

## **God's Stop and Go Lights**

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### **Day One**

All of us understand stop and go lights. We are controlled by them daily. Well, God has stop and go lights for us, and we need to recognize and obey them. I want to talk about what happens when we stop when God says go or go when God says stop.

In Numbers 9 we find the Israelites in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, and God had instructed them to build a tabernacle in the Tent of Testimony. This was a sacred place, which was covered with a cloud that looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; whenever it settled over the Tent, the Israelites encamped. It was a stop and go cloud.

Sometimes they would stop only for a night's rest and then continue; the cloud would lift the next morning. And sometimes it would stay for two days or a month—or a year! They never knew; they simply had to look for God's sign, then obey. Also, I notice God did not give them explanations for the stop and go signs. All they knew was to stop or go.

Therefore, they had to trust God. If they had gone when God said stop, they would have been lost. If they had stopped when God said go, they would have missed out on important progress to the Promised Land.

Now, think, when you're driving and you decide to go on a stop light, you may run into someone you need to avoid, causing all kinds of relationship problems. You affect your own progress, and that of others as well. Then you can easily get in trouble with the authorities. If a traffic officer sees you, you're sure to get a ticket.

The same is true in our walk with God when we decide to go before he has given us the green light. We run into trouble of all kinds. If you're an action-oriented person like I am, this is a lesson you have to learn and re-learn many times. If I'm not moving, then I feel like something must be wrong.

I tend to barrel ahead, looking at the goal line, running in my own strength many times, thinking I'm getting the job done for the Lord. Often, I can find myself going ahead without prayer or guidance. But I'm having to learn when I go on a stop signal, I get in the way of what God wants to do for me and through me. Going on a stop light causes lots of problems.

### **Day Two**

I'm examining God's stop and go lights. He gives us clear signals and when we miss them or disobey them, we find ourselves in trouble. As I mentioned earlier, I tend to think if I'm not going, I'm not doing the right thing. But often God gives me a stop light, and I need to learn stop lights are in God's will for me, just like go lights are.

Do you remember Peter on the mount of transfiguration, when Elijah and Moses appeared with Jesus? The light dazzled them, and Peter didn't know what to say, but he talked anyway, saying "This is terrific. We should be doing something—let's build three shrines here to memorialize this occasion." Peter had

big plans and thought surely God and everyone else would be impressed. But the voice from heaven said, *This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!* (Mark 9:7).

Or, in other words, "Please be quiet, Peter; you don't know what to say so why are you talking. This is not a time to build; it's a time to listen." Peter wanted to go; God said stop.

And then I think of Martha who told the Lord it was time for Mary to cook—to get in that kitchen and do something. But Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the better way, the way of listening and learning and spending time in his presence. That was hard for Martha to understand because she thought the person who was working the hardest was the one doing the right thing. Jesus taught her: Be still, Martha, and know that I am God.

Have you been going and going, trying to make things happen on your own, ignoring God's stop signals? Waiting is hard, isn't it? But all of us have to spend some time in God's waiting room, learning to look up at his cloud and wait for his signal, learning to trust him.

Waiting is difficult for me because I don't like the unknown, because I want everything in neat little rows, no problems left unsolved. Waiting is hard for me when I think I know the right solution and can see no benefit in waiting for it to happen. Waiting is hard for me because I tend to be a controlling person, and I want everything to be on schedule—my schedule, that is.

When I take a closer look, I have to conclude my problem is I don't want to let go and trust God. I'm afraid to trust God. It is a false trust in myself.

If you tend to go on God's stop lights, I want to encourage you to remember the waiting room is not wasted time; it is where you need to be sometimes while God is making your path straight.

### Day Three

Have you ever been stuck at a red light, and you think it'll never change? Sometimes it seems like God has us stuck at a red light and we're never going to get anywhere, but there's nothing we can do to make it turn green.

The waiting periods of our lives, however, are very important to our spiritual growth, for through them we learn to walk by faith and not by sight. When we can accept our waiting periods, even though we don't understand what's happening, and tell the Lord we choose to trust him anyway, we then transfer the responsibility for the situation over to God and the monkey is off our backs.

Don't we frequently misunderstand God when he has us stopped at a red light? We may even doubt his love and care for us, for our minds tell us that if he really cared, he'd move on our behalf right now. But God is willing to have us misunderstand him in order to achieve his goal for us: teaching us to walk by faith and not by sight.

