

Push
Women

SEPTEMBER

2019

Wow!

GOOD
TIMES

Girl,
Get your
"Ships"
together

enjoy
every
moment.

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Thank you so very much for Joining in on this study. We can all admit that Relationships are HARD WORK Whether they be with friends, parents, co-workers, siblings, a boss, a spouse. . . . All of them! I am the first to admit that I am not perfect at the relationships in my life, but I have tried to make a point to learn how to do them better. I have read, researched, and tried to learn how to do relationships better. . . And this Series is what I have come up with for now.

In this series, we will first learn from Jesus and his example in relationships. Then we will examine our "Sphere of Influence" to see how and where we prioritize the relationships in our life. And lastly we will look into healthy relational boundaries.

I am excited to share what I have learned with you all. I hope you will join me in committing our Relationships to God this month. If this is your heart... would you join me in this prayer:

Dear God,

You are a God of relationship. You have designed us to have a relationship with you. And now, this month especially, we give you all the relationships in our life. Help us to be better at them. Help us to identify our unhealthy behavior and learn to be more like you. Call out and bring to our attention the relationships we need to work on this month and give us the tools to do so.

AMEN

Is this a Dating thing???? NO!

I am so happy that you guys are joining us on this series. This month we are going to talk about why we are relational people, and how we can be better at it? Do our relationships with people really affect us? Do our relationships really matter in life?

As a group, the PUSH women have discussed many times over the importance of being intentional. I believe the same can be said about our relationships. We must be intentional in every area of our life in order to be successful and grow. Let's dive into this today.

The tag line for this series is, "We are relational beings because we are created by a relational God." But what does this mean? Precisely this is where we're going to start.

First, God is relational. We can identify this characteristic because he created us so that we could be in relationship with him. He also gave us free will to choose so that we could choose to be in relationship with him or not. He did not force us to love him, that would be slavery. From the beginning of time, before we were even born, He loved us without any reason. Before we knew our gifts and talents before we were even a thought in our parent's minds. And He desires that we would choose to love him in return.

The giving and receiving love is what we were designed for. It is something that separates us from other living things. Therefore, from the beginning of

our lives, we start giving and receiving love from various relationships; parental roles, friendships, spouses, and so on.

I believe that our human relationships are a direct reflection of our relationship with God. If God is a priority, and we spend time in growing our relationships with him, then he will teach us how to love people as he loves.

The opposite could also be said; if we don't spend time with God, learning to love people as he did, we will find ourselves in constant quarrelsome situations with the people in our lives.

This week we're going to talk about the characteristics of Jesus love and how they can be applied to our lives.

Before we start this new series, I think it best to take time today and examine our lives and ask ourselves some honest questions:

- Do I have issues with people?
- Do I have issues with loving our spouse?
- Do I love my family as Christ does?
- Do I love people like God loves me?

If not, that's OK. But let's take these relationships in prayer this month as we learn how to be better at them.

Jesus was Conspicuous

First of all, what is that word?

Con·spic·u·ous: standing out so as to be clearly visible. Jesus loved people in a Conspicuous way. In a way that stood out from everyone else. After all, you could usually find him in uncommon places.

John 13:35 says, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another."

This kind of love isn't something that just happens. I am sure you didn't just wake up today and feel warm kind thoughts of everyone you will come in contact with today. It is not something we do with our THOUGHTS. NO, it happens with your actions. It starts in our heart (thoughts), but it is visible in our out-ward actions. It's the sort of love that stands out conspicuously in this self-centered world. What John 13:35 is saying is that the people in our lives should see the way that we Christians love one another and say, "They must be followers of Jesus!"

Sadly, this is not how we act most of the time. I know for me when I FOCUS on this characteristic it gets easier, but once I take my mind off of loving Everyone I slip back into my (excuse my honesty) judgmental, exclusive to only people I include, kind of love and friendships. But that is not how Jesus was.

Just look at his followers. Simon was a Zealot. Zealots were a radical political group that used violence, force, and deception to try to achieve its goal of liberating Palestine from Roman rule. They refused to pay taxes, and they attacked and murdered government officials, especially the hated tax collectors. Simon doesn't seem like he should be hanging out with Perfect, God-man, Jesus.

Then there is Matthew. Mathew was a tax-collector. The tax-collectors had sold their souls to Rome. They milked the Jewish people of their money in order to line their own pockets. These are the men that Jesus is telling to love one another! That kind of

love would be conspicuous for a zealot and Tax collector.

So why do we have such a hard time loving people who are different than us? Let me be specific: Why do we have a hard time getting along with people who have different political views than us? Why do we have a hard time being friends with people who see anything in life different than us?

You see Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as beloved children, and walk-in Love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant sacrificial offering to God." We are to love this world, the people in our lives, the ones we like and don't like, just as Christ loved.

We will dive more in to this in the coming weeks. We will discuss things like understanding what circle your "friends" should be in and Healthy boundaries. However, we will always have to apply this scripture to our lives. HOW WE LOVE others is a direct REFLECTION of How much we SPEND TIME with God.

I know, this is an easy to say, and a Harder to practice principle. But, really it starts in our heart. We need to examine ourselves today and ask God to help us be better imitators of his Love.

