

SETTING LIMITS FOR

BOUNDARIES

A HEALTHY LIFE

WEEK 3

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Even in the **PERFECT**
workplace, **FREEDOM**
and **BOUNDARIES**
existed side by side.

BOUNDARIES: WEEK 3

FAITHFUL, NOT EXHAUSTED

GENESIS 2:15-17, NLT | COLOSSIANS 3:23, NLT

Before there were conference rooms, deadlines, or difficult co-workers, there was a garden. And in that garden, God established the world's first workplace—a place where work wasn't a curse but a calling, where productivity flowed from purpose, and where boundaries were built into the design.

When God created Adam, He didn't place him in paradise to relax—He gave him work to do. "Tend and watch over it," God instructed. This wasn't busy work or punishment; it was purposeful partnership with the Creator. Work existed before sin entered the world, which means work itself isn't the problem. The way we approach it often is.

Then God created Eve, bringing forth the world's first coworker. (They were also the first office romance.) Together, they shared the responsibility of leading creation. The work was meaningful, the partnership was healthy, and the boundaries were clear.

From the beginning, God established limits. He defined their workspace—the garden, He clarified their role—to tend and keep it. He even set a boundary around what they could consume—every tree except one. These weren't restrictions meant to limit their freedom, rather they were guidelines designed to protect their flourishing.

But then sin changed everything.

When Adam and Eve violated God's boundary, access changed. The relationship that once allowed them to walk freely with God in the garden was broken. Work became harder; the ground would now fight back with thorns and thistles. Adam would have to work by the sweat of his brow to get food from soil that resisted his efforts. The perfect workplace became a place of struggle.

Here's what's striking; even after the fall, God didn't remove the concept of boundaries. If anything, the broken world made them more crucial. The thorns and thistles weren't just literal weeds—they represent every frustration, difficult person, and obstacle we face at work.

We can't return to Eden's perfect workplace, but we can reclaim its principles. We can remember that work is good but not ultimate. We can set boundaries that allow us to serve faithfully without sacrificing everything else God values. We can labor with excellence while rooting our identity in something far more secure than our job performance.

God gave Adam and Eve both work and boundaries from the very beginning. Perhaps it's time we stopped seeing limits as obstacles to productivity and started recognizing them as part of God's original design for how we work.



Genesis 2:15-17, NLT

"The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the Lord God warned him, 'You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.'"

Historical Context

This passage occurs immediately after God creates Adam and before Eve is created. The garden represented the ideal work environment—abundant resources, meaningful purpose, and direct communion with God. When God placed Adam over the care the garden, He showed that work was never meant to be just about survival—rather it was a calling. The boundary prohibiting them from eating from the tree wasn't a needless restriction—it shows that even in paradise, healthy boundaries existed. God gave Adam freedom ("freely eat"), but within defined limits ("except"). This pattern reveals something profound: Even in the perfect workplace, freedom and boundaries existed side by side.

Key Points

- Work is God's gift, not His curse
- Freedom and boundaries coexist in God's design
- Clear expectations prevent confusion and conflict
- Boundaries protect what matters most
- Violating boundaries brings real consequences

Reflection

Boundaries in the garden were not about restriction but about relationship. How might healthy boundaries actually deepen our relationship with God and others today?

Why do you think God gave Adam a boundary in the middle of such a perfect place? What might that say about how God views freedom and limits in our own lives?

Colossians 3:23, NLT

"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."

Historical Context

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae while imprisoned in Rome. This verse appears in a section about household relationships and daily conduct. In the first-century Roman world, much of the workforce consisted of slaves and servants who had little control over their circumstances—no choice of employer, no career path, no ability to quit. Paul's instruction was revolutionary because he elevated all work, regardless of how mundane, difficult, or undesirable it might be, by reframing it as service to Christ. He wasn't telling people to enjoy miserable conditions or pretend their work was fulfilling. When we are living for Christ, we can find dignity and purpose even in jobs we would never have chosen. This perspective transforms work from something that defines us into something that displays our devotion to God.

Key Points

- Your job doesn't have to bring you joy for your work to honor God
- Your identity is in Christ, not in your job title or workplace success
- Working "for the Lord" frees you from needing constant human approval
- No job is beneath you when you understand who you're really working for
- God sees and values faithful work, even when others don't

Reflection

How does viewing your work as "for the Lord" change the way you approach tasks you find boring, frustrating, or beneath your skill level?

Looking back at different chapters of your life—high school, college, early career, parenthood—what has defined your identity in each one? Has that shifted over time, and where does your identity in Christ fit into that story? Discuss!



GUIDED PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the gift of work and for reminding us that it was part of Your perfect design from the beginning. Help us to see our jobs as opportunities to honor You, and not as the source of our identity.

Give us wisdom to set healthy boundaries at work. Teach us to work well, and without having to sacrifice the other priorities You've given us, our relationship with You, our families, and our well-being.

For those struggling with too much work, give us the courage to step back and trust that You are in control.

For those in difficult work environments, give us strength and discernment.

Remind us that our value comes from You and not from our careers or our hobbies. Help us to remain focused on Your goodness, especially when it's hard to see past our frustrations.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.