

DON'T TAKE RAINBOW ROAD – Psalm 119:32-35

Whether you're driving, flying, or boating your way to a summer vacation, I wanted to embark on this series so we could have imagery to take with us on any and all trips.

Eugene Peterson wrote a book with a powerful title that speaks to the journey we're on spiritually: Long Obedience in the Same Direction.

In it, he said: *"Everything in the gospel is livable and that my task was to get it lived."*

He said this was *"going to take some time, so I settled in for the long haul."*

We're called to a long haul. A journey. There may be no change in geography but there's a journey of the heart. A journey of transformation as we look to "get it lived."
And God provides us with the path...

Jeremiah 6:16 - *Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'*

Jeremiah 18:15 - *My people are not so reliable, for they have deserted me... They have stumbled off the ancient highways and walk in muddy paths.*

I drive on the highway almost daily. As I go about my weekly to do list, multiple times weekly I hit bridges, tunnels, and alike, all while going at high speeds.

Going off the highway? Not on my to do list.

One reason I can drive at high speeds on any and all kinds of roads without hesitating? Guardrails.

I learned this lesson long before I had my driver's license.

All it took was an old Nintendo gaming system and one game: Mario Kart.

Rainbow Road is the climactic course, a rainbow road suspended in space. It contains no railing or guardrail, which leads to just about everyone at one point or another falling into space.

It's where we get the name for our second Road Rule: **Don't Take Rainbow Road**

Guardrail - *a system designed to prevent travelers from straying into dangerous or off limit territory.* They're often an invisible, unheralded part of our driving experience.

Like rainbow road, *we most often think about them... and miss them... when they're missing.*

Many of our greatest regrets in life could have been prevented by guardrails.

Nobody plans to mess up a marriage over an addiction. Nobody plans to lose their job over a bad habit. Nobody plans to dive into poor health. Nobody puts bankruptcy in their ten year plan.

They don't plan for it. They just never establish guardrails.

But God is kind enough to give us many.

Psalm 119:32-35

*I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.
Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end.
Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.*

God's commands, like guardrails, should give us confidence to move forward, knowing they will keep us from going all the way off the road.

Three facets of guardrails I want to look at tonight based on scripture:

GUARDRAILS DON'T JUST PROTECT, THEY DIRECT

GPS FAILS. (The Office Vid)

When GPS and lack of "street smarts" leads us astray, guardrails come in handy. This is a reality about guardrails: they don't just protect. They direct.

God's commands are a lot like that.

But when I think of God's *direction* I don't want God's *commands*, I want his *advice*!

We want answers like David got them in 2 Sam 5

2 Samuel 5:19 - *David asked the LORD... should I?God said yes.*

2 Samuel 5:23-25 – *Again David asked the LORD...*

How ironic that we want God's advice when it comes time for a big decisions, but we ignore his daily direction that comes with his commands.

But we don't want directional commands, we want directional advice.

We don't want Christ as *King*, we want him as our tour guide. A life coach.

We want advice without the commands.

But it's your resolution to put up guardrails in light of God's Word that He can use to direct your entire life. Our decisions and entire lives become guided by His commands and His Word.

David didn't know what hung in the balance with his early decisions to honor God.

But in Psalm 19, estimated by many to be one of his earliest Psalms, we see why his life was able to keep from wrecking in spite of the roller coaster ride ahead of him...

Psalm 19:7-11

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 19 explicitly expresses his trust in setting God's commands as his guardrails. Psalm 119 and the verses we read earlier are basically a love letter for God's Word and His commands. Why? Because David realized they don't just protect, they direct.

King David's resolution to follow God's laws set the course for his life. In contrast- we see King Saul's lack of similar resolve is one reason his life went off the rails.

Maybe it's why Saul's grandson and David's son wrote the following Proverb, Proverbs 11:3 It starts speaking of "*the integrity of the upright.*" Integrity speaks to doing the right thing. The upright are those that seek to do the right thing and stick within guardrails provided. What does it do? It "*DIRECTS them.*"

We want God to direct us with advice. He wants to direct our lives with his commands. They serve as guardrails that don't just protect us, they direct us.

GUARDRAILS APPEAR EXTREME

Heard of **Victor Hugo**? You've probably heard of his story Les Mis. How long do you think it took him to write Les Mis? 17 years! Not because the book is THAT long. And not because of writers block. But because he was easily distracted. He'd break to work on his garden or go for a long walk, and never come back to it. His friends had to beg him to finish. Finally he put up a guardrail of accountability – and it sounds pretty extreme. He told his servant to come in every night and take all his clothes. That would force him to stay in his room and write rather than go outside distracted. Only after he stayed in to write would the servant be allowed to give him clothes.

That IS extreme, and that's the point of a guardrail. It's put in a place that's safe to drive so we don't end up in a dangerous wreck. They aren't one the hill or at the bottom because that helps nobody.

It's not that Victor Hugo saw something wrong with clothes. But he did see something wrong with living distracted and unproductive. So he removed his clothes as a guardrail.

Our culture isn't a fan of guardrails. Our culture is content with a painted line, and then it dances on it.

There's a reason for this. We gravitate toward the edge. We all have a tendency to play as close as we can to the edge of disaster. It is the same throughout our culture.

Example: Finances – **buy buy buy** ...but go bankrupt and you're irresponsible. But wait... didn't I just buy what you were baiting me with?

Our culture baits us to the edge and then criticizes and mocks us when we crash.
God does the opposite in his grace gives us guardrails to avoid crashing, and he gives us grace when we do.

What a gracious God He is!

But our culture doesn't like guardrails.

That's legalistic. Confining. Restrictive.

Sure, our culture sees the danger and the bad consequences. But it doesn't like guardrails.

Proverbs 27:12

"The prudent see danger and take refuge.

But the simple keep going and suffer for it."

Examples: *I avoid travelling alone with a female that isn't my wife.*

Similarly: *I try to avoid meeting with a female 1 on 1 when it isn't necessary.*

Essentially, I won't hit up women and say "let's do coffee." "Let's have dinner."

I don't text women and ask, "hey, how you doing?" or process life with them.

Bro... *"That sounds extreme."*

Our culture would joke us-- ***do you have less than zero self control?***

No, but the point of a guardrail is that the further you stay from the edge, the easier it is to avoid.

Is it a sin now to sit and chat with somebody of the opposite sex?

No, duh- but the point of a guardrail isn't that it KEEPS you from sin.

GUARDRAILS DO DAMAGE

They are designed to do a little bit of damage in order to keep you from experiencing a whole lot of damage.

It's better to bump into a guardrail and suffer a little damage than it is to drive off of the road and suffer huge- and maybe fatal- damage.

God doesn't give commands because he's a cosmic killjoy.

He gives us commands because he's a good father.

Providing guardrails is what good parents do.

But some don't. Why? Accountability and correction isn't just inconvenient the one receiving it.

Sometimes it's a drag to give it. So parents forego it. They want to be their kids pal, not their parent. So they let them "sow their wild oats" and avoid any hard conversations or correction.

We avoid guardrails because we want to raise happy children,
and we end up raising young adults who need to recover from the wrecks of their childhood.

Good parents say: In order to prevent you from doing real damage to your life and your future, I want to put up protective barriers – *rules*- here at home.

Because if you and I are going to have conflict, I want to have conflict with you at home.

I don't want your conflict out there, because conflict here is easier to resolve.

So good parents put boundaries *far* from the edge of disaster.
Does that mean our kids adhere to them? Absolutely not.
My adolescence I spent jumping fences ...not realizing that they were guardrails.

Why don't we expect God to do the same for us and understand his heart when he does?
Boundaries are a blessing, because what we prize, we'll protect.

And from the perspective of the young person becoming an adult, we spend our whole life waiting to get out from under our parents and live independent...
Then asking for accountability feels like asking for a parent!

But setting up people to keep us to guardrails is about embracing a standard of behavior you want to embrace and putting people around you to keep you from drifting from it.

We see accountability as signing up for having somebody to rail against us.
But accountability isn't just somebody to rail against... It's railing that keeps us from wrecking.

Rafting the Upper Gauley in West Virginia.

People die doing it. More often than you'd like when you've signed up to do it.

But why do they die? They don't have a guide.

We had a guide named Zach. In the moment with his direction as we'd navigate the rapids I never felt fearful for my life.

We needed Zach preparing us for what's ahead, and then barking commands as we went.

Words of direction.

Words of assessment.

Words of correction.

Words of encouragement.

A good father wouldn't send his son down those rapids in the dark or without these words.

God doesn't do that to us. He gives us HIS WORD.

As he calls us to the journey, he provides guardrails.

When you have a guide you can trust, you don't need to worry about the path you're on.

When your life has guardrails, you don't need to slow down.

You can, as David did, "run on the path of your commands."

Let's pray...