

Guardrails Week 4:

God gives us guardrails because he knows us best, loves us, and wants to give us a full, abundant, overflowing life through Jesus. **The question is, do we trust** that if we follow his guardrails, his boundaries, do we believe that he will still give us that full, abundant, overflowing life.

Here's another truth about God's guardrails. This is a way we can say "thank you" for this amazing gift and his saving grace. **God's guardrails help us honor Him with our bodies.**

We point to God with our praise and love through choosing to use our bodies as he designed them.

¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Honoring God with our bodies is based upon an understanding that is counter-cultural. Your body is the **home for the Holy Spirit**, that is the presence of the risen Jesus Christ. And, for that reason, **I belong to Him**, not myself. I am not a **free agent** who can say to the one living in me, I'll use my body in whatever way that pleases me.

Having no guardrails or boundaries, means that the desires of my body are my God, not the designer and creator.

There are **many ways** to look at how we should use our bodies to honor and thank God. **Today we are going to look at how we use them sexually.**

I know this is a subject that gets people **nervous**. Heck, I get nervous. Let me assure you that we are going to look at **what scripture says**, and **particularly what Jesus says**. I am going to encourage you to relax, lean in, and allow God to **challenge your thinking and your behavior**.

If you disagree with something you hear, I'm going to ask you to not get defensive, but rather listen, and then **dig into the word** yourself. This is

the beginning of a dialogue, not the final word on God and sex. **We enter into this topic with some humility and a focus on me, not other people.** How am I breaking through these guardrails or, at least, testing them out?

The Bible speaks a lot about sex. I think this is a good place to start.
¹⁸ Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18

The reason this is so powerful is that sex affects body, mind, and spirit. And actually, you can add another: it affects us **socially** or how we relate to one another. **The fact that it affects all of these levels is that it is such an amazing gift.** But anything that affects all these aspects of our lives for the positive, **if misused, will affect all of these areas negatively.** Then that full life becomes impossible.

What is sexual sin? That word in the original language that was spoken and written in **Greek, is porneo.** This word is translated **sexual immorality, sexual sin.** As it appears this is a general term, **an umbrella term,** for all kinds of sexual guardrails that God gives us. **More about that later.**

The best way to approach this is to make it about me. What does God want to say to me about sexual sin in my life or what might be creeping in. It is dangerous to think, **Oh yes, now he's going to talk about "those people"** who break the sexual sins that we are particularly sensitive about.

We want to look at this topic **through the story** of the Bible. Let's start at the beginning. **What does God's creation and design of our bodies tell us?**

Let's go back one more time and go back to the very beginning of the story. **So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:227-28**

Again, we see that we are **created in God's image and that means male and female.** They are both of great value and **equal value** to God. **They are**

just as he intended them to be. This plan also includes that together they will multiply. They are also the **absolute top** of all that God created.

On to Genesis chapter 2...**But for Adam no suitable helper was found.** ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." Here's the punch line. ²⁴ **That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.** ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they **felt no shame.** Genesis 2:20b-25

God's design and intention is made clear. He didn't create and **design male and female** only so that they would **make more people.** He did it because they could be **one flesh** together.

Now, before you think that this is only sexual oneness, look at that stuff about leaving his **father and mother.** If you wanted just to be about sex and making babies, then why make a big deal about leaving home. **This is because the oneness that God designed, the perfect fit together was to be one relationally,** now this relationship takes priority over the relationship to parents. And because it is in the garden where they are to **walk hand in hand with their heavenly father** together, it is also a spiritual oneness.

This is perfection in design and purpose.

But, you know what happens next in the story of God's creation. Next comes **sin, which leads to death.** This we have traditionally called, "**The Fall.**" **What does the entrance of sin and death tell us?**

³ "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" ⁴ "**You won't die!**" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the

wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly **felt shame** at their nakedness. Now they feel shame. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. ⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So **they hid from the LORD God among the trees.**

Genesis 3:3-5

Everything is now broken, not as it was intended to be. Sin brought separation from the source of life, which brings decay and death into the world. It is passed down from generation to generation. **We are born in separation from God.**

This includes our bodies and the desires of our bodies. We desire things that aren't great for our bodies and us. **I love sweets.** They are not good for my body to the level that I would like to consume them. A lot of sugar saps my energy. It can affect **sleep** and encourage **inflammation** in my body. Therefore, it can affect my **emotions and even my behavior.**

You put a group of 50 men and 50 women in the same room and the really wounded ones will often find the **absolute worst person** for them to be in a relationship with. **Why? Because of sin and separation from God.**

If you find yourself desiring something that is outside of God's guardrails for sex, this is not the time to feel desperate or unloved by God.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you **followed the ways of this world** and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, **gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.** Like the rest, we were **by nature deserving of wrath.** ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:2-4 NIV

"Flesh" means that we have a natural desire to move away from God and toward being our own God. We have a hunger for things outside of God's boundaries.

"The ways of the world" are structures or patterns that encourage what we crave that is not God's best. "Flesh" and "world" work together. The world is an expression of the structures that are broken by sin and the flesh is the part of us that is broken by sin. One is systemic, one is individual. They both play off of one another.

Our desires become God. Let's boil it all down to a basic message. This is what our world says to use, speaking directly to our flesh. "To have a desire for something and not choose to partake is to be repressive and ultimately a phony. Real life is to get what you desire."

Remember our desires, yours and mine, are broken and need Jesus. They need to be made alive in Christ. I am too easily pleased by fulfilling a desire of the flesh when God wants to teach me to desire what he wants for me, which is best.

Translate all of that specifically into the arena of our bodies, "I'll express my sexual desires however I want. I'll use my body however I want."

Here are some specific guardrails for using our bodies sexually. These are counter-cultural. They've always gone against the flow of culture, that is nothing new. Yes, in the past traditional values paid lip service to these guardrails. In other words, people like to talk about them, but when they were inconvenient people blasted through them too, they just weren't as open about it.

Let's get back to Jesus and start there.⁴ "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'"⁵ And he said, "'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'⁶ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together." Matthew 19:4-6

Jesus is being asked a moral ethical question about divorce. Jesus bases his answer in the creation story. Everything goes back to the idea that God created man and woman in his image and they were designed to become one together.

Yes, Jesus did talk about sexual issues and what God's plan was for this part of how we use our bodies.

The woman who was caught in adultery who was about to be stoned to death. Jesus starts writing in the sand and, one by one, the men drop their stones and leave. This is what Jesus said to the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" ¹¹ "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." John 8:10-12

Jesus' statement here is consistent with his reference to Genesis, a man will leave his family and become one with his wife.

²⁰ And then he added, "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. ²¹ For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you." Mark 7:20-23

Porneo...same as used in our verse that is translated sexual sin, an umbrella term for sexual expression that is not between a man and a woman inside of a marriage covenant.

What Jesus is teaching is what was established from the beginning in Genesis. It is what Paul taught when he wrote our theme passage in Colossians 3. The guardrails, the boundaries for using our bodies sexually in a way that honors God is that sex is created, designed, and given as a gift to be expressed in the context of a man and woman in a covenant relationship.

Here's what Paul says to Timothy, whom he is mentoring and put in charge of the church in Ephesus. Paul is being very direct and blunt, which is his way. ⁹ For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for

people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. ¹⁰ The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the **wholesome teaching** ¹¹ that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God. 1 Timothy 1:9-11

Paul says it this way to the **church in Rome, who was a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish people**. Keep in mind the non-Jews may not have had the **Genesis story** as a foundation for what they believe about sex. ²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they **worshiped and served the things God created** instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶ That is why **God abandoned them to their shameful desires**. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷ And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved. Romans 1:25-27

I want to talk about same sex attraction. In our culture, this automatically means you are gay, and if you call yourself gay, there is great pressure to begin practicing what you feel. **What I feel is not always truth.**

Keep in mind that there are a few people trying to remake the culture in their own image. **Cultural architects** who believe that any kind of reliance on the creation narrative is **simply a way of oppressing people**. There is **no thought of the fall because everyone is basically good** if they can just **discover their truth and identity and pursue that**.

Most people who would call themselves gay or practicing something other are not trying to change the culture. They just want to live their lives and, therefore, they are not the enemy.

I want to talk to **kids and parents**. **Be attracted to character in others**. If you find that you are attracted to someone, look deeper and say, "What

about how they live, treat people, etc. is something that I respect and am drawn to?"

Sin causing separation from God that has been passed down through the generations has caused everything to be broken. It brought decay that leads to death. That includes how we use our bodies. **We are bent toward making our desires God, worshiping the gift, not the giver.** We are all bent toward satisfying our desires in ways that go against God's design and purpose for our bodies. **That bent encourages us to use our bodies in ways that lead to deeper separation from God and bring harm to others and ourselves.**

What does Jesus' redemption have to do with how we use our bodies?

Jesus paid the price, or penalty, for all of the sin of all the people for all time. But we have to trust in it. And through his defeat of death, the power of sin has been broken. **That means that I believe that I am broken, but Jesus can begin to transform me or make me new.** He is lovingly working in and through my brokenness.

Redeem is to purchase something and then repurposing it for God's good purposes. Buy a broken down aging racehorse to become a therapy horse.

Because we live in the in-between time, where death and sin have been defeated, but the full consummation of that retreat has yet to be experienced, **we still struggle with the effects of sin in ourselves and in the world.** This is when Jesus returns to put all things right, to bring his kingdom, **the restoration of his rule over all things,** to its completion into eternity.

Paul, again to that church in Rome, describes what Jesus did for us as we live in the in-between time. ⁵ **Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.** ⁶ **We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.** ⁷ **For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin...** ¹² **Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.** ¹³ **Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to**

God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the **freedom of God's grace.** Romans 6:5-7 & 12-14

Paul says, **don't allow your body to be an instrument** of evil and sin. He then says the **positive side** challenging us to **use our bodies as instruments** to do what is right and for God's glory.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has passed away the new has begun. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Paul again using a negative **"don't"** and a positive **"do"** as a way to teach these principles. **Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.** Romans 12:1-2

If we are simply copying cultural odds, we will put ourselves into a position where we are encouraging our old selves to follow our own selfish desires, my flesh connecting with the world's behaviors and customs.

That one is worth putting to memory. It can be what you **repeat in the face of temptation.**

This takes us back to one of the questions we asked early on in this series. Do I trust that God can give that full life, abundant life, even if I honor his guardrails? That means I truly believe that he is good and that he is not holding out on me. If I resist satisfying a desire that God says no to, will I still have a full, abundant, overflowing life?

How are we to respond as a disciple of Jesus and as a church? I want to show you something that I am working on that I hope will help you see how we can respond to culture in a way that honors Jesus and shows his love to those who don't agree with God's guardrails.

- **Diagram**

Interview with Tammy S.

Steps of Obedience

1. How is sexual sin an issue for you?

Maybe it's your reaction to people who have a struggle that you don't.

2. What is my first step away from sexual sin and toward Jesus?

What is God saying to me? What do I need to do to be obedient or align my life? And whose help do I need?

Maybe for you it's just getting into God's Word by reading these scriptures and others about God's view of sexuality.

Talking to your kids

3. Digging Deeper Challenge

Pray, "Come Holy Spirit," then read looking for anything that **I am to do** in response to what God does. Make a list and see what it says about anything I need to do.