BOTTOM LINE: WHEN YOU HAVE GUARDRAILS, YOU ALLOW FOR SOME ROOM BEFORE THINGS GET REALLY DANGEROUS.

INTRODUCTION
Everywhere we go we see images, hear songs, read advertisements and receive the message that sex is great. And it’s true. Sex is great! But what makes sex great is that it is a gift from God, given with a purpose. It was created for intimacy with one person and when we establish guardrails early, we set ourselves up for the greatest potential to experience this intimacy in marriage. Without guardrails we set ourselves up to experience some deep pain, both physically and emotionally. But establishing guardrails is a crucial way for us to have the healthiest relationships we possibly can.

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ABOUT GOD
God is the one and only true God, yet He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator, so everything belongs to Him and is under His control. God is holy, so He is righteous, majestic and loving. God is all knowing and purposeful, so He’s at work to bring about His will. No person, thing or idea compares to God.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES
God reveals Himself to us through the Bible, and it is 100% accurate, reliable and authoritative.

ABOUT PEOPLE
People are made in God’s image and for His pleasure. But everybody falls short of God’s intention, or ideal, for people. In other words, everyone has sinned. As a result, we are all separated from Him, even though He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

ABOUT SALVATION
That’s why Jesus, God’s Son, came and lived on this earth, died and rose again. God offers His free gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus and accept Him as Savior, the only way to be forgiven and reconciled to God. Anyone who accepts this gift is adopted as a son or daughter into God’s family and will live with Him forever in heaven.
We believe that the set, stage, music and everything in your room communicates a message—without you saying a word. That’s why we put together a list of production ideas to help you set the stage for the session and the series. From the music you play when students come in the room to the worship set your band plays, we want to make sure that your room conveys “Guardrails” in a multi-sensory way. There is a downloadable checklist available in your series downloads that will give you all the elements for this session (and the entire series).

**BACKGROUND PLAYLIST FOR GUARDRAILS SERIES**

- “We Didn’t Start the Fire” by Billy Joel (from Storm Front)
- “Who Says” by Selena Gomez (from Who Says)
- “Sweet Serendipity” by Lee Dewyze (from Live it Up)
- “Something to Believe In” by Parachute (from Something to Believe in)
- “I Just Wanna Run” by The Downtown Fiction (from Best I Ever Had)
- “The Light Will Come” by Phil Wickham (from Cannons)
- “Should’ve Said No” by Taylor Swift (from Taylor Swift)
- “If It’s Love” by Train (from Save Me, San Francisco)
- “Hold My Hand” by Michael Jackson featuring Akon (from Michael)
- “I Run to You” by Lady Antebellum (from Lady Antebellum)
- “Otherside” by MIKESCHAIR (from MIKESCHAIR)

**WORSHIP PLAYLIST FOR GUARDRAILS SESSION 3**

- “Lovely” by Chris Tomlin (from And If Our God Is for Us, Deluxe Edition)
- “Pure” by Gateway Worship (from Immerse)
- “Unfailing God” by New Life Worship (from Counting on God)
- “Just to Be with You” by Paul Baloche (from Just to Be with You)
- “Otherside” by MIKESCHAIR (from MIKESCHAIR)

**THE SET**

Contact your county’s Department of Transportation to find out if you can get a hold of actual road guardrails to use on your set. If this isn’t feasible, you can go to a local salvage yard and see if you can find any there. You can also do a search on craigslist.com. Set up your guardrails on either side of the stage. Using yellow construction paper (or traffic tape, which you can find online) make cut outs of yellow squares to run down the middle of your room and up on to the stage to make your room into one big street. You can also get old car parts (lights, bumpers, fenders—the older and more beat up, the better) and put them on the inside of the guardrails. Make sure that somewhere within your set you incorporate the word “Guardrails”, like on a screen or monitor. Or you can use the traffic tape from the floor design to write the word “Guardrails” on the background of your stage.

