

GUARDRAILS

LESSON 4 // GUARD YOUR FAITHFULNESS

Warnings are an extremely important part of life. They provide guardrails that keep us on the right track. To ignore or reject legitimate warnings is foolish and potentially self-destructive.

Jesus issued many words of warning during His earthly ministry. In Luke 12:35-48 He warns His disciples about the need to carefully guard their faithfulness to God:

Luke 12:35-48 (NIV) *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,³⁶ like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk.⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.⁴⁷ The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows.⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”*

Clearly there are serious consequences if you fail to maintain vigilance and faithfulness. What can you do to guard against this and fortify your spiritual vigilance and faithfulness?

1. Regularly remind yourself of the reality of Jesus’ second coming.

Three phrases summarize Jesus’ warning: “Be dressed ready for service,” “keep your lamps burning” and “waiting for their master” (verses 35-36). Then He adds, “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (verse 40).

Jesus’ second coming is a source of great hope for believers (see Titus 2:13), but it also provides a sobering reality check. We must be prepared spiritually for our appointment with the Lord on that day. Since He will come unexpectedly, we must *always* be ready. This should motivate us every day to keep our hearts right with Him and our lives on track with His purposes.

2. Be consistent in your spiritual responsibilities.

Faithfulness always involves consistent fulfillment of responsibilities. Faithful people are dependable because they do what they say and engage diligently in what they are assigned.

In verse 37, Jesus put it this way: “It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.” As Jesus’ servants, we must be eagerly looking to Him, learning from Him and seeking to serve Him better.

3. Prayerfully determine to overcome unfaithfulness by God’s grace and power.

To guard your faithfulness, you must fight spiritual apathy, procrastination, laziness and other sinful tendencies that try to keep you from consistently doing what you should. God’s grace is available to empower you in this battle—even when you feel weak and powerless.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV) *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.*

4. Develop a heart of service and a lifestyle of serving.

Jesus modeled for us a heart and life of committed, faithful service. Our calling is to follow His example as devoted servants.

Mark 10:44-45 (NLT) *And whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

1 Peter 2:21 (NLT) *For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.*

This kind of servant-hearted faithfulness is not just about *maintaining*. Jesus made it clear that it also involved *multiplying* the resources God has entrusted to you.

Luke 12:48b (NLT) *When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.*

Faithfulness is a vital part of your relationship with God and the fulfillment of His purposes. Guard it vigilantly and you will see His faithfulness poured back into your life in wonderful ways.

Discussion Questions

1. How should the anticipation of Jesus’ second coming impact how you live?
2. Why is it so important to be consistent in your spiritual responsibilities? What are some of these responsibilities and how can you be more consistent with them in your daily life?
3. Read Mark 10:44-45, Luke 12:48 and 1 Peter 2:21. How do these verses speak to you about serving faithfully?