

Coach House Church BEACONS

THE HIGHWAY CODE

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Have you seen those old films, in the Charlie Chaplin days, when the pictures were black and white and the film speed makes everything move around frantically? And have you seen film clips that show the early years of motor transport when roads were becoming busy, before traffic lights were invented and all transport just carried on across the junction, hoping not to collide with anyone else. Yes, in the films it's meant to be amusing and not particularly scary. But, you may have wondered how the transport system works in busy cities in other countries, India, for example, and be amazed at how there aren't more collisions and disasters given that there doesn't appear to be much organisation on the highway. It works for them somehow!

Well could you imagine travelling nowadays without reference to the highway code – the list of rules, laws, warnings and orders that guide us along the road system in an orderly fashion? At the busiest times we certainly need to follow a set of guidelines for our safety and ease of movement.

This got me thinking – the highway code and the bible have some things in common. When we look at the bible we see: lists of rules as in Leviticus, warnings as told by the prophets, orders dictated by the rulers and judges, plus guidelines and the teachings of Jesus to keep us safe and guide our route through this life. In the bible, the book of Leviticus may be a difficult read. However, there are some sensible rules there that we have become very aware of this last year. Guidelines on maintaining cleanliness and avoiding cross contamination, how to have establish good relationships and how to show respect. The highway code has sensible rules on how to behave on the roads and show respect for others. We are aware when this is not carried out and drivers suffer from 'road rage' which is never helpful for anyone.

In the bible, the prophets were sent to the people of Israel with a message from God, with the expectation that they would follow the directions which were in their best interests. This is a bit like the traffic light system: red - God would send a message to the people to stop their practices of worshiping other gods, amber - to warn them of the consequences of continuing their actions, or green - to reward them for following the rules, of putting their trust in the one true God, their creator and guide.

The bible often refers to life as a journey, and to the road being travelled. In Matthew 7: 13-15 Jesus teaches about two roads: the narrow road and the wide road.

13 "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell[f] is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. It's easy to get swept along with the crowd, to presume that, as more people are travelling that way, it must be the right way. Have you ever taken what seemed an easy route, particularly when stuck in slow moving traffic, to find it wasn't actually the right one? While there may be many religions to choose from, lots of theories about life and its purpose, different ways to express your beliefs and a general ethos that all roads lead to heaven, this is not what the bible teaches. Jesus is warning us not to be caught out, to consider which road we are on, and not to take the easy way.

**Corrie Ten Boom once said: If God sends us on stony paths,
he provides strong shoes.**

It's true that there are encouraging words in the bible to reinforce this message, of support along the difficult and narrow track. Proverbs 3 tells us to put our trust in God and not our own understanding and he will direct our paths.

And in Proverbs 4 we are told to:
Give careful thought to the[c] paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.

In other words, take care at the junctions of life. Always ask for God's guidance and wisdom in the decisions we take in life.

Psalm 119:105 tells us that we have the word of God in written form: your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path. We can now read the bible, the handbook for life itself to both instruct and encourage us.

The bible also warns us in 1 Peter 5:8 be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Being distracted while driving is a very dangerous experience and there are laws in place expecting us to keep our focus on the job at hand. In the Christian life, there are many distractions to take our focus away from what is important. When we are side tracked by unimportant issues, following our own wisdom or keen to please others rather than follow God's guidelines for a life that is aiming towards being Christ-like, we are in danger of drifting off the road. I think this is why the road is called narrow. It is designed to keep us in focus, to maintain our direction in a single lane and not to swerve and dodge.

In John 14:5 Jesus is trying to explain to the disciples about his journey back to heaven. " Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

One of the road signs we see often is 'roadworks' or work in progress – the one that looks like someone digging or someone trying to open an umbrella, depending on how you look at it. This sign reminds me that we are all a work in progress, a flawed masterpiece created by God. We may try hard to do the right thing but we can never sustain it, a bit like setting a new year resolution that is impossible to keep to. The apostle Paul wrote about this very struggle of not being able to do the right things, no matter how much effort we use. The good thing is that God already had a plan in place to allow us to succeed.

Corrie Ten Boom's words are encouraging though when she says: There is no panic in heaven! God has no problems, only plans.

We are all on a journey and there are some bumps in the road and distractions along the way. We just need to keep focussed on Jesus. Jesus points the way as well as leads the way to heaven and presents us to his father. Only perfection can enter heaven and, as we don't fit this description and never can in our own strength, Jesus stands in front of us as the sinless, perfect one, sacrificed on our

behalf. God sees Jesus, 'the beloved son in whom I am well pleased'(Mathew 3:17) and welcomes us in.



MELANIE JACKSON



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org

// 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn