

Traffic Lights

No city in the developed world could function without traffic lights. They are not physical barriers, but drivers choose to exercise self-control, and for the most part, follow their instructions: stopping for red, exercising caution for yellow, going for green. The motorist who ignores the red light does so at the peril of his and other people's lives, while following the simple color code increases everyone's chances of reaching their destination safely.

Just so in life.





RED LIGHT

Go home and wash up. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong.—Isaiah 1:16

Zaccheus was a tax collector—never a popular job—and to top things off, honesty was not too high on his priority list. Nonetheless, he went out of his way to hear what Jesus had to say, and Jesus in turn went out of His way to meet with him. Zaccheus got the message loud and clear that he should stop fiddling the books and cheating the people he was collecting taxes from. He saw the red light. He stopped in his tracks, made a pledge, *and* paid back over and above what he had stolen.



What would God want me to stop doing? Is there a sin, a bad habit? Perhaps it's playing computer games late into the night; perhaps it's snapping impatiently at a family member, perhaps it's simply leaving the lights on and wasting electricity.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.—James 4:8

"Dear God, help me to be aware of the red lights in my life, to stop what is not helping me or others or pleasing You."

YELLOW LIGHT

The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence.—Proverbs 14:16 NLT

An yellow light can have different meanings in different contexts, but the idea of a blinking yellow light is, "Watch out, are you sure you're meant to go ahead?"

A woman in the direst poverty was about to cook up what little remained of her meager food supply. This was to be a last meal for herself and her son, but the prophet Elijah arrived and requested to be fed. Give him what remained of their food? No doubt she paused to think this over. In the end, she chose to trust God and feed His prophet first. We are told that as a result of this act of faith, her supply of food was miraculously multiplied and her household survived through the entire famine.





It is not always possible to know the outcome of our decisions. That's part of the mystery of life. What we *can* do is exercise caution, weigh up the options, consider the consequences, and pray for God's guidance. Receiving God's leading may take time; rarely do we receive the answers in a flash.

Many flowers open to the sun, but only one follows him constantly.—Heart, be thou the sunflower, not only open to receive God's blessing, but constant in looking to Him.—Jean Paul (1763–1825)

"Dear God, please help me to be cautious. Give me guidance to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.³"



GREEN LIGHT

Go therefore.—Matthew 28:19

Green light. It's time to go. There's a lot of "going" in the Gospel narrative. Laborers are sent into the vineyard, freshly healed lepers are sent to the temple, the disciples are sent out preaching and teaching. Jesus Himself stayed on the move: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." It wasn't activity simply for the sake of staying busy, but purposeful, meaningful action.



God calls us to activity. Our response to the needs around us should not be merely sympathy, but action.

If you stray to the right or the left, you will hear a word that comes from behind you: "This is the way; walk in it."—Isaiah 30:21 CEB

The strength and happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way, too.—Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)

We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow-men; and along those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.—Herman Melville (1819–1891)

"Dear God, help me not to hold back when it's time for action. Help me to go forward in faith. Amen."

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