

The Hitchhiking Story

by Otto Koning

Otto Koning's family learns to trust in God's timing and provision through a series of struggles and discouragements, ultimately leading to a miraculous sign that confirms God's will.

Duration: 38:25

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 7:7, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of hitchhiking and relying on God's provision. He recounts how he was stranded in Columbus and prayed for a ride to continue his journey. Eventually, a man picked him up and even offered to buy him a meal. The speaker reflects on how God often waits until the last minute to test our faith and see if we will trust Him. He also emphasizes the importance of taking action and being obedient to God's calling.

Transcript

All right, we were just off the mission field from New Guinea. My wife was sick and we had to come home and we lived in Huntington, West Virginia. And this is kind of the setting in which the hitchhiking story took place.

We were there and I was preaching in different churches, missionary conference and so on, trying to make a living that way. I don't have a trade, so I was doing victorious living meetings and so on, being away from home a lot. And that was not too good for the family.

And so then we got this offer from California. It was a Christian organization, a revival ministry. And they said, Mr. Koenig, you can come and join our staff and we'll bring the people to you and you won't have to leave your family.

You move out here and join us. And wow, it was so good, too good to be true. My wife said, we won't even need to pray about this one.

But I said, hey, this is a major move, so we're going to have to pray. And so I asked my father for advice and he said, go. And that was unusual for him, my father-in-law.

And he says, go. I asked each of my four children, I said, what do you think? Are you ready to pull up stakes and leave your friends? They said, yes, daddy, we want to go. And everything seemed, and then I

asked my mission board, would it be all right if I left the mission since it doesn't look like we can go back to the field and me take this other job? And they said, yes, I think that's the right thing to do.

And these were four things I prayed about. I said, if everything is go, then the Lord would show me. But there was one other thing.

God, would you sell the house for us? And so I said, you can certainly show us that we should do this by selling our house. Now, in Huntington, West Virginia, the houses weren't selling. There was many houses for sale in the town.

The economy was bad. But God can do anything. So we had a realtor and he put a sign in front of our house and he said, bring the price down a little bit.

And so we did. And then three months went by and he never sold it. There was another realtor came by.

He had a bigger company. And he said, we've got 70 agents. We'll sell the house for you.

I said, okay, and we'll be praying. And after about a couple of months, he said, you're not praying hard enough. I said, well, you're not selling hard enough.

And so, yeah, but anyway, he had that sign there six months that house wouldn't sell. Now, the group in California was putting pressure on us and saying, why don't you come out here, come out by faith, trust God to sell the house afterwards. And I said, no, that's not, this was going to be a sign.

If God wants me out there, he would sell the house. If he doesn't want me out there, then he wouldn't sell the house. That's the way we feel about it.

So they, you know, kind of said, you don't have enough faith to do this. And so, but we hung in there and now I'm glad we did. Six months went by and finally the Lord got hold of my heart.

I was preaching about trusting in God rather than trusting in man and surrendering to God. And, and all of a sudden I realized that I'm asking man for help to sell the house. I should let God sell it.

And this whole, and finally I said to the man, take your sign home. God's going to have to do this. And he kind of smiled and took his sign home.

And I got me a nice homemade sign, black and white, black lettering. I was right proud of it. And I put that out in front of the house by owner.

I put a little ad in the paper, three lines in that paper there, house for sale by owner. And I said, God, man's out of it. I'm not asking man for help.

I'm just asking you for help. And so house wouldn't sell, nothing happened. And, and it was about this time while I was trying to sell this house towards the end of that year that I, when the hitchhiking story took place.

Finally, oh, one day I got discouraged because this, this hillbilly from West Virginia drove right on my lawn. He must've been drunk and smashed my nice sign up. And I was really feeling sore about this.

And I, as I carried that broken sign back alongside the house, the Lord again spoke to me. He says, are you through yet? And I didn't realize, I thought he meant I was to look to him for help, not to man, but I'm

still in it when I have this sign and I have this little ad in the paper. And I said, okay, God, if you want to do it all by yourself, of course he does.

He wants to get the glory. Then, then God, why are we up to price again? These guys have talked me down, you know, and, and, and I was going to sell it cheaper now because there was no commission of a realtor involved and it was the best deal in town. And yet nobody, nobody even looked at it.

