

“Why Is Kingdom Boundaries Needed?”

by Timothy Bariteau – May 20, 2022

Have you ever heard someone say, “people don’t change”? Maybe you agree with this idea. Well, here at **Kingdom Boundaries Prison Aftercare Ministries, Inc.** (aka, Kingdom Boundaries for short, or just “KB” for shorter), we KNOW from personal, firsthand experience: People absolutely CAN change! However, not on their own, left to their own devices, determination, effort, and willpower. It takes someone who genuinely cares about them, offering them hope and help. It also takes a personal relationship with Jesus. This is something we take very seriously at **Kingdom Boundaries**. Yes, it’s true, people typically don’t change. But it’s also completely, factually, and Biblically true that, YES, people who surrender to Jesus in humility for help find hope and DO change!

*“...surrender yourselves to God to be His...And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights His heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship. **Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think.** This will **empower** you to discern God’s will as you live a **beautiful** life, **satisfying** and **perfect** in His eyes.”* – Romans 12:1-2 (TPT)

(I’m now going to take what may seem at first like a sudden detour, or rabbit trail, but stay with me because this is all going to circle back and hopefully make a lot of sense.)

WHAT IS ‘HOLINESS’, ANYWAY?

Right near the beginning of those verses in Romans 12 it says, “live in **holiness**”, but do we even know what **holiness** means? This needs to be said: *The concept of holiness is NOT about how we act “doing good stuff and not doing bad stuff”,* even though you’ve probably been taught that in church or heard it from religious people. Sometimes, when a person avoids doing some activity because they consider it unhealthy (smoking, drinking, gambling, or whatever), others refer to them as being “holier than thou”, which paints the idea of being **holy** in a negative light; only important to stuffy, rigid, old-fashioned people who just need to get with the times and learn to have some fun once in a while.

To be more accurate, **holiness** means *living a life that is set apart for a unique and intentional purpose, because you know you are so highly valued!* That is **completely different** than merely obeying rules, a list of do’s and don’ts, just because someone said so. **Holiness** comes from the inside, when you know your true identity as God’s child, and you KNOW you are **special, beautiful, loved, and worth FAR MORE** than whatever the world and other people may be saying about you!

When you start to recognize this...wouldn’t it make sense to begin being more careful and intentional about what activities you participate in, what substances you consume, and even what people you associate with? To be clear, the idea of being **holy** is NOT saying, “I think I’m better than you”, because the truth is EVERYONE could choose to live a **holy** life if they understood how much God loves and respects them, and what His Son, Jesus, did for them when He willingly went to the Cross on their behalf! So, instead, of coming from an attitude of arrogance,

Authentic holiness comes from a realigned perspective of your own TRUE identity and value, and then deciding to start living and acting in a way that respects and even protects that value!

In other words, when you “live in holiness” (Romans 12:1), you are choosing to set certain boundaries in place to guard your life, because you KNOW you have such **great value!**

If you discovered a buried treasure in an unmarked field somewhere, you would hide it, guard it, protect it, and make sure nothing happened to it because you recognize it has great value, right? **Holiness**, in the

simplest terms, is just saying, *“I recognize I have great value, and should be treated as such.”* And thinking with this ‘holy’ perspective should also cause us to say about others, *“This person should receive a certain level of honor and respect, not because they are better than anyone else, but simply because I know they, in and of themselves, have value, too! They are also a priceless, precious treasure, and I will begin viewing them in this way. I will put boundaries in place to honor them, care for them, guard and protect them; I value them for the amazing treasure they are!”* Recognizing the treasure in someone else has ZERO EFFECT on your own inherent value; meaning that by acknowledging another person’s worth does NOT diminish my own worth. So, there is absolutely no reason, whatsoever, for us to NOT treat other people with honor and respect!

YEAH, OK...BUT CAN A FELON REALLY BE ‘HOLY’?

What does all of this ‘holiness’ talk have to do with people coming out of prison, you ask?

EVERYTHING.