**SERIES ART**

Art for PowerPoint backgrounds and for series promotional ads is available as a free download with every series. Visit the XP3 website, log on to your account and download the images to use in your presentation, newsletters and website.

**VIDEO**

A video bumper is available for the Guardrails series and was created to be used as an intro for all three sessions of the Guardrails series. You can purchase the video by logging into your XP3 account and clicking on the “XP3 videos” link.
The following activities and illustrations will help middle school students connect with the subject matter in ways that engage them physically, mentally, socially and sometimes emotionally. You can also adapt the Guardrails series for middle school students by using the teaching outline found in this document to edit the teaching script into a 20-minute presentation. In addition, by using the separate middle school small group dialog questions (found in the series downloads) that are geared specifically for sixth to eighth graders, you can make each section more middle school friendly.

SESSION 3 GAME: PLAYING WITH FIRE (Play this game as an icebreaker to Session 3.)
In this version of Hot Potato, you will use a ball with the words “Don’t Play With Fire” written on it. Download the Billy Joel song “We Didn’t Start the Fire” (see the background playlist). Have your students stand in a circle. When the song starts, they will try to pass the ball around, getting it out of their own hands as quickly as possible. Stop the music every 30 seconds or so. The person holding the ball when the music stops is out. You can play until the last person is standing or, if you have a larger group, break your students up in to circles (make sure you have multiple balls if this is the case).

SESSION 3 ILLUSTRATION: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? (Use this illustration after teaching point “F” in the Truth section of the teaching script.)
We all have those friends who can’t make a decision. You know, that one friend who when you ask, “What do you want to do?” or “What do you want to eat?” they always reply, “I don’t care. You choose.” But the truth is, by never making a choice, they have made a choice to give up responsibility. They have decided not to choose and have left all of the responsibility up to you. Then, when you choose what to do or what to eat or where to go and they don’t like it, they can say, “Well, I didn’t choose this.” It’s kind of a no-win situation, isn’t it?

Let’s play a game called “I Didn’t Choose This.” Out of a pile of cards, you are going to pick the top card. This card will tell you something that you have to do at the end of the night. You cannot swap this card with anyone else. This is your card even though you didn’t choose it. [Note to Communicator: Using a stack of 3 x 5 notecards, write a different task (like “Stack the chairs,” “Clean up trash off the floor,” etc.) on each card. You may have to make up some random ones that don’t necessarily need to be done, like “Crawl around on your hands and knees and pick up anything smaller than a dime.” As well, you’ll want to write some more favorable ones, such as “Give every person in the room a hug” or “Go sit and have a conversation with your small group leader.” Make sure to mix the cards up, and have students draw the top card as you go around the room. At the end of the night, you can let them know that they don’t really have to do their task (unless, of course, they really want to).]

If you’ve never decided to have guardrails, then you’re ultimately choosing to leave the big choices in your life up to someone else. As we’ve seen today, when you do this, you don’t always end up loving the outcome. It’s not that every decision made for you will be awful, but the fact that you just don’t know might encourage you not to take the risk. See, the thing is, when you do give your choices over to someone else, you can’t say later, “Well, I didn’t know. I didn’t choose to get sucked into the situation. I didn’t make a bad decision; someone else did. I was just there.” By not making a decision about guardrails—by not taking the time to think this through—you have made a decision not to have guardrails. And when you choose not to have guardrails, you hand the keys of your life over to someone else.
The teaching script is divided into five sections.

**INTRODUCTION**
This introduction is intended to connect you, the communicator, to the audience usually through a personal story or observation. We’ve included our stories, but you may want to substitute your own story in this section.

**TENSION**
The tension moves the message from the “me” mentality of the introduction to a “we” mentality. For example, a transition statement might be, “At some point in our lives, we have all been jealous of someone over something.”

**TRUTH**
Once the tension builds, the next logical step is to uncover the truth of what the Bible says about the topic.

**APPLICATION**
At this point, the message moves to a “you” mentality in order to teach the application. The “you” is the student. Take God’s truth and unpack how it relates to each student so that he or she can apply it to everyday life.

