



Guardrails Study Guide

Introduction

We have all seen them. They line our streets and backroads at every dangerous turn or steep embankment. The sight of guardrails can bring feelings of discomfort and peace simultaneously. When we see them we instantly know that we are near a danger zone, but we are also aware of the safety they provide.

The whole premise of a guardrail system is: It is better to cause some insignificant damage to keep far worse damage from occurring. In this series we will discuss how this concept applies to all other areas of our lives. When we establish guardrails in the areas of finances, relationships, morally or even professionally we will avoid regrets that we would have if we hadn't implemented them.

Can you think of a time that you decided, "I am going to plan to fail today!"? None of us ever plan to fail, but we have heard it said "Failing to plan is planning to fail." We can use God as the scapegoat thinking that he will protect us, but his protection comes through guardrails he has given us in his Word. He planned all along to protect us and that is how he will do it. It is up to us to implement his boundaries.

Our culture teaches us that we can play with fire but wonder why we ever got burned. We tend to believe that we are invincible and what has happened to people around us will never happen to us. We fail to see that we are surrounded by dangers around us and that we must guard against tragedy before it is too late.

Can you imagine the heartache and destruction you could have spared yourself if you had guardrails in place before now? Or maybe you have used a guardrail system that has spared you? Our culture tempts us to flirt with disaster and then chastises us when we cross that line. We must make a decision to commit to implementing guardrails in all areas of life so that we



spare ourselves, our families, and our future generations from the devastation that no guardrails will bring.

We have guardrails in many areas of our lives without even thinking about them. Like with children, for instance. Every parent, teacher, sitter or grandparent puts boundaries in place for the children they love and care about. Just like guardrails these boundaries are put in place to keep the children from damaging consequences.

As earthly fathers guide and protect their children so does our Heavenly Father. He loves us so deeply and wants to keep us from danger. Have you ever seen a damaged guardrail? We often see them and think of how bad it looks, but have we ever stopped to think about the greater damage that the guardrail spared the driver from? For the sake of this series we have defined a guardrail as a standard or personal behavior that becomes a matter of conscience. These guardrails protect us from greater damage to our relationships, finances, and other areas in our lives.

In Ephesians Paul lists several things that we need to be on guard about. He encourages us to be very careful with how we live, reminding us that “the days are evil” (5:15-15). He gives the guardrail with alcohol. He tells us to avoid drunkenness and be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is showing us the importance of filling every aspect of our lives with the spirit of God and how he will guide us, protect us and direct us.

Session 1

Ice Breaker Question

- Prior to this series, have you ever heard of the term “guardrails”?
- What are your initial thoughts about them after hearing the description?

Session 1 Suggested Questions



1. Share a time in your life where you gave yourself guidelines to not do something, and got made fun of for it? Why do you think culture and/or people tease us for implementing those guidelines?
2. Have you ever thought about those guidelines in your life as guardrails? Explain.
3. Why is it important that our guardrails are linked to our consciences?
4. As you read Ephesians 5:15-16, what sticks out to you regarding the words of Paul?
5. How can establishing guardrails help us understand the protective nature of God?
6. How has the question, “What’s the wise thing to do?” challenged you? A better way of asking this question is, “In light of my past experiences, current circumstances and future hopes and dreams, what’s the wise thing to do?” How do these questions of wisdom help you?
7. As you read Ephesians 5:18, we learn that this text is more than avoiding drunkenness. It’s about avoiding the repercussions of what takes place because of it. Share a time where you saw someone overindulge in something, and it led to heavy repercussions (don’t use names).
 - What are some things you find yourself overindulging in (Examples: work, television, overspending, overeating, sports, social media, etc.)?
8. As you read Ephesians 5:18, why does Paul desire that we are to be filled with the Spirit?
9. What are things we can do to submit to the Holy Spirit?

Next Step Question (Session 1)

After hearing this message what is your mindset with implementing guardrails in your life? Do you see a need for them? Why or why not?

Session 2

Ice Breaker Question



- Consider your close friend group. Do you find that you have a shared set of values? Why or why not?

