

# POTHoles & GUARDRAILS



## THE BIG IDEA

**The life we're building is only as strong  
as the integrity of its foundation.**

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” —Matthew 7:24-27*

*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.  
—Proverbs 27:17*

*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. —Proverbs 4:23*

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? —Jeremiah 17:9*

## NOTES

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## GROUP DISCUSSION

- What are some ways you are tempted to build your foundation on the culture, rather than on the cornerstone, Jesus Christ?
- Read Matthew 7:24-27. In this parable, who does Jesus say is like the wise man who builds his house on the rock? Who is like the foolish man who builds his house on sand? Thinking about your life recently, have you been building on the rock or sand?
- What guardrails have you placed in your life to keep you from driving off into a ditch? What guardrails do you need to place?



## PRAYERS FOR MY BROTHERS...

## DAY 1

*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.* —Proverbs 11:3

Honor and reliability are crucial in all of life. Alan Simpson, senator from Wyoming from 1979 to 1997, said, “If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don’t have integrity, nothing else matters.”

At its most basic level, integrity is a one-to-one correlation between your Bible, your beliefs, and your behavior. In order to have integrity, you must behave biblically. But you can’t behave your way out of something that you believed your way into. So first, you have to believe that the Bible is true. That belief then becomes the natural foundation for your behavior.

What are the Bible’s standards for integrity in our behavior? They are actually fairly simple. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) give us guidelines that we can apply to every area of our lives. But Jesus, always concerned with our motives, simplifies it even further: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

### REFLECTION

Rate yourself on a scale of 1-4 (where 1 is weak and 4 is strong) in these three areas:

\_\_\_ I know what the Bible says.

\_\_\_ I believe God and the truth of the Scripture.

\_\_\_ I act in accordance with what the Bible says.

Are any of these areas out of sync with the others?

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What can you do to strengthen your foundation of integrity?

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## DAY 2

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* —Ecclesiastes 4:9-10



About 90% of an iceberg's mass is underwater, which means only about 10% of an iceberg is visible above the water line. Our lives are similar. There's a small portion that we allow most people to see, such as when we talk about news and sports and weather. But most of our life is hidden from their eyes. We have to intentionally give trusted people access into the areas of our hearts and minds where we set our priorities and make life-altering decisions. Accountability should include several key areas like spiritual disciplines, home life, work, and money. But it should also include discussion about our personal "potholes" or high-risk areas.

The Bible repeatedly explains that we can increase our chances for success by helping each other. We all need help sometimes from qualified people. That doesn't mean we look for "experts." Accountability partners aren't spiritual bosses. Instead, they are fellow travelers on the journey. While you don't need a lot of them, you should aim to have more than one, for it's harder for three or four men to get deceived in regard to a key issue in someone's life.

### REFLECTION

List five areas of your life that are not clearly visible to people who don't know you well.

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How does (or would) it protect you to be accountable to someone in those areas?

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What two or three men are partners in this for you—or could be?

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## DAY 3

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. —Matthew 5:16*

When bakers make cookies, they put all the spices and sugar together in a bowl—sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, etc. As they stir, the cookie dough picks up the different ingredients; each time the sticky dough passes over the mixture, the sweeter it becomes. It's similar with the development of our character.

How do we get integrity? We pick it up, over time, by watching people we respect. We see them handle dicey situations, face trials, and pursue good. As we roll through life and interact with others, we recognize qualities such as courage, perseverance, or compassion. We begin to identify different characteristics—different ingredients or seasonings—to which we aspire.

The same is true for those who brush up against us. When a younger man comes into contact with you, for example, be someone that coats him with the ingredients of integrity. Leave him with a vision for what he aspires to be.

As you identify ingredients in others that you want to pick up, first ask God to work it into your character through faith and the Holy Spirit. Then commit to cultivating it through the choices you make.

### REFLECTION

How did you learn integrity?

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What is an “ingredient” you’d like to pick up more of? Who in your life has it?

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How can you “teach” integrity through your daily actions?

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## DAY 4

*Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” —John 18:25*



Prior to Jesus' crucifixion, Peter denied three times that he even knew his Master. He chose to lie because it seemed expedient and safe. Although we can understand that Peter was under incredible pressure, we also probably can agree that this was a major failure. Yet in Jesus' eyes, Peter's failure did not disqualify him from being His disciple.

In fact, following Jesus' resurrection, an angel gave a message to the women who visited the tomb. He said, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. (...) But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you” (Mark 16:6-7). Notice the angel specifically mentioned Peter.

Then Jesus met His disciples on the lakeshore in Galilee, and there, He reinstated Peter as a disciple by again offering His original invitation, “Follow me.” He even reinstated His call on Peter's life to build the church by saying, “Feed my sheep” (see John 21:15-19). Every one of us has failed before and compromised his integrity. But failure does not define us when we are in Christ. Jesus offers forgiveness.

### REFLECTION

Think about a recent time you failed to act with integrity. How does it make you feel to know that failure does not disqualify you?

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## DAY 5

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* —Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Solomon was a man who trusted God as his strength, wisdom, and refuge. He enjoyed the fruit of God's blessings. But he forgot to fear God. He forgot to guard his mind. As his worldview shifted from the absolutes of Scripture to the world of feelings, he began to adopt the worldview of the pagans around him. From the wisest man to ever live to the most disillusioned, Solomon became one of history's most pathetic characters.

Through his many proverbs, the echo of his voice reverberates down through the ages with lessons from his own indiscretions, ones that left him tortured and in pain. He said, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." He knew the place the enemy would attack would be the heart (mind).

As a Christian, you must struggle to guard your mind in a non-Christian world. The Bible teaches us that a *real* enemy plots to conform our minds to the pattern of this world. When we pick and choose among the benefits of a pagan life and worldview, we inevitably weaken our resistance to its temptations. We forget to guard our minds.

You can live daily by the Spirit or the flesh. To live by the flesh means you decide what is best for your life according to the shifting sands of your human understanding. To live by the Spirit means you go to the Word of God and build a course of action on a firm foundation of rock.

Solomon knew his own mind had been left unguarded, and he languished in the smoldering ashes of a ruined life. Surrender your mind to the truth of the Word of God and guard it above all else.

### REFLECTION

The Word of God is the ultimate guardrail on the journey to biblical manhood. How will you build this guardrail into your life from here on out?

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What other guardrails do you commit to placing? Tell a couple of your brothers.

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# ROUTE PLANNER

The journey is just getting started! Take some time to prayerfully read over your video notes and daily reflections from the last four weeks, and ask God to reveal where you GO from here.

 **My next steps from Week 1: On-Ramp**

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 **My next steps from Week 2: Merging Lanes**

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 **My next steps from Week 3: Navigation**

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 **My next steps from Week 4: Potholes & Guardrails**

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My next steps for staying connected with some guys in intentional spiritual friendship:

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