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Christian Perspectives: Some boundaries revisited

Two and a half years ago, my daughter and son-in-law, along with their toddler, moved in with us. The housing market being what it is, we wanted to help them save money to purchase a home. Since then, another little boy joined their family and at the beginning of June, they will move to the home they have purchased.

When they were preparing to move in with us, I looked around my home with new eyes. If a toddler was coming to live with us, I knew I would have to do some baby proofing. And one of the first things I did was install a strong baby gate at the top of the stairs to the second story. It was the kind that an adult could easily open with the push of a button, but it would not yield to baby hands.

At the time, I wrote in my blog:

As I was in my bedroom, I noticed how happy he was, running around upstairs. In the past, this was a forbidden activity. Before we had the gate the stairs were blocked at the bottom and he couldn't come up without an adult. And if he was upstairs he was in a room with the door closed.

But once the baby gate was installed, ??there I was, making my bed, while he toddled around, exploring spaces he had never really seen before.?

I noted at the time that there was beauty in boundaries. He had greater freedom with a gate in place.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.?
Psalm 16:6 (NRSV)

The spiritual implications did not escape me. God has put boundaries in my life. Because God knows my heart and the things that would tempt me to stray, there are gates, fences and guideposts place along the way. When I accept that God knows what is best and I incorporate these ?boundaries? into my life, I experience the freedom that comes from living within the grace of God.

Now, unlike my grandsons, I can hop the gate, jump the fence and ignore the guidance that comes through God's word, the counsel of wise people and my own history with the Lord. However when I am outside of the safe places that God offers I don't experience abundant joy.

Just recently, we have started to leave the gate open during the day. My grandson is old enough to go up and down the stairs by himself. As he has matured, we have been able to trust him with more.

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.
Colossians 1:9-10 (NRSV)

In the Christian walk, we may find that God moves the boundaries a little. There are boundaries I used to have in my life. As I have matured spirituality, I realize they are no longer in place. But I still rely on the Spirit of God to open the gate in the right time and guide me in wisdom and understanding.

My final observation relates to the baby gate at night. The adults in my home have taken the responsibility of the gate very seriously. Even though it can now be open during the day, we still need to close it when darkness falls. It is habit for the last person to come to bed to ensure that it is well latched. We do not need it but we will not use our freedom to put a little boy at risk.

?But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.? 1 Corinthians 8:9 (NRSV)

In our interactions with others, we need to respect that they might have different boundaries than us. What God might set in place for their safety might not look the same as what is set in our lives. God asks us not to use our freedom to put others at risk.

Boundaries. You can cherish them or chafe against them. When we choose the former we open ourselves up to all the possibilities of freedom.

That might seem like an oxymoron. But it a wonderful truth.

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