

Guardrails, Part 2

GUARDRAIL: a system designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas

WHERE WE NEED GUARDRAILS:

- BRIDGES (when we are in a place where there is little margin for error)
- MEDIANS (when we are close to people going in the opposite direction)
- CURVES (when we encounter unexpected changes in conditions)

- Guardrails are not located in the most dangerous place – that place is just BEYOND the guardrail. Rather, guardrails are actually located in a place of SAFETY, to keep us from moving into dangerous areas.
- Guardrails are a “margin for error” – functioning as a warning signal.
- There is SOME damage done when you hit a guardrail, but not nearly as much as if the guardrail wasn't there. Guardrails take the IMPACT, and you have a small crash rather than a big crash.
- When you hit a physical guardrail you stop before you hit the ditch; when you hit a moral guardrail you stop before you commit SIN.

Some of your greatest regrets in life could have been avoided if you had had some guardrails in that area of your life!

GUARDRAIL: a personal standard of behavior that becomes a matter of conscience (*i.e. breaking your “rule” bothers you and brings you guilt*)

Ephesians 5:15-17 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

- Redeeming the time (“kairos”) – being intentional about how you live!
- You already know in your heart what God is prompting you to do! You know what is on the other side of this guardrail! Be honest!
- All of us have the tendency to get as close to the line as possible. We say, “Is it a sin to ...?” but what we are really asking is, “How close can I get to sin without sinning?” That’s the wrong question!
- Don’t ask “is it right or is it wrong?” – ask “is it the WISE thing to do?”

There are THREE kinds of standards: (1) **Bible standards** – the direct commands of Scripture, (2) **Church standards** – places where our spiritual leadership applies biblical principles to contemporary issues, (3) **Personal standards** – our own GUARDRAILS prompted by the Holy Spirit, which may or may not apply to anyone else. Our personal

standards should be HIGHER than either Bible or church standards.
Don’t put your guardrail on the far side of the danger zone!
FRIENDS are one of the biggest influences on where we draw our lines!

You will always be around people who are moving in the opposite direction and you need to be very careful, because friends (i.e. close proximity people) always influence the direction and quality of your life!

The thing that makes friendship so great is also the thing that makes friendship so dangerous. We're all repelled by rejection and attracted by acceptance, so when we're around friends who accept us we drop our guard! It's then that we are the most open to influence - because **ACCEPTANCE LEADS TO INFLUENCE.**

Proverbs 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise (PROMISE): but a companion of fools shall be destroyed (WARNING).

- WISE PEOPLE are CAREFUL about obeying God’s laws.
- FOOLISH PEOPLE are CARELESS about obeying God’s laws.
- WISE PEOPLE understand that all of life is CONNECTED (no isolated incidents), so they make decisions based on TOMORROW.
- FOOLISH PEOPLE believe that all of life is DISCONNECTED (all isolated incidents), so they make decisions based only on TODAY.
- Wisdom is contagious, but foolishness is not – notice the difference! However, the COMPANION of fools shall be destroyed (like getting hit with shrapnel from the destruction of their life). “But I'll never do what they do, so I'm safe" - Solomon says you're absolutely wrong!
- Friends who are not concerned about THEIR life (marriage, finances, reputation, etc.) are not going to be concerned about YOUR life, etc.

2 Samuel 13:1-3 (KJV) And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. **But Amnon had a friend,** whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.

Amnon was the firstborn son of King David, the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. He lived in the palace and had everything anyone could ever need. He had the reputation of a royal, and with his family was admired by the masses. His bright future was assured by his imperial lineage. But behind the image Amnon was a fraud! Amnon had a deep dark secret that he was unsuccessfully trying to deal with. He was consumed with

lust for his own half-sister Tamar. He couldn't court her because such a relationship was forbidden by God's law, but he had entertained the notion secretly until it occupied his thoughts day and night. Amnon didn't realize that he was already ensnared in the dreaded cycle of sin. One preacher called it "LSD" – lust, sin, death.

James 1:14-15 (KJV) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Amnon thought that just because everything still appeared right on the outside, he was doing okay. His name meant "faithful" but he was only being faithful outwardly where everyone could see it. Inwardly, he was in reality being unfaithful to his father, to his family, to himself and to his God. He wasn't guilty of sin because he had struggles (everyone has struggles!), but because he wasn't being honest about his struggles before God. There is probably nothing more ridiculous in human nature than our attempts to "hide" from God who can read our every thought!

Technically, Amnon had not yet fallen into sin, but he was hanging above the pit of disaster by a very slender thread. All that was holding him back was his "royal reputation" – he knew that he could not risk publicly what he thought about privately. By himself, perhaps Amnon would have never acted out his lustful fantasies. Perhaps his desire not to soil his reputation, his knowledge that his desire was wrong before God, and the warning voice of his conscience would have been enough to hold him back for a few years until Tamar was married and beyond his reach.

BUT AMNON HAD A FRIEND!

Jonadab was the nephew of King David; that is, he hung around with the royal family, but he was not in line for the throne. The Bible says that he was a very subtle or conniving man. His name meant "Jehovah gives" and he made a mockery out of its meaning by convincing his friend Amnon that God would allow him to sin and get by, that God would "give" him his desire even though it was wrong.

Under the influence of Jonadab, Amnon carried out a wicked plan to rape his own half-sister. He shamed her, he shamed himself, he shamed his father, and he shamed his whole family. Through his selfishness, he scarred Tamar for the rest of her life. He also unwittingly destroyed himself, because Tamar's brother Absalom would eventually seek revenge and kill him. By himself, perhaps Amnon could have held out a little longer against temptation. **BUT AMNON HAD A FRIEND!**

Meanwhile, the crafty Jonadab walked away unscathed by the whole sordid situation. The Bible records that he is still lurking about the palace when Amnon is killed by Absalom; in fact, it is Jonadab that brings the news of his death to King David! What a "friend" he was!

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

Talk to anyone who has fallen into destructive lifestyles and sinful habits, and 99 times out of 100, you'll find a "friend" in the shadows! It's hard to put a finger on the exact details of their influence, but it's easy for the spiritually discerning to detect the "CATALYST" at work!

- When did you first start doing drugs? I had a friend ...
- When did you take your first drink? I had a friend ...
- When did you start smoking? I had a friend ...
- When did you first look at pornography? I had a friend ...
- When did you begin cheating on your spouse? I had a friend ...
- When did you stop listening to your pastor? I had a friend ...
- When did you drop your holiness convictions? I had a friend ...
- When did you first slack off in your prayer life? I had a friend ...

SHOW ME YOUR FRIENDS AND I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR FUTURE!

Proverbs 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise (PROMISE): but a companion of fools shall be destroyed (WARNING).

SOME GUARDRAIL WARNING SIGNS:

- When it dawns on you that your core group isn't moving in the direction you want your life to move, you're too close to the edge!
- When you catch yourself pretending to be someone you're not when you're around your friends, you're too close to the edge!
- When you feel pressure to compromise (when what has never been a temptation before suddenly becomes an option for consideration), you're too close to the edge!
- When you hear yourself saying, "I'll go, but I won't participate" (you're hanging out in the proximity of sin), you're too close to the edge!
- When you hope the people who care about you the most don't find out what you're doing, you're too close to the edge!

NEVER CONFUSE COMPASSION WITH WISDOM! Compassion will never require you to make an unwise decision. Our church welcomes everyone (including fools!), but don't let them be an influence on you.

Drawing back from some relationships may be the best thing you could ever do for them. God is calling you back to safety because He loves you! Think about where you will end up if you maintain this friendship!