I recall a three-year delay God gave me, when I so wanted to leave a job I was in. From my vantage point, no good could be served by remaining in that job another day. It was so painful to make myself go to that office each morning. So, in my usual style, I got the resume updated, and started the job search. I had full confidence I could find something suitable quickly.

Days turned into weeks and months, and jobs that looked like a shoe-in fell through. I asked: "Why did you let that job fall through? That would have gotten me out of this mess." But finally, I gave him permission to keep me there as long as it served his purposes, though I couldn't imagine what good purposes could possibly be served. That's the place we must come to.

Had I left that job when I wanted to, I would have missed three years of personal development that have been essential to my walk with God and the ministry he has given me. The tough lessons I learned then molded my character significantly. And in addition, during those years I acquired business skills and experience that allowed me to be self-employed, and that turned out to be essential in beginning this ministry. God knew what he was doing.

If you're in that predicament today, wondering why God hasn't done anything yet, try to remember the day will come when you can look back and see how he was developing you in that time. Someday he'll give you a green light to go.

## Day Four

We know from Numbers 9 God used an ingenious stop and go light for his people when they were in the desert. He put a cloud over the tabernacle Tent, and when the cloud was covering the Tent, that was the red light. They stayed put. When the cloud lifted, that was the green light. They moved on.

God has stop and go lights for us, too. I want to talk about what happens when we stop on God's green light. Think about what happens when we sit still at God's green lights. We impede not only our own progress, but others as well. The Body of Christ is meant to work together, as the parts of our own body do. When one part of the body is supposed to be moving and it doesn't, the rest of the body gets slowed down, doesn't it?

Are you slowing down some progress today because you're sitting still when God wants you to move? Are you letting others carry the load you should be carrying? Are you sitting on the sidelines instead of getting in the race and running? If so, you're slowing others down. And you're missing the blessing that comes in doing. Jesus told his disciples: *Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them* (John 13:17).

When we stop on God's go light, we waste precious time. Time is a resource God has given to us for which we will give an account. Think about what you've done with your time in the last week, the last month, the last year. Would you like to stand before God now and give an account as to how you've used that irreplaceable resource called time?

It's hard to guide a car that isn't moving, but once you get it going, you can guide it easily. Are you asking God to give you guidance before you get in motion? God wants you to step out on faith and trust him to light your path as you go. But he's not going to shine a light on your path until you start walking down it.

How do you know if God wants you to go or not? Ask trusted counselors; seek a verse of confirmation; pray about it much. And if the light is green, go. If God shuts the door, then you know it's time to stop again, but as long as the light is green, trust God; get moving.

## Day Five

Are you in the bad habit of stopping on God's green lights? I wonder, what keeps you from going? Are you fearful of the future and uncertain about the path? Fear is never from God; it is always from the enemy, and it reflects our lack of trust.

Maybe you're stopping on the go light because you see yourself as inadequate for the job. You are inadequate in yourself but totally capable through Christ. The wonderful thing about our Lord is when he gives us a go light, he also supplies the motor and the fuel to drive the engine. But we have to put the gears in forward and say, "I'm ready, Lord; let's go."

Or maybe you're in stop mode simply because you're lazy. Remember the parable of the talents? When the servant with one talent didn't do anything with his resource, the master reprimanded him strongly. "You wicked, lazy slave," he said. Laziness is a very strong offense to God; to him it's wicked, not just a bad habit or a little character fault.

Perhaps you're stopping when you should be going because you don't want to go in the direction God is guiding you. You had a different plan for your life, and you can't imagine God's plan is best for you. Oh my, do you realize how much you're missing by refusing to go in God's direction? He has good plans for you, plans to bless you and to prosper you.

For ten years I chose to go my own way and refused to let God guide my way. I just didn't believe I could be happy doing it God's way, and so I spent ten years in selfishness and a lot of misery. But once I said, "Lord, I will go on your green light, and allow you to guide me," I discovered such fulfillment and excitement and contentment in his path.

Stop or go—where are you today? Remember both are in God's will for our lives at different times. Sometimes he tells us to get going and move fast, and other times we hear his "Be still and know that I am God." We are most fulfilled, most satisfied and most contented when we willingly obey God's stop and go lights in our lives.