

Jacob's Well**Lesson Title:** Mental Health—Boundaries

Key Concept: Brokenness is the reason for many mental health struggles that we were not created to deal with. Setting boundaries helps us make healthy decisions for ourselves, our relationships, and our ministry.

**Scriptures:**

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.
(Proverbs 4:23 *New Living Translation*)

Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.”
(Mark 6:31 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Nehemiah 6:13; Psalm 1:1; Psalm 3:30; Matthew 18:15–17;
Luke 5:16; John 15:15; Matthew 6:38–39; Luke 4:29–30; John 8:59; John 2

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Boundaries are the invisible lines we create to help us guide interactions and protect our well-being and emotional space. Boundaries show us what we are—and are not—responsible for. They set expectations for ourselves, let others know what to expect, and create safety within relationships. But setting boundaries is often a challenge for Christians. We feel that if we say no or are not available 24/7, then we are not being selfless servants or showing love. And while serving others is a core value of Christian faith, always putting others’ needs before your own can lead to stress, burnout from over-commitment, and even resentment.

While rebuilding the temple wall, Nehemiah was confronted four times by people who were hoping to intimidate him and make him sin, wanting to accuse and discredit him (Nehemiah 6:13). But Nehemiah refused to listen to their lies and become distracted, and he kept on track. Both Psalm 1:1 and Proverbs 3:30 teach us to choose wisely who we associate with and allow to influence us. Jesus reaffirmed this message in Matthew 18:15–17. After describing how to resolve

Jacob's Well

conflict, he made it clear: if the other person refuses to sort things out, then you no longer owe them a personal relationship.

Jesus modeled boundaries in how he protected his time. When crowds followed him, “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). He prioritized time spent with his disciples to build trusting and intimate relationships (John 15:15). And he instructed his disciples to take time to rest after ministering to the crowds (Mark 6:31). Jesus also set boundaries in how he protected his safety and well-being. When the Pharisees and teachers wanted a miraculous sign from Jesus, he said no (Matthew 12:38–39). He would not be manipulated. At the end of John 2, Jesus chose not to act because he did not trust the intentions of the people. There were many occasions where Jesus “slipped away,” “passed through the crowd and left,” and “hid himself” when he encountered toxic people or harmful situations. (See Luke 4:29–30; John 8:59.)

The Bible is clear: boundaries are healthy. Jesus himself set boundaries, and he encouraged us to do the same. When we set clear boundaries, we can make decisions that allow us to function in healthy ways. Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries helps us steward our time, energy, and relationships to operate from a balanced life. This balanced life empowers us to minister more effectively.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Since boundaries are so important, why is it difficult to set and keep them? What do you fear might happen if you set boundaries?
- 2) Share a time when not having boundaries caused you stress. How could having boundaries in this area have helped you?
- 3) How do you feel when others ignore your boundaries? What are unhealthy (reactive) responses? What are healthy (proactive) responses?
- 4) Could boundaries look different with different people or situations? How?
- 5) What biblical guidelines or examples can help you set healthy boundaries?

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections

- 1) These are some signs of lacking boundaries:
 - a. Difficulty saying no
 - b. Feeling constantly overwhelmed and stressed
 - c. Constantly putting the needs of others before your own
 - d. Taking responsibility for others' actions or emotions
 - e. Being easily manipulated or taken advantage of
 - f. Feeling guilty, anxious, or fearful about setting boundaries
 - g. A lack of self-respect
 - h. Feeling resentment or frustration due to overextending yourself
 - i. Constantly over-scheduling yourself and breaking promises

Write down the ones that apply to you. Choose some boundaries that help protect your time, energy, and physical and emotional well-being. How will you prioritize them? How will you communicate them?

- 2) Read Proverbs 3:30, Proverbs 4:23, and Psalm 1:1. Prayerfully meditate on their message in choosing healthy relationships (good, wise, positive influence, etc.). How do your relationships line up with this biblical advice?

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections, cont.