

THE GUARDRAIL



A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



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Whoever keeps commandments keeps their life,
but whoever shows contempt for their ways will die.

– PROVERBS 19:16 NIV

*Picking up and Digging Deeper in the 'Spiritual Boundaries' study
(a study/resource of 'Snapshots of a Disciple')*

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

Intro and background on this study.

This little study is really just a re-collecting and expanding of my studies and conversations and Biblically-analyzing of core texts of Scripture from over the last 5 to 10 years, as I have been trying to re-establish (for myself and others) the careful and safe boundaries that we all need to have - boundaries that need to be set in our minds, because the world hates boundaries because boundaries prick their consciences about the evil deeds they do. These are boundaries that many generations before us have known - but, over time, rebellion-levels have increases, preachers have grown silent, and many who should hold the Biblical boundaries have let go and either given up or compromised with evil too much to get their own hearts right. So, since many of the past generations and categories do not and/or refuse to hold these boundaries, God is raising up a new generation of a variety of maturity

levels to work together to re-establish, and re-hold the boundaries of truth, while exposing errors and liars along the way, just as God's Word teaches us to do.

You will notice a variety of subjects here in this study. I'm sorry it's not more collected. At the moment, it's not yet a whole-picture view, it's getting closer, but currently is just a scattering of topics. You'll notice that I did I try to include verses and/or verse references throughout and under each topic for further study. In time, I expect God will grant me (and others) the clarity to pull it all together better... for now, this is what I can see. And I'm sharing it because I see that this discussion, and the things included in this study, are needed in the genuine body of Christ today, in the US and worldwide.

What are 'boundary stones'?

"Boundary stones". That phrase doesn't mean much to us today, but back centuries ago, it was the only way to keep track of who owned what land, and/or to mark areas to stay away from for our own health and safety, etc (*Exodus 19 is a good example, See also Proverbs 15:25, Isaiah 10:2*) Typically, boundary stones would mark the four corners of the property you owned and were (from what I've read) most often large rocks, that were identified and known as property lines. In the US today, we have surveyors who use GPS coordinates with satellites too numerous to count - some of which essentially do the same thing: marking boundaries and/or locating points on the earth to help keep track of boundaries. If you study into the subject of boundary stones, you will find that some evil people would move the boundary stones during the night (sometimes) to 'claim' (really steal) more land from their neighbors for themselves. Thus the phrase - "moving the boundary stones". And, yes, they do that still today - only here in the US today, it's called 'eminent domain', but God isn't confused by their elaborate disguise on stealing and bribing to pervert justice. But, I'm using that phrase of 'boundary stones' to talk about something of a much deeper meaning.

Many years ago, I heard a sermon that I have still remembered pieces of about how boundary stones were more than just stones marking the perimeter of the property. They were also a reminder of God's boundaries to mark the difference between what God says is right and holy, and what God calls sin and evil. Needless to say, today those 'boundary stones' have been moved... a lot. Let's look at this from a few different angles. Passages that show clear spiritual boundaries are Romans 1, Galatians 5, and 2nd Peter 1, but those are just 3 key ones. Let's look a few others on various topics.

In 2nd Corinthians 6 and 7, God explains that He still calls some things 'clean' and 'unclean', but He's not talking about food or animals. He's talking about right and wrong, justice and injustice, lies and false teachings versus truth. You see, many of the things in the 'Old Testament' are types, shadows, and patterns in the 'New Testament', and

we see this principle taught in a variety of passages, here are four more passages that show this deeper perspective: Romans 15:4; 1st John 5:13; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 11. So, what does that mean today? Good question.

Today, we have so many varied definitions and teaching about everything, and sadly because so few people seem to know the core teachings of the Word, they believe what they hear from a variety of teachers - including many false ones. Even the modern 'dictionaries' have definitions that scoff and mock God's Word on almost every issue and topic you can think of. You see, when we look to the world to define sin, they will get it wrong - always. And, indeed, they do get it wrong all the time - always reducing sin to be less than God's Word defines it, and always adjusting to excuse their active sins to be less than the sins that God says He hates. For an easy example, look up any sin from the Bible - in the English dictionary. You will find for most of those definitions, the dictionary-writer had no understanding of what the Bible is talking about when it talks about a sin. And, that's another thing I'd like to remind people - Biblical definitions.

Do you realize that God's Word is the best dictionary and commentary on the Bible? Who knew? :) Seriously, though, if you want to know the Biblical definition of a sin, don't go to a book or a teacher - many modern ones (seemingly most, at least the "popular" or "best-selling" ones) get it wrong, and sometimes very wrong. No, instead, pick up a Bible, and study out both the Hebrew or Greek word, and/or look up a few passages that use that word. Once you find a few clear passages on the topic, you will quickly see from the context what God's Word is defining that sin to be.