Jesus teaches us Forgiveness

In Matthew 18: 23-35, Jesus tells us a parable about an unforgiving servant. A man owed his king more money than he could ever pay. And when he begged the king for mercy, the king forgave the entire debt. This same man, who had been forgiven for so much, then found a servant who owed him a small amount of money. When that servant asked for mercy, the recently forgiven man refused and put him in prison. When the king heard about this, he put the first servant in jail. The lesson of this parable, said Jesus, is that this is what "my Heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." (18:35)

Ouch! I don't want that. Forgiveness is rough! The hurt we feel is real, the discomfort in those relationships is real. But Jesus tells us that forgiveness is necessary for healthy relationships. Jesus does this with Judas. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him, yet he still broke bread with him, and still brought him in to his circle. Because this is true forgiveness.

Forgiveness isn't -Forgive and forget- To forget a memory is often hard, But to use that memory as an opportunity to remember to forgive is POWERFUL.

Forgiveness isn't- Reconciling- Sometimes that isn't possible- to reconcile takes two people, to forgive, takes one.

Forgiveness isn't- Minimizing the offense- Don't minimize what you feel in order to "Forgive", it will sprout up again.

Forgiveness does not mean one has to be friends with everyone who has wronged them (we will discuss this in the next few weeks). If we do not learn how to forgive as we go along, we will build walls and grudges, and our relationships will quickly break down on a fundamental level. If we

learn how to forgive one another, we will be able to create long and lasting relationships. And we will be able to learn how to build real relationships because every relationship has problems. Sweeping problems under the rug doesn't make for a healthy relationship. Neither does being unable to forgive issues.

Having the ability to confront problems, effectively forgive, and ask for forgiveness sets each relationship under the umbrella of Christ, and follows His example of forgiveness. The Crucifixion and Christ's forgiveness from the Cross opened the door of reconciliation between God and humanity. It also gave us the most excellent example of how to forgive and reconcile with one another.

Take a look at your life today, and ask - Do you have people that you need to forgive? Is it a conversation that you need to have, or something you need to do within yourself?

Pray and ask God to reveal those situations to you so that throughout this series you can learn to address them healthily and not allow unforgiveness to hold you back from all that God has for you.

Jesus was unoffendable

Let me first start by saying that this is a new and mind-blowing concept for me. And might even go against some things I have formerly told in a previous life before Christ. I tend to be a confrontational person and love to win an argument. However, as I get older I'm asking myself more often, What's the point? Eek. But y'all this concept is so freeing that I had to share. Jesus lived a life that was free from taking offense, and I think we should too.

We can repeatedly read, in the Bible, the things people did or said to Jesus, or about him that were offensive. We must admit that if it were us we would be offended! WE would be thinking of an intelligent sarcastic response to reply to the Pharisees irrelevant questions. WE would be stewing all night at how the people made us feel being for us one day & against us the next? Right?? However, as it turns out, giving up our "right" to be offended can be one of the most freeing, healthy, simplifying, relaxing, refreshing, stress-relieving, encouraging things we can do. And that is what we see Jesus do over and over again.

1 Peter 3: 9-11 (NIV) says, Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

First, we have to understand that taking on an offense means taking on anger. You can choose to be angry or you can choose to be at peace. However, anger and Peace cannot reside in the same place. WE must learn to drop the anger and choose instead to be unoffendable.

Secondly, we must learn that People are human, and Human Nature is pretty offensive. Human nature isn't perfect, doesn't always get it right, it occasionally forgets lessons already learned, etc. HUM. . Aren't we all human? So why is it that when we see other's imperfections we say things like, "I can't believe they did that!" Is it really that surprising??? Does it surprise you that they are human and make mistakes? Instead why don't we stop being surprised at others' failures and learn to let things go and celebrate the good. This will lead us to live a free life.

If you've ever stayed up at night stewing over an offense, lost your temper, or wondered how to respond to those nasty comments on your Facebook, this concept is for you. It's not our "job" to fret over what everyone else is doing wrong; We are not in control, God is. By trying to be in control we are only telling God we do not trust him. I don't know about you, but I have seen what I can do with my life and I don't want that. I want what God has for my life!

So as we strive to let go of constantly being offended lets remember that God isn't looking for people to be the "Christian Police," but instead he says LOVE others over and over again. So lets focus on just that. . .

Letting things go and just loving others. After all God knows we aren't perfect. So while you're at it let yourself off the hook.

Is there some offense that you have been holding on too that you need to let go. Now is the time. Pray about it give it to God and then let it go. Eventually you will find that life is much more free this way 😊