Think for a moment how *differently* people in jail and prison **would have lived** if someone had told them years ago, when they were just children: *“No matter what you do or how you act, **you ARE and will ALWAYS BE unconditionally loved!** Why? Because YOU have such a **high value** to God’s heart, and HE says you are His **priceless treasure?!**”*

Most likely, if they grew up hearing this, they would not have made the choices they did, which caused them to be incarcerated later in life. However, even though they were not told this, and they ended up making poor choices, it does NOT change the Truth: **God DOES value them this highly, and He gave His Son’s life to pay the blood-price for them to be REDEEMED and RESTORED!** You don’t need to be redeemed and restored if you are already perfect...so Jesus came for people who were losing at life, not just the winners! His forgiveness, love, and grace are NOT a prize that anyone could ever claim to have earned! In fact, what He did for ALL of us losers (yup, the entire human race), is He made it possible for even the worst of us to have our script flipped and become victorious in life! We can’t do that on our own, but when we align ourselves with Jesus, He does that in and for us! *So, at ANY point, if a person wakes up to their True identity in Christ and the high value He puts on them, they CAN begin living a life of holiness!* Doesn’t it make sense then that **we should be helping people to learn who they really are as God sees them?** Doing so would put courage in them and empower them to begin making much better, wiser choices now.

Unfortunately, the opposite usually happens. Most people released from incarceration, instead of having their value restored by society, are met with fear (based on what people think they **might** do) and a huge number of added restrictions the typical member of society would have difficulty enduring. Naturally, this causes stress and anxiety, and breeds even more fear. It is not actually all that surprising then, that the recidivism rate (*tendency of a criminal to reoffend*) is so high, as people tend to slip back into old patterns of behavior and bad habits, especially when feeling stressed, afraid, and overwhelmed. And again, keep in mind, they typically are NOT being reminded of their extremely high value, but are constantly being told (even multiple times a day, and in various ways) that they are despicable, disgusting, perverted, awful, horrible, losers who can NEVER change. Having been released from prison after many years of (and in some cases, even decades of) isolation, loneliness, and worse...the **greatest desire** in a person’s heart is to feel loved and accepted again, and to be part of a family and community. Instead, they repeatedly hear the message over and over, that due to their struggles, mistakes, and failures in the past, they are now nothing more than rejected outcasts who have no significance or importance to anyone anymore. If THAT is what you are being told, especially if you have been hearing it your whole life, you are going to believe it’s true. Therefore, you are going to live and continue making choices from that perspective.

I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THESE NUMBERS!

On average, in the state South Dakota alone, over 4,000 people are released from prison **every year!** That is approximately 340 people EVERY MONTH! Where do they all go? There are simply not enough places for all these people to go when they are released, especially when you consider the fact that most of the time, as I mentioned earlier, due to their past, society and even their own families disown and reject them, refusing to allow them to "come home". This makes it ridiculously difficult for someone with a felony to find a place to live. Depending on their crime, they may be refused housing, unable to rent virtually anywhere. So again, **where are they supposed to go?**

Well, guess what...whether you like it or not, they ARE coming to YOUR neighborhoods, your communities, your places of residence, your jobs, your businesses. They ARE moving into your world, shopping where you shop, living where your family and friends call home. Three hundred and forty people EVERY month. Over four THOUSAND. Every. Year. And these numbers are only talking about the inmates coming out of the South Dakota prison system. Keep in mind the numbers are actually even higher when you take into consideration the people coming out of both the federal prisons and the people from other states that for various reasons want to move to South Dakota after they are released from incarceration.

Rather than treat all of these people with disrespect, dishonor, anger, hatred, bitterness, rejection and so on, which only serves to further compound the problem, why don't we begin "taking the higher ground" as they say and start loving these people and help them to recognize their true value? Why not come alongside them, be supportive and coach them into making better, wiser choices?! If we do that, instead of needing to be in fear of them moving into our neighborhoods, we can be proud of them as they become productive, wonderful members of our community!

Consider this: *the vast majority of inmates coming out of prison do **NOT WANT TO GO BACK!*** They really DO want to be successful and not get in trouble again! They really **WANT** to make wise choices, be respected, and have a sense of dignity. They do NOT want to have to constantly be on their guard, in paranoia, always walking on eggshells, just hoping someone isn't going to 'find out about their past' and out of spite and/or fear accuse them of doing something wrong! Because if that were to happen, they would very likely lose everything all over again that they have been working so hard to accomplish, and they would end up going back to prison. Nobody would want that.