But another huge hazard in this spiritual growth process is sometimes some people are willing to abandon everything they once knew to adjust their beliefs, morals, and definitions to the latest person on stage - on the 'Trash Vendor', behind the pulpit, or behind the latest "best-selling" book or audio. This is key thing the Word of God warns us so many times to avoid - don't drop what you know of right and wrong to pick up someone else's worldview - just let Scripture (and the entirety of God's Word) teach your heart and your conscience more of God's holy character, and more of right and wrong. Here are a few core-foundational texts to help you (and others) make sure you hold onto what God's Word explains is the foundation of Jesus Christ.

⁶"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel... ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if

I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."

(Galatians 1:6-10, NKJV)

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

(1 John 4:1, NKJV)

"I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. ⁶This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." (2 John 1:4-6, NKJV)

²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

(Acts 20:28-30, NKJV)

¹⁰Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:10-11, NKJV)

Key question

Are you a Berean? Do you watch out for *new* winds of doctrine and trends that everyone is falling for? A deeper question - Do you test the spirit(s) and honesty of the teaching you are hearing? If not, you need to! If you do - keep doing it and growing in it! :) How do we do that? We stay with the Biblical structure God has set, and not allow our hearts or others to move the boundary stones. This passage explains it well.

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting," (Ephesians 4:11-14, NKJV)

» We must beware of those who sound eloquent, but their life shows they hate the Word of God, His holiness, and His boundaries against sin. This category of false teachers has 2 sub-groups, those who are 1) openly lawless, and those who are 2) using *new* rules to draw disciples after themselves, and their *new* false doctrine.

We must watch out for both. An easy rule of thumb - allow people/brethren to show you topics to study deeper, but don't move quickly - but do pray that God shows you if you need to change, and if so how.

Okay, let's look deeper at 'Biblical definitions'. The world always diminishes the sins in the heart and mind, and most often even diminishes all sins, except the '*7 Deadly Sins*', which then was reduce to the top 3 (adultery, hatred and greed)... and now is becoming "*they're just all mistakes, not actual rebellion against God...*" *sigh* The lies of this world never stop. But, another way to double-check your hypothesis on a Biblical definition is to share it and discuss it with those you trust. And if they don't see it, but you still see in the text, find a few others to ask, and keep studying yourself. With prayer and the clear text of God's Word, these things become clear, often-times pretty easily. One of my favorite tools because of its accuracy and ease-of-use is the free small-program you can download at www.Scripture4all.org . I recommend it to all my friends. I've been using it for years, and I consider it to be more-honest than all the other dozen+ Bible programs I've seen.

So, Biblical definitions are essential to understanding the Word, and so is context, and so is pattern of Scripture. It can take time to study what the Word says, taking notes and saving them can help too. :) Another key part in this is also realizing that God's definition will always bring conviction on all people, not just some. Some people catch that easier than others.

Okay, let's look at another area where the boundary stones are being moved - culture norms. The culture is constantly rejecting God's Word and using their actions and manners and patterns of choices to push and promote sin - sometimes they are so spiritually deceived, they aren't aware anymore of how much sin they are practicing. But, satan uses what's 'common' to push Christians to back down and fall to practicing the same sins as everyone else. And this happens in one of two ways - either talking genuine followers of Christ into entertain themselves with sin (*just like everybody else is doing*), and the "Trash Vendor" (TV), the pagan movies, the pagan music, and pagan art, literature, and games, are all apart of helping everyone believe that more and more sin is 'normal', and therefore apparently "*not that bad*". Another way satan accomplishes the lukewarm-deterioration of believers is by surrounding them with unbelievers and/or those who call themselves 'believers' while they live, speak, act, and think just like the pagans around them. America is a great example of this. All around us, here in the US, we are surrounded by many who are fighting for sin, but they call it 'normal'. Well, yes self-wants and sin-pleasures **are** normal for those who don't Christ, and aren't ransomed by His blood. But, it is **not normal** for those who are in Christ. For those who are "in Christ" need to "abide in Christ" and they will be quickly noticed to be set-apart "to Christ". If they are not set apart, there is a high likely hood

that they are not Christ's, as explained very well in Romans 6, 8, and Hebrews 12. Key passage: ["17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."](#) (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV)

