

## **A God with Good Boundaries**

In a world filled with dysfunction, dysfunction begins to appear normal. Proper, healthy love begins to look odd and unhealthy. That being the case, folks look at God as if His attitudes and actions are wrong. They simply can't understand how God could allow punishment and consequences, especially one as stark as hell. The real problem here is not hell, which is not, as some suppose, the awful jail where God sends the people He is mad at because they won't do what He wants. Rather, it is the horrific state of being completely and ultimately separated from God. We must grasp that this separation doesn't come because we serve an angry God, but because we serve a God with good boundaries.

Boundaries are tough for us. Our world wants most limits removed. Further, we are so exposed to codependent behaviors, we are puzzled by the truly independent God. That is, our experience with most relationships is so dysfunctional, codependent, and boundariless, real boundaries seem restrictive and mean.

Consider our common experiences. A parent establishes a rule, but becomes so afraid a child will abandon the family that the parent doesn't discipline the violation of the rule. Or a young single makes a commitment to sexual purity, but when his/her significant other pushes to cross the line, the single is so afraid of losing the relationship that he/she breaks the boundary. The concept of codependency is most discussed today in the context of addictions. One spouse continues to drink, drug, pursue pornography, gamble, chase sexual immorality (the list could go on), and while the other hates the behavior, they are dependent upon it. That is, spouses of addicts often get their sense of self from being able to react to the addiction. That happens either by attempts to control the addict's behavior or by playing the martyr who has to endure so much. Spouses of addicts are often so desperate for relationship, they'll share their spouse with the addiction, sometimes even with other people. The crazy thing is the spouses who leave these unhealthy relationships (whether through lawful divorce or otherwise) are often so subconsciously dependent on the addiction of their spouse that they marry someone who struggles with similar addictions.

James 4:1-10 demonstrates God is not like that. God maintains good boundaries. He wants a relationship with you, but He is not so desperate that He will share you with the devil or the world. If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you. In fact, He has done everything He can (short of forcing you) to get you to draw near, even paving the way with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, if you would rather be friends with the world or embrace the devil, you are choosing to be enemies with God. And eventually, as much as it pains Him, He'll let you have what you are pursuing—separation from Him, otherwise known as hell.

Our culture and even some culturally impacted Christians think that is harsh, even mean and evil. Understand, it's not that He doesn't love us tremendously. He does. The problem is we are so confused by unhealthy demonstrations of love that when we finally see healthy, loving boundaries, we are shocked. God won't share us with the devil or the world. He wants cleansed hands and pure hearts. God wants us so much He sacrificed His Son, but not so much that He'll sacrifice His boundaries.

You make the call. You can decide for Satan and the world, or you can draw near to God, but you can't do both. God is too healthy for that. What will you choose?