

Do you remember the game “Red Light, Green Light”? One person plays the stop light and the rest of the children try to touch him or her. Everyone lines up about 15 feet from the stop light, who turns away from the group and says “Green light.” All the kids move forward until they hear “Red light.” If the stop light turns around and finds any one still moving, they are out. The winner is the first person to touch the stop light and earns the right of being the stop light for the next game.

Our lives are full of stop lights, not just traffic lights that try to prevent us from reaching our goals. Stop lights may be people who tell us we don’t have enough talent or ability, bosses who refuse to give us credit for our ideas or a promotion, family members or friends who hold us back.

Jesus certainly encountered enough stop lights during His life. After spending over two years with His disciples teaching the crowds, healing the sick and working with them in private, Jesus was ready to fulfill His mission. He had travelled with the disciples about as far from Jerusalem as they ever went together to the Northern most part of Galilee. It was there that Peter was the first to identify Jesus as the Christ, the Promised Savior. That should have been a big green light. The Israelites had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries.

When Jesus began to explain that he had to make a final journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders of Israel, Peter raised up a big “Stop Sign.” He didn’t want Jesus to go to Jerusalem if it meant He was going to die. Peter loved the Lord. He didn’t want his close friend to suffer and die. So he did everything that he could to stop him. But it didn’t work. Jesus wouldn’t let anyone or anything stand between Him and the cross.

Jesus made a choice, a big green light straight to the cross. Jesus didn’t get caught in a political buzz saw when He went to Jerusalem. He wasn’t in the wrong place at the wrong time. He went there by choice, a choice He made a long time before. The Apostle Paul described Jesus’ choice with these words in Philippians 2:6-8. **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”** The Cross of Christ was all part of God’s plans to save us.

Jesus didn’t have to go to the cross. Jesus didn’t have to enter into our world in the first place. He could have given up on us. He could have said those people are just not worth the effort. He could have, but He didn’t. Jesus chose the cross because He loves us. That is an amazing statement. So many people think that God hates us, that He is judgmental, hyper critical. So they turn away from God, try to hide from God, attempt to discredit God and those who believe in Him. But God loves us. That is why Jesus made the journey to the cross. Jesus said, **“There is**

**no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.”** (John 15:13 NLT) Jesus committed Himself to the cross because He loves us.

Sometimes we forget that God is both a just and a loving God. When people think that God is only a God of justice, they live in fear of his judgment. When people think of God only as love, they dismiss His justice that demands that sin be paid for. God's justice demands that we live perfect lives. We don't! No one does or can. We are all guilty of sin, of breaking God's command. We fail to love God with our whole heart and to give him the # 1 place in our lives every minute of every day. We fail to honor and respect the life, the relationships, the reputations and the property of other people every minute of every day. Failing to do these things is called sin. We're all guilty. As a result, we all deserve to die. But Jesus died in our place to forgive us. Our sins were nailed to the cross with Christ. He paid the price in full. Jesus made the journey to the cross to forgive us. He didn't have to, he wanted to!

The problem with sin is that it kills. The first sin killed the perfect relationship between God and man. When Adam tried to blame Eve, their perfect relationship died too. If you took the time to read the first few chapters of Genesis and you'll see the result of sin. Jealousy drove one brother to kill another. Everything went downhill from there until it got so bad that God destroyed His wonderful creation with a flood, saving only Noah and his family and the animals they took with them on the ark. Sin kills. But Jesus gives life. Jesus said, **“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”** (John 10:10) Near the conclusion of his Gospel account, John wrote, **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** (John 20:31)

Jesus had to go; he had to make the journey to the cross to save the people He loves. No one made him go. Jesus said, **“No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.”** (John 10:18 NLT) Jesus had to go to save us because we can't save ourselves. God's justice demanded a perfect sacrifice. Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice for our sins on the cross. God's love required that He do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Nothing and no one could keep Jesus from making the journey to the cross. Don't let anyone or anything put up a red light that keeps you away from the cross of Christ and the empty tomb. Walk with Jesus. Listen to His words. Receive His love and forgiveness. It is the most important journey you'll ever make. Amen.