Session 2 Suggested Questions

1. We learn that there is a big difference between being judgmental and having good judgement. A judgmental mindset is having an opinion about someone else and setting yourself up as their judge. Using good judgment is when you draw a conclusion about your own life.
 - Share a time where your parents, legal guardian or someone you trust was trying to exercise good judgment in your life, but you didn't listen?
 - What happened?
 - In what ways do you find yourself doing the same thing with others now that you're older?
2. Why is it difficult for us to implement good judgment over our own lives, yet find ourselves doing it towards others?
3. Friends who aren't careful with their own life will not be careful with yours. If they aren't careful with their marriage, they won't be careful with your marriage. If they are careful with their finances, they won't be careful with their finances.
 - How does understanding this shift your perspective about the friends you have?
4. As you read Proverbs 13:20, what sticks out to you?
5. Why do we hang with foolish people?
6. Think of someone who you'd consider to be wise.
 - What about them makes them wise?
 - What's the feeling you get when around them?
 - What do you typically experience because of their insight?
 - How can we grow and be more intentional about surrounding ourselves with wise people?
7. There are four suggested guardrails we can implement within our friendships. They are:
 - When your friends are doing something that's moving in a direction you don't like.



- When you catch yourself pretending to be someone that you're not.
- When you catch yourself thinking "I'll go but I won't participate".
- When you hope the people that you care about don't know your whereabouts.
- Out of the four previous mentioned guardrails, which one sticks out to you the most?

Next Step Question (Session 2)

Out of the four guardrails, which one do you need to work on the most? What will you do practically to implement that guardrail?

Session 3

Ice Breaker Question

- Do you find yourself completely immersed in books, shows or movies that have love scenes between unmarried people?

Session 3 Suggested Questions

1. Why is the area of sexual intimacy the hardest guardrail to implement?
2. Have you ever thought of sex being more than a physical thing? Why or Why not?
3. In what ways does our culture encourage us to flirt with sexual immorality rather than flee from it?
4. As you read 1 Corinthians 6:18, what is Paul instructing us to do? Why is that important?
5. 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. How does this impact your desire to flee from all sexual immorality?
6. The value of a container is determined by what it contains.



- What do I have inside me right now that is devaluing my container? (TV, Movies, Books, Magazines, apps, people group etc.)
 - Do you think you are filling yourself with things that empower you to be the sacred image God wants you to be? Why or why not?
 - Do you view yourself as sacred? Why or why not?
 - What are healthy things you could do, to fill yourself to be the image of God?
7. Discuss with the group all the ways our society would be different if everyone chose to flee from sexual immorality.
8. Do you think you will look back in 5 years from now and have regrets of NOT establishing guardrails?
9. If we consider setting a guardrail as saying to our spouse “I’m forever yours, faithfully” does that make setting those guardrails easier to do?
- In not setting appropriate guardrails do you consider yourself as saying to your spouse “I may not be forever yours, faithfully”?
 - How do those questions help you to reframe your thinking regarding guardrails?
10. Three suggested guardrails to implement are:
- Talk About It: What/who are the problematic things/people in my life?
 - Tell ‘em about it: If you’re not being honest in a relationship with your spouse/significant other, tell them. Why is this important?
 - Tell Somebody: If you find yourself and your mind drifting off thinking of someone that gets your heart going, tell someone.
 - Which one of the three would increase the health of your relationship?

Next Step Question (Session 3)

Think of one or two people that you can talk to about the guardrails you have set regarding your sexual purity.

- Can you be completely honest with them? If not, consider other people.



- Do these people share the same values in regard to sexual purity? If not, consider other people as accountability.

Session 4

Ice Breaker Question

- “Guardrails not only protect; they also direct.” Have you seen this at work in your life as you have begun implementing new guardrails?

Session 4 Suggested Questions

1. (Without sharing names) Share a story of someone you know that runs to danger. What were the consequences of their actions?
2. According to Proverbs 27:12, what’s the difference between the prudent and a simpleton?
3. It’s important to not get legalistic in how you establish guardrails in your life. Remember that a guardrail is a standard of personal behavior that becomes a matter of conscience.
 - Why is it necessary to have guardrails in the workplace?
4. What is an example of a guardrail you have seen or heard that’s implemented in the workplace?
5. What is a guardrail you’d like to implement in your own workplace?
 - How can this guardrail add value to your workplace?
6. When it comes to finances, everyone lives on a percentage of their income. Some live at 120%, some at 110% and others at 99.98% where you barely leave enough margin to which you’re practically on the edge.
 - Why is it important to know the percentage of the income you live on?
 - Have you ever thought about the fact that what you live on is what will determine your lifestyle? How does that thought challenge you?
 - Do you currently track your finances right now? Why or why not?
 - Do you currently live on a budget? Why or why not?