**LANDING**
Here it is important to land the message on what each student needs to know and do with what they’ve heard. Just as the message began with a personal story or observation, the message also ends with a “me” mentality. For example, one possible landing statement might be, “I have a greater sense of purpose knowing that God created me in His image.” Leave the students with a clear sense of what all of you should do with what you’ve heard.
BOTTOM LINE: WHEN YOU HAVE GUARDRAILS, YOU ALLOW FOR SOME ROOM BEFORE THINGS GET REALLY DANGEROUS.

INTRODUCTION
A guardrail is a standard of behavior that you choose for yourself that becomes a matter of conscience.

TENSION
Unlike any other area of your life, sexual disaster is almost impossible to fully recover from.

Every desire that you have requires guardrails.

TRUTH
Flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV).

Our culture lures us to the edge of disaster and then mocks us when we step over.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you (1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV).

Your body is a temple received from God (v.19) that the Holy Spirit came to live inside of.

You were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20 NIV).

Here’s the litmus test: Honor God with your body.

You’ve got to establish some guardrails because when you live on the edge sexually it’ll be a catastrophe.

This is a decision you have to make and by not making it you’ve actually already made a decision.

APPLICATION
If a date means fooling around, I say you’ve got to take a break.

I think you will have a clearer idea of what you want in a relationship.

It will protect you and save you from an incredible amount of pain in the long run.

LANDING
God is the creator and the giver of sex.

If sex is a fire, God brought the matches.
If you learn to honor God with your body, the reward is that God will honor you with a relationship of intimacy the way He intended and designed it to be.

But if you’re going to get there, if you’re going to live there, you’re going to have to establish some guardrails.
HOW TO CONTEXTUALIZE A TEACHING SCRIPT

The XP3 Students Team wants you to take our work and make it work within the context of your current student ministry. We encourage you to tailor an XP3 Students Teaching Script so that it directly speaks to your current church context, allows for the master teacher’s personality to shine in and through the message and parallels the personal world and community of your students.

HOW TO DETERMINE THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUR YOUTH GROUP

• Who are the student clusters in your ministry?
  Typically a student cluster is a homogeneous group of 5-10 students who act, behave, talk and dress the same. Understand what they love to do, eat, listen to and watch. What type of student clusters gather at your church (athletes, artistic types, Emo, etc.)? How many different student clusters come to your church? What student clusters will you initially target when you teach?

• Identify your youth ministry distinctive.
  What makes your youth group different? What does your youth group tend to focus on? What does your youth group do well? What traditions are a part of your youth group (baptism, communion, weekly dinner)? What makes your youth group remarkable? What does your youth group offer?

HOW CAN EVERY XP3 STUDENTS BOTTOM LINE CONNECT WITH THE MISSION, UNIQUENESS AND VALUES OF YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY?

HOW TO FIND YOUR OWN VOICE: THE MASTER TEACHER’S STYLE

1. Embrace your uniqueness. God made you. Be yourself! Don’t try to pretend to be Andy Stanley or Reggie Joiner or Jared Herd when you teach. Your students need you to be you.
2. Know your strengths and weaknesses as a speaker. Have a few of your adult volunteers give you constructive feedback on your delivery.
3. Tell your own stories. Rely on your experience in order to personalize the message. Allow your students to get to know you through your storytelling.
4. Pray and be confident. Thankfully God gave us His Holy Spirit to empower all ministers of the gospel. God doesn’t leave His communicators alone on stage.

HOW TO SPEAK TO THE STUDENTS’ REAL NEEDS: THE STUDENTS’ SOCIAL SCENE

1. Define the top issues that are transpiring in your student ministry.
   a) Think through the five social areas students live in: family, school, church, friends and extracurricular activities (sports, theater, clubs, band, etc.).
   b) Observe, talk to and survey students. They will tell you their needs.
   c) Feel free to cruise social media in order to gain an understanding of their world.
2. Directly speak to students’ needs by adapting the Application and Landing sections of the teaching script. It may be more productive to deal contextually with your students’ needs rather than sticking to the script verbatim. Granted, your students will deal with application in small group, but it is helpful to at least speak to their real needs from the stage. Speaking generally about their issues helps them process faster when asked in small group.
3. Highlight top issues in the Tension section of the teaching script. It can be helpful to add to the tension by using current issues your youth ministry is experiencing.
BOTTOM LINE: WHEN YOU HAVE GUARDRAILS, YOU ALLOW FOR SOME ROOM BEFORE THINGS GET REALLY DANGEROUS.

INTRODUCTION
A. We’re in week three of this series called “Guardrails.” The whole point of the series is setting up guardrails. You know what guardrails are. Essentially they’re part of a system designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limits areas. So we asked the question, just like a guardrail protects us when we’re driving, what would it look like to have guardrails in other areas of our lives? And we said a guardrail is actually placed in a safe zone to keep us from wandering into an unsafe zone—they aren’t actually in the area of danger; they’re placed a few feet or yards in front of the area of danger.

B. We came up with our own definition of a guardrail for this series: A guardrail is a standard of behavior you choose for yourself that becomes a matter of conscience. The idea being that you would choose behaviors for yourself that would keep you a few feet or a few yards away from disaster, whether it’s relationally, morally or whatever kind of disaster it is. It is the idea that there are lines out there, and once you cross them there’s a consequence or a penalty or you hurt the people you love the most. As you recognize those lines, you step back and establish a guardrail for yourself.

C. A guardrail is a system by which you decide for yourself what actions or habits are bad for you so that if you ever get close to them, you feel yourself bump into that guardrail you’ve established. The temptation in life, of course, is to live right on the edge of disaster relationally, morally, in your thought life or any of those kinds of things, so when you do make a misstep you end up in a disaster. But the wise person says, “I’m not going to live on the edge of disaster; I’m going to step back and establish guardrails.” We began last week by asking what it would look like to establish guardrails in different areas of life.

TENSION
A. Last week we talked about guardrails in friendships. Today I want to talk about what I think is the most important area for guardrails. This is the area where it’s most needed, but it’s also the area where we find the most resistance. In fact, whenever I talk about this subject, and I do so from time to time, I literally feel like one of those Old Testament prophets who is yelling and screaming and everybody’s passing by ignoring them. And no matter what I say or what illustrations I use or how graphic I get, the average person says, “Yeah, that’s what we expect the preacher to say,” and then they go right back to business as usual.

B. So is the suspense killing you? Well then, let’s get started. Today we are going to talk about guardrails when it comes to sexual intimacy. And if I can just be honest here, in the area of our physical and sexual intimacy and in our desire for sexual intimacy, we need reinforced steel for guardrails. And the reason is this: Unlike any other area of life where you can fully recover from just about any other kind of disaster, sexual disaster is almost impossible to fully recover from.

Your family can recover from financial disaster. Your mom or your dad may have no guardrails in their lives when it comes to money—they could rack up a lot of debt and get in a lot of trouble—but given enough time and enough discipline, they can fully recover from financial disaster.

The same is true of an educational disaster. Maybe you know someone in your family who flunked out of
school but took summer school classes, did extra credit, worked extra hard and now it’s this inspirational
story in your family.

But when it comes to our sexuality, no one ever laughs about those stories because what we know intuitively, what every adult knows in their heart even though they don’t always know how to talk about it, is this: Sex is not just physical. It’s way deeper than that. And when a person crosses certain lines in their desire for physical intimacy, when a person crosses the line with regard to their sexuality, there are certain scars that they carry with them for the rest of their lives. We know that, we just don’t talk about it.

See, the problem is that we live in a culture that says sex is purely physical. But that’s not true. It’s a lie. And if there’s any area in our life where we need guardrails, I’m convinced this is the area. Because the damage done follows us through our lives, the memories follow us through our lives, the guilt and the ghosts follow us through our lives and it goes on and on.

