



* **“RED MEANS STOP”**

Biblical Text: [Ephesians 4:25-32](#)

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Most of us learned some simple rules early in life. Like **“say please and thank you.”* Granted, my kids were always better at please than thank you. So are most of us!

(And just like Pastor Karen taught our children...) Among those early rules was this one: **“Red means stop.”* We learn it applies to tricycles, walking to school and when our parents get up the nerve, when we learn to drive. **It appears in the official Kansas Driver’s Handbook, and trust me on this – it’s on the exam.*

Closely related are the **three-color traffic signals* that, worldwide, regulate vehicle traffic at intersections. Out of an abundance of caution, there is even an intersection over in **Brookside* that uses both stop signs and signals. Your tax dollars at work!

Of course, here in Fairway, **we are used to other signs, *no matter which way you come to Church or navigate your way home. * And what does any of that have to do with the Christian life or my message this morning? Just this.*

We need stop signs ** to navigate the intersections while we drive our cars, because you can’t just “go” as fast as you can all the time. Just so, in our lives, we need to take our foot off the gas from time to time and look at where we are. And the Biblical sign for us is in Psalm 46:10. It says this: **“Be still and know that I am God.”*¹*

The problem is that we don’t, **stop**, I mean. **Not very often. Either to rest, or to stop and consider the wisdom of God. Instead, we just rush on ahead, and push harder, press on, go our own way. And it doesn’t work very well, whether you are an “Average Joe, “Average Jane,” or the President of a company or even of the USA.*

Let’s review our traffic signals. **Green means what? “Go.” *Red means? “Stop.” And *Yellow means? “Caution.” You’d think so, but near as I can tell for most drivers it really means “Get out of my way – I’m coming through!” Not wise. In life either!*

**Scripture is this way. Sometimes it is instructive for our own good, to guide the way we go through life. Sometimes it is meant to restrict, to show us where we need to stop. Sometimes it serves to give us pause, to think wisely before we move ahead.*

There’s a verse I love from Jeremiah 6:16, which points right at our need today.

¹ Psalm 46:10, Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

It was the Word of the Lord to the people of God. Their lives were in chaos and didn't know which way to turn or what to do: **“Stand at the crossroads; Look to the ancient paths that lead to good; and walk in them to find rest for your souls.”*²

I think many of us are at a crossroads. Old answers aren't working, we are exhausted with all the contentiousness and disrespect, and we know something has to change.

*We are running on empty, or getting close to it. I'm right there with you.

*At the crossroads of life, in this verse, God has three pieces of wise counsel...

- 1) “Seek the ancient paths that lead to good.”
- 2) “Walk in them...”
- 3) “Find rest for your soul.”

In order to seek God's paths, so we can walk in them, and find peace we have to STOP and find our place, in our relationship with him. In Doug Field's words, we have to follow three simple but difficult steps: ** “Stop. Be Quiet. Make a connection.”*

It may be the hardest thing I know. I shared my five-minute plan last week. **In my car, wherever I arrive, I'm trying to spend five minutes with the Lord. And Monday went great this week. I got to the office early enough to stop and pray. Victory!*

The rest of the week. All I can say is, *“Monday went great.”* By Wednesday it was all a shamble. First it was the insurance company refusing to pay for my medications without a ton of paperwork from my Doctor, then relentless buzz of my phone, then it was the outcome of the KU/K-State game, and all week long the never-ending news cycle and the steady stream of Executive Orders from the White House.

It turns out that the hardest part of Doug Fields' advice* was the second one. *“Be Quiet.”* My problem is, in a world where there is so much noise, like many of you, I have a hard time handling silence because we've are conditioned to the noise.

God rarely speaks in the noise of the world, or in the emotions and opinions swirling in us, but when are quiet enough to listen. 1 Kings 19:12: ** “...after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice...”*³

I wonder in my own life; how many times have I missed the voice of God because I was around noise so much. Our challenge is stop and be quiet, so we can make a connection. **What I'm asking you to do is for a little bit of time each day is pause the outer connection, your phone, your tv, your ipod, your computer, NPR, Fox News, the relentless news from the White House ... so you make an inner connection.*

² Jeremiah 6:16, paraphrased from the King James Version of the Bible by the author.

³ 1 Kings 19 recounts the experience of Elijah, in the fear of defeat, overcome by emotion, afraid for his life, when he finally was still enough to hear the voice of God. Scripture quotation is paraphrased in modern English from the King James Version.

Jesus said in John 15:5: * *“Those who remain in me will bear much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing...”* But it really isn’t that we can do nothing. There are lots of things we can do without Christ and his wise counsel. What Jesus was telling us was this: * *“...apart from me, you can do nothing... (as well as you can with me.)”*

*Our text from Ephesians 4:25-32 gives us some practical guidance about that. Look at Ephesians 4 with me starting at verse 25:

²⁵ * *Putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors...*

²⁶ * *Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...*

²⁸ * *...give up stealing; ...work honestly with (your) own hands...*

²⁹ * *Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up...*

³⁰ * *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...*

³¹ * *Put away ... bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander ... and malice,*

³² * *Be kind to one another ... forgiving one another, as God st has forgiven you.*⁴

*If you want a list of things to meditate on while you are taking your five minutes, or two minutes or whatever you can take each day, you’d be hard pressed to find a better place to start than those things.

That’s where I am starting anyway. I invite you to join me.

And I want to leave you with this promise that came from Mother Teresa:

* *“Spend one hour a day with the Lord and never do anything that you know is wrong - and you’ll be all right.”*

Let us pray.

⁴ Op. Cit. Ephesians 3:25-32, Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*.