

An Abide Discovery Session

# *The* Guardrails of Biblical Interpretation

Seven principles that protect how we read God's Word —  
keeping us on the road to sound interpretation  
and off the cliff of misuse.

Meditate & Obey. Study & Apply. Hear & Do.

# The Relatable Experience: From Passive to Skilled

Have you ever walked away from a Bible passage unsure if you understood it? You are not alone. Most of us were handed a Bible and told to read it, but no one taught us how.

## THE PASSIVE READER



- Hopes for a random spark of inspiration.



- Asks, "What does this mean to me?"



- Often feels confused or left guessing.



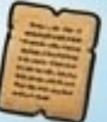
## THE SKILLED WORKMAN



- Uses reliable tools to find precision.



- Asks, "What did God intend to say?"



- Feels confident, empowered, and approved.



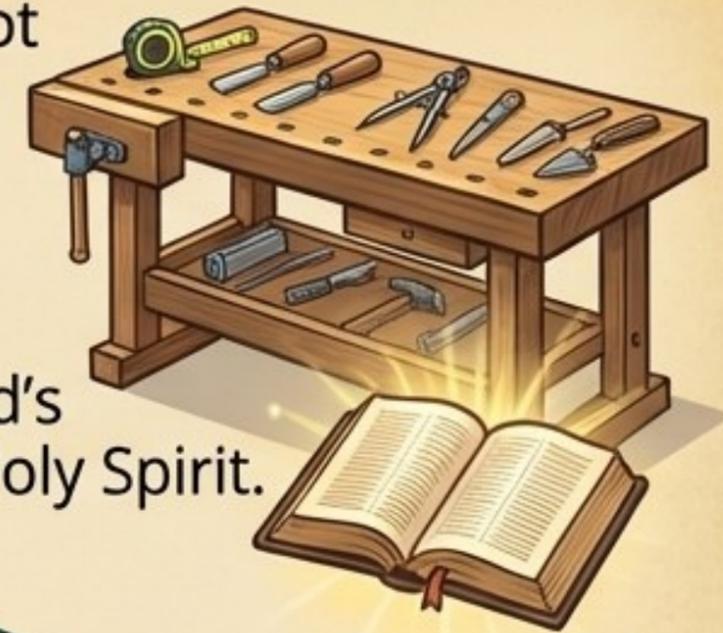
# The Workman's Invitation

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”  
(2 Timothy 2:15, LSB)

“How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of Yahweh.”  
(Psalm 119:1, LSB)

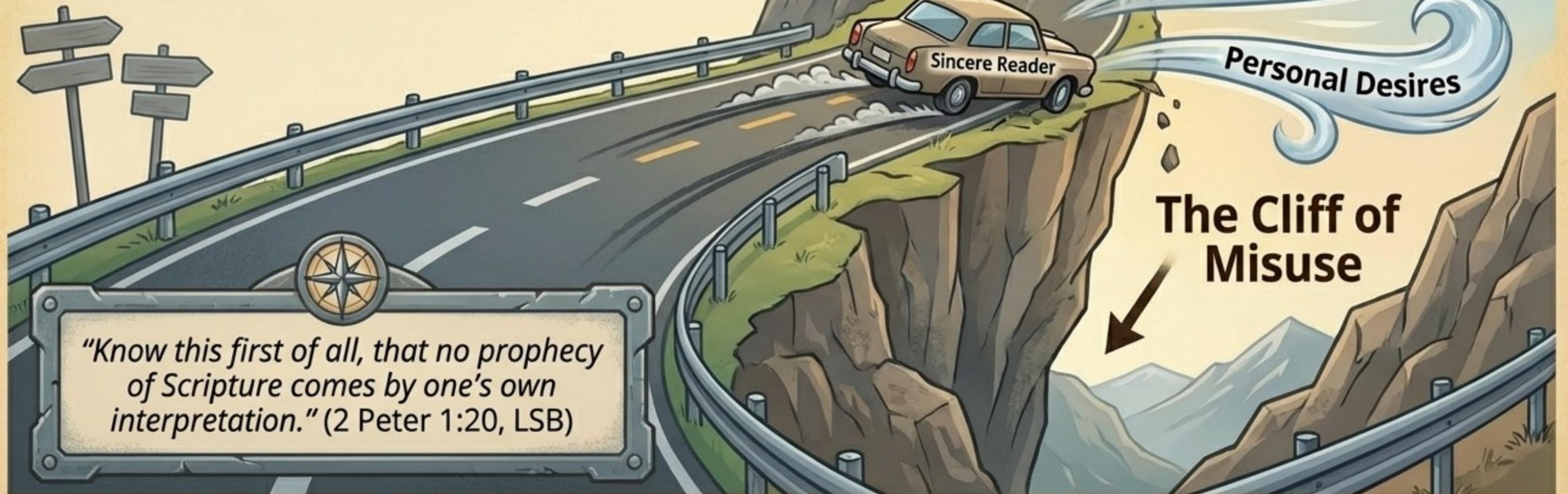
A skilled craftsman does not resent his tools; he values them because they make precision possible.

Discipleship is learning to prayerfully engage with God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit.



# The Danger of Interpretive Drift

Without a framework, even the most sincere reader will eventually drift. When we prioritize what we want the text to say over what God actually said, it is no longer Bible study—it is a conversation with ourselves.

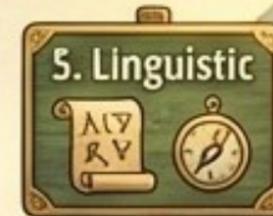


*"Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one's own interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20, LSB)*

# The Divine Safety System

Because this Word comes from the breath of the Creator, how we listen matters. Guardrails are not restrictions—they are empowering tools. They keep us on the safe path of truth so we can build a life that lasts.

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16, LSB).*



# GOD-BREATHED

# 1. The Literal Guardrail

*Understand the text in its normal, plain sense by honoring its specific literary genre.*

## Poetry

When David writes that God is his "rock", we read it as a beautiful poetic metaphor for unmoving strength, not a literal stone.



## Wisdom

When Proverbs tells us to "Train up a child...", we read it as a formative wisdom principle, not a mathematical guarantee that prevents heartache.

## History

We read historical accounts as concrete realities, keeping us from over-spiritualizing real events.

God chose to speak through poetry, wisdom, and history.  
Honoring the genre is the doorway to hearing Him accurately.

## 2. The Contextual Guardrail

A verse read in isolation is vulnerable to misuse. We must read every passage through three vital layers to bridge ancient **“there and then”** to **“here and now.”**



**Layer 1: Historical-Cultural**

The ancient world, daily life, and original audience.  
**Example:** Knowing the dangerous, sacrificial reality of an ancient shepherd transforms Psalm 23 into a bold claim of total dependence.



**Layer 2: Literary**

The surrounding paragraphs and full section. Does the tone shift from a green pasture to a dark valley?



**Layer 3: Theological-Canonical**

The larger story of Scripture, with Christ at the center.



### 3. The One-Meaning Guardrail

Seek the single, main meaning intended by the original Author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**The Meaning:** The text cannot mean "whatever it means to me." The Author's meaning is stable, historical, and unchanging.

**The Application:** While the meaning is singular, the applications are wonderfully diverse across different lives, cultures, and circumstances today.