C. Every desire you have, whether it’s your desire for physical intimacy or for food or for money, every desire requires guardrails. And this one requires the strongest and toughest guardrails, so today I want to be very explicit and specific. Some of you are going to think I’m being way too conservative, and that’s okay.

D. The verse we’re going to look at today seems kind of extreme, but if you look at what’s happening in our culture and in your life and in your family and as you think about your past, you might realize that we would all be better off if we took this very simple verse a little bit more seriously.

TRUTH
A. Here’s what the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:18: Flee from sexual immorality (NIV). Flee. This is a pretty strong word. Paul does not say to just be careful. To watch out. To get as close to the line as you possibly can and peer over the edge. When it comes to sexual immorality, what could be any clearer than this? Flee.

Now here’s the thing I know about you. You may not be a church person or a Christian person, or you may think this is exactly what you would expect from the pastor, but here’s what I know about you. When it comes to sexual immorality, you want your little sister or your big brother or your best friend or your parents to do exactly what Paul says—flee. This is what you want everyone you care about to do. The problem is that you’re just not sure this is what you want to do. But the reason we want this for everyone else is because we know the implications of stepping over the line sexually. So we would say to the people we love, flee from sexual immorality, but when it comes to ourselves, we don’t flee. We flirt. We say we don’t know exactly where sexual immorality is, so tell me when I’m getting too close and then maybe I will draw a line.

B. Our culture lures us to the edge of disaster and then mocks us when we step over, right? In no other area of our culture is this more evident than in our desire for sexual intimacy. Everywhere we turn we are being baited to the edge, and when we step over the edge, culture chastises us. In our culture, we are told if you are in love, sex is okay. Just make sure you are ready for it. So teenagers have sex. But when the relationship goes bad and there is a breakup, the girl or the guy starts dating someone else and then they “fall” in love again. Then they have sex again. And before too long, even though culture tells us sex is fine as long as we are in love, culture also looks at this girl who “feels” in love every time she dates a guy, and calls her “trashy” or “dirty” for sleeping around. Does that seem fair?
C. Everybody agrees—and the culture’s finally talking about it—that somewhere on the other side of that guardrail, there’s inappropriate male sexual activity as it relates to the Internet and porn and all that. Somewhere out there is a line where everybody says, “Oh, that’s gross; that’s too much. I can’t believe he got so involved in that.” And you know what all guys know? That every time they turn on the television, every time they walk through the mall, every time they flip through a magazine, they are being pulled in a direction toward inappropriate sexual activity. And then when some guy finally falls in and gets addicted, everybody wonders what’s wrong with him. Well, he just took the bait that’s offered everywhere he goes. Guys are constantly baited to the edge of moral disaster, and then when they step over the line, they’re chastised and looked down on. And because culture’s not going to change, because the temptation level isn’t going to change, guys need guardrails. The point is not to quit going to the mall and stop watching movies or television. The point is to create guardrails because culture is not going to get any better.

For you all in middle school and high school, it is so important to decide now what your guardrails are, so that when you bump up against your personal standard of behavior, even if it isn’t crossing a line and getting into danger, you are going to back up, stop right where you are and not go any farther.

D. If you’re a Christian, there’s even greater incentive for you to flee sexual immorality. There’s even greater incentive for us as Christians to create guardrails. Let’s look at what Paul goes on to say: Do you not know, [which means that he didn’t think they knew,] that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? (1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV). Your body is sacred. But when a person becomes a Christian, God’s Spirit comes to live inside of our physical bodies. This means that, as a Christian, your body is a temple received from God (v.19); it means that the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. I would say that means your body is very special.

Now listen to the implication. Paul says, “You are not your own.” That means that your body doesn’t belong to you because God moved into your body. You were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20 NIV). The implication as you read the whole passage is that when Christ came into this world and died for your sins, He purchased you—redeemed you. You have been purchased from sin, and you are no longer a slave to sin. You don’t have to do what your desires tell you to do. Specifically, you have been purchased from the power of sin. Therefore, and here’s the application, “honor God with your bodies.” And remember, the context for this whole discussion is sexual. Flee sexual immorality. Don’t you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? You are not your own. You have been purchased, and what was the price? The death of your Savior, Jesus Christ. That was the price that God paid for your body.

