

Boundaries and Transformation

Have you every met or known someone whose eyes, demeanor, and presence screamed *potential*? It is kind of like happening upon those little cocoons from which the butterfly breaks free. Looking in wonder at this little nest of potential one cannot help but ponder the beauty that may soon explode from what is currently less than it can be.

The reality of the cocoon, however, is that in order for the potential to be revealed, the creature inside must stay within the boundaries until being called forth at the appointed time. Should the little creature inside decide to jump ship early, disaster ensues. Should it decide it will remain inside the less than wonderful looking sphere forever, it shall never become what it is being called to be, and the world will be void of what could have become a wondrous work of art and inspiration.

Essentially, the story of the cocoon and the butterfly is all about the proper navigation of boundaries. The boundaries are there for growth, development, health, and wonder. Our story of boundaries and transformation is the same. We were created with a plan in mind. We are intended to be a certain type of person. Yet, without the intentional, willful, and committed embrace of God's boundaries for us, we will never realize our potential. Too many of us settle for less than God intended for us to be, and despite the look of potential greatness in our eyes, we never venture out and grab hold of the beauty to which we are called. It is a tragedy which occurs day after day in our society.



Boundaries. The idea of a supernatural creator ought to bring us to the hopeful conclusion that we were created for a purpose. Yet, in our culture, the "Christian America", we seem to be mired in an enormous struggle regarding the idea of an absolute being and the demands that such a being might have upon us. Polls demonstrate that an increasing number of us want to embrace moral relativism, the idea that what may be truth for one person may not be truth for another. And yet, all truths, this philosophy suggests, even conflicting ones, are in the end "true". 2+2 no longer equals 4 and only 4. This is evident in the culture wars over prayer in schools, supreme justice ideology, abortion rights, sexual mores, homosexuality, and the fight for the legalization of drugs. In the quest for modern man's "freedom" of all that would hint of exclusivity, we seem to be enslaved as a culture by our lust for pushing past boundaries of any kind. As George Barna has recently revealed through one of his surveys, while the overwhelming majority of Americans claim a belief in God, and while a majority refer to themselves as "Christian", only 9% have an understanding of biblical Christianity. That is staggering, sadly staggering, and it explains why we, as a culture, are plagued with so many ills despite all our potential. We are like larvae, pre-butterflies, entrapped by our own idea of how the life-generating process should take place. Instead of looking to the creator of the process for abundant life, we seem determined to take our own path which results in our being imprisoned in the cocoon of potential, yet, never realizing it.

But what about boundaries? Is it not reasonable to suggest that a supernatural creator like the one revealed in scripture would have our good in mind even as He put guidelines in place? Moreover, does it not make sense that One, who creates with such beauty, diversity, and intentionality, as is seen in the world around us, would also be constructing a beautiful and life giving structure of morality? Is it not reasonable to assume that a loving God would offer His creation a loving blueprint in order that we might live a more fulfilling life? Yes, it is reasonable. In fact it makes perfect sense. If we thought rationally about the alternative (that a loving God would give us no guidelines or prohibitions and no directions for our journey) we would see just how intellectually fragile our view of morality has become as post-modern beings. The scripture encourages us, "Come, let us reason together".

One issue our culture is wrestling with in plain view for everyone, even our children to see, is sexuality. Essentially, our culture wants to maintain either that God does not exist and therefore no moral restraints of any sort exist or if He exists, His directives on loving relationships cannot be reduced to the ranting of bible thumping bigots. Truth, as it pertains to sexuality, is up for grabs, it is relative to each person's situation. If we maintain that God does not exist then we find ourselves in a very precarious intellectual position. That is to say, we at once state exclusively and absolutely that God does not exist. But such a statement is untenable intellectually if one maintains there is no such thing as absolute truth. How can one make an absolute statement about anything if no absolutes exist? If God does not exist we are void of a beginning point for our argument from a logical basis. If we are void of a beginning point we are also without a foundation from which any absolute certainty can arise. To make an absolute statement is indeed a moral action because it negates anything contrary and casts it aside as a falsity. To make an absolute statement one must have a benchmark, a reference for an ultimate absolute. Thus, as a culture is makes little sense to absolutely refuse any morality that calls our sexuality into question on the basis that no absolutes exist. Where is the absolute moral backing for such a stance?

Perhaps, God does have something to say about our promiscuity, homosexuality, adultery, and other various sexual practices. Perhaps, what He has to say is actually of great importance. Perhaps God has offered us plan which actually contributes to our happiness rather than detracts from it. Perhaps.

The most common view in our culture is, of course, that God is loving and would not want us as humans to be narrow in our approach to who we love and how we love them. The problems with this view are many. I am reminded of Darwin's right hand man and spokesman, Mr. Huxley, who when asked about the lack of evidence to support the Evolutionary theories of Darwin had an utterly honest and stunning response regarding the rabid determination and commitment to the theories despite the lack of evidence, "...I suppose its because the idea of a creator imposes upon our sexual mores" (paraphrase).

