

# Outside the Box... Inside the Lines | Life In The Box | Study Guide

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## Bible Reading:

- Haggai 1:1-11   
  1 Corinthians 6:9-20   
  1 John 1:1-10   
  1 Corinthians 13:1-13   
  James 4:1-10

*The Book of Ezra recounts the story of Israel's return from captivity. Over 50,000 people left the comfort of home to rebuild God's Temple and their beloved Jerusalem. However, things did not go as planned. Political pressure put those dreams on pause. The people ended up "boxed in" by their enemies for over 15 years. The Book of Haggai records a wake-up call from God.*

**Haggai 1:9 (NLT)** You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses.

*We all know what it's like to live "Stuck" or "boxed in". We often feel like everyone else is in control. Some days we even feel like God is against us. Very much like ancient Israel, we have felt as though we were scratching out a living among the rubble of our own dreams. It doesn't need to be that way. We can learn to take responsibility for the right things and release control of the wrong things. Our journey starts by realizing when we have been boxed in.*

## When We Say Yes to the Bad.

**John 12:42-43 (NLT)** Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. 43 For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

*Why did these people say "yes" to so much bad? Think of all the dead religion they were saying "yes" to. Consider the prejudiced and the wicked leaders that continued ruling their lives. Why did they allow this? Because they were afraid.*

We also say yes to the Bad because of our fear. We are afraid that we might hurt someone's feelings or that we will be abandoned, so we say "yes" to so many things that we don't want.

**Proverbs 29:25 (NLT)** Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.

## When We Say No to the Good

*So many give but never receive. When we do that we basically box ourselves in and put the lock outside the gate of our heart. Then only unsafe people, who don't respect our boundaries will enter. While safe people, who do respect then won't enter without permission. We need safe people in our lives.*

**James 5:16 (NLT)** Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

*The Way out of this box is to "Walk In The Light". We need safe people with whom we are able to share our lives. Nothing heals faster than light upon our darkness.*

**1 John 1:7 (NLT)** But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

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## When We Disrespect Others

*Our lives are composed of areas that we control, that we influence and that concern us. We disrespect others when we disregard our personal responsibility and try to control them. We do this because a part of us thinks it is easier to control others than ourselves. So we try to "get" others to meet our needs. It never turns out well. (Read [James 4:1-10](#)) Living in this way creates a great deal of loneliness and fear that people would abandon us if we ever change.*

*The way out of this box is to honestly consider ourselves and our new identity in Christ. When we receive what we have been given in Christ, reflect upon it and ask God for a greater revelation of it, we discover that we are not alone. We can then experience a real connection with God and others.*

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## When We Ignore Others

**Galatians 6:2 (NLT)** Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

*We are responsible to care about and help others whom God places in our lives. Of course, there must be limits, but we cannot live absorbed only with ourselves. The point of "lines" is to protect our true responsibilities. Good boundaries don't cut off those in need, but rather meet the needs of others more effectively.*

*The way out of this box is to prioritize relationships. Are we carrying our weight in our relationships? If not, do we have too many relationships or too few? How could we better choose and invest in stronger connections?*

*Life outside the box will ensure that we serve and give out of real love rather than resentment. We can help each other in the journey from isolation to connection.*

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## Talk about it...

- *What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.*
- *Review Haggai 1:1-11. How could you empathize with Israel's difficulty regarding the construction of the Temple?*
- *Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Do you struggle to work on your "temple"? Why? What keeps you from growing more consistently?*
- *Share some fears that keep us saying "Yes" to the bad? "No" to the Good?*
- *How did you feel the last time someone disrespected your "No"? How do we disrespect the "No" of others? How could we better respect other people's boundaries?*
- *Do you have relationships in which the other person does the lion's share of the work? What does that reveal about the relationship? What would improve it?*
- *Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?*

*Additional Resources:*

*Adapted from "Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life, Cloud, Townsend" - Chapter 3 - Boundary Problems*