

Guardrails

Week 1 - Mike Curl

“Minimal Damage”

Icebreaker:

Topics for Discussion:

- Read **Ephesians 5** in the Message and an additional translation of your choice (NIV, NKJV, etc.)
 - The Message is a paraphrased Bible, which seeks to provide clarity to the imagery and intent of scripture through modern language and phrasing. Using both a paraphrase version and a translation version, what do you think Paul is addressing in the opening of this chapter?
 - How does what Paul says in **verse 5** square with your understanding of Christianity?
 - Do you think it is easy or hard to come “near to the Kingdom of Christ” through your own efforts?
 - What are some things that can prevent us from being successful in what Paul says is a necessity?

Things to Consider:

- A guardrail is, in its simplest form, a method or device used to direct and protect something or someone from finding itself in the danger zone. The danger zone is the area in life where we run the risk of catastrophic damage, loss, or sometimes death. Guardrails do not eliminate damage!
 - For our purposes, a guardrail is designed to ping or ding our conscience; to let us know that we are heading into the danger zone and to give us time to correct our direction.
- When we think about physical guardrails, such as those on a highway, we recognize the value and necessity of such systems to prevent injury or death in dangerous situations or conditions. Spiritual or behavioural guardrails have not enjoyed the same view; we rebel against the notion that we even need such protections, yet it takes only seconds to find out that the world is a very dangerous place—full of traps and pitfalls ready to snag the unwary.
 - Are there any current events that come to mind where participants would have benefited from behavioural or social guardrails or “warning systems”? Do you have any in your life you may be willing to share? (Regrets are a pretty good indicator here.)
 - What are some of the dangers we risk in life if we stray from the path toward a “better life”? (e.g. adultery, addiction, etc.)

- As humans, created in the image of God, we are seemingly waging a civil war between our “natural” and our “spiritual” or eternal selves. We must not forget that many of the desires of our natural selves are not wrong, but how we act them out is. It was God who created our physical bodies and they play a part in our salvation and eternity.
 - Our physical beings and actions are the results of habits and responses to external stimuli. With that in mind, some of the easiest guardrails to identify deal with habits and physical actions. As a group, can you think of some basic guardrails that would be helpful to avoid the danger zones you identified?
- All humanity seeks a “better life” than what we witness around us. This is a response to the eternal side of our nature—the one that recognizes that without God we are lost.
 - Not every danger zone is physical. Can you think of emotional or spiritual guardrails you may need?

Going Deeper:

- Though we share danger zones, our paths toward them are as unique as snowflakes. Our individual guardrails may look quite different from someone else’s. Society hates guardrails and will fight against the very notion of someone having one. We need to be encouraging and understanding of each other’s weaknesses and needs for these “directing and protecting” devices in our lives. Stand up for each other and keep each other accountable in a positive and loving manner!

Prayer: Prayer is not just “asking for stuff” but also celebrating and thanking God for what he has done and will do! Collect requests for prayer from the group, but think of areas to express gratitude to God as a group.