

# [GUARDRAILS]

## Direct and Protect

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**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:15–18

**Idea:** Just as we need physical guardrails on a road to **direct** and **protect** us, we need guardrails in other arenas of our lives as well.

### Introduction

1. Launching a new series: *Guardrails*.
2. We all know what a guardrail is: **a system designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas.**
3. You are most likely to find guardrails in the potentially dangerous areas of a road. The three most common:
  - Bridges: little room for error
  - Medians: to protect you from oncoming traffic
  - Soft shoulders/curves: unexpected change
4. They direct and protect.
5. There is something else interesting about the placement of guardrails.
  - They are not placed in the actual areas of danger.
  - They are placed just inside the danger zones.
  - The actual danger zones are just beyond.
  - If there were no guardrails on bridges, you could drive closer to the edge of the bridge and be fine.
  - No one argues with that logic. To do otherwise would be foolish. It would defeat the purpose.
6. The assumption with guardrails is that the damage done by hitting a guardrail is minor when compared to what you would have hit had it not been there.

*For the next several weeks, I want to talk about establishing guardrails in other arenas of our lives . . . guardrails that are so strong and established that when we bump up against them they bother our **consciences**.*

***Your greatest regrets** could have probably been avoided if you had had some financial, moral, relational, and professional guardrails . . . guardrails for your health, time.*

***The challenge for all of us is that culture doesn't promote guardrails.** Culture is content with a painted line.*

- *Alcohol: Drink responsibly.*
- *Sex: Wait until you are ready.*
- *Parents: Talk to your children about drugs.*
- *Money: Consolidate your debts.*

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*None of those things alert your conscience.*

*This is not a new or an original idea. Both the Old and New Testaments address this issue . . . not in the same terms. Most people walked.*

**Turn to Ephesians 5:15 (TNIV).**

*Context: Paul has just finished warning against a series of things that we are generally against: greed, marriage-wrecking immorality, dishonesty. Then he warns of the natural and unnatural consequences of those behaviors . . . to which we say, “We are with you. But it’s hard to be that good.” To which he says in the very next verse . . .*

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—[Literally: Look out, then, carefully, how you walk/where you step. We have two dogs. They potty in the same ten square yards of grass. We apply this verse faithfully.]

1. Be careful, not careless.
2. Look around, look ahead, look back.

. . . not as unwise but as wise, [eyes wide open]

<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, [Literally: redeeming the time. The older we get, the more we wish we could go back and reuse some of the time we misspent walking down paths that were a waste of time . . . relationships that were a waste of time.]

. . . because the days are evil. [Dangerous times. You can’t afford to be careless. There’s too much at stake.]

*Would you agree these are dangerous times financially, morally, maritally, and professionally?*

1. Some unexpected curves? Didn’t see that comin’.
2. Less margin for error?

<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the **Lord’s** will is.

*Imperative: Face up to. Quit deceiving yourself. You know. You already know what God would have you do. You know where you are dancing on the edge of disaster. Your conscience is talking. You’ve already had some near misses. Come on. Wake up.*

*Then he gives us an illustration: one thing leads to another.*

Ephesians 5

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, [Disclosure: I don’t drink. My interaction with kids and alcoholic parents has all been bad. I don’t have any stories that end with, “And once they

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*started drinking, everything got better. They lived happily ever after.” That might be your story. Most of you are secretly glad I don’t. So this is a safe illustration for me. Easy.]*

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which **leads to** debauchery [*NASB: dissipation*].

*Now before I tell you what those words mean . . . I don’t want you to miss his point . . . getting drunk is not the problem according to Paul. It’s what it leads to.*

- *Drunk is the guardrail. Hitting it should be a problem.*
- *For some of you, it’s the goal.*
- *For some of you, it’s a nightmare/addiction.*
- *Perhaps your life has been forever changed because somebody was drunk. It was funny right up until somebody lost his life . . . was beat up.*

*Question: Is getting drunk a sin?*

*Answer: It’s foolish.*

*Debauchery: Extreme indulgence that results in the loss of control. That can be alcohol, lust, greed, anger, stuff, food.*

*We need guardrails to keep us from getting to the place where we hand control over to someone or something else.*

<sup>18</sup> . . . Instead, be filled with the Spirit . . . [*The issue here is influence. Who or what will you allow to influence your behavior/decisions?*]

*God wants to play that role. So as you reach for the remote, head to the fridge, text her back, order that second drink . . . bump into a guardrail, he whispers in your conscience, “Uh, uh, uh.”*

## **I. We don’t plan to mess up our lives any more than we plan to wreck our cars. We just don’t plan *not to*.**

A. Nobody plans . . .

1. Financial ruin through debt
2. A violent marriage
3. To get involved with a married man/woman
4. To fall in love with someone who lacks character and has bad habits
5. To become addicted to anything

B. Guardrails are how you plan NOT TO.

## **II. Please don’t insult yourself by saying:**

A. “I have faith God will take care of me.”

1. He’s trying.

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2. He got you here today to hear this. And this ain't the first time you've been warned.  
B. "I'll be careful." This is how you "BE careful."

## **Conclusion**

1. Here's the added benefit to all of this. Guardrails not only **protect**, as I said earlier. They **direct**.
2. You will find it so much easier to discern the voice of God in your life once you establish guardrails. You will be amazed.
3. In the weeks to come, we are going to touch on friends, money, time, and marriage. Sandra is going to help with this one.
4. But as we conclude: What do you need to face up to today? Where are you flirting with disaster? That's where you need to begin. And this isn't the first time.