Okay, now let's dig a little deeper. One key area where the spiritual 'boundary stones' have been moved is in the area of relationships. I have found this so many times over the dozen+ years I was working with youths - many young people simply don't know healthy boundaries because they aren't being taught. And what I found when working with the youth, is many adults who never learned these things as a youth, sometimes still don't know them as an adult, especially if they are just watching an almost-empty religious entertainer on Sunday mornings. If he's the lead guy at a 501c3 tax-exempt corporation, there are **many** things he cannot and will not teach on, because of business bylaws, and the constantly-changing secret rules that are sent to these pastors every month or quarter, from DC. And, if he's also a freemason member, he simply won't teach much at all - just enough to make you feel warm with a few fake and empty stories to make it appealing to the pagan world. Which then leaves his hearers empty, having learned nothing of God's holiness, how to please God, or how to share the honest gospel of Jesus with those around you. Remember, in the Bible, the pastors were not to be focused on bringing in unbelievers to share the 'gospel' every week. No, they were to be training the believers what the Word said and how to follow Christ, so that the whole church body would be out sharing the gospel all week long... America's a far-cry from that one, huh? We need to get it back - and that means, one person at a time.

Did you realize that less than 25% of the content of the 'New Testament' gets taught in most churches today? Why is that? It's not right. Do you realize that most of Jesus' teachings do not get taught? Do you also realize that the whole gospel message that Jesus and the disciples taught is not understood by many who share the gospel? Did you also know that a half-gospel is just like a false gospel - no one can get saved with it or by it? These are huge gaps in what modern American churches (and their look-alikes around the globe) won't teach. Yes, I mean - they refuse to teach. But, there is good news. The home-church movement is growing - worldwide, and especially in the US. Many genuine followers of Christ don't realize that home-churches are the 2nd largest denomination in the US, and that info is from 2003. I suspect now, in 2015 almost 2016, that the move of genuine believers to home-churches is getting pretty close to making it the #1 denomination in the US. And the lack of Biblical content in modern American 'churches' is why they are leaving the 501c3 corporations, and starting or joining home-churches.

Another aspect where the spiritual 'boundary stones' are being moved is: life-covenants. Back in the mid-1900s, many people still knew what modesty was. And,

they also knew what it takes to make a marriage, a family, and what working diligently and by the sweat of the brow looked like. Skip to today - definitions? Mostly gone. Why? They were never taught. Meaning? We need to pick up that baton that someone(s) before us dropped. In an age of social media, conversations can be too fast, too emotional, and often too harsh, too quickly. We need to get back in the pattern of obeying Matthew 18 in all of our conversations. Not only that, but 'dating' goes super-fast that way too, and that is a key part of why faulty marriages are made, and why the easy-divorce rate is so high, and why the not-going-to-get-married number is so high as well. Technology has created superficial connections that abandon the genuineness of real human interaction (at least in some cases). Am I suggesting to abandon social media completely? Nope. I use Facebook, Gmail, Twitter, and a little of Pinterest... but I do so with intention. I don't use it to kill time, but to post content to help others, and/or to interact with others and encourage them, the Biblical way. The Bible calls the Biblical fellowship. If you are not doing that pattern - would you consider changing to do that pattern with your 'social media'? In one way or another, you will see that change grow you - a lot!

But, since we're on the topic of social media, let's discuss it a little more. This 'new' technology that has been created as I've grown up with it, but I've also seen over the years that it has also been a key part of blurring boundaries too. Everyone is different - different backgrounds, different cultures, different rules of right and wrong, etc, but some boundaries need to stay solid for all of us, for all the time. Just like in dating and marriage, there are key rules to be put in place and held there to keep us and others safe, and your friends safe. There need to be additional guidelines/boundaries to help us and others stay above reproach too. Many reading this are already being careful - but reviewing this topic can help us help others. Some people also have more accountability than others, so it's not as much an issue as it is for those who have no one to see, stop and/or correct them when they are in a pattern of sin, or something that is spiritually hurting another person. A quick review, if I may, for all audiences on Biblical boundaries in relationships.

This topic has been quite confusing for me over the years as I was growing up, because of a variety of factors - and maybe you can relate. You see, I have been blessed to have grown up in a family where my Dad, Madre taught my bro and I, and together we have grown and sought the Lord a long time and we encourage each other, and pray with each other many times a week, and talk through many things Biblically. It's a wonderful atmosphere to have. :) Sadly... I'm finding many don't have that luxury.