E. So Paul says, “This is what I want you to do with your body. If you have any questions, if it gets unclear as you’re trying to make a decision, here’s the litmus test: ‘Honor God with your body.’” Basically, if it’s dishonoring to God, don’t do it with your body. If it’s dishonoring to God, don’t take your body there. If it’s dishonoring to God, don’t look at it. If it’s dishonoring to God, don’t purposefully think about it. Decide every morning to say, “God, my body belongs to You. It’s Your temple. I want to live this life and I want to live this day in such a way that everything I do with this body honors You.” And God says, “If that’s the case, then when it comes to sexual immorality and your desire for sexual intimacy, you must flee, flee, flee, not flirt, flirt, flirt.”

But you and I both know this is always easier said than done. When it comes to sex, and when it comes to temptations with sex, fleeing is generally the last thing on our minds. When it comes to sex, we don’t
usually just want to stop. We want to keep going. Which is why Paul begs us to do the exact opposite of what our bodies and our emotions tell us to do. Paul tells us to move away. Not just stop, but flee. Make a U-turn, a complete 180. Get out of there.

So, practically speaking, this means you’ve got to establish some guardrails, because when you live on the edge sexually, when you flirt with the line and then you step over it, it’ll be a catastrophe. But if you have guardrails and you bump into them, even though your conscience lights up, there are generally no consequences because you have allowed for some room before things get really dangerous.

F. This is a decision you have to make, and by not making it you’ve actually already made a decision. But at some point you’ve got to decide, “Am I going to honor God with my body especially as it relates to my sexuality, or am I not?” If you’ve never decided, then you’ve decided not to. And in a minute I’m going to say something, and if you start to think, “This is so extreme. Nobody does this,” you’re wrong, because a lot of people have done this in the past and are doing it right now. But if your whole take on what I’m about to say is that it’s just too extreme, then here are two things I want you to think about.

Number one: What do you want for the person you may marry someday? And what do you want for your brother or sister or best friend? If there’s duplicity or hypocrisy in your answer, you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself why. Why is it that I want my best friend or my little sister to take this seriously, but I don’t want to take it seriously myself? You owe yourself an answer to that question.

But there’s another thing I want you to think about before we get started. Let’s say that at the end of this message you think, “Nobody’s going to do that. I’m not going to do that.” And let’s say two or three years from now you find yourself on the edge or in the midst of some sexual disaster—you have an addiction, you have an unwanted pregnancy, or you’ve crossed a line physically and you think someone’s about to find out—and all of a sudden you’re in the midst of some drama and you can’t believe where you’ve gone. Here’s my question: If in two or three years you find yourself dealing with the consequences of not having any guardrails and you haven’t been careful, in the midst of this, do you think you’ll pray? Do you think you would throw up a prayer like, “Oh my God, don’t let me be pregnant?” Do you think you would pray a prayer like that? Or how about, “Oh God, don’t let her find out!” or “Oh God, if You just get me through this I’ll go to church every Sunday; I’ll give; I’ll tithe; I’ll pray.”

G. And here’s the thing. God may get you out of a situation you have created, or He may not. He will forgive you—no matter what. That isn’t in question. But what is in question is whether or not you would have found yourself in such a bad situation if you had only laid down some rules, set up some guardrails, before things got complicated. You may be sitting here today and thinking everything I am about to say is too strict, too extreme—and it may sound like it is. But years down the road, if you find yourself in a place dealing with the fallout of some poor decisions, it will be because you didn’t decide to act on the guardrails that sounded strict but would have saved you a lot of pain and hurt.

