

# Cross Current



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## THE GAUGE OF SUCCESS

Whether you call it *hypermiling* or *ecodriving*, using your car efficiently will make you green, not blue, next time you fill up.

First, let's deal with an urban legend. Though you've heard of *drafting* — driving a small car so close to a tractor trailer you can shut off the engine and get sucked down the highway by the big rig — it's extremely dangerous and it doesn't work. On the highway, you need three seconds of reaction time for emergencies: about 150 feet.



And if you're ever tempted to save money by shutting off your engine on a big hill, don't! It could fry your transmission because many are lubricated by a pump powered by the engine. So are power brakes and steering which get extremely stiff if the engine's off.

One of the best ways to improve fuel efficiency is to keep your car tuned and in good repair. Smaller problems can increase your costs from four to 40 per cent. It also helps to keep your tires inflated to the proper pressure because soft ones create more friction. Changing your oil is another simple step. The longer oil stays in your engine, the dirtier and thicker it gets, making it harder to push through the system.

As for driving techniques, don't idle or warm up your car except in extreme weather. Most newer vehicles warm up best if you start driving as soon as the engine's running smoothly. It also helps to string your errands together because you save gas with one long trip compared to several trips in which the car starts cold each time.

According to Consumer Reports, it's not true rolling down your windows hurts fuel efficiency, and even air conditioning costs you only one mile per gallon. It also helps to choose the lane of least



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resistance, the one requiring the least braking or changes in speed. To avoid stop-and-go traffic, take back roads with less traffic.

Though common sense says efficiency increases when you take heavy snow off your car and drive on roads already plowed, even rain creates road resistance. So hypermilers "ridge ride", driving just to the left or right of shallow highway tire ruts that collect water, provided the lane's wide enough.

On the road to spirituality, don't follow anyone too closely, aside from Jesus Christ, and don't try coasting on the work of others. Spiritual progress takes individual effort and even good mentors encourage us to be independent and go our own speed. Anytime you get sucked in by another, you're heading for a crash. Even pastors and teachers have spiritual car wrecks, so don't tailgate us.

It's also dangerous to cut your source of power when you're careening downhill, yet our first response to turmoil is to switch off emotionally from God and his people. When we don't use the very resources that can get us through, we find it harder to steer through the pain and put the brakes on harmful behaviour. It's no wonder we often run off the road into the deep ditch of despair.

Much of that can be avoided if we take care of smaller problems as they arise instead of letting them build, sapping our energy. "*Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry,*" Paul writes, "*for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.*" (Eph. 4:27) Keeping our spirit in good repair takes vigilance and effort but it pays. So does avoiding unnecessary resistance in our relationships and taking care to clean out the gunk from our system through constant worship and renewal.

Another key to successful living is not to idle for too long. Being still and standing still are not the same. We need to know the peace and power of God but also let it give us confidence to move forward in faith. Stop-and-start, on-and-off spirituality is no spirituality at all. It saps our energy, harms our witness and leaves us running on empty.

To be truly Christ-like, stay cool in all circumstances and slow down but maintain a steady momentum. Avoid the ruts and don't hesitate to take the road less travelled, even if it puts you at odds with others. You'll enjoy the journey better and get much more spiritual mileage out of your life.

*Rick Gamble*