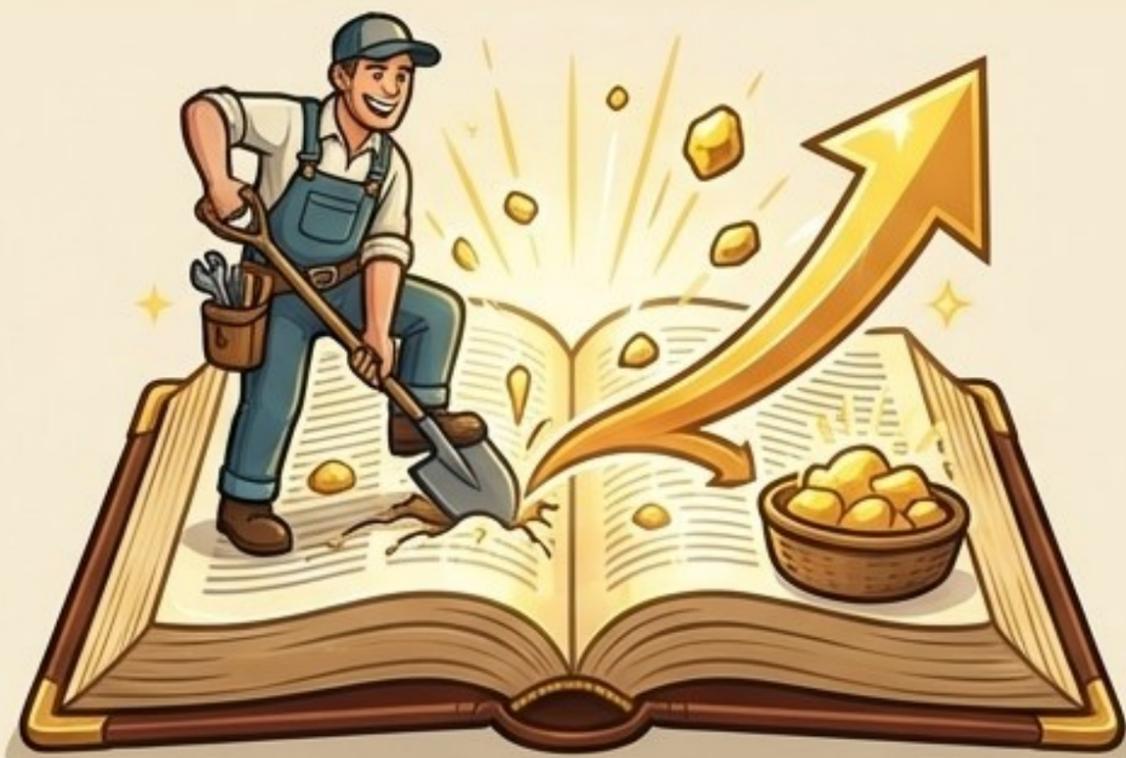


**Takeaway:** This guardrail protects your foundation so you can safely build your life on what God actually said.

## 4. The Exegetical Guardrail



### Exegesis



Commit to drawing meaning **OUT** of the text. We let God's Word correct our personal biases and pre-understandings.