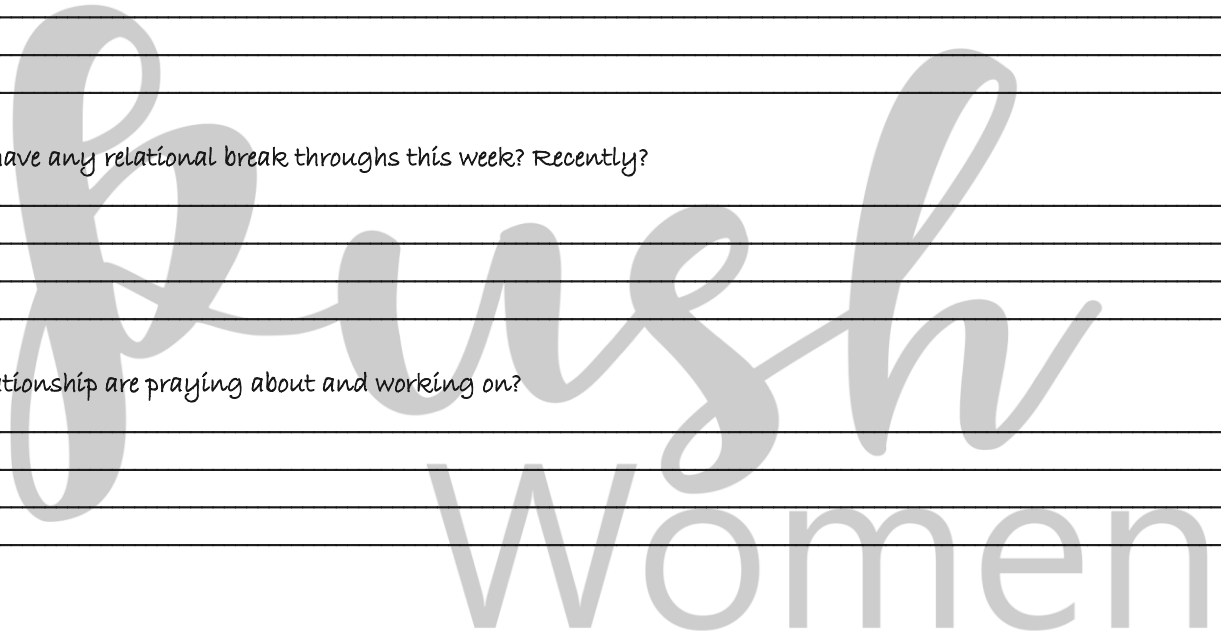
This week we have covered so much! Moving forward we will use Fridays as a wrap-up day. It's a proven point that if we take the time to write things down then we are more likely to remember them. So take about 5 minutes today and write down some things you remember from the series. We have covered the importance of loving people like Jesus this week because he was a Relational God. We talked about How Jesus lived Conspicuously – in a stand out way. Not like everyone else. He forgave people. Many people. And then lastly that he was Unoffendable.

What was your favorite concept this week?

What concept was the hardest to you? Why?

Did you have any relational break throughs this week? Recently?

What relationship are praying about and working on?



Bush
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Back to the basic's

This week we are going to do a Relational Audit. We are going to look at all of our relationships and see where they fit on the Spheres of Influence. WE will look to see if the people in our lives are actually in the correct spheres, or if we need to move them around in order for the relationship to be healthy. What you will notice as we unpack this week is the closer you get to the center the more influence one has in our lives. What we keep at the center of our life will be the thing that influences us the most.

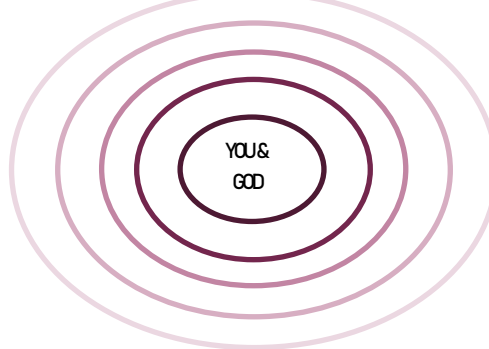
Wasting no time, let's discuss what should be in the center of our lives. Some might say, family or spouse. I'd say many think their boyfriend/ girlfriend does (let's talk about that another time). But in reality, God is the only one who should be at the center of our life. Every other relationship hinges on God being at the center of our lives.

I know that this seems very basic. But it has to be where we start, in everything we do. The most important relationship that you will ever have is with the heavenly father. This relationship is the highest priority over every other one. If your relationship with God is off focus, or nonexistent, it will directly affect your relationship's with people.

Let me dig in a little deeper. A lot of people casually say they put God First. However, when you look at there lives it is absent of the evidence of a relationship with God (the fruit of the Holy Spirit). This fact tells me that many people "say" that they put Him first. And they probably want to. But they just Don't. The bible says in Colossians 1: 17 (NIV), "He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together." He holds everything together. In our lives He must be at the center.

So how do we put him first? First, you have to be in Relation with him. Do you communicate? Do you talk to God? Do you have an appointment with God,

Spheres of Influence



Daily? How often does that Appointment get canceled or rescheduled? What if we treated that appointment like a Doctors appointment or a hair appointment? What if we kept our time with God and made it Priority. The bible says in Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." We must seek a relationship with him first, and the rest of our lives and relationships will fall in to place.

Secondly, Putting God first is doing what He wants us to do over what we want to do even if it seems like our way is right. OUCH. I think this is where a lot of us fall off track. This can be so hard, especially when it comes to relationships with the people we care about. Often times we want to do what we want to do, or we question if its really God talking to us. But when you spend time with him you will be able to hear him clearly. It really is a simple cycle. Along with the next . . .

Third, we keep him first by doing it over and over again. We are human, and we are going to fail sometimes. WE have to learn to recognize that and keep bringing everything back to the center . . . Back to God every day, and every hour if need be. If we can (1) keep relationship with him, (2) learn to listen to him, and (3) do it over and over again daily, I believe that every other relationship will be just that easier. And maybe "easier" isn't the word, but the more we put our relationship (family, friends, Spouse, and so on, the more we will be able to trust him, and live in peace with others. It's a cycle that Starts with Keeping Jesus at the center . . .

NOW Cue the Worship SONG ("Jesus at the center of it all")!! And really ask yourself? Is God the center of my life? Do I ask what he wants for my life? Daily? Do I obey him when he gives direction for my friendships/ relationships?

Relational Audit

Yesterday we started with the main focus that we need at the center of all of our lives. GOD. Today I want to unpack the rest of the diagram layer by layer.

