthy boundaries, accountability, and commitment to God's Word and Will protect us against this process becoming high-jacked.
- Boundaries are Emotional and Relational 'Property Lines' that clarify who is responsible for what in a relationship.
- Loose Boundaries – can be easily crossed (ex. chalk lines)
- Rigid Boundaries – block people out; unfortunately they block out the good as well as the bad. (ex. concrete block walls)
- Healthy Boundaries – can set healthy limits (ex. say 'No') when appropriate, but also can appropriately relate to others in an open manner. (ex. fence with a gate door)

Girl Differences	Guy Differences
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tend to be driven by their emotional desires.2. Crave emotional intimacy.3. Tend to be stimulated by what they hear and feel.4. Sometimes they give sex to get love.5. Generally need emotional connection to become sexually aroused.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tend to be driven by their physical desires.2. Crave physical intimacy.3. Tend to be stimulated by what they see.4. Sometimes they give love to get sex.5. Don't need emotional connection to become sexually aroused.

Reflection:

- **For Girls:** Are you relating to **all men** in the way you would want another woman relating to **your future husband?**
- **For Guys:** Are you relating to **all women** in the way you would want another man relating to **your future wife?**

Adapted from Ethridge & Arterburn-2004, Cloud and Townsend-1992, Wright-2000.

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For more information on boundaries please visit www.accounseling.org/boundaries or scan here:

