

Preserved by Purpose: Worship in the Middle

“Tell my mama to come get me.” As the Dallas Police placed the young man repeatedly shouting these words in the back of a police cruiser, I watched from the comfort of my car as I entered the parking lot for Kwanzaafest. What had I just driven into and what had he done to get himself arrested? I was a little embarrassed because I’d convinced my friend visiting from out of town that Kwanzaafest was a fun place to go. Even as we fought through traffic and searched for a parking space, I continued to brag about the greatness of Kwanzaafest.

Because it was too crowded to get inside Kwanzaafest, we opted to walk through the African American Museum instead. About an hour later, we were stuck in traffic again; this time we were trying to make our way out of Fair Park.

As traffic slowly moved, my friend noticed the police in riot gear and wondered why they had their shields out and ready for action. I then noticed that I had to put gas in my car so as much as we wanted to leave the area quickly, we had to stop. It turns out that where we stopped was less than 20 feet away from where the police were.

As we put gas in the car, we asked the parking lot attendant what happened. He shared how there’d been a shooting and the cops were looking for the shooter. Finally, the arrest we’d

seen earlier now made sense. But even in the midst of the chaos that we'd unknowingly driven into, we'd still been protected from the worst.

In the end, I don't know if I was more disappointed because I missed my annual Christmas shopping at Kwanzaafest or shocked because we'd been in middle of a potentially explosive scene without realizing it. I was explaining the good, bad and ugly of the Dallas/Fort Worth area when we experienced a real life example. Had I known how really dangerous the situation, there's no telling how I would have reacted or how much I would have panicked.

As 2009 begins, you may find yourself in a similar situation where you are dealing with things in "the middle." Your "middle" situation may be a financial struggle, relationship problem or spiritual desert that forces you to rely more on God's grace. If most of us knew how bad the middle was on the way to our promised land, many of us would have said "Never mind!" Sometimes God allows us to be protected in the middle because he wants us to be focused on the one who can deliver us out of those circumstances. Learn to worship our way out of "the middle" like the Hebrew boys in Daniel 3:13-30.

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