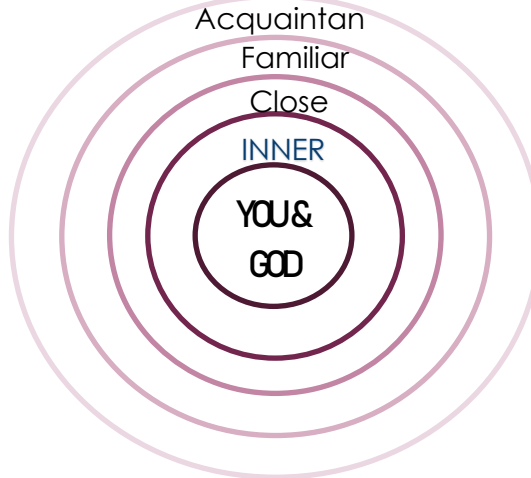
The first layer closest to you and God in your INNER CIRCLE. The inner circle is the closest people to you. These people spend a lot of time with you and have the most significant influence in your life. These people would say they know you the best. These people will tell you what you need to hear, regardless of how it makes you feel. These relationships are critical and key to healthy growth. For a single (unmarried) person this circle should consist of your immediate family or people you live with. Married people, this should be your spouse and kids. These people know you for what you say, but also know you because they spend so much time with you they know the things you don't say.

The next layer is your CLOSE Circle. This Circle consists of people that you spend a reasonable amount of time with. The Close circle has an influence on you because you choose to spend time with them. These people know you for what you tell them about you. These tend to be the people that tell you what they know you want to hear. They would rather avoid an argument than tell you what their opinion is. This would be the category where most of your friends fall.

The next layer is the Familiar. This circle is people that you enjoy, but likely you don't get to spend a lot of time with. Maybe you'd like to keep it that way. These might be people that you see at church once a week. They do not have a good amount of influence in your life. Be careful, we tend to go to our Familiar people to get their opinion when we don't want to hear what our inner circle or close circle is saying to us. And sometimes people that we spend a lot of time with

(inner or close circle) might need to be in this circle instead for the relationship to be healthy. Maybe they don't need as much influence in our life as we give them.

Spheres of Influence



The last layer is the Acquaintance's. This is the final layer and furthest from the middle. This layer has the least amount of influence on you. This layer is people who know of you, but they don't spend time with you enough to really know you. Keep in mind that this is where most relationships start. Just because people are in this category doesn't mean that they don't matter.

When we start to look at what category our friendship and relationships actually fall, we will begin to learn some things about our unhealthy tendency's. After auditing, we can be more intentional about growing ourselves and our relationships in a healthy way. *** Married people with busy lives and kids can some times give up on category of people (Close and/or Familiar), and I would recommend we analyze that and do our best to change this.

Today I would like you to stop and take a few minutes and list the 10 people closest to you in your life. After that draw a quick list with the categories of the audit and list who falls where on the list. This will help us for the rest of the study to be able to asses and see what friendships and relationships need to change.

List of 10 Friends

1. _____

6. _____

2. _____

7. _____

3. _____

8. _____

4. _____

9. _____

5. _____

10. _____

Who is in What Sphere of Influence????

Inner (People you spend the most time with, live with. These people will tell you what you don't want to hear regardless)

Close (These people you choose to spend time with. Your BFF's, maybe co-workers. These people know you for the things you don't say but might not tell you. They would rather keep the peace than tell you the hard stuff)

Familiar (These people you don't get to see too often, maybe once a week a church. You enjoy them, but don't know EVERYTHING about each other. . . just the highlights)

Acquaintances (These are people you don't often see at all. But keep in mind that these people can eventually become closer in the sphere. Everyone starts here)

Not everyone needs to be your BFF (Understanding Values)

Now that we understand the different spheres of influence, and have listed out the friendships we have and where they fit in the layers, we can begin to define these different layers.

It is essential to know what each layer/ sphere is defined as. This helps us to have clear boundaries. It also helps us to identify where certain people should fit into our lives.

Now I know you're saying, "what does this matter?" If you want to be successful at friendships and relationships with people then understanding this concept will aid you in knowing which relationships need more time. Which relationships need more energy, and which ones need to be valued more. If you have no precise identifications of these layers in your life, then you might be placing everyone in the same category. This could leave you feeling hurt more often than you should. Or maybe you feel like you can't trust ANYONE because you have been trusting EVERYONE. Understanding each layer and where the relationships fall within the layers should help you identify which relationships to value more, and which ones to move in distance.

eHarmony says, "If you have shared values, regardless of your interests, your relationship has a good chance of success. On the other hand, if you have no shared values but lots of common interests, you might have a great time together for a while but, when it comes to making decisions about marriage, children, and careers, you could find that you lack the strong foundations that move you forward."

Even eHarmony knows that you can have different interests and hobbies, but Having the same values is an essential part of relationships. (I know eHarmony is focused on Romantic relationships, but this is true of all relationships ** If people can't tell you what they value, then they have nothing to value. These people will often find themselves full of surface-level friendships in the Familiar category but never close.

Let's go through each category and discuss

some values for each one. This is a personal time that you can write in and list the values that you have.

You and GOD: What is the value of this category?

What is the schedule that you have in Keeping up your relationship with God. (Remember that the health and growth of every other relationship in your life is dependent on the time you spend in this one).

Inner Circle: Why do people get to be in this category? This is a sacred category that should be a privilege earned, or given to as a sign of respect. Not everyone needs to know everything about you. : Don't cast the pearls of your life's story in the hands (or ears) of swine (the undeserving). How much time is set aside for these relationships. Sure the other friendships are fun, but this relationships are the ones that help you grow the most.

We will continue tomorrow on the other layers. Pray today that God would help you to identify the values of the people that Fit within your inner circle.