### Eisegesis

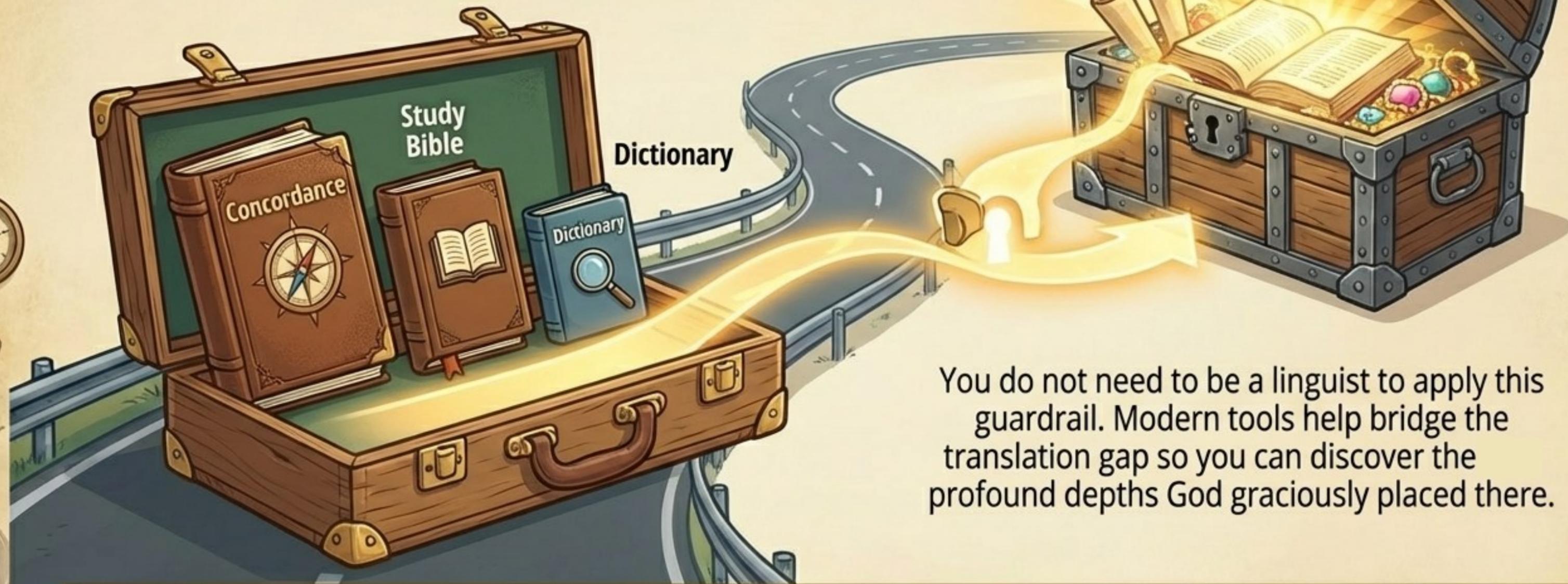


Avoid reading meaning **INTO** the text. Eisegesis is comfortable because it confirms what we already believe. Exegesis confronts what we need to change.

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2, LSB)*

## 5. The Linguistic Guardrail

Recognize that the original languages have the final say on matters of nuance and meaning.



You do not need to be a linguist to apply this guardrail. Modern tools help bridge the translation gap so you can discover the profound depths God graciously placed there.

“...so that we may know the depths graciously given to us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12, LSB).  
The depths of God's Word are not locked away from ordinary disciples—they are treasures He wants you to find.

# 6. The Progressive Guardrail

Approach the Bible as an unfolding, forward-moving story.

Later revelation builds upon, fulfills, or clarifies what came before. God's story is not a flat book of timeless rules; it moves toward Jesus.



## Seed

Plant-based diet  
(Genesis 1).

## Sprout

Specific dietary restrictions  
for Israel (Leviticus).

## Tree

Jesus declares all foods  
clean (Mark 7).

**Takeaway:** This is not a contradiction. This keeps us from misapplying fulfilled covenant laws, while honoring that "whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4, LSB).

# 7. The Harmony Guardrail

Scripture interprets Scripture. No interpretation of one passage can contradict the clear teaching of the rest of the Bible.



Because there is one Divine Author, the Bible is its own best commentary. It is not a collection of competing voices; it is one beautiful, coherent conversation spanning centuries.

**Takeaway:** You never have to guess or build an entire belief on one confusing verse. You simply let the clear passages shed light on the unclear ones.

# The Goal: Abiding in the Vine

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit...” (John 15:5, LSB).

These tools are not meant to make you academic. They exist to bring you into an intimate, relational closeness with Jesus.

**The Promise:** You are not reading alone. The Holy Spirit is your Advocate and Teacher. When we accurately handle the Word, we don't just gather information—we are transformed.



# The Blessing of the Doer

“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty...”  
(Isaiah 55:11, LSB)

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom... not having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does.”  
(James 1:25, LSB)

God wants to reveal Himself to you more than you want to know Him. His grace calls us to grow, and obedience is the path to deep, flourishing joy.

**Come as you are. Use the guardrails.  
Meditate and Obey. Study and Apply. Hear and Do.**