Wise Boundaries:

**Galatians 6:7-9 (NIV)**

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

**What does it mean to say God cannot be mocked?**

The word that is translated here as “mocked” literally means to turn one’s nose up at. We cannot turn our noses up at God and think we can get away with sinful activity with no accountability or consequences. There will always be consequences for our sin, whether immediate or delayed. There will an accounting for how we allowed God to lead our lives.

**What does it mean to sow to the sin nature versus the Spirit?**

Our sin nature (the flesh) always wants to sin, but the Spirit within us calls us to righteousness. If I embrace sinful thoughts and activities, then that sin will grow until it reaps destruction in my life and my relationships. However, if I only allow things into my life that please the Spirit, then they will grow resulting in a full, peaceful and joyful life.

**Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)**

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Sexual immorality isn’t ultimately about our actions, it is about our heart. But we also need to guard what we expose ourselves to as we work at changing our heart. To win the battle for sexual purity in our lives, we need to set up some very practical boundaries for both our actions and our thought life.

Read the following passages and identify boundaries you can set in place to guard your heart.

**Matthew 5:27-30 (NIV)**

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

**Summarize what Jesus is saying in the above passage.**

If there is a temptation in your life, it is better to remove the source of temptation than to repeatedly fall into sin.
What are some practical ways we might apply this passage?

- Avoid certain relationships that are unhealthy or a source of temptation
- Remove TV from your house
- Cut off your internet
- Place filters on your internet that do not allow you to go to inappropriate sites (have your spouse or another be the one with the access code)
- Etc.

2 Timothy 2:22 (NIV)
Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (NIV)
Flee from sexual immorality.

Why does Paul consistently advise us to flee temptations as opposed to standing and fighting them?
In the battle with temptation, your flesh will always side with the temptation. The temptation will remain constant, but we grow weary in the fight.

Genesis 39:6-12 (NIV)
6 Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"
8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" 10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.
11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside.
12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

What was Joseph’s basis for being able to resist the temptation?
Joseph’s resistance was partly due to his respect for his master’s trust in him, but mostly due to his respect for God. He knew that this sin was a rejection of God’s holy character and rule in his life. Because Joseph deeply valued his relationship with God, it gave him a proper perspective in the time of strong temptation; it gave him the strength to say no.

What can we learn from Joseph’s response?
Our ability to say no to temptation is conditioned on they type of relationship we have cultivated with God. If we do not have an authentic relationship with God (merely an intellectual one) then we will most likely not stand firm. It is the basis of authentic relationship that shapes what we value and how we live.
In this case, Joseph “literally” fled from temptation. What are some other practical ways we can flee sexual temptation?

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)
No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

What type of open doors might God provide so we can escape temptation?

Psalm 119:37 (NIV)
Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

Job 31:1 (NIV)
I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

Men are very visually stimulated. What are some steps men can take to guard what enters their hearts through their eyes?

What are some things women can do to help make this easier for men?

What are some steps women can take to guard what enters their eyes?

In the book of Proverbs there is a tension between following wisdom or folly. Both are presented as women calling out to a young man.

Proverbs 5:1-8 (NIV)
1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, 2 that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. 3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; 4 but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. 6 She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not. 7 Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. 8 Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house,
In what ways does sexual immorality bring sorrow to our lives?

What does it mean practically to keep to a path far from the adulterous woman (folly)?

Song of Songs 2:7 (NLT) (also 3:5 & 8:4)
*Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and wild deer, not to awaken love until the time is right.*

What did Solomon mean when he said to not to awaken love until the time is right?
When the feelings of romantic love are aroused it drives us to want deeper intimacy. This will only lead to frustration and the forcing of putting on the relational brakes, or to sin. The king’s bride cautions women that the only right time for that level of intimacy is within the safety of covenant marriage.

What are some ways young women allow love to be awakened before the time is right?

How might romantic stories and movies awaken this love?

1 Timothy 2:9-10 (NIV)
*9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*

Why was Paul concerned about how some women were dressing?
Paul desired that women be valued for who they were, and not for external appearances. He wanted women to be free not to need the affirmation that came from the external because he knew this type of value did not last. God desires that women find their value in him as opposed to striving for it from the opinions of others.

In God’s eyes, true beauty comes from a love for him that reflects in loving and serving others. If women are concerned about being beautiful in their hearts before God, it would save them from much of the emotional pain that comes from fearing or experiencing the rejection of others.
One of the best ways to counter sexual immorality is to have an accountability or encouragement partner. This is someone you meet with on a regular basis who will ask the tough questions with regard to temptations you are drawn to and to encourage you in your walk with God. We added a sample Encouragement Partner form at the end of this study.

Should we ever be concerned with how others perceive our actions as long as we know we are not sinning?

What do the following versus teach us about how we should live before others?

1 Timothy 3:7 (NIV)
He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

2 Corinthians 8:21 (NIV)
For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

Colossians 4:5 (NIV)
Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV)
9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

What is the difference between times when we should not care what others think and when we should care about what others think?
We are not to care about what others think when it comes to our sense of worth and value or what God has called us to be and do.