Not everyone needs to be your BFF (Understanding Values)

Let us pick up where we left off yesterday while keeping in mind the importance of defining each layer of our Sphere of Influence so that we can better understand where people should fit based on the values of each category.

Here we go:

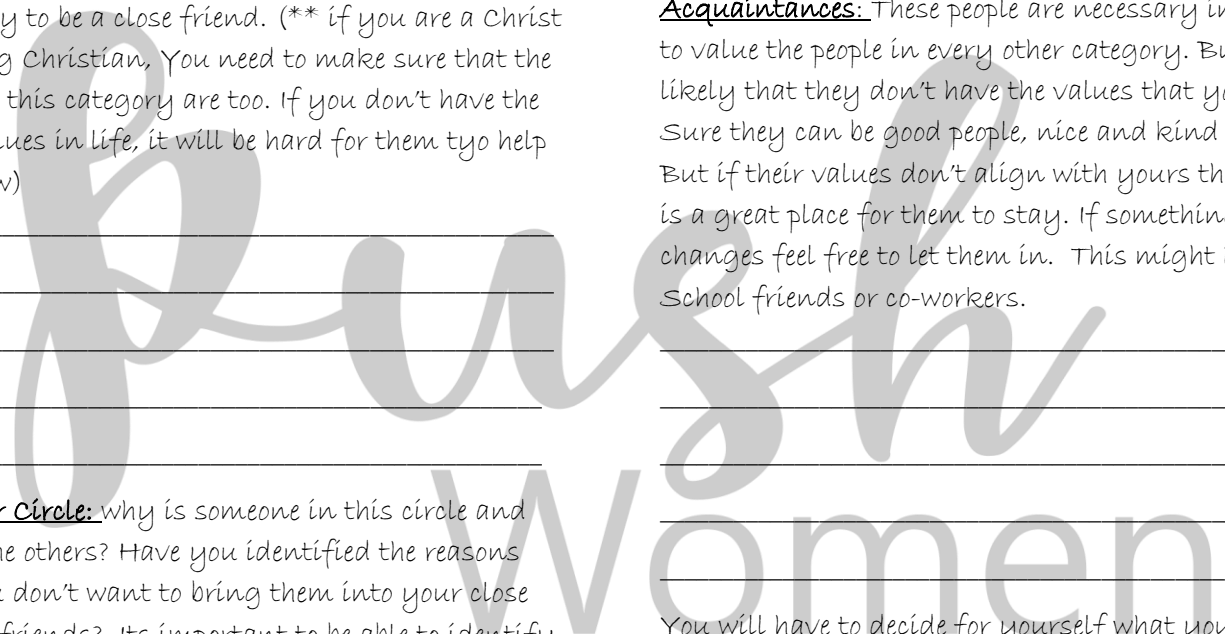
Close Circle: what separates this circle from the familiar? How much time does something on this circle deserve? Do you drop everything for someone in this circle? Do you have to respond to every text message instantly? Do these friendships help you to grow towards your goals? What are the values necessary to be a close friend. (** if you are a Christ following Christian, You need to make sure that the people in this category are too. If you don't have the same values in life, it will be hard for them to help you grow)

Familiar Circle: why is someone in this circle and not in the others? Have you identified the reasons why you don't want to bring them into your close circle of friends? Its important to be able to identify these things so that you will remember to keep them in this place, and not "Closer". Often if we don't make a clear definition then we will open up and be vulnerable with people who likely don't have all the values that you do for your life. There is a reason why you don't let them in? Make sure you aren't

spending too much time with the people in this group if they don't fit the values of the other layers. This group might include school friends or co-workers that you see often but know that your values in life are different.

Acquaintances: These people are necessary in order to value the people in every other category. But it is likely that they don't have the values that you do. Sure they can be good people, nice and kind people. But if their values don't align with yours then this is a great place for them to stay. If something changes feel free to let them in. This might include School friends or co-workers.

You will have to decide for yourself what you value, and what the standards for each category will be in your life. But if we want healthy relationships we have to remember that having the same values is key to their success. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance people fail." lets make sure any have some guidance for ourselves to follow.



