

Slow Down or Hit the Sofa

Civil and traffic engineers the world over have tried any number of interesting methods to get traffic to slow down.

Traffic lights, police speed traps, digital speed displays, speed bumps, *Slow! Children Playing* signs, flashing *Reduced Speed Ahead* signs, and myriad other measures have all been employed with varying levels of success.

One particularly interesting idea was instituted in the Dutch city of Delft:

European traffic-calming began as a grassroots movement in the late 1960s. Angry residents of the Dutch city of Delft turned their streets into “woonerven,” or “living yards.” What were once channels for the movement of cars became shared areas, outfitted with tables, benches, sandboxes, and parking bays jutting into the street. The effect was to turn the street into an obstacle course for motor vehicles and an extension of homes for residents.

Woonerven were officially endorsed by the Dutch government in 1976. Over the next decade, the idea spread to many other countries. Laws and regulations were changed to permit woonerf designs in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, England, France, Japan, Israel, Austria, and Switzerland. By 1990, there were more than 3,500 shared streets in the Netherlands and Germany, 300 in Japan, and 600 in Israel. The twists and turns, plus brick pavement and periodic raised areas, brought motorists down to “walking speeds,” meaning about 15 kph or 9 mph.



We can only imagine the reaction of American motorists zooming down a busy street only to encounter a sofa, a table or a sandbox strategically placed as a roadblock to slow them to a more agreeable speed.

So, you ask, what is the point of this story?

Ever feel like God is throwing all manner of crazy roadblocks in your way as you are zooming toward your desired destination in life? Any manner of strategically placed roadblocks – illness, financial distress, broken relationships, you name it – can slow us down or even drop us in our tracks.

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Trials can be God's roadblocks to slow us down, cause us to focus on what really matters in life, and ultimately save us from calamity. In the end, God knows better than any civil engineer where you need to be and when you need to be there.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter