

A photograph of a stone castle wall overlooking a valley. The wall is made of large, dark stones and has a crenelated top. In the background, there is a forested ridge and a valley with green fields. The sky is overcast and grey. The text "SECURING OUR BOUNDARIES" is overlaid on the wall in white, serif font.

SECURING OUR
BOUNDARIES

'A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.' Proverbs 25:28

In biblical times cities had boundaries such as walls and gates which protected the cities from enemy penetration and kept its residents safe. These boundaries typically had men stationed around them, especially at the city gates as they monitored who came into and left the city and restricted or permitted access accordingly. In those days a city without vigilant men manning the boundaries and ensuring the walls and gates were secure would have been quite porous and open to easy attack by those seeking to take undue advantage.

It's therefore interesting that in Proverbs a person without self-control is likened to a city with broken down walls.

In applying this to our lives, how do we ensure we are effectively manning our boundaries? What strategies can we employ to secure all aspects of our lives so we don't leave any areas open to attacks and manipulations? As we go through this series, we pray the Holy Spirit will equip us with the skills and strategies required to take charge of our boundaries so we walk in constant victory.



Day 1 Gates of Speech

“The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.” Proverbs 18:21 NLT

“Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips.” Psalms 141:3 NLT

The first boundary we’re looking at is that of the mouth. Words are powerful, don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. The words we speak play a huge role in forming the reality we will see. This is why the psalmist prayed specifically for the Lord to guard and take control of his lips. If words didn’t matter then this prayer wouldn’t be necessary.

“Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth, but only such speech as is good for building up others, according to the need and the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak].” Ephesians 4:29 AMP

“Let your speech at all times be gracious and pleasant, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer each one [who questions you].” Colossians 4:6 AMP

As the Holy Spirit brings illumination and understanding of the power of what we say and how we say it, we will be more circumspect in our speech. The desired result is that what comes out of our mouths should be undergirded by a desire to build up and not tear down either ourselves or others, even when rebukes or corrections are necessary.

This means that before we speak, we first consider what we’re about to say and the impact it may have. In practical terms this involves us constantly checking internally with the Holy Spirit about what we’re saying and being open to adjust according to His instructions, especially if we want to respond to something negative.

We also need the Holy Spirit to help us check if we are promoting self instead of God with our words as these things can be quite subtle. Why is this important? Once there’s an opening for the enemy to take advantage of, he will intentionally steer us in the direction of using our words to act as a snare to us. So we must be diligent and intentional in manning the gates of our mouth.

Prayer: Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips. Let the words I speak reflect Your character at all times.

Day 2

Eye Gates

'Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!' Matthew 6:22-23

Why does what we permit through the gates of our eyes matter? What we see has the power to transform us, either for good or bad. Everything we look at impacts our thought processes, our disposition and our responses in a subtle manner. The more we see something, the stronger the impact and the more readily we come into alignment with what we have been seeing. This is what makes the eye gate so powerful.

"I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar..." Psalms 101:3 NLT

"Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word." Psalms 119:37 NLT

"Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth." Colossians 3:2 NLT

What we look at shapes our thought patterns which eventually become our actions and actions ultimately become habits which form our character. Both the kingdom of light and darkness know this which is why a lot of emphasis is placed on what we see. From the Bible we see that the onus is upon us to make the choice regarding what to allow to enter our eye gates. The psalmist spoke about choosing what not to look at while Paul's letter to the Colossians provided the preferred alternative: focus on things of heaven.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means we have to be intentional about what we choose to see whether physical or virtual and to always ask ourselves where what we're watching could lead us. Is it enhancing or eroding the values of heaven? If we picture Jesus physically next to us, would He be comfortable with what we're watching or looking at? If yes, great and ask for grace to build the capacity to remain consistent and grow accordingly. If not, turn away/switch off and ask for grace not to go back.

We also need to ask for discernment because as we said yesterday, many potentially dangerous things are actually quite subtle in form, so they may not look 'bad' to begin with, but the enemy's long-term strategy is to use them as a means of distraction, so we don't focus on what really matters.

Prayer: Lord help me be discerning as I man my eye gates. Keep my eyes from focusing at the things that don't build me up spiritually.

Day 3 Ear Gates

'Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.' Proverbs 4:24

Have you ever heard a song you didn't like but over time because you heard it so often you found yourself unconsciously humming the song even if it wasn't playing at that moment? That's the power of the ear gate. It's a lot more subtle than the eye and mouth gates as ears do not have a filtering system on their own that decides what they will or won't hear. The more often we hear something, the more it seeps into our subconscious and begins to impact our actions, even when we're not actively aware of it.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

If faith comes by hearing, then it means that fear also comes by hearing. What we constantly expose ourselves to determines if we walk in faith or in fear. And if our hearts are filled with fear, it will be difficult to hear what God is saying at the time. If we were to examine the conversations we participate in, do they inspire faith, godliness, or the opposite. Are we present in conversations that include lewd speech, gossip, etc. Even if we're not actively contributing to these discussions just being around them permits what is being said to come into our space.

"Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!" Matthew 11:15

There's also a spiritual element to hearing. When Jesus talked about ears to hear, He wasn't referring to our physical ears. Rather there are things we can only 'hear' by the Spirit, but if we have filled our natural ears with things that grieve the Holy Spirit who we know is resident in a believer, then our spiritual ears will become dull and we will not only miss what He is saying but will also reduce His ability to move in us. How do we man our ear gate? By walking away when we sense what we're hearing or about to hear isn't pleasing to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord help me to be conscious of my ear gates and what I permit to access them. Help me maintain spiritual sensitivity as I commit to being discerning about what I choose to listen to.

Day 4 Evaluating Relationships

“Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.”
Proverbs 13:20

There’s a saying: show me your friends and I will tell you who you are. Who we associate with matters because we become just like them - for good or bad. If we look at travel nowadays, many travelers require some form of entry permit when going to a foreign nation. However while the permit gives them the confidence to journey to that nation, the final decision regarding entry lies with border control officers in the destination country. These officers typically interview non-citizens desiring to enter their nation to ascertain their objectives and people with seemingly questionable objectives aren’t granted entry.

“But Jesus didn’t trust them, because he knew all about people. No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person’s heart.”
John 2:24-25

Similarly we must act as the border control officers for our lives. People may approach us but we must determine by the Holy Spirit who we should or shouldn’t allow access. This isn’t about people we encounter once in a while or one-off but those who we draw close to us. Throngs of people surrounded Jesus because of the miracles He performed, but He didn’t open Himself up to them because He knew their hearts. We have the benefit of having the Holy Spirit in our lives who knows all things, especially what’s in the hearts of people around us.

“So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!” 2
Corinthians 5:16

Choosing who to grant access to us shouldn’t be done based on natural perspectives alone. If we choose association based only on human perspectives we stand the risk of permitting the wrong people into our space and maybe even ignoring the ones who God has assigned to us in that season. This is important as every relationship has an impact on our lives for good or bad.

Prayer: Lord teach me how to evaluate relationships by the Spirit and not from human perspectives.

Day 5 Directed Steps

“The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.” Psalms 37:23

Two things we trust the Holy Spirit to imprint upon our hearts as we’ve gone through this study is that life is spiritual and the spiritual controls the natural. With this in mind, we must understand that our actions are rarely totally random and nothing just happens. It’s just that the influencers and triggers for certain actions aren’t always immediately visible, either to us or others. When the Bible talks about directing our steps, it’s speaking of the decision-making process and influences that guide the actions we take.

“...I will stay close to you, instructing and guiding you along the pathway for your life. I will advise you along the way and lead you forth with my eyes as your guide. So don’t make it difficult; don’t be stubborn when I take you where you’ve not been before...” Psalms 32:8-9
TPT

“Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left.” Isaiah 30:21

We were created with free will, so at any point we can choose to make whatever decision we want including choosing to submit our decision making to the influence of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead us. However it will be difficult for us to live according to the leading of the Holy Spirit if we’re not manning our boundaries effectively. Our lives are heavily influenced by what we say, see, hear and who we associate with. If these areas are not in alignment with the Holy Spirit, then we can be assured that the decisions we make won’t be influenced by Him on a consistent basis.

Manning our boundaries is a lifestyle decision not a one-off event. It means that we intentionally choose to align with what pleases the Lord so He can move freely in our lives. Yes we may err once in a while, but as we prioritize the Lord, He makes grace available to us to follow through and we mature in the process.

Prayer: Lord help me choose to put what pleases You first so You can always lead me along the best pathway for my life.



Day 6 Guarding Your Heart

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” Proverbs 4:23

The Bible tells us clearly that we are to pay extra attention to our heart because it is the engine room that determines the direction our lives will go. The first question someone may ask is what is the Bible speaking about as we know this doesn't refer to the physical heart. Our heart speaks to the part of us that determines the decisions we make: our conscience, thought process, convictions all in one. How then do we guard it?

“Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.” Proverbs 4:24-27 NLT

The subsequent verses in Proverbs 4 speak to how we can guard our heart and you will notice if you've been following this series that the steps cover what we say, hear, see, focus on and where we go. None of these just happen, they require a willingness on our part to yield to the Holy Spirit to shape us. Beyond the externals, there's also an internal work that needs to be done in guarding our hearts.

“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” Acts 24:16

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:31-32

As we seek to guard our hearts we must also guard against being offended. Apostle Paul spoke of ensuring he didn't harbour offence against either God or people because of his hope in Christ. Clearly, he understood that there was a connection between being offended and having a close walk with Christ. Other areas to be wary of include keeping malice, being unforgiving as these greatly grieve the Holy Spirit and will hinder His works in our life. As we work on the outward parts, let's also ask the Holy Spirit to help us live in a way that frees Him to move at will in us.

Prayer: Lord teach me to guard my heart above all else and help me live free from offence and unforgiveness.

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