

## *Green, Yellow, Red*

A while back my wife, April made some behavior modification cards for our oldest grandson, Cole. The system consists of three laminated cards attached to a key ring. One card is green and has a smiley face on it. It means that everything is going along well. You are behaving the way you should. The second card is yellow and has a face on it which has just a straight line for the mouth. This card means that his behavior is border line, or problematic. He needs to think about his behavior and improve it. The third card is red and has a frowning face on it. Ah, *Oh you blew it kid! You have lost your privileges and any treats.* These cards are like traffic signals. You can go on a green light and normally you will be okay unless someone else doesn't obey their red light. The yellow light means caution and we should be slowing down because the red light will soon be appearing. Of course the red light means stop and that we aren't supposed to go until the green light comes on again.

When you become a Christian you enter that green card zone. God is pleased with us and smiling down on us. We know from the Bible that God loved us before then, because God loves all men and desires that none should perish.

1 Timothy 2:3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God has the desire that all would be saved, but He wasn't pleased with us before we obeyed His will.

We love our children and our grandchildren, but we aren't always pleased with them. When they don't obey our will we usually aren't pleased with them and sometimes they receive discipline from us because of their disobedient actions.

In the Old Testament we can read in many places about the various types of discipline, or punishments God inflicted on men because of disobedience. The first punishment of course came upon Adam and Eve because of their disobedience in the Garden of Eden. God had placed very few restrictions upon Adam and Eve, but unfortunately for them they couldn't even follow those. That yellow caution light should have been glowing when the serpent was tempting Eve with that forbidden fruit, but unfortunately for her she didn't pay attention to it. Then that yellow light should have been glowing for Adam when Eve presented that fruit to him, but he too didn't obey it. For their sins God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and punished them in many other ways.

Most of us would call that yellow light a conscience. A conscience is what makes us feel bad, or upset with ourselves when we act in an inappropriate manner. We might also have a good conscience, or feel good about ourselves when we do something we feel is exceptionally good. A runner that wins a race because he has trained hard, run hard and completed the course should feel good about himself. A runner who wins a race by taking a short cut is cheating and should feel bad about himself, if he hasn't seared his conscience by making a habit of bad conduct. The

cheating runner has entered the red light, because he didn't heed his conscience. Are there times in our lives when we should be noticing that yellow caution light coming on, but we don't pay attention to it?

If that cheating runner is discovered he will be stripped of his trophy and be disgraced. He will be punished. If he continues in this type of lifestyle he may also be punished by God because a person acting in this way is not pleasing to God.

1 John 2:3 speaking of Jesus tells us, "*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.*" When we are following in the footsteps of Jesus and keeping His commandments we are in the green. But how do we know that we are truly doing what God wants us to do?

Psalms 119 beginning in verse 9 tells us how we can make sure our conscience is working properly so we may remain pleasing to God.

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

10 With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 Your word I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not sin against You.

12 Blessed are You, O LORD!

Teach me Your statutes.

13 With my lips I have declared

All the judgments of Your mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,

As *much as* in all riches.

15 I will meditate on Your precepts,

And contemplate Your ways.

16 I will delight myself in Your statutes;

I will not forget Your word.

Through meditating on the words of God and not the words and teachings of man we can have a proper conscience and be able to recognize when we are entering that yellow zone. When we enter that yellow zone, it is then in our best interest to take the proper steps to return to the green zone.

Psalms 112:1 tells us, "*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who delights greatly in His commandments.*"

Let us build a strong, healthy conscience in ourselves by studying the word of God and meditating on it. Then when the yellow situation arises we will be able to recognize it and flee from it before it turns to red.

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