Good morning! For anyone that is new or visiting or watching online for the first time, my name is Matt Chesney. I am the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge and it is my pleasure to be speaking with you today.

We began a series last week called “Guard Rails” and Pastor Bill kicked things off by giving us a general overview of why these guard rails are important and how they serve us. He also gave us some hints or previews into some of the topics we are going to be addressing throughout this series, but regardless of whether you caught those – be prepared – things are going to become uncomfortable and you will be challenged. And this is all because we love you and we wouldn’t be doing you any favors by avoiding these topics.

The idea behind the imagery of guard rails is that they are constructs that attempt to keep you safe. They attempt to keep you on the right path and out of danger.

I was trying to explain this concept to my youth group last Sunday night – which was difficult because almost none of them drive and most of them didn’t know what a guard rail was – so I changed the analogy for them and it seemed to help. I reminded them that all of them have rules that their parents have in their homes. Rules concerning bedtime, curfew, treats before/after dinner, how to treat your siblings, sharing electronic devices, etc. Rules. Breaking most of these rules would mean there will be consequences that you will not enjoy, but you probably won’t die. Your parents will probably be angry at you but it doesn’t mean that your parents stop loving you. These rules are in place for your benefit so that you can be healthy, well-adjusted, and grow and mature to be a productive member of society. Now… there are other rules that your parents might have that are a little more serious. Rules like looking both ways before crossing a street. Staying near them in a parking lot full of cars. Not talking to strangers or jumping in their white van when they offer you candy. Again, these rules are not designed to make your life miserable… or to take away your freedoms or fun. They are designed to keep you safe… and breaking these rules could lead to some EXTREMELY bad situations.

The point is… as children we are not equipped to navigate the challenges of this world. We can’t see over the cars in the parking lot to see one coming down the way… we don’t automatically recognize the sound of an approaching car… we don’t know that there are people out there that don’t have our best interest in mind… we just don’t know. Thank goodness for parents! They are there to yank our arm and pull us back into safety before we get hit by that car… it might hurt a little, but we’re safe. They are there to tell us not to take that candy and to stay away from that stranger we don’t know… even though we want that candy and that stranger seemed nice. And because we are children… and we don’t see these things or understand these things… we spend our youth fighting against our parents, rebelling in our teenage years, pushing away and demanding the things we want… until we maybe someday have kids of our own… and get it.

Now, stay with me here… but… here’s the question I have for you today: When did you grow up? When did you become so wise? Because, I’m just around the corner from turning 40… have 5 kids of my own… and still feel like I have no idea what I’m doing most of the time and like I’m still a kid.

And the truth is… we all are still children. We are children of God. He is our father and we are his adopted kids. And he sets rules for us, and tells us no, and yanks us out of danger, and sometimes there are consequences for breaking his rules… but HE is our father. And we need him. And not just any father… but a perfect father. An all-knowing, ever-present, always loving parent.

(Slide 2) Bill gave us 5 reasons why God has the right to create boundaries or guard rails in our lives.

1. Truth is external to me, revealed by God
2. He loves us and wants to protect us
3. He knows us better that we do
4. The right path isn’t natural to us *(leave a 10 year old home alone for a month with money to spend and see what happens)*
5. Guard rails demand we trust He will give us a full life (John 10:10)

This all boils down to the fact that we are kids, he is the parent and we just don’t know what we don’t know.

Now, this mindset is great, and I encourage you to hold onto it and remind yourself daily about this relationship you have with your heavenly father and where you are positionally… but the truth is.. most of the time we run around like awkward teenagers that are over-confident, think we know everything, and feel invincible against anything the world throws at us.

Let’s look at some statements and break them down a bit…

(Slide 3) I am special. (Story) *I am special because God made me – just like everyone else. But that does not put me above others.*

[Psa 139:14 NLT] 14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous--how well I know it.

[Rom 12:3 NLT] 3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

(Slide 4) I work hard, achieve my goals, and deserve the things I want. (Story) *I work hard to gain the approval of others, my goals are a response to what the world values and views as “success,” and the things I want are all designed to fill a void I have in my life in an attempt to be happy.*

(Slide 5) I am not a child. I am an adult. No one is the boss of me. *I am a very young child compared to God and not only are there plenty of people with more life experience than me, but also differently equipped and skilled to direct me when I’m not able.*

(Slide 6) I love criticism. *Unless it’s negative… in that case I tell myself they don’t know what they’re talking about*. *Taking feedback from others forces me to admit that I am not perfect.*

(Slide 7) I make sacrifices for the people I love. *And remind them of it as often as I can to hold it over them. Telling others about the sacrifices I make is a bonus – it makes me look better in their eyes too.*

[Mat 6:2-3 NLT] 2 When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do--blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. 3 But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

The primary issue or concern we keep running into here is simple: (Slide 8) **Idolatry**.

Idolatry is (Slide 9) putting anything in a position as to be more important than God.

In these examples what we are putting in a position to be more important than God… is ourselves. Our desire for power, prestige, wealth, possessions, etc. is all to fuel a need we have deep inside of us to worship ourselves (and to want others to worship us as well). Bill jokes sometimes on stage that he “likes me some me” and we laugh… but we laugh because we know it’s true… we all like us some us… It’s something every one of us struggles with.

This type of idolatry leads to some very ungodly behaviors. It leads to greed, covetousness, envy, gluttony, entitlement, and selfishness. These sins… or behaviors… are actually symptoms of an underlying problem. A “God-complex” that we all have. It started back in the garden when Adam and Eve were tempted to “be like God” and it continues to this day.

The good news is that God knows this about us and wants to help. He’s given us His Word and Spirit as well as each other to help guide us back into our rightful place in his family as his child. They show us what is wrong – but also explain why…

In our verses in Colossians that we’ve been digging deeper into you’ll find in verse 5 it says: (Slide 10) Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.”

And we know that to be the case which is why verse 10 is SO important when it directs us to: (Slide 11) Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

In Luke 12:15 it says: (Slide 12) “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness” and then explains why… (Slide 13) “for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

In Romans 13:9 it says: (Slide 14) You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,

Which are all more symptoms of the god-complex - taking or doing what we think we have the right to do. But instead Jesus taught us to do something else and the verse finishes like this: (Slide 15) and any other commandment are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

To live your life as a false god… one that is envious, greedy, entitled, selfish… is to be a slave to those desires. And the unfortunate truth is… that no matter how much stuff you get, or power you achieve, or pleasures you experience – you’re still going to want more… and it’s never going to be enough. These things don’t bring satisfaction. Only more desire. And we end up unhappy, discontent, and unfulfilled.

The only thing that brings true satisfaction and fulfillment – life and life to the fullest – is Jesus.

Which is the reason for the guard rails. God doesn’t want us to travel down that path. He doesn’t want us to be unfulfilled, unhappy, or constantly chasing after the next hollow high. He wants us to have the joy that can only come from being in his presence and allowing him to work in our lives. It’s the same reason our parents gave us rules to follow as kids – they want what’s best for us until we are mature enough to make better choices. It’s the same with God – he wants the absolute best for us. He wants us, as his children, to mature and develop while he guides us. At that time we will enter into his heaven, an everlasting kingdom free from sin and death and the concerns of this world. But… it takes a while to get there. Basically, your whole life. And while in some ways that seems like a really REALLY long time… it is actually just a flash of light compared to the eternity waiting for us.

So, how do we do this? How do we simultaneously acknowledge that we have a “God-complex” (which pushes us to rule our own lives) AND follow the teachings of Jesus which include abstaining and avoiding the things that we think are “good” for us?

(Slide 16) Steps of Obedience

Well… (Slide 17) 1. we ask for help. Help comes in a few forms… We can (Slide 18) pray for help – so the Holy Spirit can fill us and guide us. We can (Slide 19) read ­ God’s word and be encouraged and strengthened by it. And we can rely on (Slide 20) God’s people to support us and hold us accountable.

And Speaking of Reading God’s word… we have another step in the (Slide 21) 2. Dig Deeper Challenge that Bill started for us last week. So, if you still have that paper from last week – hopefully at home in a good spot for you – or somewhere where you can access it regularly and be reminded to engage with it – you don’t need to get another one. But if you didn’t get one last week make sure you pick this up this week and use this scripture to dig deeper with us throughout this series. Last week, Bill challenged us to Pray before reading, “Come Holy Spirit” and then to read through the scripture two times. The second time he asked you to just take note of what catches your attention. This time, you’re going to start the same way and pray before reading, “Come Holy Spirit.” Then after reading it through once, when you read through it a 2nd time I’d like you to find specific words or phrases that are either unfamiliar or challenging. Things you would like to learn more about. THEN I want you to use a resource called “Blue Letter Bible” to look up those words or phrases and investigate them. Take what you learn and discover to your bridge group and discuss it! So, how do you use Blue Letter Bible? Well, I’ve prepared a short video tutorial to help you with that! VIDEO

So, my fellow children of God… you have some homework to do! We need to ask for help by praying, reading God’s word, and relying on God’s people for support. And we also need to start educating ourselves about and discovering God’s amazing plan that he has for every single one of our lives and how that plan comes with a fulfillment that can’t be achieved separate from God.

Let’s pray.