

# CAN YOU Relate?

## BOUNDARIES

### WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

Have you ever been “guilted” into a commitment that you didn’t have time for, and then felt resentful about it later? Is there anything you’ve participated in lately that you wish you hadn’t agreed to do? READ PROVERBS 4:20-23.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN? \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs is a book of wisdom, a pragmatic guide to living wisely. But it’s a book about probabilities, not about promises or guarantees. This passage suggests that what we choose to hear influences our heart, and what fills our heart influences our decisions. It’s all related.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK? \_\_\_\_\_

How do we learn to tune into the voice of God in the middle of all the noise in our lives? And how, when we’re spread thin between things like overtime, homework, soccer practice, music lessons, volunteering, mowing the lawn, laundry, car repair, dental appointments, grocery shopping, paying the bills, dealing with that pesky furnace before snowfall, keeping in touch with friends and spending quality time with your family, can we ever really become who we are created to be?

How does all of this relate to boundaries? Does having boundaries mean that we say “no” to everything? Do boundaries mean that we always put ourselves first? Aren’t we called to break down the boundaries between us? Will we end suffering and world hunger, etc., by simply sitting back and just taking care of ourselves?

On the other hand, will we make progress with any of those issues by failing to take care of ourselves? Are we called to be martyrs all the time? Does God want our lives and our energy to be stretched really thin?

Is this all about moderation and balance, or is it more complex than that? Is living into the tension of both serving others and keeping yourself whole more than a simple balancing act? How do we know when to give our hearts and our energy?

Read the text again. Is there a way to find life in the middle of competing agendas and boundaries, guilt and exhaustion? What word of hope can you find in this passage to lead you forward?

### WHAT’S THE NEXT STEP? \_\_\_\_\_

Over the next several weeks, pay attention to your relationships and commitments. Where do you need healthy boundaries? What steps can you take now to put those boundaries in place? Be accountable to your group and support each other.

### LOOKING FOR MORE? \_\_\_\_\_

Consider this quote from researcher Brené Brown’s book called *The Gifts of Imperfection*: “When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated. This is why we sometimes attack who they are, which is far more hurtful than addressing a behavior or a choice.”

Then watch her video about boundaries: [theworkofthepeople.com/boundaries](http://theworkofthepeople.com/boundaries)

Do you think she’s right? How can failing to set boundaries make you resentful and hateful? How can setting boundaries actually make you more loving and generous? How can setting boundaries help you assume the best about other people?

Why do we commit to things we don’t actually want to do, things that will make us resentful in the long run? What changes when we’re able to respond to those requests with honesty and transparency? Why are those conversations so difficult?