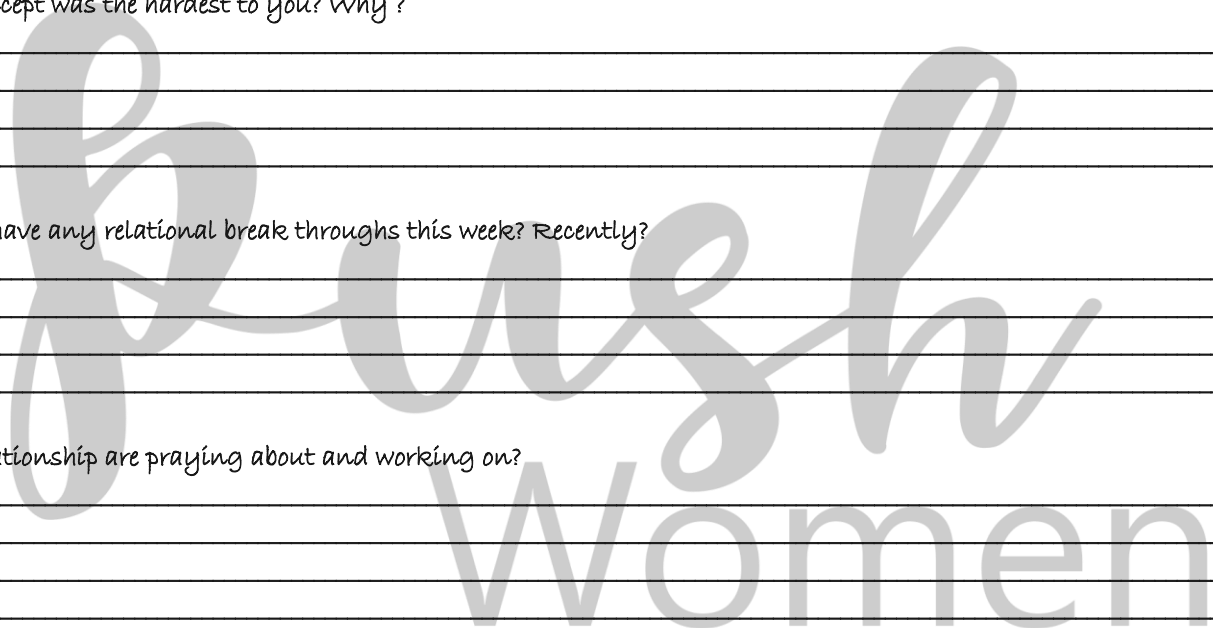
This week we have covered so much about the different layers in our sphere of influence! And its Friday our WRAP UP DAY! It's a proven point that if we take the time to write things down then we are more likely to remember them. So take about 5 minutes today and write down some things you remember from the series. We have covered the spheres of influence and what each layer should mean. How much time we should spend with these people, and who our most time should be spent with. If we keep Jesus at the center of our relationships then every other relationship in our lives will benefit from it. Also keeping in mind that those closest to us should have the same Christ-like values as we do will help us make sure we are positioned in our life for maximum growth!

What was your favorite concept this week?

What concept was the hardest to you? Why?

Did you have any relational break throughs this week? Recently?

What relationship are praying about and working on?



You stay on your side.

Welcome back!! Last week we talked about our Spheres of influence and the need to place a value on our layers of friendships. Now that we understand what we value we need to learn to protect those values.

One way we do this is with Boundaries. When we use proper boundaries in our relationship with people we will begin to find that we can live a life with the freedom that God intended.

God created us to live Free lives. Sometimes the relationships we have with people are motivated out of guilt, hurt, pressure, instead of freedom. We react towards or away from these relationships when they start to entangle us. Many suffer from emotional anxiety derived from stressful relationships with people when they likely have a boundary issue. But the bible says "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1). We must "stand firm" and choose to live in the freedom he has already paid for.

The choice is ours. ONLY we can free ourselves from the pain, pressure, and guilt by living within our boundaries. Relational boundaries allow us to distinguish our unique identity from that of another person. This concept is relatively easy to understand when that person is an acquaintance or coworker, Right?? We just spend less time with them. However, it gets more complicated the closer you are to that person. It's easy for the boundaries to become too loose or too rigid.

If we want to establish boundaries we have to know a few things first. First off: With freedom comes **OWNERSHIP**. With the freedom that Christ has given us, we have to take ownership of our life and our choices. This means you must take **OWNERSHIP FOR YOUR Feelings, Attitudes, Behaviors, Choices, Limits, Talents, Thoughts, Desires, Loves, and Values**. All of these things lie within your boundaries. And God has given you the freedom to have control over these things. Either good or bad. As Paul and Jesus both tell us, "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12) On that day, there will be no

blaming it on someone else, no excuses given such as "he made me feel that way," or "she drove me to it." It will be just us and Him, and we will be responsible. So, while freedom is a good thing, it takes a bit of work.

Ownership says, "that is mine, and I am responsible for it." It is what Jesus was calling us to in the commandment to "take the log out of our own eye first." (Lk. 6:42) So, in order to take ownership of our lives, we must own what is ours. That means if I am angry, then it is my anger and I have to take Ownership for it, not blame it on you. You may have provoked me to it, but the reality is that since it exists in my soul, it is my problem. Ownership is a hard part of boundaries that most of us have a hard time doing. We are too quick to blame everyone else for why/what we do.

Boundaries teach us that I have to own my feelings, and once I own them, I can do something about them. But as long as we divert ownership to others, then we will allow ourselves to be victims of their actions/ or reactions/ or lack of action for that matter. Our Ownership is the beginning of the steps to freedom.

Ownership then leads to **control**. God is behind the idea of you being in control of your own life! That is precisely why he died. So that you could be free to choose the life you want. With him or Not. That being said, He does not want anyone else controlling you, your feelings, your attitudes, your thoughts, or any other aspect of your life. He wants you in control of yourself so that you can freely submit that life to Him.

So with **Ownership** and **control**, we can live a life of freedom with people and in our relationships. When we learn to choose freedom and peace over blame and "being right" we will find true freedom. This takes practice, it takes being able to tell people NO, it takes walking away from an argument that you might be right, but it just isn't worth the breath. This means that we have to let people pick up their own messes, and not fix things for them all the time and this is healthy boundaries.

REFLECT

While talking about this topic, does a relationship or issue come to mind? In the space below list those relationships that might be causing you stress. Include those relationships that might be crossing over into your ownership, or control. Then as the week progresses, Pray that God will help you determine boundaries for these relationships. Maybe you just focus on one important relationship first. But give it time and you will see that with boundaries you can be free. After all isn't that why Christ Died, to set us free.

Remember that this takes practice. We will continue this series this week learning more about how we can be better at boundaries.

Bush
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Boundaries are a fun topic- said no one ever

Boundaries are healthy and necessary for our lives. Boundaries help us to separate who we are apart from everyone else. Boundaries help us to clarify how we feel in a respectful but bold way. They let people know that we have respect for ourselves and they should too.

