

Guardrails, Part 3

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.

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

In the first part of our series we talked about living INTENTIONALLY and setting up personal standards of conduct to protect ourselves.

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!
In the second part of our series we talked about our FRIENDSHIPS and how we are always influenced by these associations.

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!

In this last part of our series we will be talking about two major danger zones in our personal lives – SEX and MONEY.

In any area of life where there is DESIRE, you must have guardrails – because legitimate desires can run out of control and become LUSTS.

Ever since Adam’s failure, mankind has been plagued with out-of-control DESIRES (LUSTS) within their own bodies that war against holiness. These desires are God-given, and are not wrong in themselves. (i.e. The appetite for food is both natural and necessary in humans, but an unrestrained appetite will lead to obesity and many health problems.)

The Bible has much to say about our DESIRES, especially those that get out-of-control (LUSTS), for they destroy our spiritual life. LUST can refer

to ANY wrong desire, but not that the Bible talks most about out-of-control desires for MONEY and for SEX, because they do the most damage to our spiritual lives, and to our future!

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly **LUSTS**, which war against the soul;

Romans 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the **LUSTS** thereof.

“ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS” / “MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH” – PAUL IS TELLING US TO BUILD A GUARDRAIL!

1 Timothy 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful **LUSTS**, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

There are TWO dangerous ditches on either side of the road where money is concerned – on one side we have the ditch of CONSUMPTION (all about NOW), and on the other side we have the ditch of HOARDING (all about THEN). But BOTH ditches are (1) self-centered, (2) consumed by greed, and (3) cause us to live as if there was no God!

GREED is the assumption that it's all for my consumption! Greedy people think, “If anything comes TO me, then it's FOR me!” But Jesus said that our money and possessions (mammon) have the greatest potential to replace God in our lives, because whatever I trust for my SECURITY is in reality my god. Jesus demands that we make a choice!

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Here's the way most people handle their money: Enjoy it (present), Repay it (past), Save it (future), Give it (eternity).

But here's the only order God blesses: Give it (eternity), Save it (future), Repay it (past), Enjoy it (present).

Matthew 6:32-33 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Pagans live opposite of this principle, but YOU build a guardrail that puts God FIRST. It is not a matter of MONEY, but a matter of PRIORITY! Your heart (the FOCUS of your life) follows your TREASURE ...

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

It is possible to fully recover from many disasters in your life, even financial disaster, but you can never fully recover from sexual disaster! (You may laugh about money mistakes, but not sexual mistakes.)

Romans 6:12-13 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the **LUSTS** thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

One of the great lies of our culture is that SEX is just a physical act. Nothing could be future from the truth. Our culture and our media bait us into living as close to the edge as possible in this area, and then chastise us when we step over the line into addiction. People literally entertain themselves with the BAIT all the time – that's stupid and DANGEROUS!

We want everyone that we really care about (spouses, children, etc.) to be sure and build guardrails in this area, but we're not totally committed to doing that ourselves. That is totally hypocritical and DANGEROUS! What do you want the person you are married to (or will marry) to do? What do you want for your children or grandchildren? Is there duplicity in your answer? If so, that is totally hypocritical and DANGEROUS!

Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness (DUPLICITY) of transgressors shall destroy them.

There is incredible incentive for ANYONE to put up guardrails in this area, but especially for CHRISTIANS who understand that we are to honor God with our BODY. If it is dishonoring to God, then don't do it with your body! The context in 1 Corinthians 6 is all “sexual” ...

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Paul says, “FLEE, DON'T FLIRT! PUT UP A GUARDRAIL HERE!”

Desires are NEVER totally satisfied (i.e. the “meal to end all meals” never happens – we have to eat again). Desires GROW when exercised. That means when we COMPROMISE our convictions, we don’t eliminate the tension, we simply make it easier to yield next time! Your temptation STARTS wherever you build your guardrail, so build it far enough back from sin that your desires are still manageable at that point!

God is calling you to put up guardrails in this area because He wants to bless you, not because He wants to punish you. Think about where you will end up in the future if you persist in the direction you are going now!

Proverbs 27:12 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Guardrails for Married People:

- Don't travel alone with members of the opposite sex.
- Don't eat alone with members of the opposite sex.
- Don't confide in members of the opposite sex.
- When you feel your heart drifting toward someone, tell someone.
- Make sure your spouse approves of your guardrails!

It is 600 years before Christ, and many young Jewish men have been taken captive by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in his conquest of the city of Jerusalem. Among the captives carried off to Babylon is a young man named Daniel. He is hundreds of miles from home, in a strange land, and it is the custom of the Babylonians to remove the identity of their captives by forcing them to adapt to the new culture. Even Daniel’s name has been changed to Beltshazzar, which exalts a Babylonian god. It would have been easiest for Daniel to just go along with the rest of the captives, but he decided to build a guardrail!

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel said, “This is where I draw the line, this is as far as I go.” He built his guardrail without knowing where his story would end – but he was smart enough to PREDICT where it would end without a guardrail!

Daniel 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

God used Daniel’s guardrails not just to PROTECT him, but to DIRECT him. You have no idea what hangs in the balance when you set up your guardrails. They become a DEFINING MOMENT for your life!

Some of your greatest regrets could have been avoided if you had had guardrails – that means most of your future regrets can be eliminated!