- What is a basic next step you could do moving forward to have healthier finances?
- 7. What are ways that your family identifies approaching danger as it confronts our marriages or families or other relationships? Or as it threatens our personal or work lives?
- 8. Share a time in your life that you didn't have accountability and paid the price for it.
 - Share a time when having accountability spared you.
- 9. If you're single, how can you set guardrails to ensure that when you get married you have a marriage-centered home?
- 10. How can you set guardrails to ensure that your family is a marriage-centered home vs a child-centered one?
 - What are some benefits to having a marriage-centered home?
 - What are some of the pitfalls to a child-centered home?

Next Step Question (Session 4)

We talked about having guardrails in the workplace, finances, and in family/relational dynamics. Out of the three areas, what's one next step you can take in implementing a guardrail?

Session 5

Ice Breaker Question

- Growing up, money in my house was _____.
- When it comes to your finances, are you a saver or spender?
 - In what ways have you benefited from that lifestyle?
 - In what ways have it created challenges for you?

Session 5 Suggested Questions

1. How do guardrails practically show us God's guidance and protection?



2. Do you find that your appetite for “stuff” only grows and is never satisfied? Explain
3. When you see people that have established guardrails in their lives do you find it encouraging? Why or why not?
4. Matthew 6:24 tells us that no one can serve two masters (God or Money). What is the primary issue this verse addresses?
 - In what ways do you think money has you?
5. How much do you value generosity toward those in need?
 - Based on your current finances, to what extent are you able to prioritize generosity toward others?
 - In what ways would you like your current level of generosity to change?
6. Greed is the root to both desire for more and fear. “Greed is the assumption that it is all for my consumption.”
 - How does greed show itself in our lives? Give examples of how you have seen it in your own life.
7. It’s common to live in the order of “Live, Save, Give” versus “Give, Save, Live”.
 - How does the suggested new order of living challenge your way of living?
8. Read Matthew 6:31-33. In what ways do you feel the Lord prompting you to seek His kingdom first?
 - What are some steps you can take to reprioritize your finances so that His kingdom is first?
9. Are you giving the desires of your heart over to God? Or to your flesh?
10. Mark 10:45 tells us that the Son of Man didn’t come to be served but to serve.
 - Does your life embody the selflessness of Christ?
 - In what ways would selflessness solve the issues we see in our society?

Next Step Question Session 5

- If we lived in the order of “Give Save, Live”, What is one specific action that I could take right now that could change my financial situation?



- What can you do financially to make a difference in other people's lives?

Session 6

Ice Breaker Questions

- Are you experiencing any kind of continuing resistance to the idea of guardrails in your life?
- If so, how would you describe this resistance?

Session 6 Suggested Questions

1. What have you learned most in this series about the importance and value of guardrails?
2. If you are not already applying guardrails in your life, where will you start to apply them and why?
3. What further help do you want or feel you need in establishing strong guardrails?
4. Refusing to have guardrails does not erase the tension or temptation. It just erodes your resolve.
 - How does this statement challenge your view and understanding of the concept of guardrails?
5. What stuck out to you most about the story of Daniel (Daniel 1:5-20)?
6. What do you admire most about Daniel? Why?
7. Have you ever thought about the possibility that you could be one guardrail away from changing the direction of your life? Why or why not?
8. Have you ever thought about the possibility that your guardrail could not only impact your life, but the lives of others? Explain
 - Who do you think it would impact if you were to implement guardrails?
9. What do you think will happen when you start to implement guardrails in your life (family, relationships, work, finances etc.)?



10. What has been the most impactful part of this series and how has it challenged your values?

Next Step Question Session 6

- Picture and envision where you want to be and what you'd like to happen in your future (Pray on it and discuss it with people who love you and that you trust).
 - What guardrails do you need to implement in order for that to happen?