

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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**SERMON TITLE** The New Year Ordeal

**SERIES**

**DATE** 1/15/2023

**KEY SCRIPTURE** Various Scriptures

**SYNOPSIS** A true story from our New Year's weekend gives some life lessons.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☛ The New Year Ordeal

So, an interesting thing happened at the family gathering over New Year's weekend. After celebrating Christmas with the Waldo extended family on Friday night, we went to Des Moines to celebrate Christmas with the Mathews family on Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. We arrived at the hotel around 4 pm and gathered with the rest of the family in the party room of the hotel. There was soup for supper and many snacks to be shared. Then we had a grab bag gift exchange, followed by games and conversation. I was not feeling especially well, so went to bed early. Others stayed up late into the night with the party room finally vacant by about 2 am.

During a late breakfast the next morning, Naomi's brother commented about several of his Menard's bags being gone from the party room, but he figured one of his sons had picked them up and taken them home. After breakfast, as more were gathering again in the party room, Naomi's sister noticed that her daughter's purse had been rummaged through and it appeared that credit cards were missing. Then others noticed that other items had been disturbed sometime overnight. A cooler was left open; bags of games had been moved around and more.

I decided to get up and check our stuff which was at the far end of the room. The game bag seemed ok, but a glove from my coat was out of the pocket. Upon closer inspection, I noticed the key fob for my car was missing. I quickly asked Naomi if she had the car keys, to which she promptly replied that she did not. So, I immediately went out the front door to check on our car and it was gone. I came back in with the report of our missing car and everyone's jaws hit the floor.

Naomi's brother had already been in conversation with the hotel manager about the situation in the party room and now he got right on the horn and called the police. To their credit, a police unit was on site within minutes.

The officers were very polite and professional, gathering information about what had been stolen and when we thought it might have happened. Of course, they were particularly interested in the details of our car's theft. In short order they had all of our information and put out a notice regarding a stolen car.

The officer in charge explained that typically when cars are stolen from the west side of Des Moines, they end up abandoned on the east side and police find them a few weeks later. "Oh great. We are without a car and our kids are coming home from California today to have our Waldo 6 Christmas in Boone." "I guess we'll figure something out."

While the officers were interviewing other family members and talking with the hotel manager about security cameras, we contacted our neighbor to have her check our house. Since the thief had our car, they also had our registration information and now had access to the house with our garage door opener. Thankfully, the house was untouched.

We also thought it best to call our insurance agent to let him know about the car theft. While in conversation with our agent, we remembered that we are participants in what is called



Driveology. Driveology is a device that is plugged into the car's On-Board-Diagnostics port to monitor the driving patterns of the person insured. Safe driving = lower insurance rates. Well, it's more than that. It also keeps records of locations and times the car has traveled.

Our agent was able to help us get into the log of the Driveology app and see that the car had left the hotel shortly before 5 am, and its last known location was in Coralville at 10 am. Not what the police officer had expected. However, armed with that information, he was able to contact the police in that area and have them drive by to see if the car was still there. It was now 11 am, an hour after that last known stop.

While waiting to hear back from the Coralville authorities, I dug a little deeper into the Driveology app and could see that the thief had made several stops before that final destination. Actually, it's quite remarkable what details are recorded in the app. I then went to tell the officer a more in-depth report on the car's adventure and just at that time he was getting a report from Coralville.

They found the car in the location the app had indicated. It was locked and looked to be in good condition. They were not able to keep an officer on site waiting for us to pick the car up, so they recommended we have the car impounded so that it would be secure. The key fob was unaccounted for, so if they left the car, the thief could potentially come back and steal it again. That's what we did.

Then, we were able to make arrangements to have spare keys delivered to us in Des Moines, saving us a round trip to Boone before we could even go get the car. Naomi's brother was hopeful that his stolen items were still in the car, so he was glad to take us to Coralville.

Almost two hours later we arrived at the lot, paid the fee, and retrieved our car. Indeed, it was in good shape. In fact, it had been washed. However, nearly everything inside the car had been removed. Unfortunately, most of the stolen items were missing and now so were various items from inside the car's glove box and center console. But the car itself was in good condition; washed and ready to go. I think they even put some gas in it since it was about the same level I remembered it being.

From there, we drove home to Boone only a few hours later than we had originally planned. We were able to have our Waldo 6 Christmas before anyone had to head back home. And, now we had a tale to tell.

While we felt, in some measure, violated, a bad situation turned out much better than it could have. Police officers expected at least a few weeks of lost car, but we had it back the same day within hours. Family members expected a car in shambles, but it was retrieved in good shape, actually looking better than when we last drove it.

It made for a long day, but we came away feeling blessed to have our car back so soon. The most costly item stolen was recovered within the day. It really was miraculous. Praise the Lord!



## ☞ Some observations and lessons:

☞ **Never assume life is safe.**

### **John 16:33**

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In fact, this was our experience. Neither Naomi nor I panicked. We simply did what was necessary at the moment, and one thing led to another which made it possible to recover our

☞ stolen car. **The world brings problems, but the Lord brings peace.**

☞ **Rely on those in authority.**

### **Romans 13:1**

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

### ☞ **1 Peter 2:13-16**

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men... For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

The police officer in charge noted that we handled the ordeal much more calmly than most he had dealt with.

☞ **Keep a cool head.**

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

While we were calmly taking care of business with the police and our insurance, others in the family were praying. And, God answered the prayers all while giving us peace of mind.

☞ **Call on friends when in need.**

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

Our friends helped us by checking on the house, bringing spare keys to us and driving us to

☞ retrieve the stolen car. **We need each other.**

☞ **Use the tools at your disposal.**



The Driveology app was crucial for our situation. In everyday life, God has given us tools for our spiritual welfare.

☞ **Psalms 119:105**

Your **word** is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

☞ **Hebrews 4:16**    **prayer**

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

These are basics of the faith. We often want something more complex, but God keeps it simple. The Driveology app is pretty simple, but it was all we needed in our situation.

☞ **Put in the effort to get what you want.**

**2 Peter 3:13-14**

We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

We had one goal in mind – to get our car back. So, our focus was refined and determined.

☞ **Give God the glory.**

**1 Timothy 1:17**

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

**And finally, ...keep your car keys with you.**