

GREEN LIGHTS

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With Rev. Richard Maraj

So have you ever been driving and you were just sailing and hitting all the green lights? Anybody ever have that experience? Isn't that one of the most fun and wonderful experiences in life?

So I was driving north on 7th Street from McDowell all the way to Greenway and, I'll tell you, I was just zinging along. I mean, easily; effortlessly; green light after green light after green light. I was just humming and cruising totally uninterrupted, feeling absolutely and totally in sync; in the flow.

Now how many people have ever been driving and you're only hitting red and yellows? Anybody ever have that? [Congregation laughs] And you felt the frustration of the start and stop and start and stop. And sometimes you've got to speed up and rush through, or sometimes you've got to stop really hard when you face a yellow or a red. And you feel kind of out of sync.

You know, this kind of reminds me of this naive woman who wrote in her journal about a religious traffic experience. I could've also said: This reminds me of a really bad joke I'm about to tell you. [Congregation laughs] Either way, it's going to come out the same! So here we go!

She writes -- this elderly, naive lady writes:

"Today I went to our local Christian bookstore and bought a 'Honk if you love Jesus' bumper sticker. I was feeling particularly sassy, because I'd just come from a thrilling choir performance followed by a thunderous prayer meeting. So I bought the sticker and I put it on my bumper. And, boy, was I glad I did! What an uplifting experience that followed! I was stopped at a red light at a busy intersection, lost in my thought and love of the Lord, and I didn't notice that the light had changed to green. Well, my bumper sticker really worked; I found a lot of people honked and loved Jesus. The man behind me was honking like crazy, and he leaned out the window and he screamed, 'For the love of God, go! Go! Go! Jesus Christ, go!' [Congregation laughs]

"What an exuberant cheerleader for Jesus he was! Everyone started honking! So I leaned out the window and started smiling and waving at everybody, and I even honked the horn a few times to share in all that love I was feeling. I saw another man waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air." [Congregation laughs] "And I asked my grandson, who was sitting in the back seat, what that meant. And he said, 'Oh, Grandma, it probably meant, 'Good luck' or something. A Hawaiian good luck sign.

"Well, I'd never been to Hawaii or known anyone from Hawaii, so I leaned out and I gave him the good luck sign right back." [Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh] "My grandson burst out into laughter; why even he was enjoying this incredible religious experience! [Laughs]

*"A couple of people got so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and started walking towards me. I bet they probably wanted to pray or ask me what church I attended. And that's when I noticed that the light had changed again. So I waved at all my brothers and sisters, grinning, and drove through the intersection. I noticed I was the only car that made it through the intersection before the light changed again, and I felt kind of sad. You know, having to leave after all the love that we had shared." [Congregation laughs] "So I slowed down the car, leaned out the window, and gave them all the Hawaiian good luck sign one more time as I drove away."
[Congregation laughs and applauds]*

Alright. You know there are lots of times in our lives when we can get annoyed and frustrated and upset at traffic lights. But when you think about it, really traffic lights are important and hugely valuable in our lives, because they give a process and a structure and an order to allow ourselves to travel safely and effectively and efficiently to reach where we want to go.

When you think about it spiritually, traffic lights kind of explain some processes for us to live our lives and to get where we really want to go. I mean, green lights mean, "Go!" And, to me, spiritually that

means to advance; to move forward; to go forth towards your destination; to go; to live; to learn; to risk; to plan; to open your heart. You know, to truly be the fullness of the amazing person you came to be. Go! It's a powerful message for us.

Of course, red means, "*Stop!*" And sometimes we have things that just stop our routine; stop our plans. You know, they stop us right in our tracks; things just grind to a halt. And whether they're things that we didn't expect that stopped, or things we know we need to stop in our lives, stopping is an important aspect of a happy life and getting where we want to go.

Yellow light means, "*Caution!*" It means to slow down; rethink; be careful of the choices that we're making. Do some reflection.

You know, green lights, red lights and yellow lights are an important part of reaching our goals, not just in the intersections, but in our lives, as well.

I've been reading a book. A friend of mine gave me a book before I went on vacation. And the title is *Green Lights*. And I thought, "*That's cool! I'm going to pick that and write that as a title for one of my talks!*" Even before I read the book! I wasn't even sure if I was going to read the book, because I liked the title so much. [Congregation laughs]

But the book, *Green Lights*, is written by the actor, Matthew McConaughey. And I love that analogy of green lights and yellow lights and red lights. Because it's the way we handle the red lights and green lights of our lives that determines how many more greens we can hit. How many more green lights ... which means how many more positive experiences. You know, how many great adventures. How much more success. How much more love and insight and understanding and fulfillment. How we use all the lights -- the red, green -- determine how much of the green lights we can hit, and how much more of life we can live and live more fully and freely.

So today we're going to talk about three things that can help us hit more green lights. Three things that can help us live and progress and advance more fully in our everyday living.

And the first thing is: **We've got to find our spiritual frequency.** We've got to find our frequency. Anybody ever have a time where you felt, like, out of sync? Out of balance? Just out of sorts? You just felt like you lost your groove? Anybody? Okay; three of us have lost our groove. Okay. [Congregation laughs]

And, you know, I'm sure every one of us have had a time where we felt we just weren't on our "A Game." We just weren't being ourselves. We weren't being our best self. We just felt like stuck, or like we'd hit a plateau, and we just couldn't go much further.

You know, any time we feel like we're out of balance, out of sorts, or not living up to our highest and best, it is because there is something within us that is lost. It is something in us that feels out of balance and disconnected. We don't feel centered and grounded in the truth of who we are.

You know, there's a Spirit and an energy and a wisdom and a beauty and creativity in each and every one of us that is unique to us; that is an amazing, incredible Spirit that we are meant to discover and to express and share with the world. But often, we lose touch with it. You know, sometimes we lose that connection.

I think there's so many things in our lives that can distract us: problems can distract us. Sometimes new, shiny toys and fun things can distract us. Sometimes pretending that everything's okay can distract us. We have all kinds of things that keep us away, where we lose our centeredness. Where we don't feel as grounded. Where we don't feel our connection with that spiritual frequency; that vibrational energy of the Divine that is in us.

And what we end up doing is looking on the outside for the answers -- seeking advice; reading books; doing all kinds of different things -- when truly it's an inside job. If we want to find our frequency, we need to quiet ourselves and just connect with the vibration and the energy and the intelligence that's always there. That's always there: in us and around us. For it is the energy and intelligence and vibration that made us; that sustains us. And that we just get out of alignment. We get distracted.

And it's just about coming back to center. Getting back to our truth. Getting back to our spirit. Getting back to our soul. The world distracts us. We get caught up in the appearances. But we just need to keep coming back to center; keep coming back to Spirit.

It is amazing how we all know this. I've been a minister 25 years. It's amazing how, when I get frustrated, sometimes I forget and need to remind myself that it's an inside job! That I need to get back to center. That we need to keep connecting at that higher level.

You know, when it says, *"Be still and know that I am God"*; when it says, *"Seek ye first ... and all these things will be added to you,"* they are just reminders of that truth that we need to find our frequency. We need to reconnect and center ourselves and align ourselves in the Divine.

So I never thought I'd be using Matthew McConaughey as an example of all that. So you're going to hear some ... And I really, as I read the book, I really, really started liking and appreciating him a lot. One of the things was his family wanted him to become a lawyer and for him to go to the University of Texas. He wanted to go to SMU, but he ended up doing what his family wanted: going and being a lawyer and studying at University of Texas.

Well, he discovered he didn't want to be a lawyer; he was bored in the classes. And what he would do in the classes: he would write stories. In fact, he'd been writing stories his entire life! It was one of his favorite things to do was write stories. So he's bored with the law school stuff. And then a friend of his says, *"You like stories; why don't you go to film school?"* And he said, *"I'm not into film or that kind of stuff! I just like stories."* He said, *"That's what film people do! They just tell stories!"* And so he said, *"Well, maybe; okay."*

And so he had to call his dad and tell his dad that he wanted to do film school and stories. His father said -- and he was scared a little bit what his dad would say -- but his dad said, *"Okay; if this is what you really want. Just promise me one thing."* He said, *"What?"* He said, *"Just don't do it half-assed."* I didn't say half-assed; I'm just quoting what the father said. [Congregation laughs]

And so, interestingly, he's working in a bar and coincidentally he meets a guy who produces films. And he's got one called *Dazed and Confused*. And he talks to him and he said, *"I don't know if I have a spot for you, but why don't you come and we'll do a wardrobe test ... see if you dress."* And it was for a character who was 22 years old who still hung out with high school girls. And he was still in high school, playing around in high school. And he was a good-looking guy; got all the girls.

And when he was there for his wardrobe thing, he looked so good the director said, *"Hey! You're not supposed to do any lines or anything, but why don't we just have you drive up in a car and try to hit on these girls? And we'll have a read, intellectual girl: one that nobody would think you would ever go after. And I want you to try and impress her."*

And he said, *"Okay; give me 30 minutes."* And so he just kind of centered himself on his intention and how to give the director what he wanted. And after 30 minutes, he came back. He got in the car. They said, *"Action!"* He drives the car up to the girls. Three words come out of his mouth just spontaneously, and the words were: *"Alright; alright; alright!"* [Congregation laughs]

That's what came out of him! This guy was so connected. Still, 30 years later, one of the things he's most identified with is that line that he spontaneously came up with because he was tuned in. He was tuned in to his own inner frequency.

One of the things I liked and respected about him is that he understands that life has cycles. And they're cycles that happen, and then you hit little ruts and it's time for a change. And he realized -- even though he indulged in a lot of errors in his life; he was a pretty wild guy -- is that he always came back to doing retreats. He always came back to times of solitude and going on pilgrimages. I mean, he went to the Amazon for three weeks. He realized that, even though that outer stuff is fun and fabulous, and he really got into it, he knew that that's not the Source. He kept coming back to times of solitude and cleansing and renewal and releasing and just quietness and connecting with his frequency. You know, connecting with his divine essence.

I really believe that if we want more green lights to advance and progress and live more fully, we need to find our frequency. We need to take time to align with the Divine, and to really get centered in God's Spirit and intelligence that is in us.

So based on how you're feeling right now: on a scale of 1 to 10 -- 10 being you've found your frequency - what level are you? And whatever that number is, what do you think it would take for you to truly find and feel your frequency? And to feel that centeredness in the Divine?

And I would guarantee for all of us it would include meditation, solitude, being still and quiet. But I also think there are other aspects that help us find our frequency, as well. Sometimes it might be something like letting go of the past and forgiving. Maybe there's something we need to heal. Maybe there's some therapy or program we need to get involved with and to join. Maybe it's making amends to someone. Maybe it's being more honest with ourselves about what we want to do. Maybe it's time to make a change in the direction of our career or our attitude. Maybe it's time to be a little more disciplined. Maybe it's time for us to love and accept and do a better job of self-care.

For the last several months, something in me has felt like I'm not quite at my "A-Game." There is a level that I haven't reached that I know it's important for me to reach. And one of the two things -- I'll just tell you one of them -- is that I feel like my diet and the things that I eat aren't exactly supporting the level. They're not bad, but I had two separate people tell me they'd been eating so clean, part of it for some health issues, that their energy levels are up. That their mental clarity is up. That they aren't feeling aches in their joints because they're so disciplined.

And some of it's forced by health to do it. But when I heard that, it's like, "*Man, I feel like that's what my next level -- to really get to a higher level of frequency and vibration -- is.*" And I have an appointment next Friday with this consultant. And my friend said, "*It's hard; it requires a lot of discipline.*" And I keep thinking, "*Man! Can I do it? And it's a lot of money. So should I do it?*" [Congregation laughs]

And the thing about it is: For the last several months, I have really, really started liking dessert. And I think dessert likes me. [Congregation laughs] I would have to say I've been seduced by dessert a few times. And usually in the evening. And so it might sound silly, but for me, it's an important thing that I can feel that my frequency and vibration will be higher and better if I were to commit myself to do this thing. It's been in me for a while. And to me, two people who -- two people who don't even know each other -- separately said this to me. I think this is something for me that my life is telling me, "*Raise your vibration by doing this thing.*"

And so maybe yours is counseling. Maybe yours is moving in a new direction. Maybe yours is picking up an old dream that you left and to start moving forward. But what's going to raise your frequency? What's going to make you feel more alive with the truth of who you came here to be? This is an important thing. Finding your frequency is an inside job of where you make it a priority to connect with Spirit on a regular basis and align yourself with the truth and from the Source from where you came. Because that's where everything flows from. That's where the green lights start opening up in life.

Second thing is: **We've got to be a conscious magnet.** You know, the best way to achieve goals: writing them down. Good! Those are important. But the best way to achieve our goals and attract it is by being it. It's by seeing it. It's by believing it. It is by becoming it.

You know, Jesus said, "*Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*" Believe it to the point that you can see it; you can feel it. That you allow it to become a part of your consciousness and your life. You know, you act it; you feel it; you speak it.

You know, Michael Beckwith said, "*You can have anything you want in life, but first you must become it in consciousness.*" So if you want to be successful or prosperous or whatever it is you want, we have to radiate that consciousness and that energy.

Matthew McConaughey had a chapter, and it was too long. So that's why I made it: Be a conscious magnet. Because here's the chapter title. He said, "*The arrow doesn't seek the target; the target draws the arrow.*" The arrow doesn't seek the target; the target draws the arrow. And what he's saying is ... And to me, it's three things. When you are clear about what you want, and you connect with the feeling

and embody that vibration and energy, you will make yourself a target that will draw the right people to you; that will draw the right situations; that will draw the right inspiration and ideas to manifest it. It's good to know what you want, but you need to become what you want: to feel that energy and that vibration. That it will attract it more.

Another Matthew story. So Matthew was really successful at those romantic comedies. Everybody remember *The Wedding Planner* or *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*? Or *Failure to Launch*? Or *Fool's Gold*? Anyway, the phone was just ringing off the hook. Any romantic comedy; they pigeon-holed him as a romantic comedy guy. I mean, just contracts coming in. But there was a point he realized, "*This isn't me. This isn't me. Ten million, five million, eight million; I can have lots of that. But that's not what my soul wants for me.*"

So he decided to get clear that he wanted to be a serious actor. He wanted parts that challenged him and stretched him and helped him become more. And so he started saying, "*No*" to \$10 million movies that were romantic comedies. He kept saying, "*No; I want to be a serious actor.*"

And, you know, in Hollywood -- or in most businesses -- when something's working, you stay with it! So the executives were like, "*Oh, yeah, great, Matthew; we'll do this. That's what you do. That's where you're going to make your money.*" And for two years, he said, "*No.*" And he said after a while when you keep saying, "*No,*" they stop asking. And so he was scared. But he was so clear: "*This is who I am.*"

He started to make himself the target and the magnet to attract what he wanted as a serious actor. And finally, after two years of holding this mindset and space, he was able to attract the arrows. He drew them. And he got a movie called *The Lincoln Lawyer*. One called *Mud*. And the other was *The Dallas Buyers' Club*, of which he won an Oscar for.

I love that he embodied who he wanted to be, even though people saw him different. He became the consciousness of what he wanted and was able to attract it.

And so, for me, I want you to think for a second: What is something that you want? You want to have? You want to be? And what's the consciousness? What's the mindset? What's the feeling of having that and becoming that and experiencing that? Because it is that vibrational level -- that higher level -- that draws the arrows. That attracts and brings the right people. He had the right people come into his life because he held it so strongly and was so clear about what he wanted.

So if the target draws the arrow, and what we attract is our vibration, what do you need to change or shift or embody to attract the thing that you want in your life? What is the thing that's going to magnetize you by you feeling and you embodying? Because it really, absolutely makes ... You can have anything you want! But first you must become it in consciousness. Become a magnet for the thing that you desire, and it will come to you.

Last thing is to: **Turn your red lights into green lights.** I'd love to say that, somehow, we could all get green lights all the time. But that's not how life works. We will get red lights. And if we get red lights, we should take advantage of our red lights, and help the red lights turn into green lights. Or help us -- when they turn green -- to be able to advance and use them to help us live even more fully.

Jesus said, "*In this life there will be trials and tribulations; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.*" That's the equivalent of saying: In this life there will be red lights, but be of good cheer, because they'll turn into green lights. You can overcome and transform any situation in your life, no matter how dark it might be; no matter how painful it might be. No matter how much you have lost. No matter if it's a break-up; no matter if it's a failure. No matter what it is you're struggling with; there is a way to turn that red into a green, and to open a space. But it's how well we handle it in the times.

One of the things I always say is that one of the keys to a happy and fulfilling life is how you handle life when it isn't going your way. Because there are times when life doesn't go our way. And how we handle it in those moments really affect the green lights. Really affect the moments and the experiences afterward.

You know, sometimes it is the break-ups; sometimes it's the failures; sometimes it's the problem; sometimes it's the betrayal and the hurt that cracks us open. That opens us to dig in deeper to a level that we wouldn't have done if everything had just been smooth and easy. Sometimes the things that shake us up wake us up to a level that we need to be awakened to, and to bring out the greatness and the goodness that is in us.

How many people believe that everything happens for a reason? I think we do most of the time, but I don't think all of the time. But that is the truth all the time. Whatever it is in your life right now that isn't working -- that is your greatest struggle -- is also potentially your greatest gift. It is potentially a thing that can bring you resilience and strength and appreciation and insight and perspective and understanding that nothing else will bring. It's in your life for a reason! It's not an accident. Every one of us. And we may not be liking it, but it is there for us.

Life isn't against us; it's for us! And all these things are trying to help us if we let down our resistance -- if we let down our judgement and our upset -- and actually see it for what it is and allow it to move through us. Because it will lift us and bless us.

The Apostle Paul said, *"All things work together for good for those who love God."* And God, in the Joseph stories, said, *"Man means it for evil, but God means it for good."*

So I want you to think of a red-light experience you're going through right now. And realize God means it for good. That this will work together for your highest and best. Just allow it to teach you. Allow it to humble you and open you and help you. It really will! That's why it's there, if you let it be there.

What's a yellow light in your life? What is something that's saying, *"Slow down; be careful! Put some thought into this!"* And realize it's there to help you, and God means it for good.

One of the things is we like to be in a rush. It's like, *"Yeah; all things happen for a reason and what's that reason? Come on! Get it now!"* It's like, sometimes it requires patience. Sometimes if we were to get everything we wanted right now, maybe we're not ready for it! Maybe we need some more preparation so it will really fit into our lives and bless us at that time.

One of the hardest things for us as human beings is to wait. To allow it to settle in. Things get better with time! It's amazing how wisdom and lessons come to us after the fact. There's still stuff happened 10, 15 years ago and I'm like, *"Oh, yeah; that's what that was about."* Sometimes our wisdom and learning takes time and patience. And we don't always have it.

One of the Scriptures I like in the Book of Isaiah ... I like it and dislike it at the same time, because it's about waiting and being patient. It's about slowing down and letting things process and unfold the way they should. And it's, *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."* They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. *"They will mount up with wings like eagles; they will walk and not grow weary; they will run and not faint."*

And how well do you wait upon the Lord? How well do you wait and let some things unfold instead of always rushing to it and trying to force it? Can you find that level of peace -- you know, those yellow lights -- that just calmly wait and allow it to unfold in a great way.

Okay, so this week, when you're driving around and you see a traffic light, I want you to remember how important and valuable traffic lights are in organizing things and helping us get where we want to go. And know that there are spiritual laws that help us reach us where we want to reach and live as full a life as we want to live.

You know, there are red lights and green lights and yellow lights. And we want to hit more green ones ... but you've got to also utilize the red and the yellow. And the three things we need to do is to find your frequency. When you feel off base, look within. Center yourself in the vibration and that energy and let that guide you. The other one is to become a conscious magnet. You know, clearly know what you want and embody it. Feel those feelings and become a person would have an experience like that. And finally, help your red lights become green lights. Know that God means it for good and learn the lesson it came to teach. Let it bring forth your greatness by helping you dig a little bit deeper.

And you know what the most important thing about getting more green lights? It's not just using your yellow and your red; it is giving yourself the green light to be your very best self and to live your best life.

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]

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