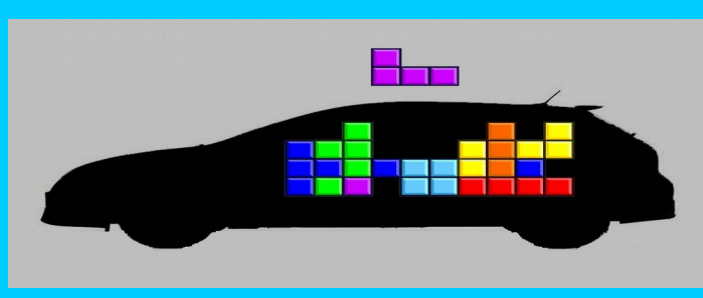


# Red Lights and Tetris

by larry bubb



I know what you're thinking ... I don't even know how to play Tetris so this article does not apply to me. Well, I don't know how to play either so it doesn't really matter! However, I have made up my own driving game that I like to pretend is just like Tetris. Strategies include logical options like when you come to a stop light with 3 lanes. If there are cars in 2 lanes but one is open, you should obviously pull your car into the lane with NO car. If you come to the intersection and all three lanes have a vehicle (a tractor, an electric car with a texting driver, and a motorcycle) pull your car behind the motorcycle, which should be the fastest off the line ... by far! Speaking of which ...



My goal in this "game" is not to be the first, but merely to finish in the best possible time I can without breaking the law (too much ☹) or obnoxiously cutting anybody off. My passion for this driving game is to be Biblical and "redeem the time" (I'm pretty sure Paul had driving cars in mind when he wrote Eph. 5:16!). As I get older I am increasingly aware that time is such a valuable commodity. You can't buy extra time on Amazon and there is no App called "Light Be Green" that allows you to get past a red light more quickly ... at least that I am aware of as of this writing.

I read that the average driver will spend well over 2 months of their entire life waiting in traffic. And that driver will also spend 6 months of their lifetime waiting at stop lights!

I often feel that if I can spend less time driving on our CA roads and more time at home encouraging someone by connecting with them, reading a Christian book, or writing an article like this one ... or even relaxing watching a sporting event (OK ... maybe not so relaxing at times), then my life will be more enjoyable and God-honoring than sitting in traffic for hours. So I try to get through traffic as quickly as possible.

One time I was driving (playing Vehicular Tetris) and I remember being frustrated as the light was about to change red just before I got to it and there were absolutely NO cars waiting to go in the other directions. In other words, the light (or maybe the evil one disguised as a light) was messing with my head! The guy next to me ran the red light as I was slowing down to stop and obey the law. He was, of course, disqualified from this version of Driving Tetris since he blatantly broke the law! It turns out that 2 stop lights later I pulled up to the red light and who should be stopped directly next to me one lane over but the guy who ran the red light. ☹

I had an epiphany about life at that moment. Sometimes it seems like the odds are stacked against you and nothing is going right so it is very easy to get down or discouraged. BUT GOD ... has a way of leveling the playing field. I thought back on the passage in the OT where it says God WILL repay the people for the devastation caused by the locusts (Joel 2:25). I am not saying we will always be blessed to the extent Job was after all his calamities if we choose to obey God. But in the eternal bigger picture, it will most definitely all work out in the end! So we just need to remember these things during those challenging times when nothing seems to be working out the way we want it to or think it should. Faith ... Trust God!

What lessons can we learn from playing Vehicular Tetris ... or reading about someone else who plays it in his own little world by himself?

Biblical Tetris Lesson 1) The ends do NOT justify the means. For instance, evil is NOT thwarted by violent means in the name of justice. Many Muslims play by those rules. It also makes human sense at times in our efforts to eradicate evil and make this world a better place. But if it contradicts what Jesus said, we must break from what our human nature tells us makes sense, and follow what He commands. We must love our enemies (not destroy them) ... we must repay evil with good (not look for subtle, passive-aggressive ways to get back at others). Jesus did not call us to be the best humans we could possibly be but rather to be God-like. That is impossible by our own will power or by our own intellect. We need God's Spirit within us and in control of us to be able to pull that one off successfully.

Biblical Tetris Lesson 2) We must learn to trust when the outcome looks bleak. He will repay the bad locust years (and driving moments) sooner or later ... and not usually the way we expect. So we must trust God above our instincts and intellect.

Biblical Tetris Lesson 3) These days you can call someone from your car phone to encourage them, or listen to the Bible in your car, or pray while you are sitting at that stop light, so there are other ways to "redeem the time" without rushing through an evil red light. Along those lines, here is a note I got from a member of our church home group ...

*"When I sit at a red light, those 7 seconds seem like an eternity. That is because there usually seems to have been several traffic light cycles' worth of cross traffic already having passed through on the one cycle where I am.*

*Truly, each one of us is called upon to bear our own cross traffic. And the Devil can appear as an [evil] angel of traffic lights.*

*What in the cornbread heck is the solution? You can be reasonably sure it is not a "firing solution," as in artillery. When a traffic light is broken [oops!] you treat it as a stop sign. Am I right?*

*Another incorrect response would be an epic Tourette's Syndrome torrent of your pet impropriety. [Oh, the embarrassment! Did I just hear me say that?]*

*No, the correct response is to make your request known to God: "Request green, please!" We should never say what we want to befall the other guy, but how we would like to be blessed. Then begin praising God LOUDLY! This is called Paul's Syndrome. After all, you are confined by the red light, n'est-ce pas?*

*So, in a nutshell [How I got here is not important, but how I get out is!], we say, "Ce n'est pas terrible!" We get to choose [in the context of*

*Either, "It's great!" or "It's awful!"*

*Scriptures: 1 John 1:9 [if needed], Philippians 4:4-9."*

~Blessings, Mike Colunga

