

Ranting Ever On: Bad Drivers

I am an angry driver most of the time. It is something I have to work on constantly. I wouldn't even consider myself an angry person most of the time – though I do have a very angry resting face. (That's an article for another time!) I am not even an impatient person in my day-to-day life. But on the road behind the wheel, I am all those things. Plainly put, most people have no business driving a vehicle. They have no idea how to control their own vehicle, let alone be aware that there are other vehicles on the road around them. This is all very annoying. It is also dangerous. I could live with the annoying part, but when you factor in the dangerous aspect of bad driving, that sets me off. I never took Driver's Education in school. My small school didn't offer it. (To give you some idea how small my school was, I was in a graduating class of one.) My parents taught me when I was 17 years old and it made a world of difference. They taught me to pay just as much attention to those around me as to my own driving. They taught me to follow the laws of the road – novel idea it seems. They taught me to be a “defensive” driver. I have done my best to take their lessons to heart. I don't speed. I use my signal lights. I do all the little things we are supposed to do when we are drive our vehicles. And it bothers me that from all appearances, most other drivers do not do these things.

Complaining about bad driving is too general to make a good rant. If I want this rant to stick, it needs to be more focused. With that in mind, let's look at the art of driving conscientiously. Little things like letting cars merge, not following too closely, slowing down and moving over a lane when there is a stalled car on the side of the road, acknowledging when another driver lets you merge. These are the little things that make driving better and safer for everyone on the road. Too often though, these are the first things that are thrown out of the window by most drivers.

Comedian Brian Regan has a really good bit about acknowledging other drivers that is not only funny, but also makes many valid points. You can watch that clip [here](#) if you so desire. Warning: Some might find the advertisement before the clip offensive.

I have had many similar experiences. One in particular stands out. On my way to work, I was in the right turn lane and I could tell that the car to the left of me was going to need to get over. They did not have their signal light on, but I could tell. How? It's just one of those things you learn to recognize when you pay attention when you are driving. Naturally, I slowed down and gave the driver a chance to switch lanes. They didn't. I thought for a brief moment that perhaps I was mistaken that this driver needed to change lanes. My faith wavered. I doubted my skills. Not for long though, because finally, at the last possible moment, the driver flashed their turn signal once and then quickly swerved in front of me. That last-second signal light was both infuriating and laughable. It was pointless but I'm sure it made the driver feel like they had done everything correctly.

So, I had allowed the driver to merge – and believe me, it was not easy. The very pleasant and patient person behind me was not less than thrilled that I slowed down. They showed their displeasure by honking at me and then giving me a friendly hand gesture. (Maybe they weren't angry and were trying to tell me that I was Number One?) Even after all of this, I had a faint hope that the driver I had allowed to merge would acknowledge my help and perhaps wave to show their appreciation. Nope. They did not wave. They didn't even look in the rearview mirror to see the kind man who had made their turn possible. They continued to do the thing that had put them in the precarious position from the very beginning: They talked on their phone. How did I respond to this ugly and distasteful display of incivility? I waved at them like an idiot and continued to wave (with a giant, completely over-

the-top grin on my face) for the next three or four minutes. I have no idea if they saw me. I don't really care. Actually, I do care. My secret hope is that they saw me and realized what they had done and when they got to work, felt so bad about how they treated another human being that they curled up in the corner of their cubicle and cried themselves to sleep. No big deal – just total and abject shame and guilt.

Moral of this story: Be nice to other people when you are on the road. Or, in the words of the famous fictional rock band, Wyld Stallyns, "Be excellent to each other." Bill and Ted believed it. Jesus did too. Driving would be less stressful and the roads would be safer if we just listened to Bill, Ted, and Jesus.