

THE STEWARDSHIP PAPERS

Interstates

Have you ever traveled the speed limit on some interstate? It's like the Doppler effect with the cars passing you and converging ahead, like streaks of light, to some pin point in the distance. It's as if you're the only one in the world who's obeying the law.

I have to admit that I've tried it both ways: traveling the speed limit and speeding down the highway, that is. I'm really good at following the speed limit...for awhile. Then, it seems like my foot becomes a bit heavier on the gas pedal. Speeding can be an insidious habit. Almost before I realize it, I find myself getting frustrated when stuck behind cars which are going at a slower pace than I. After all, I have somewhere to go, and they seem to be perversely trying to keep me from getting there! Quick flashes of anger are easy answers to the "obstructions" in my way.

After many years in this rat race, however, I began to realize that I was the one causing myself a great deal of unnecessary stress, and I am making a conscious attempt to slow down. Driving has become much more peaceful. I have time, once again, to notice the beauty of the countryside and to contemplate less violent thoughts about my fellow drivers. Life is Good.

However, I am also beginning to realize that all of those other passers-by, those "law breakers," have been getting angry at me. They've been passing me in "no

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passing” zones and tailgating me, as if intimidation would cause me to speed up. They’ve even tried to blind me with their bright lights and screamed nasties out their car windows. In the very least, they’ve glared at me as if I was the one who was in the wrong. Totally ridiculous, of course! I haven’t been breaking the law, they have! And perhaps because I was feeling a bit like Jesus (it’s often easier to identify with someone righteous, you know), I felt good enough about myself to be able to recognize that, at one time, I had been the persecutor rather than the persecuted...and that, now, I was simply in a different “state of being.”

Jesus, on the other hand, didn’t speed up one day and slow down the next. He was a man that obeyed the Law all the time, even when those about him were “on the fast track.” And he made a lot of enemies that way, too; because those who are traveling too quickly tend to stumble over those people who are in their way. But he didn’t condemn anyone; he simply lived his life according to the values that he held dear, and as such, set an example, a building block, as it were, for those who wanted to do the same.

At any rate, it got me to thinking...maybe we’re given practice at keeping earthly laws so that, eventually, we’ll be able to keep the heavenly ones. And, perhaps, we’re even allowed to feel like Jesus, occasionally, in order that we may be gently taught not to condemn other people along the way; because it seems that there is One who chooses not to condemn us as we travel between these internal states of awareness...these “inter-states” of Life. (May 17, 1994)