

Guardrails, Part 1

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 our “MARGIN FOR ERROR.”

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*)

- Guardrails function 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.
- Guardrails let us have “conscience crashes” instead of “life crashes” – they are “instructive” rather than “destructive.”
- 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.

We can all agree on the ULTIMATE danger areas, but without personal guardrails we have no way to keep from straying into them!

Good fathers set up guardrails for their children, and our Heavenly Father does the same thing if we'll follow His prompting. *"We'll have conflict HERE so little damage is done, and you never end up THERE."*

Our culture thinks that guardrails are stupid! And in our generation, even many Christians think that guardrails are stupid! That's DANGEROUS! But we are not the first generation to face this issue ...

In Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul gives a list of commandments and instructions that are pretty hard-hitting (5:1-12). How in a sinful culture

like ours can we ever hope to keep these absolute commands? Only by setting up personal guardrails! Here's where Paul tells us how to do that: **Ephesians 5:15** See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

- Be careful how you walk! Walking circumspectly is like walking through a yard where animals live – watch where you step! ☺
- Not as unwise (careless), but as wise (careful). Don't think “is it right or is it wrong?” – think “is it the WISE thing to do?”

Ephesians 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

- Redeeming the time (“kairos”) – being intentional about how you live, because you are living in dangerous times and dangerous places.

Ephesians 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

- Understand what God's will is! How do you obey that command? By facing up to what you already know in your heart that God wants you to do! Stop deceiving yourself – just obey God's prompting!
- 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!

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

- Paul says, “Put up a guardrail!” Christians, don't drink because it leads to extreme indulgence and a loss of control. “Excess” literally means “UN-wholeness” or “UN-savedness.”
- This principle is not just about alcohol! ANYTHING that leads us TOWARD indulgence of the flesh or TOWARD a lack of control of our appetites is WRONG for us as Christians!
- Our Heavenly Father is against it for the same reason a good earthly father would be against it – he knows where it could lead us! (This is why your parents closely monitored your friendships growing up.)
- ANY area in your life where you tend to hand control over to someone or something else is an area where you need to have a GUARDRAIL!

- INSTEAD, be filled with the SPIRIT – God wants to be the preeminent influencer in your life. That's why we NEED to be FILLED with the Holy Ghost!

Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

- Guardrails are personal (and often private) convictions. This verse is about exhorting and encouraging YOURSELF to live as unto the Lord, even when no one else knows about your guardrail.
- 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 standards or church standards, because these are the GUARDRAILS that convict us long before we stray near to sin.
- If the Bible's standards or your church's standards are higher than YOUR standards, then you have a serious spiritual problem! Your guardrail is on the far side of the danger zone!!

Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

- This verse describes our ATTITUDE in living out our personal convictions – we give THANKS for the privilege of pleasing God!

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

- A balanced church will always have new believers who do not yet understand our Scriptural lifestyle convictions, or even the need to have their own personal standards that are higher still.
- However, immature believers (who should have grown up by now) sometimes say “I’m not convicted about that” when they really should be saying “I don’t want to submit to that.”
- Submission is “your mission under someone else’s mission” – that means it’s only true submission when you DISAGREE.

None of us plan to mess up our lives - but the problem is that none of us plan NOT to mess up our lives. A little yellow line painted on the side of the road in places of danger won't do it - we need GUARDRAILS!

No one has ever regretting having guardrails, but many people have a lifetime full of regret for NOT having them. YOU NEED PERSONAL STANDARDS THAT BECOME A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE!