

Sometimes you meet God in odd places where you would never expect to find Him. I suppose the key is being open to Him.

Take drag-racing, for example. Most of my Brothers here know that I am a gear-head, a car nut. When I was 20 years old I raced a Pontiac at the Pomona Drag Strip, unbeknownst to my parents.

I haven't raced on a Drag Strip since, but as I was getting my bucket list together I keep on writing "Drag Strip" repeatedly. Alright: it was an obsession.

My wife is a real trooper and knows how to humor me. So together, with a brand new Go Pro camera for the car, we recently drove to the Drag Strip in Las Vegas with my daily driver and participated in the Mopar On The Strip event. There I was in the tech review line with a bunch of cars that were towing racers that were going "Thump thump thump" through their loud unrestricted exhaust pipes. When it was my turn the tech inspector looked at me, my car, looked around and said, innocently, "Where's your racer?" He doesn't know how much that hurt inside.

Anyway, he asked me if I knew what I was doing and, like the imaginary racer I would like to be, I said "Of course." So he waved me on.

I approached the starter and he gave me a little wave with his hand. What I was stupidly ignorant about, although I should have known better, was that that he meant to go up to the starting line. I thought it meant: GO!

So I punched it. I roared down the drag strip, engine whining, faster and faster with a rush of adrenaline inside me and crossed

the 1/4 mile finish line. I started to slow down and saw an exit on the far right and exited — unfortunately right into the fire engine and ambulance waiting area. They told me the exit was on the-LEFT side and directed me to the other side of the track for the return road.

As I cautiously drove down the return road I came to the timer who handed me a small printout which said “13.6 seconds, 104 miles per hour.” But then he added laconically: “The Tower wants to see you.” I said : “Is that like going to the Principal’s office?” and he replied “Yep.”

So I sheepishly parked my car and walked up the long staircase to the NHRA officials in the tower. It was like meeting God. The main guy looked me over making sure I wasn't intoxicated — I wasn't. Then he said I could have hurt his official by gunning past the starter and not waiting for the starting lights like I was suppose to. His wave really just meant “You may proceed to the starting light line.”

And what about exiting onto the first truck lane rather than on the official exit on the left? I lamely said I just got a little confused. He then said gently: “Go out and do it again — just do it the right way.”

I was chastised but not humiliated. I did run several times more and did better each time. The other angels, I mean track workers, all helped me with encouragement and suggestions. It was a great time.

When I was done I turned to Marlene and said, “You know, going to the Tower Manager wasn’t like going to the Principal’s Office; it was more like going to God.”

Marlene replied “I’m glad he was gentle with you.”

And that's what I imagine a real encounter with God to be — corrective for mistakes but expressed with a gentleness. And all the while his Angels helping you out.

Except, if God were driving at the Drag Strip, he probably could have done 130.