And I said, God, if you're going to do it all by yourself, why don't we up the price again? So we get a decent price for what it's worth. And God didn't seem to mind that at all. And so I said to my wife, I said, Carol, it's all over.

Maybe God doesn't want us to move. Uh, if he doesn't want us to move, we surrender our right to go there. Maybe he has something different for us.

And we laid it down at that point and surrendered our right to move. And exactly two days and this old man came to my house at about eight o'clock at night. And he said, sir, I've got a, maybe a strange question for you, but would you consider selling your house to me? And I said, well, I would consider it.

Apparently he says, I know it's not for sale. He apparently had not seen my sign before or he'd come into town, whatever. And I said, uh, he said, I said, named him the price.

He says, that's rather high. He says, uh, could you come down? I said, no. I said, you came to me for it.

I said, this is what it's worth. We've improved this place. That's it.

He says, well, all right, I'll take it. And he shook my hand on it. And the next day we went to an attorney and he had the money.

I said to him, I said, just a minute. I said, don't you want to see the place? He says, I've already seen it before you moved in here. I looked at this house.

I wanted to buy then, but I hadn't sold my farm. And so he says, I tell you why I want this house. I used to live down the street as a boy.

I'd walk this street to my school. I'd always looked at this house, wanted to own it someday. And he says, now I've got the money.

I've sold the farm and I want to own it. And so God sold the house without a real heir, without an ad in the paper. And I got the full price.

So now I had money to move. But the amazing thing was, by the time I sold that house, that ministry in California had gone under. And I thanked the Lord till this day that he never allowed me to sell that house.

And that when he, God could have done, if he wanted me out there, he would have sold it. You know that. And I stuck to that.

And I would have been out in California with no supporters there, no connections. And now I was still in East where I could get help. So I praise God for this thing.

But it was at this time that before that house sold, that we had stopped our ministry. I had made September 1st a target day for us moving. That was going to be nine months.

So I had not made any more arrangements for meetings. And I had no income. And now it's gotten to be that time of year.

And wow, we were stuck. No job, you know, house sold. The mission, I had told the mission I would be leaving them.

And they took back the ministry car that I was driving. We had this old junker that we had. That's all we had left.

So we have really no car, no house, no job. And we fast ran out of money with the six of us. And we came down to the final \$60.

And I said to Carol, I said, you know, the Revival Fellowship, the Canadian Revival Fellowship weekend is at Rives Junction, Michigan. And I had spoken at that rally before, this large rally, and a lot of people came. And I said, I'm going there.

I've got to get contacts with pastors, the pre-pastors meetings. And I've got to line up meetings, and I need help. So she says, are you taking the old car? I said, no, I'm going to leave it for you.

I'm going to hitchhike. I haven't got enough money for gas. I gave her \$30.

I hated to give her so little for a week. And then I took the other \$30. I'd have to somehow get a place to stay in a motel or something up there.

And I said, just pray. And so early one Wednesday morning, she took me to the outskirts of Huntington, West Virginia there. And she promised she would pray.

And she says, I hate to see you do this. I said, hey, I used to hitchhike a lot. But times have changed, that's for sure.

And so I got out there, and I had told her, Carol, if I get by Columbus, Ohio by noon today, I'll consider that God is in this thing and that this is his will for me to go. If I don't get there, then I'll get back on the other side of the road, and I'll come home and hope to see you tonight. And I prayed about that.

I said, God, would you show me a sign if I get by there by a certain time by noon, then I'll consider that you're blessing this endeavor. And so she said, well, all right. So I stood.

She left, and I stood there the longest time, early in the morning, about 5:30 in the morning, waited, had my thumb out. I'd look good. I put my sports coat on.

I had a tie on. I looked like a guy that I'd want to pick up. And so, but nobody picked me up.

And I stood there, and I said, God, maybe this isn't what you want. And I really started to want. But finally, this Baptist man came, because as soon as I thanked him for stopping, he handed me a gospel tract.

And I said, man, I don't need this. I was going to give you one. You just beat me to it.

We had good fellowship, but it only lasted for 10 miles. And so he took me down the road 10 miles, and I said, you know, I've got a long way to go. Would you pray as you go to work somehow? I'd like to get there at 7:30 tonight for the meeting.

And I said, would you pray, because I'm getting kind of discouraged, waiting so long for the first ride, and I've only, you know, gone 10 miles. And he says, I'll certainly pray for you. And that encouraged me, so I'm out there again, and sticking my thumb out, and cars go by, and nothing, and I'm almost a whole hour again.

I couldn't believe it myself. And I'm praying, and I'm reminding God to help my wife to remember to pray. You know what I mean? You get to a point where you don't have faith in your own prayers, and you pray, God, remind that Baptist guy to pray.

And so I'm doing this. But this old pickup truck stopped, and I thanked him, and he hands me a track. I couldn't believe it.

I said, man, I was going to give you one. I've got some. I promised God I'd give a track to everybody, as if that would bring God's favor to give me rides.

You know, that's not--motives aren't exactly right there. But he was a Pentecostal man, and he witnessed to me, and I said, hey, I was going to tell you. And he took me 15 miles down the road.

Now I'm across from Ashland, Kentucky, at the foot of the bridge, and he was going there, and I said, would you pray for me? I said, I've got so far to go, and I've gone exactly 25 miles. I could have walked this. And I said, I've been on this over two hours on this trip.

I'll never make Columbus by noon, maybe. Well, and he says, sir, just trust God. Just claim it.

Just believe it. And I thought, you know, this is great. I've got a Baptist and a Pentecostal praying for me.

God's going to hear one or the other. I don't know which one. But so I stood there again.

I was--you know, I got some more courage, but man, it's long again and too long. And finally, this car stops. And I didn't even say thank you.

I said, I want to beat you to it. I'm going to give you this track before you give me one. And he says, how did you know I was going to give you a track? I said, well, everybody's giving them out today.

So anyway, he was a new Christian, and he hadn't been a Christian too long. And I had been to the seminar at this time, and I was teaching this man principles that I'd learned and told him that he should go. And he was just soaking it in, a tremendous disciple.

And first, he took me about 30 miles to Portsmouth, Ohio, and that's where I have to turn north. And he was going straight west to Cincinnati. And all of a sudden, we were talking, having a good time.

And there we were at this stoplight, and I've got to get out. And the light turns green. I said, oh, man, I've got to get my suitcase out of the back, and people are starting to honk their horns.

And I just hardly had time to thank him. And I got stuck in Portsmouth, and that's a stringy town. I've got a long way to walk to the outskirts of town.

And I thought, this guy would have gladly had taken me out there. He was indebted to me for teaching him. Well, I was indebted to him for the ride.

But in other words, and I missed it. I said, God, I'm out here in the middle of this town because I'm doing your work. Now, doesn't that need some action? And I, thank God, sent an old man along.

He was a Methodist, and he was a gracious fellow, and he took me all the way to the outskirts. I don't think he was even going there. Now I'm on the open road again, and I'm waiting and waiting.

And I look at my watch. I thought, if God dropped a car out of the sky, I could hardly get to Columbus, you know, in time. Well, maybe there was still maybe a half-hour fluctuation there.

And I thought, how can I make it to Rives Junction, which is above Jackson, Michigan, between Jackson and Lansing? And stood there, and I wondered what God is up to. Finally, this old station wagon, old junker stuff. I thank God for a ride.

Anything will do, you know, when you're this desperate. And so he says, get around the other side. And these two tough guys, they had no shirts on, tattoos on them.

They're sitting there smoking, rough crowd. And they were used car salesmen, I guess. They had all these car parts anyway.

This car hardly, oh man. He says, shove some of that stuff over. The seat was dirty.

Back behind was this, all carburetors and alternators, you know, everything. And there was stuff on the floor. And he says, can you get in? Now, I'm sitting there with my legs on top of the stuff, but my knees almost hitting my chin.

And man, he says, and I'm just, and it's dirty. And there was no glass in the back. There was all plywood.

They had somehow broken the windows. And the muffler, I don't think he had a muffler. It was noise.

It was terrible. Oh man, the exhaust was coming in, and I'm sitting there choking back there. And I'm fussing, and I'm totally uncomfortable.

And I don't know how long I can last. And I said, God, I thank you for the ride, but it sure isn't much. You know, I thought God would send a nice car.

I mean, doesn't he, couldn't he have sent an air-conditioned Cadillac along and have his preacher driving it? What's he trying to tell me? He's got to get, you know, he's trying to get through to me. And I'm sitting cramped up, choking, and I'm hoping that, man, I don't know what to do. Finally, he pulls off, and he's going.

I said, he says, you'll have to get out here. I was glad to get out of that one. But you know, as I was getting out on the driver's side, there was a white Chevrolet coming down, and he had his window open.

And as I get out, I said to the guy, hey, are you going north or south? I need to ride north. He says, okay, jump in. So, I never set my suitcase down, and I ride from one car to the other.

And we went down to 23, starting north, and it wasn't long until I discovered that these two guys were both drunk. I'm so glad it was a four-lane highway. We needed both lanes, you know, and oh, brother, that's bad.

Now, I was sitting back there in that Chev, and this passenger, he had this brand fresh loaf of bread and a pack of cheese and ham, never been touched. He says, hey, make yourself a sandwich. I said, why do you say that? He said, hitchhikers are always hungry.

And so, I said, well, I've got some peanut butter sandwiches in my suitcase. I hadn't touched them yet. I thought this is going to be a long trip.

I'm going to space eating out. And he says, well, you can use them down the road. I said, you're right.

So, I'm fixing the sandwich while he's weaving. I'm trying to swallow this food. It was difficult.

I don't know if you've ever tried to eat a sandwich in the back of a car with a drunk driver. I mean, this was bad, folks. Now, there was one thing.

Back when I was a teenager, I used to hitchhike from my town to Hamilton Youth for Christ on Saturday nights, and there was one ride that I had that was worse than this. One day, a guy picked me up. He had this great big heavy motorcycle, and he was drunk.

Now, I'm sitting on the back. Don't ever get on a motorcycle with a drunk driver. He was really revving this boot up, and he was going, and he's leaning, you know, leaning around it.

I thought, this drunk guy can't think how far to lean. So, I'm leaning the other way to compensate. Now, you never do that.

You're supposed to go with, oh, but it was so bad. I was never so scared in my life. And so, I'm sorry, folks.

I lied. I yelled in his ear, there's my house. I see my house.

Get me off here. It wasn't my house at all, but I got off of that thing in one piece, and I walked the rest of the way. It was worth it.

Oh, man. But now, I'm in the back of this Chevy, and they're weaving, and finally, he goes off the road, heads up the side. I said, hey, I'm just, hey, man, you know, I've got to go north.

He said, well, I'm going to come back to the highway. I've got to drop something off. So, I'm just wondering whether he's not, and he's going back, and it's in the country, and then he drops something off, and then he heads up the other way.

He hadn't heading north again, and I thought, well, we're going in the right direction, but then he goes right the other. I said, hey, you're going the wrong way. He said, oh, I forgot you were there.

Oh, yeah, just walk that way. You'll find the highway. Now, I'm walking on this country road, carrying my suitcase, and I'm looking at my watch.

I said, God, do you know where I am? I've never been here before. I wonder how far the highway is now, and I'm pacing along, carrying my suitcase, and praying, and finally, crossed this ridge, and there was a highway. Man, neat.

No further, and I didn't even set my suitcase down. I put my thumb out, and this step van, this large truck kind of, he comes screeching to a hog, and I run up to it, and this guy stood in the doorway, and he was a

man from my home church in Huntington, West Virginia, a businessman. They were going to pick up a load of stuff in Columbus.

He says, Otto, what are you doing out here? I said, I'm trying to get a ride. Give me a ride, man. He says, preachers aren't supposed to hitchhike.

I said, well, some of them do. I said, he said, he says, where are you going? I said, Rives Junction, Michigan. He says, oh, I can't take you any further than Columbus.

I'm supposed to pick up this load, and he says, get in, so he sat on a pile of bags, and I sat there. His son was driving, and he says, well, and his son was really stepping on it, and man, I look, we made Columbus by before 12 o'clock. That was God's sign.

It was unbelievable, just minutes. Why does God wait, let it go to the last minute? Have you ever noticed that? I think he wants to know what we're made out of. Are we going to stick with him, you know, and he lets us go right till the last mailman has come, and no checking the mail, and man, you just about had it, and he wants to see what you do then, and I got there, and he says, now, before I let you out, I'm going to buy you a meal.

I said, sir, I don't need any meal. I said, I'm not feeling very good. I've still got some sandwiches in my, he says, no way am I going to put you out there.

We're starting to rain. He says, I'm going to buy you, so I thought, you know, this might be a long trip. I better maybe work ahead a little bit, and so I stuffed some food down, and he said, do you not have a car? I said, well, the mission took the car back when I left them.

I said, I got that old one. I didn't have enough money to put gas in it. He says, why didn't you tell me, brother Otto? I've got cars sitting in my yard that are doing nothing.

You could use them anytime you want to. I said, well, why didn't you tell me you had cars sitting around? We both laughed, and he said, promise me from now on you will never do this again. I said, I'll never do this again if I don't have to, and I said, he says, now, I'm going to, he says, I've got a four-cylinder car that's almost brand new.

He says, I want you to drive it for ministry, and I'm going to pay for the gas. He even fussed at me if I filled it up when I returned it the first time, and so he's taking care. Hey, it's cheaper not to own a car.

Can you imagine that? And so, but that didn't help me in this trip. I said, now, he let me off at a northwest corner. I said, get me through Columbus, and, you know, get me at the open.

He took me all the way up there, and this dear man and his son prayed for me that I'd get a ride, and it was starting to rain. I said, hey, that's good. They pick you up faster.

They have pity on you. So, I said, just leave me alone, and I said, are you going to be a prayer meeting tonight? And he said, yes, I plan to be back. I said, tell my wife that I got through Columbus.

I'm not coming back tonight. I'm on my way. God's in this thing.

I said, will you do that? He said, I sure will. And that night, I didn't know that. He met my wife at the church, and my wife was really happy that she didn't skip out on prayer meeting that night, because that

businessman gave her \$50.

He said, have you got any money? She had already spent the \$30. I'd given her for groceries or whatever, and he gave her \$50. She was all set for the week while I was gone.

You know, and aren't you glad sometimes when you don't skip out on prayer meeting? I heard about these two church elders that skipped out on their pastor one Wednesday night, and they went fishing, and during the time fishing, one gets convicted and says, you know, I feel bad about this. I shouldn't have let the pastor. I should be in prayer meeting.

Don't you feel that way about it? The other guy says, no. He says, I couldn't have gone anyway. My wife is sick.

And so, excuses, but my wife was happy that she went that night. Okay. Now, I was standing, this step van had just cleared the viaduct, just out, and this nice Oldsmobile Regency 98, I said, God, he screeched.

I said, God, this is more like it. You know, and this man came out, and he walked back, he almost ran. He says, Brother Otto, Brother Otto, what are you doing? And he was a pastor of a church in Columbus that I'd preach for.

He says, what are you doing? I said, I'm hitchhiking to Rives Junction. He says, well, that's where I'm going. I said, well, give me a ride.

And he says, he says, but I'm not going till Friday. I said, a lot of help you are. He says, well, why don't I take you to bus station? I said, I can't afford the bus.

I said, they're too slow anyway. Just get out of my way so I can get a ride. And he says, no way, get in the car.

And so he took me to church. There was another deacon there with him, and the two of them said, we got to get Brother Otto a car. And I said, if you're going to get me a car, get me something small that's, you know, economy.

And this is a lack of faith, I know. You know, if God gets me a car, wouldn't he get me gas to put in it? I mean, but I'm worried if he gave me a car, I'd spend my whole \$30, put it all in at once, one of those big clunkers. And so he got on the phone.

I said, Harry, the deacon, I said, take me back to the road. I'm wasting time. He says, no way.

He says, I'm going to tell him that you need gas money too. And he came bouncing out of there, and he got a new Phoenix, Pontiac Phoenix. One of his members was a car dealer, and he had these demos sitting around.

And he says, go by the bank, Harry, and got me \$50. Now I had \$80 in my pocket. And this is an amazing thing.

I start out with \$30. Now I have \$80. I start out with two peanut butter sandwiches.

Now I don't want to see any more food. And this is the way I start out with nothing, and now I'm driving a new car. We went to this house.

Oh, it was a rich place. And this dear lady didn't even know me, trusted her pastor, said, you can drive the car to Michigan and then just drive it back here. I said, well, I'd appreciate it.

And she came out with a lunch bag. And she says, I made you a lunch. I said, you probably need some food on the way.

