

Discipleship series

Embracing God's limits on your life

Tom Landry, former Hall of Fame Coach of the Dallas Cowboys and a great man of faith in Christ, once had this to say:

"Most successful football players not only accept rules and limitations but, I believe, they need them. Players are free to perform at their best only when they know what the expectations are where the limits stand. I see this as a biblical principle that also applies to life, a principle our society as a whole has forgotten; you can't enjoy true freedom without limits." Todd Leupold

Limits are also called boundaries. It's a point where we'll go up to and no further, or a point that we allow someone to go to in our lives and no further. They protect us, but sometimes they can also hinder us. We have to live within our limits and at times we have to learn to overcome our limits to become and do what God has called us to do.

1 Corinthians 6:12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

1) God given limits

- Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
- Right from the beginning in the Garden of Eden God gave man limits on what he could and couldn't do.
 - If they overstepped those limits there would be consequences – they would die
- God gave Adam and Eve to eat of any tree in the Garden with the exception of one
 - Their freedom far exceeded the limits that God had set for them, but Satan pushed that one and only boundary that was set
 - It's human nature to complain about our limitations rather than enjoy the freedom that God has given us
- Why did God set limits in the Garden before sin?
 - He gave them almost absolute freedom, but still wanted them to know that He was in authority and some things belonged only to Him
 - Genesis 3:5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
- Most of God's limits on our lives now are limits of morality
- Why does God set limits on us now?
 - To protect us from the consequences of sin
 - Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - To be set apart as holy
 - 1 Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - To trust Him and be content with His provision
 - Hebrews 13:5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

2) Non-moral limits

- Mark 4:18-19 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.
- Many times these cares of the world aren't sinful, but merely distract us from what's important
 - They could be legitimate concerns of life – food, clothing, paying the bills, etc.
 - Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
 - These are things that are lawful i.e. permissible, but not helpful; not beneficial
 - Letting these cares consume our lives won't necessarily be sinful, but they will cause us to live unfruitful and unproductive lives
- Not having limits – boundaries – in our lives can lead to frustration, burnout, stress, strained relationships
 - When I referred to these as non-moral limits it means that the limits aren't necessarily on moral issues, but not having limits can lead to a moral downfall
- Jesus' life was ministering to people, but He also had His limits and took time out to be alone to pray and to spend quality time just with His disciples
 - Matthew 14:23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.
 - Mark 6:31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.
- We ought to place limits on all aspects of our lives
 - Our personal life – don't allow others to crowd you out when you need time alone
 - Our spiritual life – set aside time to pray and read your Bible and don't allow other work or distractions to interfere with that time. Do you have limits of what you will allow to keep you from fellowship and worship with other believers?
 - Our family life – protect your family and set limits together of what you can and can't do. Who will you allow to drive with you in the car?
 - Our social life – who do you spend time with, where do you hang out, and how much time do you do it
- Having limits in themselves isn't an indication of your spirituality, but they are a safeguard for you

3) Overcoming limits

- The limits that we've looked at are restrictive limits for a purpose, but sometimes God wants us to overcome natural limits that we, our families, or society have put on us and we need to overcome them in order to fulfill God's purposes in our lives
- Exodus 4:10-12 Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."
- There are times when God expects us to do things beyond our natural abilities so that the glory goes to Him and not to ourselves
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."