APPLICATION
A. This is your opportunity, and I will promise you this. If you establish guardrails—specifically the one I am going to give you, you will not regret it. It isn’t in the Bible. I made it up based on many conversations, many emails, many tearful phone calls and many heartbreaking circumstances. And I’ve come to the conclusion that because of how dangerous culture can be and how eagerly culture tries to bait us, these guardrails really aren’t all that extreme. Living with these sorts of boundaries is actually easier than you
think once you make up your mind to establish these kinds of guardrails.

B. So here we go. Just gouge out your eyes with a spoon. That’s pretty much what you’ve got to do, okay? Just kidding.

Okay, so now for the real guardrail. This is enormous—huge. This is the advice I have been most thanked for through the years. Here it is: If in the social scene that you’re a part of, the idea of a relationship—whether it’s dating or a friendship—has become equivalent to having sex or some form of sex, I say you’ve got to take a break. In other words, if a date means fooling around, and if you think that without fooling around at the end of the date, it doesn’t even count as a date, take a break. Or if you and a friend have some kind of arrangement, you need to back off. You’ve got to mark an X on the calendar and say, “I am having no relationships at all for a year.” You need a year to renew your mind. You need a year for God to renew your heart. You need a year to reset. Most people ignore that advice, but I know lots of people who have made the decision to take a year off and after the fact were able to be in healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex as a result. It may seem ridiculous now. It may seem old-fashioned. It may seem pointless. But I just want to challenge you to decide here and now that you are going to take a break. No dating. No messing around with sex. No hooking up. For one year. And if you do this, if you take a pre-determined break, I think you will be surprised at what you will find. I think you will better understand what dating is supposed to look like, what respecting and being respected by someone looks like. I think you will have a clearer idea of what you want in a relationship—and you will have figured it out without making a lot of mistakes, without trial and error. You will have done it without creating a lot of regret.

C. Now, is that extreme? I don’t think so. I think it’s just common sense. In fact, you may even hear that and think, “That’s it?” But this is a big deal, and if you decide to be intentional in doing this you will notice yourself being careful about lots of things when it comes to physical relationships—especially if you take time away from the dating scene. I tell you what, if you do this, in five years you will not look back and say, “Dang it, I wish I had dated around more.” “I wish there were more people that I never want to run into again.” “I miss the fact that I can go to Kroger week after week after week and never have anybody I have to dodge.” You’re never going to regret creating a guardrail that intentionally and purposefully keeps your body and your heart from getting hurt. Is it extreme? Maybe. But I can promise you it will protect you and save you from an incredible amount of pain in the long run.

D. One of the big things that fuels intimacy in marriage is exclusivity. When your spouse believes that he or she is the only one for you, that’s a powerful thing. And even though that’s in the distant future, do you know where that begins? It begins now, with guardrails. None of us says, “I hope someday I have a marriage full of unfaithfulness.” Many of us have already seen our parents go through that, and it’s not pretty. It begins perhaps with a year off—by figuring out more about yourself, more about what you want, more about who you want to be and what you want a relationship to be. It begins by setting standards that no one else in your culture is going to understand, but don’t be fooled by culture. Culture will bait you to the edge of disaster and then turn its back on you when you step over certain lines.

E. So what would you expect your heavenly Father to say? He would say, “Flee sexual immorality. Your body is precious to Me. Don’t you know that in some kind of strange, mystical way, I live inside of you? That be-
ing the case, I want you to honor Me with your body, and if you honor Me with your body, I will honor you in your relationships."

LANDING
A. God is the creator and the giver of sex. That’s not in the seven days of creation, but it was created in there somewhere. It was His idea. If sex is a fire, God brought the matches. It was His idea. If you learn to honor God with your body, the reward is that God will honor you with a relationship of intimacy the way He intended and designed it to be.

B. But if you’re going to get there, if you’re going to live there, you’re going to have to establish some guardrails. If you’re not sure what that looks like for you, we are about to break off into our small groups. That’s the perfect place to talk about this. I know it may seem a little scary to make yourself that vulnerable, but the cost is too high to let your pride or fear keep you from setting up guardrails in your life. And if you need help doing that, say something. Lean into the community God has placed you in.

[TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS]