

## SESSION 3

# RADIOACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

## Loving Unhealthy People without Getting Sick

*A boundary is simply a property line. It clarifies where you end and the other person begins. Boundaries help you to be clear about what you are for and against and what you will and won't tolerate in your relationships.*

**John Townsend, *BEYOND BOUNDARIES***

**GROUP DISCUSSION** A key part of getting to know God better is sharing your journey with others.

Briefly check in with each other about your experiences since the last session ...or as a result of the last session. For example:

- What insights did you discover in your personal study or in the chapter you read from the Soul Detox book?
- How did the last session impact your daily life or your relationship with God?
- What questions would you like to ask the other members of your group?

**VIDEO NOTES RADIOACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS.** As you watch, use the outline below to follow along or to take notes on anything that stands out to you.

### NOTES

The right people build you up and lead you toward Christ; the wrong people can be very toxic.

**“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’ “(1 Corinthians 15:33)**

Three categories of toxic people

1. Critics (negative)

2. Controllers

3. Tempters

Jesus loved everyone equally, but He didn't treat everyone equally. He created boundaries.

As we grow closer to Christ, we need to create healthy boundaries in relationships that are toxic or could hurt us.

When people don't respect your boundaries, you may need to cut off the relationship – at least for a period of time.

We need to separate ourselves from toxic relationships so we can be spiritually strong and full of God's love.

**GROUP DISCUSSION** Let's talk about what we just watched.

1. What part of the teaching had the most impact on you

#### **TOXIC PEOPLE**

2. On the video there were 3 different types of toxic people described:

**\_Critics:** chronically negative people who find fault in everything

**\_Controllers:** overbearing people who manipulate or force their will on others.

**\_Tempters:** persuasive people who encourage you to do things you know you shouldn't

- Which of the three kind of toxic people do you find most difficult to deal with?
- Even if we aren't actively toxic in our relationships, all of us have the capacity for toxic behavior. If you were to ask the people who know you best to describe your toxic tendency, which of the three categories do you think they might choose? What examples might they cite as evidence of your tendency?

3. Which number on the continuum below best describes how you feel when you have a toxic person in your life? Briefly share an experience that illustrates your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>I feel like the toxic person is in control. I can't change his/her behavior and I am miserable and powerless to do</p>								<p>I feel like I am in control. I can't change the other person's behavior, but I can take ownership and responsibility for how I feel and respond.</p>	

**HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

4. The biblical foundation for healthy boundaries includes the principle of good stewardship. Stewardship applies to financial and material resources, but it also requires taking ownership and responsibility for our lives as a whole: how we use our gifts (1 Peter 4:10), pursue our growth (Hebrews 6:1), care for our bodies (1 Corinthians 16:19-20), guard our interior lives (Proverbs 4:23), and conduct our relationships (Galatians 5:14-15). As Christ followers, we are stewards of everything God has entrusted to us.

- Based on your experience of toxic relationships, how would you describe the impact these relationships have on your ability to steward your life and your energies well?

- Healthy boundary statements set a limit. For example:

*I'm not participating.*  
*I'm not going there with you.*  
*If the conversation goes toward complaining, trash talk, or gossip, I need to step away.*  
*The next time you try to get me to do something I don't want to do, I'll leave the room.*  
*That activity is not good for me. I need to take a pass.*

What is your comfort level with setting clear boundaries or with making statements like those above?

- Briefly describe someone you know who has healthy boundaries. How have you seen this person establish or maintain his or her boundaries well? Would you say people tend to respect or resist this person's boundaries? Why?

## **MANAGING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS**

**5. Jesus regularly set boundaries. He loved everyone equally, but He didn't treat everyone equally. And He kept His distance from people who weren't good for Him – even those who believed in Him. Here is one example:**

In Jerusalem during Passover many people put their faith in Jesus, because they saw Him work miracles. But Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and He would not let them have power over Him.  
(John 2:23, 24 CEV)

**Other Bible versions describe the boundary Jesus set by saying He “didn't trust them” or “didn't entrust His life to them.” Jesus also had no hesitation in setting vividly clear boundaries with those He was closest to.**

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” (Matthew 16:23)

- **How would you describe the similarities and differences in how Jesus establishes His boundaries in both cases?**
- **We know Jesus routinely kept his distance from heardhearted and corrupt religious leaders, but in both examples here, He puts a protective fence between Himself and His own followers. What unique challenges do you face in establishing boundaries with other Christians? How is it more or less difficult for you than establishing boundaries with non-Christians?**
- **What connections might you make between Jesus' actions and the principle of good stewardship? In other words, how did He take ownership and responsibility for His life and what God had entrusted to Him?**

**6. Take a few moments to reflect on what you've learned and experienced together in *Soul Detox* so far.**

- **Since the first session, what shifts have you noticed in yourself in terms of how you relate to the group? For example, do you feel more or less guarded, understood, challenged, encouraged, connected, etc?**

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: What I Want To Remember**

**Complete this activity on your own.**

- 1. Briefly review the outline and any notes you took.**
- 2. In the space below, write down the most significant thing you gained in this session – from the teaching, activities, or discussion.**

*What I want to remember from this session ...*