We are to care about what other think of us when we are representing Jesus Christ. If any action could possibly be misinterpreted to bring slander against the name of Jesus, then guarding the name of Jesus takes higher priority than whatever that action might have been.

Possible Example: It might be convenient for a man to stay at a woman’s apartment in another room, but if the “picture” that is perceived by others is one of sexual immorality, then it would be wise to arrange other accommodations rather than bring slander to the name of Jesus.
What safeguards might one put in place to guard their reputation, the reputation of others and the name of Jesus?
The following examples are merely discussion provokers:
• Not being alone with the opposite sex in potentially misunderstood situations.
• Men not being alone with young children when others are not present.
• If married, do not cultivate deep friendships with the opposite sex apart from your spouse.

What policies do you think a church should have to guard from potential sexual immorality?

Are there some ways you are approaching life right now that could possibly be misunderstood?

Are there some safeguards you can set up for your family?

Recommendations for families to take or leave:
• Do not allow internet access apart from a computer that is in a visible place in your house.
• Shut off your internet each night once everyone is supposedly in bed so there can be no late night communications or web browsing. (You do not want your teen engaging in pornography or dialoguing with the opposite sex while lying in bed).
• Use internet filters, but do not be so naïve as to think there are not ways around them.
• Have access to all your children’s Social Media accounts with their knowledge so there is no “secrecy”.
• Do not allow teens to have the opposite sex over to the house, or to be at another house, when there are no responsible adults present.

PEER ENCOURAGEMENT
We encourage people to have relationships in their lives that can help them grow in purity and their walk with Christ. These are not “policing” relationships, constantly checking to see where you stumble and fall, but encouragement partners who will help you to not fall, or help you up when you do.

You may then want to seek out a friend, support or mentor who can meet with you regularly to ask the types of questions others don’t feel they have permission to ask.
Peer Encouragement Partnership

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

What do we mean by Peer Encouragement?
Peer Encouragement simply describes a relationship between two people where they agree to encourage each other in deeper life issues on a regular basis. In addition to some general areas of encouragement, individuals choose questions they would like to be asked to help them grow in their walk with Christ.

Why encouragement?
It is easy to get discouraged with struggles and spiritual failure in our lives. We do not need spiritual police, we need spiritual encouragers. Sometimes all it takes is a little perspective and encouragement to help us move forward, conquer sin and live spiritually disciplined and fruitful lives. Where there is no regular encouragement, there is little growth or change. We need people in our lives that have the permission to speak into key areas of our lives.

Who makes a good Encouragement Partner?
- Someone who wants to grow in their relationship and walk with God.
- Someone who desires to see you stronger in your walk with Christ.
- Someone you respect.
- Someone you feel you can trust and will keep matters confidential
- Someone who will ask tough questions.
- Someone who will allow themselves to be asked tough questions.
- This person does not need to be a “friend”, but there should be some degree of compatibility.

Possible struggle areas needing encouragement:
- Devotional times with God
- Relationship with your spouse
- Relationship with your children
- Spending habits
- Time management
- Pornography
- Alcohol, smoking, drugs etc.
- Areas of temptation
- Personal struggles, etc.

We have raised some standard questions to ask one another, but also suggest each person choose personal questions they would like to be asked. Below are some “examples” of personal questions. You can make up others that are relevant to you.

Were there times this week you did not relate well to your spouse/children? How can you relate more effectively?
Did you go out of your way to communicate love to your spouse/children this week? What could you do this week?
Did you handle your finances in a way that was pleasing to God this week? How can you do so this week?
Did you spend money in a way that created tension for your spouse? How can you rectify that?
Did you keep your time balanced this past week between work, family and ministry? How can you create better balance?
Did you invest time in God’s kingdom to make it more effective this week? How can you make this more of a focus?
Did you view any sexually inappropriate material this week? What boundaries could you put in place?
Did you allow your thoughts to be sexually inappropriate areas this week? How can you limit that temptation?
Did you turn to alcohol, cigarettes or drugs as a means of coping this week? What steps can you take so that will not happen?
Did you give in to any area of temptation this week? How can you avoid that temptation this week?
Did you assume responsibility to help others grow in their walk with God this week? How can you take discipleship more seriously?

**Peer Encouragement Agreement**

Encouragement Partner: _____________________________

Phone: _____________________________

Email: _____________________________

Contact Day: ___________ Time: ___________

End/Re-evaluation Date: _____________________________

**Standard Encouragement Questions:**

1) What has God taught you as you spent time with him this past week?  
2) Are you experiencing increasing victory over sin? If so, how? Are there struggle areas of sin I can pray for?  
3) In what ways did you make attempts to connect others to God this week?  
4) How could you become more kingdom-focused this coming week?

**Additional Personal Questions:**

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us **encourage one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.