As it has already been noted that it is not unloving to suggest that a loving creator would give us clear and fulfilling guidelines for our sexuality. We are sexual beings and our sexuality is a gift from God. Expressed properly, our sexuality is one of life's greatest gifts. Abused, it becomes an enslavement that breaks our hearts, distorts our emotions, wrecks our bodies, and torments our souls. Someone wise once suggested that God gave us the gift of one spouse, but had he given us 100 we would have taken 101. Indeed, if He had given us 1,000 we would have taken 1,001. Had He given us 10,000 we would have taken 10,001. We break through the boundaries because of our struggle with sin, not because the boundaries are not there. As the woman Jesus encountered at the well came to discover, God dwells where the marriage bed is undefiled. Where the bed is defiled God does not dwell. Where He does not dwell, emptiness, confusion, psychological chaos, and relational deterioration result.

The loving God of scripture does not say, "Do what you want". Actually, you can read that in the Satanic Verses "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law". The loving God of scripture actually, time and time again, warns us of the dangers of life apart from Him. And yet, God shows up right where people come to an end of themselves in their brokenness, and there He offers them grace and love and forgiveness. He does not show up like some of us bible thumping fundamentalists saying, "See, I told you that you would get what you deserve!" Rather, he reasons with us, doctors us, and offers us His grace which transforms us into His image. He grabs hold of us and gives us the strength to break free from the cocoon, enabling us to take flight and experience the light of a new day.

Transformation. Here is the great truth in the story of creation and boundaries. Here we find the life giving energy, purpose and focus that comes from embracing God's plan. The God of the universe, rather than place us here and leave us to our own devices, actually has given us a map for the journey. It's when we get off His road map that trouble sets in. Take as an example the story of the Prodigal Son, told in fact, by Jesus Himself. As we see here, the loving Son of God Himself actually told stories where the message was clear, "There is absolute truth and when you turn from it, life gets ugly". As this lost son turned his back on the boundaries set by his father, he finds that, in the end, he has made a wreck of his life. After all the money was gone, the parties had ended, and the "friends" had disappeared, this lost son found himself eating and sleeping with pigs. The abandonment of good boundaries had left him confined to the borders of a pigs sty, imprisoned in a world of inner turmoil and circumstantial chaos. Satan's lie offered to Adam and Eve in the beginning and to each of us day in and day out is merely this, "What God says about boundaries is not true". "You will not surely die," says the enemy of our souls. He markets his lie in cunning fashion attempting to assure us that sin, especially hidden sin, does not affect anyone adversely. His line sounds a little bit like this, "Whap happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas". As long as there is consent, then all is fair game in love and war, we are tempted to believe. The enemy's lie continues when he whispers to us, "God just wants to steal your fun, and make you His subject. Don't let someone else tell you what is true. Boundaries, we don't need no stinking boundaries". And we take the bait. The Prodigal Son took the bait and found that what happened in all the hidden places actually took up permanent lodging in his own heart and soul. Eventually it all came out in the form of a life undone emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and physically.

The parable of the Lost Sheep, like that of the Lost Coin and the Lost Son, demonstrates the perspective of our God who is devoted to our good. In this parable Jesus speaks of God's love reaching out to the wayward, insignificant, weak, and desperately lost black-sheep that gets separated from the 99 others. The little wooly rebel, with eyes full of potential, broke the boundaries and found itself in trouble. And God went after this rebel! Knowing the destruction that awaited this reckless lamb, God was on the move hunting it down, desiring to bring it back into the safety of His care. If we will take time to read His word and take it at face value, we will find the value of God-given boundaries and the boundless measure of His grace. We view boundaries negatively, but scripture views them positively. And, moreover, those who walk in His ways find that these boundaries are the means to a life of significance, purpose and joy. Read the Psalms and discover how those who walk after His statutes view life! Read Proverbs and find the rewards of listening to His instruction. And read the story of the woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8 where Jesus shows up and confronts the religious leaders for their lack of mercy and grace, confronts the woman for her sexual boundary breaking, and yet, offers life and the power to move on and "sin no more". Yet another life snatched from the cocoon of potential and brought into the beauty of a life wide-open to new adventures and intimacy with the Creator!

We must turn to God for grace and forgiveness as we acknowledge that our boundary-breaking is due to our lack of understanding and our lack of love for Him. He offers us life and brings us back into the safety of His playground. Kids are not safe playing out in the street. Playgrounds have fences so kids do not run out and get hurt and so that misery cannot get in easily. As

God's kids, we are given so much to play with in this life. Why do we crave the danger beyond the fence? Why choose more than one woman when He offers us the vast playground of sexual fulfillment, emotional intimacy, and spiritual connection in the woman He has joined us to? Why throw ourselves on the jagged fence of same sex relationships when God has designed us (emotionally, psychologically, and indeed, physically) to be perfectly fit heterosexually?

He has called us to know Him and enjoy Him forever. As we go His way we find joy unspeakable. God's boundaries are our greatest pleasure. The allure to break out of the boundaries is what started this whole mess, literally, in the beginning. Go back and read the story of Adam and Eve and you will find how God offered them so much and gave boundaries for only one thing. Remember the 100/101 rule? Rules were not made to be broken. Lives are broken when boundaries are ignored. Transformation is offered in the person of Christ. The boundary of our sin which kept us from God was broken through on the cross by the Son of God. God is the master of all boundaries! He is good. Try life His way. It has been said that the Gospel has not been tried and found wanting, but rather, it has been found hard and left untried. If you have been trying life your way, and you have found yourself wanting spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically or otherwise, why not give Him a try today? Just as any "good" parent sets the boundaries for their children, God provides for the safety, health, and good of His children. He is your hope. He is your future. He is your Creator. He is your all in all. Embrace life beyond the cocoon. Take flight and enjoy the ride.

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