I said, ma'am, I don't want to see any more food. But then I saw her face. Never denied people the opportunity of giving something to you.

But I said, but ma'am, I probably need it down the road. And she was happy, and she gave me this lunch, and I just threw it in the backseat, never even looked at it. And I got to the highway, and what I said to her, I said, you know, I might need to feed some hitchhikers on the way.

And that's exactly what happened. I picked up this first guy. He said, where are you going? I said, Rives Junction.

He says, I'm going to Kalamazoo. You mean you can take me all the way? I said, why not? You know, but I'm starting to fiddle. I didn't take time to look at this car dash, and I started to rain, and I'm looking for the wipers, and I turned on the things.

And he says, he looks at me, he says, you don't know this car very well, do you? You haven't had it very long. I said, no, I haven't had it very long. He says, sure, it's nice.

I said, that's right, thank you. And then I said, when have you eaten last? And he says, I haven't eaten today. I said, check that lunch there.

It's a rich man's lunch, and he thought it was mine. He says, check it out. I don't know what's in there, but go ahead.

He says, you mean a ride all the way to Michigan, lunch provided? I said, why not? He says, this is my lucky day. I said, mine too. And he didn't know what I was talking about.

And then he looked at the back seat there, and there was my white suitcase, and I had Toledo on there. I had taken the short, I had papers for each city, but I was going for the long shot, time was a premium. And so he says, that suit, is that your suitcase? I said, yeah.

He says, were you hitchhiking this morning? I said, yeah. He says, I saw you this morning. I said, where were you this morning? He says, 5.30, I started from Huntington, West Virginia.

I said, where did you stay? He says, I slept under the bridge. I said, where did you come from? Florida, all the way up from Florida. And he says, I was that other hitchhiker on the road this morning.

I walked down the road, because there's another guy hitchhiking over there. Not good to be together, so I walked down the road. He was the other guy.

He says, I got in this T-bird before you did. I told the guy to pick you up, because he says, you're a nice looking guy. And he says, I don't got room for him.

And he says, I tried to help you, man. I said, I appreciate that. And so here we both started from the same place.

And he says, well, did you steal this car? I said, no. He says, it's got Ohio plates on it. I explained.

I said, the pastor, the people. He says, now, to an unsaved person, this is very amazing, that I don't even know the people that own the car, and that this is the way Christianity ought to work, you know. And see, they trusted the pastor, and so on.

And the pastor trusted me. And so he says, that's amazing. So I tried to witness to the guy.

He said he was a Christian, so on. But we picking up other hitchhikers on the way. And when we got to, I stopped for gas one time, spent \$7.

I had \$73 when I got there. That thing didn't burn a lot of gas. And so I, at Toledo, you know, between Toledo, Ohio and Ann Arbor, Michigan, there is the Michigan prisons.

There's a women's prison. There's three prisons. There's big signs on the road, don't pick up hitchhikers, prison zone.

Now, I wondered at that sign. He saw it too. I said to the guy, would you have been going this direction, this place? He said, yes.

I said, me too. I never thought of this. What would you have done? Suppose I let you out in the middle of this prison zone.

What would you do? No hitchhiking. He says, don't do it. I said, no, I'm not going to do it.

But I said, man, think of the predicament we would have been in if we'd gone on this road. Now, that sign, you know, he says, man, I just hope somebody would pick me up anyway. I said, yeah.

I said, I just hope somebody was illiterate and couldn't see it. I wondered about that sign. It didn't say this is the law.

I thought that's maybe just a suggestion to, you know, keep us, protect us. I don't know, whatever way you want to look at it. But he says, and we're talking about the predicament we could have been in, in this 20 miles and no hitchhiking zone.

What a mess. And as we contemplated what that could have meant, we saw this guy standing there hitchhiking. He says, sir, you've got to, you've got to pick him up.

That could be you. That could be me. He says, I said, yeah, that guy might be standing out there praying God to have so many illiterate guy come along and pick him up.

I said, he, I said, let's check him out first. This guy had no baggage at all. He had a brush cut.

And that didn't, I wondered about him. But I said, roll down your window. So he looked in the window.

I said, hey man, just a minute. I said, we had to backdoor lock. Did you get out of one of these prisons around here? He says, no, man, what do you think? He says, can you imagine what it's like trying to hitchhike out of this place? Give me a ride, man.