Boundaries are like a fence. This fence protects what is our responsibility, and identify what is not. *When we learn to take responsibility, through ownership, we gain control and can live in the freedom that God created us to live in.*

Let me make a clear distinction for you. . . Boundaries are Not Walls. They don't isolate or keep you from people. Boundaries simply help to separate what we are not responsible for, and what we are. They let the bad stuff happening inside of your fence have a way out and the Good stuff on the outside of your fence have a way in.

Here is the hard part: In order for you to grow in your relationships and with boundaries, You really have to start to look inside of yourself and be honest with yourself. Learning about boundaries means that we must take **responsibility** for our feelings. Asking the questions like, Why did I say yes? Do I feel like I have to say yes? Why am I exhausted? Am I taking care of things that are not within my boundaries? If we are saying YES, then we might have a boundary issue.

We can also look at our Motivations. Why do we feel the need to attend an event that we know we don't really enjoy? Will this event help us to grow a friendship or meet new people, or just add stress and frustration to the relationships we do have. Why do we say yes to helping friends, even though we know they won't help us? Sure we enjoy being helpful to friends, but if this friendship doesn't benefit from your hard work, is it worth it? These can all be boundary issues.

Often times we are taught that boundaries are rude and selfish. But the bible tells us in Proverb 4: 23 to *Guard our heart*. Boundaries will help us to keep guard of the person that we are or are becoming.

Galatians 6: 2-5 says: *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load."*

What this scripture is saying is that we each have a **Load** or a responsibility to carry for ourselves. And then when **burdens** get to heavy we the church can help each other out. The Greek language uses the Word Burden to describe a boulder- something one person cant possible carry alone. And the Greek uses the word **Load** to describe as a backpack.

The problem with boundaries is when people act like their **boulders** (big problems we can bring to the church body together) are Daily **Loads** and refuse help form others. Or they act like their daily **Loads** (small Backpack problems) are **boulders** they don't have to carry, they push off their responsibility on the other people in their live. This can be tiresome. Boundaries simply remind those others and yourself what is yours and theirs. This will help us tremendously in our families, and our relationships with kids, spouses, and friend.

This is going to be a tough week. If we want change we have to change our thought process. If we want to live a live that is free from the burdens that other people try to place on us, we are going to have to learn to trust the process, let a lot of things go, and move forward with the responsibility of our own property and no one else. I am excited to grow with you this week.

Rules of Boundaries Part 1

God's world is set up with Laws and principles that even if you do not know them you will discover their effects. Understanding these will help us to understand where we are lacking boundaries. Today we will study 5 of them.

#1 Sewing and Reaping

Gal. 6: 7-8 tells us that we reap what we sew, it's sort of the Cause and effect scenario. Every action causes a reaction. This means that sometimes we have to deal with the consequences of our actions. However sometimes we don't reap what we sew because someone steps in and reaps the consequences for us. However then the sewing and reaping experience is interrupted. And the one who interrupts has no boundaries. **The one who is sewing should do the reaping.** This is harmful because when interrupted people don't learn their lessons. Consequences are a normal thing that we need to experience in order to grow and do better.

?? Think about a time in your life when you sewed "negatively" (acting out, overspending, being selfish, ignoring God), what did you reap? Then think about a time you sewed positively, what did you reap??

#2 We must be Responsible

It is our job to be responsible only for ourselves, not OTHERS. (we talked a lot about this yesterday).

?? What areas of our life, attitude, word, actions, and time do we need to take responsibility for so we don't hurt other people in our life??

#3 We do have Power

Although we are not all-powerful, for we render that control to our Creator. We do have the power to agree with the Truth of our problems and take responsibility. We have the power to submit our inability to fix things to God and make amends with those we can.

You have the power to work on submitting yourself to the process and working with God to change you. You see, understanding what you do have power over, help you understand what you don't have power over.

?? What are you worried about outside of your

boundaries?? Who has the power to change it??

#4 Respect

Often times we are afraid to set boundaries because we are afraid of what "They" will do. "They" won't speak to you. "They" won't be your friend. "They" will end the relationship. **When we focus on others we lose clarity about ourselves,** and therefore our boundaries get crossed. But keep in mind that you can teach people how to treat you. In Mathew 7: 1-2 the bible says do unto others as you would want them to do to you. This means that you need to respect other peoples boundaries and choices and when you do they will learn to respect your boundaries as well.

?? What relationships do you comply with instead of setting boundaries?

#5 Motivation

The bible does say that it is more blessed to give than to receive. But what if we are giving of our time and money and talents so much so that it is draining us? This happens more than we would like to admit. And this is likely due to boundaries. **We need to set better boundaries for our time, and our family, so that we don't end up giving and serving, and in turn hating it.** When you give it shouldn't frustrate you, but it should give you cheer and make you happy. If it does the opposite you need to set a boundary for those things.

? Are you motivated out of fear that you will lose love? Or that people will be angry with you?

?? What are you doing with the wrong motivations? Love should be the only true motive for what we do. Love God and love people.

We will continue tomorrow... .

Rules of Boundaries Part 2

Let us pick up where we left off yesterday. . .

#6. Evaluation

Ephesians 4:25 teaches us that we need to be honest with one another about how we are hurt. Too often do we evaluate the situation and choose to stay silent. This might seem like we are respecting boundaries. But **respect doesn't mean silence**. You might say "I don't want to hurt them" but let me explain that HURT and HARM are two very different things.

When you go to the dentist, and he drills in to your tooth and it HURTS. Correct? But did it harm you? No because he was fixing something. What about when you ate the sugar that caused the cavity. Did the sugar hurt you? NO but it did harm you. You see things that are good for us can HARM us. And things that HURT can be good too.

