

**Knowing When to Stop, Learning When to Go**

*Lessons from the Drivers' Ed Manual of Life*

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10/16/16

For those of us who learned how to drive in what kids of today would consider to be the prehistoric era, I doubt that any of us ever considered the Drivers' Ed manual to be anything other than a conduit toward a life of freedom. So, when Rebecca asked me if we could do a blessing upon the new drivers in our midst, I thought that it wouldn't hurt for me to reacquaint myself with the dreaded manual that I had more or less committed to memory so long ago (as I'm sure many of you have done). Needless to say, with an older be-speckled pair of eyes, I was surprised to **notice something much more profound within its pages** besides the instruction on when you should use a turn signal...something that my father in his 80's and 90's decided was an overrated and unnecessary gesture for the people behind him who should have been paying attention, anyway (but I digress).

Much to my amazement, the little book that I remember studying is now 156 pages long. As I scrolled through its contents, I thought that it might be a good idea to return to it when I have more time, and reread in detail all the rules, regulations, and expectations that are required in order for us **to be successful and lawful drivers**. In fact, I'd recommend that everyone here take another look at it now and again. *But what stood out for me, in particular*, were the simple transferrable lessons that it heralded which really speak to everything that we do on this human journey, from the relational, to the emotional, to the intellectual, and to the spiritual.

To know when to stop, when to look, when to listen, and to learn when it is time to go, pretty much sums-up the rules of the road and the rules of life. Add a large dose of respect for others and property, an even larger draft of patience, and a bottomless well of responsibility for

your actions, and you have in your possession some powerful tools to help you navigate life.

To know when to stop and pause before rushing forward, to look and evaluate your situation with a greater clarity of vision, and to listen more carefully both for on-coming trains, sirens, and other dangers **as well as to that quiet voice of wisdom from within**, are all practices that we must commit to memory. Stopping oftentimes means that we are at a crossroads, and life is coming at us from all directions. We need to make sure that the path is clear for us to proceed. If we don't take the time to stop, look, and listen, it could mean disaster for us as well as for others. This applies to most decisions in our lives, whether it is in our relationships or jobs or just navigating life in general.

Of course, sometimes we need to stop because we feel lost and don't know where we're going. That is when we need to intentionally **pause**, get our bearings back, and perhaps (dare I say) even ask for directions to help us get to where we need or desire to be. We do this by reaching out to those who could help get us back on the right track...a parent or friend, a teacher or guidance counselor, a doctor or lawyer, a therapist or even a member of the clergy. When we neglect to follow the rules of the road and the rules of life, **the consequences can negate our intended or hoped for outcome**.

There is also the need to learn when to go forward. How many times have we been stopped at a red light and we are so pre-occupied with our thoughts or our cell phone and we neglect to notice that the light has turned green. Then someone behind us beeps their horn to remind us that it is time to move on. Sometimes we are grateful for the wake-up call and encouragement, sometimes we feel embarrassed or guilty for holding-up other people, and sometimes **we feel angry** for being pushed when we are not quite ready to go. Well, that applies to so many other situations that life presents to us.

Most of us spend our lives exploring the mysteries of the universe, plumbing the depths of our human potentiality, searching for the answers to those questions that challenge us to our very core. Then, just when we think that we have it all figured out, the answers shape-shift into an amorphous cloud of unrecognizable complexity, leaving us with the simple truth that the roadmap of discovery is revealed to us only when we learn to navigate it using the most basic tools of instruction that are found in the map's key. Stop, look, listen, and only then go forward.

Consider how those simple instructions can make your own journey, your own decisions, your own moving forward less stressful and more powerful. Sometimes we get so caught-up in a traffic jam of confusion and emotion that we cannot think clearly and we cannot even see the road before us. That is when we need to call upon those few basis lessons from the Driver's Ed manual of life that can make all the difference as to how we will emerge on the other side.

Amen and Blessed Be