Life-bonds/covenants

So, for me, understanding the 'boundaries' of communication with many of the people around me was pretty hard growing up - because many of the people I've talked with were taught evolution, and/or had a broken family structure, so no boundaries were clearly defined. Over the years of talking with youths and their parents and families, and general church folk, I've seen more personalities types than I can count - each person being a unique individual to themselves. And with the world and its constantly-evolving 'definition' of "love", many have a very hard time figuring out how to balance it all. But, over time, I've also started to figure out what God's boundaries are that do apply to everyone, as we see briefly taught in 1st Corinthians 10:13 and other passages like Matthew 13, and Galatians 5 and 6. So, if this topic is still fuzzy for you, let's review it together. And, let's start by looking at the home.

Family Bond - This is the one category in which almost all activity and conversation are okay, but they do, of course, need to happen in a God-fearing manner. There are still boundaries, but very few - though each family understands and holds to only what they know from the Word, or the world. Biblically speaking, the Dad needs to lead in teaching, correction, and example in working hard in his job, and being active in the Word and ministry - and every Dad can do that in some way. If the Dad is shunning sin and loving his family and teaching them, in partnership with his wife, that is a stable home, and the children can learn from their parents and partner with them (when older) and they can all grow together. That is the Biblical model of the family. That is how God intended it to be, and that's what we need to re-teach (or even teach) those who haven't heard it or who have forgotten it. God established the wife/Mom to be home with the children and working with her husband to be teaching her children, taking care of the home, and partnering with her husband as time and life allow. The Lord did not intend for the home to be built around sin-pleasures or the sinful distractions of this world. Where there is sin, it causes division in the home and those consequences won't stop, until that sin is kicked out of the home for good. God's Word makes the solution clear and easy: **"[Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease.](#)"** (Proverbs 22:10) ~ Either remove the scoffer from your home, or set clearer boundaries to protect those you love.

Marriage Covenant - This is the only type of relationship that is deeper than the family structure. A husband and wife need to be actively getting to know, hear, and understand each other in all aspects and in all subjects. That means the husband learning to be a man his wife can respect, and learning to take care of her needs and work together on their wants, in accordance to God's will explained in His Word. And the wife needs to make sure that she shows respect to her husband and doesn't let any other relationship get between them. Patience is needed on both parts, as they learn and grow together. And, both the husband and wife need to not have their own pet-sins which are off-limits to the other spouse to discuss. Keeping each other

growing in purity and holiness is a team-effort. If they are becoming one, as Jesus explained, then they can be the honest salt and light in this world, teaching and explaining God's Word as they take care of those God puts in their path. And as they grow as one in the Word, they are becoming more like Christ and are also a reflection of Christ - but only as both are dealing with sin, together.

New Covenant - The covenant with Christ is sadly not understood by many, but it is rich for those who love it and treasure it. God is the only One who can handle all of the topics of life, all the time. He isn't a resource to be consulted when there's a problem. He's a Person who wants a spiritually intimacy and gives wisdom in all subjects when seeking Him is an active and ongoing focus all day long. The covenant-relationship with Christ is the safe haven where you can (and always need to) be honest with Him about what you're going through and your struggles, and asking Him for wisdom in all things at all times, understanding of His holiness and character, and how to set boundaries or just hold the boundaries you see in His Word. He never rebukes you for asking wisdom from Him - He welcomes it. He never gets angry or rebukes us for asking for His clear wisdom on any topic or for coming at a 'wrong time', unlike humans who are frail sometimes, even if they are growing. A close relationship with God helps all the other relationships work out.

So, now reversing them, the order looks like this:

- › New Covenant with Christ
- › Marriage Covenant
- › Family bond

From there, the other relationships can work. But when there's a conflict at the core levels, those need to be addressed first, or else the rest won't work. Everyone else in our lives needs to fit somewhere in a lesser category.

Home-church family - this category is similar to the adopted family and close friends categories - and it has its boundaries. God intended for the genuine believers to get to know each other, exhort, show grace, pray for, discuss the Word and life, etc - not many know God's form of 'church' today, though. Most only know the modern confusion about a 501c3 system - a very far cry from God's model for the church family.

Adopted family - Some people have 'adopted family' - this can be good (I have some too), but it isn't the same as family we grew up with, so it has it's cautions and boundaries.

Close Friends - Those that are likeminded in the Word and with whom we can pray with and for

Casual Friends - This group can be more random, and probably will be - but we need to make sure that those we hang out with from time to time aren't dragging us back into our old ways of sin.

Acquaintances - People that we may see once, or a few times. Or talk with once or a few times. We can pray for them, but we also need to remember what role they are in our lives.

Strangers - In a sense, no one is a stranger to a follower of Christ... but we need to handle them that way, other than making sure they know the gospel - if we get time.

Keeping these categories (or similar) in our minds will help us to remember what level of connection the person is and how to handle them. All of these categories need to hear the gospel from us - if at all possible, because we might be the only ones they hear it from.