Remember this when you are evaluating whether you should confront someone who is doing wrong and harmful things. 1. Write out your complaint. 2. Pray about it and ask God to purify your intentions. 3. Confront the person in love. 4. Let it go. And don't keep bringing it up.

#7. Proactive

Here we learn to harness the ability to be reactive to situations and decide to be PROACTIVE. Reactive people are quick to respond to something after a situation has occurred. Proactive people recognize that a situation might happen and do what they can to avoid it or adjust. Once we learn what we don't like we can start to place proactive boundaries that don't create a reactive effect.

Mathew 5 gives a great example when Jesus did not resist an evil person. . . But learned to turn the other cheek. Don't be like a child who throws fits. **Learn what provokes these emotions and learn to not be affected by them.** This is what Jesus was saying. Don't be a reactive person.

#8. Envy

Envy focus on things we don't have and

makes us neglect what we have in our life!

Boundaryless people feel empty and unfulfilled. They look at another's sense of fullness and feel envious. This time and energy could/should be spent on taking responsibility for their lack of doing something about it. Gal 6:4 says each one should test his actions and then take pride in his accomplishments, without comparing (Jesse Translation) **Don't be envious of what isn't happening in your life, evaluate yourself so that you can change what you can control**

#9. ACTIVITY

Many times we have boundary issues because we lack initiative - the God-given ability to push ourselves in to life. The sad thing is that people who are not active, but passive, are not evil or bad people. However, passivity can become an alley of evil when we sit back a just "let things happen to us". Hebrews 10: 38-39 say that God is not pleased with those that "shrinks back", or are passive. When we stop to recognize how destructive it is to be passive, we can see why God doesn't tolerate it. **Passive people allow others to cross boundaries in their lives, and never correct them.** Often these people will continue to pray for change, all while God is waiting for you to be active and make the change happen.

#10. Exposure

Your boundaries need to be made visible to others that you are in a relationship with. You need to learn to communicate what they are, as well as when they have been crossed. Often times we take the passive road and don't address our hurts. We build up anger, and frustration that way and we end up with walls instead of fences. Learn to communicate with Love and Respect.

If we can learn these 10 laws and learn to apply them we will see our relationships with people directly impacted.

Myths & misconceptions of Boundaries

1. If I set boundaries I'm being selfish

Absolutely not. Yes, the bible does tell us to Love others, and healthy boundaries are a reflection of love for yourself and the other person. The difference here is the difference between *selfishness* and *stewardship*. A selfish person makes everything about them and therefore looses out on opportunities to love others. Someone who is a good steward of there love however makes less time for people who take advantage of it and more time for those who are actually in need.

2. Boundaries are a sign of disobedience

Absolutely not. A lot of people think that those who have boundaries have them because they have been disobedient or sinned and now must limit themselves. But in reality it is those people who have a lack of boundaries that find themselves in limitless opportunities to disobey the word of God.

3. If I say no, then I will lose relationships with people.

Although this might be true in some cases. Is the relationship really worth the cost of you being committed to something you don't really want to do? You will be committed to the obligation just to make sure you don't lose a friend? Is that a friendship? Instead, We must learn to say NO. the book Boundaries by Henery Cloud, says " an internal no nullifies an external YES." if we are saying no inside then we won't have peace. And we deserve peace. So learn to say NO

4. If I began setting boundaries I will be hurt others

Saying no is a test for the quality of your relationship. Those that can respect our boundaries are ok with us saying NO. Those are the people you really want in your life. Not the people you have to keep up with their obligations. That's a boss??

****Don't be a people pleaser!!** If everything you say is loved by everyone chances are it's not the truth

TIP- Make sure that you are surrounded by a few good friendships. This helps when one is too busy meeting their own needs to help you. You don't have to be upset about that, you can respect it and call another healthy friend. Often times we isolate ourselves and only have one friend. These are High demand friendships, that can cause drama and burn us out.

5. Boundaries mean that I am angry

Although a need for boundaries is recognized when we are constantly dealing with the emotions of anger, Stress, anxiety, etc. The fact is emotions and feelings tell us what's happening on the inside of us. They are an indicator that something is not at peace.

Those emotions such as Anger, are an opportunity to face a threat, and set some boundaries so it doesn't keep happening. Getting upset is going to happen, take responsibility to heal and set boundaries. When you develop boundaries you have less need for anger. *****Don't get mad get even is WRONG** instead don't get mad, set better boundaries

6. When others set boundaries, it upsets me.

An inability to accept boundaries from others can identify a dependence. This is another reason why we need more than one close friend. This helps us to not take one person's opinion not so personal because we can turn to our other close friends. Remember that when you respect others boundaries, they will respect yours. Don't get caught causing Emotional blackmail, make people be there for you when they really don't want to. God doesn't want you isolated he will put the correct people in your life. But first you must be able to let some of those unhealthy or unfruitful relationships go.

7. Boundaries cause feelings of guilt

Setting boundaries intentionally or not on people should not cause guilt. If you are busy and cannot see your friends or family they should not put you in a guilt-ridden position. You can and should be able to move about towards the purpose and dreams God has called you to without feeling bad.

BIGGEST TIP: You are in control of your boundaries, just like fence post they are not permanent, they can change and be renegotiated. You can make your boundaries bigger or shrink them back when needed. **YOU are in control of your BOUNDARIES!!**

Bush
Women

Push
Women

Push
Women

Push
Women

Bush
Women