So, why then is the *recidivism rate so high? Why do most people cycle back through the prison system (sometimes over and over again)? Simple. As I stated previously, *when you are only being told you are horrible and worthless, that you will never be able to contribute, and worse, that you will NEVER be able to change any of this about yourself...sadly, you believe it is true, and so you think and act accordingly.* It is much easier when you are ashamed, scared, humiliated and bitter to revert back to old habits and familiar patterns, rather than do the hard, uphill work of changing your lifestyle...especially when you are only being reinforced with the idea that YOU WILL NEVER CHANGE!

IF YOU CHANGE A PERSON'S WORLD...YOU CHANGE THE WORLD!

Our ministry, **Kingdom Boundaries**, believes there is a better way. We seek to change the world, one former inmate at a time, by breaking the cycle of *recidivism (*see below*) by introducing them to the powerful, too-good-to-be-true message of Jesus Christ. How do we do that? By providing men (and hopefully women soon, too!) with a safe, secure, caring environment to live in after being released from prison. Once a person arrives at our ministry, they are surrounded by people who genuinely care about them, believe in them, and want to offer any needed structure, accountability, spiritual guidance, and practical assistance (shelter, food, clothing, employment, transportation, etc.) as they learn how to begin making wiser, more mature choices, empowered by the knowledge they ARE loved; both by a forgiving God, and by people who want to see them succeed.

We strive to offer more than just a bed, but structure, caring support, friendship, accountability, proven Biblical godly wisdom and guidance, in addition to the many practical resources. On a very tangible level, we also provide safety by utilizing a security system which includes locks on all the doors, accountability software that records the arrivals/departures of each resident and staff member, a special key to enter any of our buildings, and cameras all around the facility—inside and out—so our residents, staff and guests can feel protected and at peace while they are here. Our methods seem to be somewhat effective. In contrast to the national *recidivism rate of 44% after being out for 3 years (one of the highest in the world), we only have a 17% rate!

****Recidivism: The tendency of a criminal to reoffend and go back to prison.***

*In other words, how many people go back to prison again after getting out.
For example, if the recidivism rate is 75%, that means out of every 100 people
that get released from prison, 75 end up going back.*

Beginning with just one motel room for one resident in 2013, we have been growing steadily ever since. Currently, we have 3 buildings with a capacity of 21 beds for men. We always have a long waiting list, as we have a mix of both short and long-term residents, taking in new people as soon as a bed opens up. To date (May '22), we have helped over 240 men, with many more waiting for their turn to move in! Recently, we began the process of raising the funds to build a much needed, larger facility enabling us to provide housing for both woman and men, expanding our capacity to 56 beds – 40 for men, 16 for women!

THE BIG PICTURE: IT'S FOR THE KIDS!

Finally, on a much bigger scale, we realize that by helping the men and women who come out of prison, we are not only directly helping those individuals, but we are also helping countless children and families through indirect, yet very real ways! The majority of incarcerated adults are parents, and their choices have deeply affected their children and extended families. **Statistically speaking, **one fourth** of all students with an incarcerated parent drop out of high school, and the chances of a child growing up and being incarcerated themselves one day are **82% HIGHER** if either of the parents were incarcerated. ***But it doesn't have to be that way!***

We aim to break that cycle! Our goal is to see people's lives transformed through genuine repentance, reconciliation, and restoration. We want to help men and women put their lives back on track, begin living in true **holiness** (because they ARE worth it!), see their families experience true reconciliation, and restore both them and their children's destinies to something beautiful again!

*That's worth **fighting for!** That's worth **protecting!**
That's worth setting **strong boundaries** in place to ensure **success!***

And THAT is what Kingdom Boundaries is all about!

**Statistics taken from the website for Proverbs226 Ministry, which seeks to connect incarcerated parents with their children and provide those children with a college education. <https://proverbs226.org>