Suppose you, I said, get in. So now I had this guy back there and he says, well, this is a nice car you got. I said, thank you.

This other guy was just grinning. And this, he looked at the suitcase with the Toledo sign. He asked this other guy, is that your suitcase? He said, no, it's his.

He says, it's his? Yeah, he's a hitchhiker too. That's why I picked you up. No, he says, he says, well, are you guys together? He said, no.

He says, I'm from Florida. He's from West Virginia. He says, where'd you guys get this Ohio car? I said, I stole it.

But don't you tell anybody. I said, look, I wanted to check this guy out. I said, look, I'm doing you a favor.

I could set you right out on this road and you know it. I said, now you cooperate. He says, sir, don't you worry about me.

You've got nothing to worry about. He says, I've been in this situation before. He says, I know where, hey, where are we headed? I said, where are you going? He says, I'm going north right now.

But he says, where are you going? I said, well, I'm heading west on 94. He says, Chicago? He says, I'd like to go to Phoenix. Why don't we head that way? He says, we'll stick with this thing.

Whoa, he gave himself away big time. And then he asked some different questions. He says, what's the price of gas nowadays? I thought this guy has been out of circulation.

He asked me what postage stamps cost. I thought, where has this guy been? And the more he went and he goes where the ride's going. And I'm thinking, hey, I might have trouble in the back seat.

And so we headed west on 94. And I thought, I can't help if this guy is indeed escaping, which I didn't know. And I still don't know for sure.

But sure, I want to turn him in. I can't help him get away. So I saw a policeman.

He was going to pass me a state trooper. And I thought, I'll speed and he'll pull me over and I'll turn this guy in. And then I thought, oh, no, I won't.

I don't even know the name of the people in this car. Can you imagine? Can you imagine three guys in a car and nobody from Ohio and all three from different states? And I thought, no way I'll be in the pen right with him. You know what I mean? And I behaved myself.

And as the police went by, I looked at him through my rear view mirror and he's just, just, I mean, he didn't even wince. I thought, man, this guy is. We went on down 94.

We got to Highway 127 north. I'm heading north for Rives Junction now. I said, guys, this is it.

Split the food that's remaining. This is it. I'm.

And he says, hey, sir, I'm going to stick with you. What? And this guy allowed. He says, this guy is no thief.

He's a preacher. He says he's going to a pastor's meeting. Do you want to go with him to the pastor's meeting? He said, no way.

He got up and both guys got out at this point. And this, this is this guy that I was suspicious of. He jumps across the medium and he goes to this holiday inn and and he never even looked back.

He acted like he owned the place. It was amazing. I was watching him all the way.

He goes in there, walks in there, doesn't have a suitcase, acts as if he's got a room there. I thought, oh, man. So I go up the road.

I found a one of them rest stops. There was a phone. I called that holiday inn.

I said, there's been a guy that just walked in your door just a while ago. And I described him. And I said, you know, you better check him out.

You better call the police on him. I'm suspicious of him. And he said and she says, well, who are you? Where are you calling from? I just put the phone on the hook, a neutral phone, and I got out of there.

And I don't know why I figure I did my duty. I walked into that meeting, put my tie on straight, acted like a preacher. And I got there at 725, five minutes before the time that everybody prayed.

And I thanked the Lord. I had a new car to drive. You know, the seat would go down and I could make, you know, you could actually sleep in it.

So I didn't have to get a motel. Well, everybody knows me at the Rives Junction. I preached there many times.

It's a big rally on Labor Day weekend. And one man said, Otto, we weren't expecting you. I said, well, I didn't decide to come until just yesterday.

He says, well, how did you get here? I said, by car. Did you drive all the way? I said, well, I drove part of the way. He said, well, who drove the rest of the way? I said, well, it's a long story.

Some Baptists and some drunks and some Pentecostals and Methodists and hobos. I said, what have you been up to? And then I told him, you know, I've been hitchhiking and finally got this car. Well, I said, look, can you help me? He says, do you need something to eat before you go into meeting? I'm sure there's supper left over that you could get.

I said, no, I don't want to see any more food. I still had those peanut butter sandwiches. I later threw them away.

I hate to waste food, but I had to. I couldn't. He said, you go on in.

I said, have they got any more of the cheaper beds over at the camp? I can't afford a motel, really. And he says, well, you go on in the meeting and I'll check for you and I'll let you know after the meeting. I said, oh, great, thank you.

And when I got to the registration desk afterwards, all my meals for the paid for, and I couldn't spend any money that whole week. And he says, I said, who did it so I can thank you? They said, no, you're not to know. And so I walked out of that meeting and I'm almost in tears.

I've got a new car to drive. I still had my sandwiches. I had more, all my meals paid.

And I said, God, you're awfully good. You can do things way beyond what we think. You know, and I thought of the banker in my home church who wanted to, he wanted to loan me a car.

He wanted to give me a loan for money. He loved my ministry and he was going to pay any. And I said, no, I said, no, I listened well to you, hadn't I? And I was never going to go on dead on a car.

I promised God that I'll hitchhike, I'll do whatever he wants. And so, and God took care of me just the same. And then what I didn't know is this, this man that I told about my hitchhiking told everybody or many people, wherever he went, he told people at their table.

And so many people knew about how crazy Koning got to their meeting. And, and so what, what happened was now that, uh, Saturday afternoon, Ralph Cetera calls me up. Now this was a big rally, almost a thousand people, this church.

And he says, and he says, come on up here out of Koning. And I got up there and he says, now, I want you to answer this question. I want you to tell everybody exactly in detail how you got here.

I thought, oh no, the whole crowd. Well, I started out, that was the first time I told a hitchhiking story. They laughed and they couldn't believe it.

And one guy says, why don't we start a fund in the Canadian Revival Fellowship to a fund for a car for Mr. Koning? I thought, well, that's a good idea, but apparently, uh, that didn't work out. Uh, and then people started giving me money. One guy gave me a \$20 bill.

He says, here, this is for a bus ticket. Get that home. Okay.

I said, no, look, I've got to, I got to drive the car back to Columbus. But from then on, okay. And then I put it in my pocket.

And then another guy gave me \$20. He says here for a bus ticket home. I said, I put it in the other pocket.

I got kind of convicted. I thought I've already got money for a bus ticket. So I found this guy in the crowd.

I said, I'm bringing back your \$20. I've already got \$20. He said, but you need some food on the way home.

Don't you? I said, you're right. So I stuck it back. And then others, and I got various pieces of money bills in my pockets now.

And I was amazed. And when I finally got home, well, I had to drive the car back. I got back to Columbus, found the pastor.

We drove to this place because I wouldn't be able to find it. Gave the car back, thanked the lady. And he says, what are you going to do now? I said, going to hitchhike home.

He says, you still haven't had any money? I said, I don't want to use the good money I have because my wife and they're probably hungry. And I said, we have no income. And I, and I said, take me to the South side of town.

And I hitchhiked and you know, God was in it. Everybody's praying for me. One ride all the way from the South side of Columbus to Huntington, West Virginia.

Can you believe it? And sure God can do it anytime he wants to. And I, I phoned my wife then, and she picked me up where he let me off. And I counted the money.

I had \$300 cash in my pocket. I had left with \$30. Now I had 300, tenfold, ten times as much.

God's got a sense of humor, hasn't he? He knows. But you know, the things that happened at that meeting, I came home with three times as much money. I had now had a new car to drive to my meetings, no expenses.

I had meetings. People, I told them, I said, I came up here because I don't know what else to do. I don't have a trade.

I need to get some meetings. I've come to meet your pastors and they all lined me up. So I had meetings all the time.

And so I had meetings and I had a car and I had the money. I had no debt because I hadn't borrowed money. I was so good.

And then a man called me up not long after that. And he says, I bought you a car, come and get it. And just about that time, the businessman, I don't know what happened, but he was going to sell that car I was driving.

And just then I got the car, which was only one year old, a Ford, and we came and got it. Within a year, folks, I had given that car away because I had other cars given to me. God is not stuck for cars.

Just go out and hitchhike some. And people will realize the givers are the most frustrated people in Christianity. They're looking for people to give to, but all of us go into debt on stuff and we don't need anything.

They're frustrated. They don't know what to do with their cars. And when you finally show them that you needed a car to come from, and I was given away.

Ah, God is so good. But you know, the greatest blessing of that weekend was that spiritual blessing that came. God wanted me there at that meeting.

Let us pray.

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