

## I Found God in Hollywood

Some people might have a hard time believing that anyone could find God in the middle of Hollywood. But I did. I wasn't raised with a God and I certainly didn't see any evidence in my family that God was an option. We never talked about God and didn't belong to any religion. Not that religion makes you know anything about God. To me, religion has nothing to do with God; it's all just man-made stuff. Some things in religion have nice sentiments, but, overall, I believe it's mostly a con about power and control and the God stuff is just part of the bait.

I just found out from my sister that my parents are atheists. I never knew that. I don't know a lot of things about my parents. I don't even know what kind of ice cream they like best, or who's their favorite band.

Anyway, the topic of religion came up when I was on the phone with my sister and she said Mom and Dad were positive that they don't believe in God at all. I always thought that they just didn't know any better. I always thought they were agnostics. Being atheists explains a lot of things to me now. Hey, better late than never.

My belief in God doesn't work like most people. Then again, since I don't physically know most people, there's no way I can substantiate my claim. In fact, there's no way people can prove just about anything that we as a society go along with. Not only that, but unless I was there, I can't really believe what I'm told, or what I read, because, quite frankly, people lie all the time. It's a mean, scary thing to think that just about anything that we're told or read could not be true. But then again, what's the alternative? To believe everything we're told or read? That would be even worse. The hard part is figuring out the difference between what things people tell me are true and what things I read that are true. The older I get, the more I can't really tell. I always thought it would be the other way around. Maybe God is playing a trick on me. Or maybe God doesn't exist and I'm playing a trick on me. Or maybe God does exist, and I'm still playing a trick on me. Now, why would I want to play a trick on me in the first place? Maybe somebody played a trick on me when I was little and I forgot how to not play a trick on myself. That could be.

Anyway, let's just say that God is real for now and take a look at the facts.

If you look up at the sky, you'll realize that it keeps going and going, probably forever. I didn't do that. I didn't invent that. I didn't make that up. It's not in a history book and it's not on TV. It's real. Go look and see for yourself. SOMETHING made the sky like that.

If you think about all the stuff you see in life — all the little animals and all the stars and planets — something made all that. I didn't do it. You didn't do it.

So, now we have a situation. It's clear that I am not God, but it isn't clear who is. I don't think God is a person or a thing. It's just a three-letter word that we pitiful humans use to try and describe the indescribable to somehow make sense of the universe and why we are here and what this is all about. Otherwise, it would be less fun; trust me on that one.

Maybe the atheists are having more fun than us. But, my guess is that they're not. But since I don't know all atheists, there really is no way for me to know for sure if they aren't having more fun. Here we are, back to my old theory: unless I know you personally or see it happen, then it's pretty much up for grabs.

## I Found God in Hollywood

I suppose growing up, I always wondered a little bit about God, here and there. But truthfully, I didn't put much energy into the subject until I got to Hollywood. I had to hit bottom in life and truly go down as dark a hole as I could take to eventually come up with a better theory.

It seems that most people in my situation have to go down that dark, scary road, alone and naked, until they either:

- A. Go crazy
- B. Go to jail forever, or
- C. Die

I don't know why it has to be that way, but from my experience, it just seems to be the way God likes to do it. If I were God, I probably would have a friendlier way of doing it. But since humans tend to avoid and reject friendly advice, it probably wouldn't be as effective. So, once again, God has me beat on this one, as usual. But you can't blame me for tryin' once in a while.

I'm not sayin' that I want to be God, or outsmart him (or her), I'm just sayin' that it would've been easier on me if I could've just figured out the whole thing without having to go through the valley of darkness — naked, alone, and afraid.

Here's how it happened.

I was in my late twenties, cruising along through life. Just kinda doing my thing, trying to get along with people and have some fun once in a while. I was doing okay, but things weren't really working out as well as I'd hoped they would when I was younger.

When I was about 14 years old, I figured it would be obvious to the world that I was a genius, talented and cute. Well, I have news for you. The world hadn't figured out that I was a genius, talented and cute as much as it should have by then. But at the time, it just really seemed so darn obvious to me. It still seems really obvious to me, at least most of the time. Maybe it's because I know me better than the world does and it's really just a Public Relations thing. Maybe that's what the problem is. I just need a good P.R. lady.

So, skipping to when I'm in my late 20's, I still haven't made millions. I still haven't found my model girlfriend who is my soul mate, best friend and lover. I still haven't been discovered. I still have a crappy car. I still have mean people in my life. I still have crazy friends. I still have that funny feeling that I should generally be doing better in life, but don't know why I can't figure out how.

It happened on July 17th, when I was 29 years old.

I was single. I was driving a '67 Mustang with bad brakes. Still hanging out with my ex-girlfriend, Sandy, once in a while, because she was a cool chick and she liked to smoke pot. I always had a lot of that. Plus, Sandy needed a ride to work and I had a car.

So, I came over to her apartment "one last time." I knew my brakes were bad and I had tried to get them fixed three different times that month but each guy did them wrong and had some big excuse about what the problem actually was. Basically, each guy ripped me off. I think God didn't want my brakes to work so he (or she) could get through to me. We'll get to that later.

## I Found God in Hollywood

Anyway, Sandy and I woke up after our “one last night” and she had to go to work and I had to give her a ride. I told her my brakes were just about gone and that I really should try to get them fixed again and that it would be a gamble if we made it to her job all in one piece. She was a hot stoner chick and she was cool with that scenario. As long as I got her stoned and as long as she let me fuck her, then it really didn't matter if my brakes worked, or not.

Well, this time, on this fateful morning, it DID matter.

So, we got stoned, had sex, and jumped in my beat rig and headed south on Crescent Heights Boulevard in West Hollywood. Sandy lived in a cool neighborhood right below Santa Monica Boulevard. I had to give her a ride to SONY because she worked for some TV production company.

I always thought it was funny how most people got up in the morning and had to go to work. I never had to get up in the morning and go to work. I still don't. For me, I have somehow finagled a way to live my life where I just get up whenever I want to and wander around until something happens and when it does, I'm off and running with a job or some kind of project. Or, I play with my cat for a while, or do some cleaning. I'm kind of like a cat, in a way. I just do whatever I want, and I like to clean. Maybe I'm a cat reincarnated. That's what a lot of the Egyptians thought, so I have read, but then again, who knows if it's really true or not? But it would be cool if it were.

Remember, at this point in my life, I wasn't doing all that great.

Basically, I was 29 years old, white, male, good- looking, talented, super smart, and not going anywhere in life. I had all the advantages you could think of, sort of, But for some weird reason, things just weren't going my way as much as they should have been. But no matter how bad things got, this little flame kept burning in me that wouldn't blow out. It might've gotten really dim, but it never went away, even on windy days.

Maybe that's what still keeps me going when the chips are down. Maybe it's that little candle inside of me that never blows out and makes me want to keep trying and to beat the odds.

Sandy and I got in my car and we headed off. We got about two blocks and I noticed that my brakes were really WORSE than I thought and pretty much weren't working at all. I had gotten to Sandy's house the night before by pumping the brakes over and over, and downshifting until I slowed down enough to either avoid an accident or eventually stop. Sometimes, I had to open the door and drag my foot on the ground to fully stop, kind of like the Flintstones. I went through a lot of sneakers that way.

So, that fateful morning, I was taking Sandy to work and my brakes finally gave out completely, no matter how much I pumped or downshifted.

I turned to Sandy and said, “Hang on, we're gonna crash. My brakes are dead.”

She looked at me horrified and braced herself.

**BAM!**

## I Found God in Hollywood

We crashed into all the nice people who have jobs and were on their way to work that morning at the stoplight right before Melrose Avenue.

Sandy looked at me like, you dumb shit, now I can't get to work on time. She didn't care about me or my car. She just wanted to get stoned and get a free ride to work.

The accident wasn't a total disaster, but the front-end of my car was all mushed up and the people in front of me had a few thousand dollars' worth of damage.

But my car was still runnin'.

I jumped out and asked if the people I crashed into were okay and they said they were.

I said that I was so sorry, that my brakes had failed, and I would pay for everything and that it was all going to be okay. They weren't very impressed or very happy about the whole thing. People got out of their cars and pulled out their cell phones and started making those calls. You know those calls. To the police, the job, the wife, the yadda-yadda-yadda.

I had to think fast. I was in a situation that could've gotten a lot worse if I wasn't thinking fast. I had a briefcase full of pot. It was full of baggies of eighths and quarter ounces. If the cops came and impounded my car and smelled the pot and then found my bags of pot, then I was busted and that was NOT an option. I couldn't allow that to happen, at any expense. I'm just not the kind of guy who goes to jail. It's not that jail is any worse than how my life was going at the time, but I just wasn't gonna go down like that. Not if I could help it.

I asked the nice people who I crashed into, who weren't in a very good mood at the time, if they could just be cool and let me pay for everything and not involve the police and all that stuff.

They all just looked at me like I was a lunatic and shook their heads like it just wasn't gonna work out that way. They all were calling the cops and they all were gonna do everything they could to get me busted because I crashed into them at a stoplight while they were just minding their own business.

It was my fault and I was going to pay, plain and simple.

I said, "Okay, I'll be right back with you."

Hey man, I would've done the exact same thing if some stoner with a beat muscle car with no brakes crashed into me while I was sitting there minding my own business at a stoplight. As if!

I got back in my car and told Sandy to hold on. She looked at me like I was a crazy person and said, "You aren't gonna just bail, are you?"

I didn't answer her. I put my car in reverse and slowly backed up. I put it in first gear, punched it and did a 180 and got the hell out of there. The people I hit just shook their heads in disbelief while they were writing down my license plate number. They probably felt sorry for me, but who knows?

## I Found God in Hollywood

I didn't feel sorry for myself at all. I had to get the hell out of there because I was not going to get caught with a briefcase full of POT. I'd much rather be a fugitive from the law than just sit there and wait to get busted. At least this way, I had some options. Being handcuffed and in jail has a lot less options, and I wasn't about to wait and see how that might pan out.

I stopped the car by dragging my shoes on the ground until I pulled over to the curb.

I said, "Sandy, get out of the car. You're on your own, girl."

She just looked at me like I was an asshole and jumped out the car.

I was officially a fugitive and in a lot of trouble. The most trouble I'd ever been in so far, in my whole life. I didn't know what to do. I did know that I had to get my car home and off the streets. So I drove in first gear on side streets with adrenalin pumping in my veins, and somehow I made it home without killing anyone or myself.

I told my roommate, Laurie, what had happened. She was in her bathrobe, stoned, and eating some kind of green health drink.

She just shook her head and said, "You know man, that's just how it is in this country. We try and do the right thing, but no matter what we do, we're fucked, man. It's the system, it's the government and it's the bullshit laws in this country that are gonna bring us all down, man. You and I should take this opportunity to get the hell out of L.A. and try something different, like, maybe we could go to Montana and grow pot and live on a commune."

I said, "Laurie, it was my fault, it's not a conspiracy, you stoner. I'm turning myself in to the police tomorrow."

She shrugged her shoulders and said, "Whatever, man. It's your life."

I had to turn myself in.

It was a hit-and-run and about 10 people saw the whole thing and they all had my license plate number and it was only going to take the cops a short while before they were knockin' on my door. I figured I better turn myself in and just get it over with. At least that way, it'll just be a hit-and-run and not a drug-induced accident with a pot dealer.

There were bigger fish to fry than me in this town and the cops were up to their ears busting crack dealers and carjackers and I was way low on the list of people to bust. I really didn't hurt hardly anyone and pot was the least bad of all the drugs; and, quite frankly, pot really isn't all that bad, anyways.

At this point, I had to wave the white flag and admit to myself that, whatever I was doing with my life, my best efforts weren't good enough. I still didn't know anything about God or a higher power, as some people like to describe it, or him or her, or whatever.

I did know that I was in a lot of trouble and not looking forward to turning myself in to the police. What was I going to say? Would they throw me in jail? Did I need to get a lawyer? I was

## I Found God in Hollywood

fucked, basically. And there was no way out of it. A lot of people in life have imaginary stress and anxiety about what may or may not happen. Not me, I had REAL stress.

If I didn't turn myself in, they'd be after me. Being a part-time pot dealer was already nerve-racking enough without having to worry about the cops showing up randomly while I was selling a bag to someone. That kind of stress was just too crazy for me to handle.

I waited it out until the next day and then went down to the Hollywood Police Department on Wilcox. I was nervous and stood in line to turn myself in. I didn't know what was going to happen. Would they point guns at me and handcuff me and jump me? Who knew what those crazy police would do next.

Finally, it was my turn to talk to the police guy at the front desk. I told him that I was in an accident and that I wanted to turn myself in. He VERY nonchalantly asked me where the accident was and I told him on Crescent Heights and Melrose.

He said, "Oh, you have to go to the Beverly Hills Department. It's out of our jurisdiction."

That was it. He didn't try to bust me or point a gun at me and frisk me or beat me with his billy club. There was no drama. He didn't even care. I was sort of bummed that I wasn't important enough that he didn't show some sort of interest in my case. He was just like, "Whatever, pal. Next."

It took me a while to find the Beverly Hills Police Department. It wasn't that easy turning myself in to the police back in those days. I parked my car in the visitors' area and walked right in the building and stood in line again, waiting for my demise. Would it be jail? Would they shoot me? Would they kick my ass? Would I have to sit in a cell with a crazy black guy who wanted me to be his girlfriend? God only knew what my fate would be.

When it was finally my turn, I told the policeman what had happened and where. I made sure he knew where it was right up front, because I was sort of getting a feel for how to turn myself in for a hit-and-run car accident.

He just kind of looked at me pathetically and asked me why I left the accident.

I had to think of a good one. I couldn't just say, "Well, you see, Officer, I'm a small-time pot dealer on the side while I'm working on my music career, and I had all this pot in my briefcase, and you can imagine what it must have felt like, etc., etc."

I didn't say any of that.

I just said, "Well, see, what happened was, I don't know, I guess I just must have panicked or something. I've never been in an accident before and my brakes went out and I didn't know what to do and I basically just flipped out."

He looked at me like I was wasting his time and he said, "Listen, you need to go to the Pico and Robertson Police Department. We don't handle that area."

## I Found God in Hollywood

Apparently, there are like seven different police departments all over LA and you basically need a Ph.D. for turning yourself in to the police. Who knew it could be so complicated? I had no idea it took this much work to surrender to the police. There should be a drive-through “Turn Yourself In To The Police” window somewhere. That would probably cut down a lot of red tape in the system.

So, now I had to go all the way down to the THIRD police station. Half my day had been inconvenienced by all this standing in line and driving and getting all the wrong information from those dumb-ass cops. It shouldn't have to be rocket science to turn your self in to the cops.

I was getting kind of annoyed at the whole process and I didn't even really care anymore what they did to me. I just wanted to get on with my life and do my hard time in the state penitentiary. Working on the chain gang, chopping rocks in half with a pick ax, or wearing those stupid orange vests by the highway, cleaning up trash with my feet in shackles next to a big black guy who calls me “baby.” That's what I figured I had to look forward to...

I finally find the stupid cop station and just walk in and blurt out, “Where can a guy turn himself in around here?”

The cop at the front desk was like, “Excuse me?”

I said that I was in a car accident the day before and I hit-and-ran and that I wanted to turn myself in.

He said, “Oh, yeah, they already called it in. Here's a form that you have to fill out and someone will give you a call sometime later this month.”

Later this month? That was it? No guns. No helicopters on the 7 o'clock news? No cops running and catching air in their undercover, vintage '70s vehicles with a bird named Fred?

Nothin' man, not even a raised eyebrow from no one. I was just another car accident in a long line of stupid car accidents. I had built up this huge scenario of “what ifs,” and all I got was a stupid form and “we'll call you later.”

At this point, I was so low in my life that I couldn't even get being a fugitive right. I was in a hopeless and desperate place and I had nowhere to turn and no one to talk to about it.

I couldn't talk to any of my friends because they were all stoners and clueless. I couldn't talk to my parents because they would've just shamed me and called me stupid for being in such a ridiculous situation and then, after all that humiliation, have nothing of value to say or guide me with, so why even go there?

Once again, I was alone, in trouble, naked and afraid.

Well, there was one person — my neighbor, Rich. I knew him from college and we had played in a band before and he was cool. Plus, I knew that he was seeing a shrink and that he was in AA, or something. I didn't even know what AA stood for. So I called Rich and told him that my life was fucked and that I needed help. He told me to go to his shrink, Dennis, that it would be a wise move.

## I Found God in Hollywood

I had gone to my parents a year or so before and told them that my life was falling apart, that I was a pot dealer and didn't know how to stop or get out or how to function in the normal world or how to support myself and integrate myself into society. I just figured all along that the world would just instinctively recognize my genius talent and that it would be EASY to find a great job in the music business.

Guess what?

The music business isn't a real business. It's a bunch of monkeys and crazy people randomly running around without a clue, and most of the time it's just plain old dumb luck to get a gig.

Being a musician and in L.A., where there are literally hundreds of thousands of lame musicians running around getting gigs, just made it harder for me — an actually trained and skilled professional musician — to get noticed and to get through all the quagmire of B.S. Plus, I smoked a lot of pot all day, every day, which might've influenced my ability to be social and motivated and secure enough with myself to actually go and LOOK for a gig.

I remember telling my mother that I was fucked and that I didn't know how to get out of the hole that I admitted I had dug all by myself.

She basically just said, "Yeah, you're right, you are fucked," and that I had dug my own hole and that I needed to get out of that hole, all by myself.

I already knew that, Mom, thanks for the wise words of help, understanding and encouragement.

That was it. There was no one else in my family to ask for help.

I didn't know about AA. I didn't know about nothin', man. I was just in a situation that was so complex and scary and crazy and difficult that it literally would've taken an act of God to get me out of it.

Of course, no one in my family had heard of doing an intervention, which I so desperately needed. That would've been a lot nicer than, "sorry, you're fucked; go and figure it out by yourself, naked, in the dark, on the floor, in a fetal position."

What should've happened was, my family should've taken me out of society and put me in a rehab to detox off of the drugs and TREAT my disease, and gently and kindly HELP me get back on my feet and TEACH me how to be a normal, healthy, productive human being.

But no, I was just pushed back out on to the street, with no tools, street smarts, or weapons to defend myself. Who knows? Maybe it was the best thing for me. Or, maybe it was too harsh of a lesson. Or, maybe my mom didn't know any better and was just like the dog who poops on the living room rug with that far away look in her eyes.

## I Found God in Hollywood

I called Dr. Dennis McCabe the very next day and told him that I needed some help. He was very expensive at \$90 an hour, but I had to go SOMEWHERE. I met with him and in the first five minutes he simply said: "Go to AA."

I said, "No problem."

I just needed someone, anyone, to tell me where to go. If a bum on the street told me to go to AA, I would have. I was finished. I was washed up. I was done. I had cashed in my party chips. My way of being in the world wasn't working. I desperately needed help and I needed to have someone tell me a better way. Good thing I didn't ask the Mormon people or Scientology people what to do. If I thought I was fucked then, I can only imagine how much WORSE it could have gotten.

I asked my friend Rich if he would take me to an AA meeting.

He said, "Sure. It'll be fun."

Fun? What was he talkin' about?

Fun? Who goes to AA for fun?

I had no idea what AA was and no idea about nothin'. I was mentally and spiritually bankrupt. I had crossed the line that I said I wouldn't have crossed ten years earlier and was in a spaceship going at the speed of light in the WRONG DIRECTION. I knew it was going to take a long time to get back to earth and get back on solid ground.

Once I started going to AA, everything changed.

One miracle after the next kept happening all around me. It was very strange for me. Everything was strange for me. I was in a ton of trouble with the police and insurance companies with my "wreckage of the past". I didn't know how to function in society or how to hold a job. My life was in shambles, but I still looked pretty cute, even at the lowest point. No matter how bad things got, I always managed to go to the gym and eat pretty well and wear clean clothes.

All the guys in AA were making bets that I wasn't going to last because I would go to meetings with a briefcase full of drugs, but NOT use any of them. They all thought I was crazy and that it was just a matter of time before I broke down and started using.

But I never did.

I remember saying the "Serenity Prayer" while weighing out little baggies of pot, shaking my head, thinking that I really was living in two worlds. I thought that it was going to be a bona fide miracle for God to get me out that situation.

All I could do was go to two or three meetings a day, and then hang out with my new sober friends until the next meeting. I was too scared to do anything else. I was frozen with a thousand forms of fear. Oddly enough, though, I put an ad in the paper looking for a music producer to work in my studio and got a few people to show up for interviews.

## I Found God in Hollywood

One guy ended up being an amazing producer who just needed a studio to work in and he had a ton of clients. The weird thing was, that I overheard him on the phone one day and he said some stuff that sounded like AA slogans and after he got off the phone I asked him if he was sober.

He told me he had 10 years sober! I told him I was trying to stay sober for the first time and that I had a couple weeks clean and sober and that I was a small time pot dealer and that I really needed him to cover me while I went to a ton of meetings to get my shit together. He was totally cool with the whole thing and would work in my studio all day and I would cruise by in between meetings and check in to see how much money we had brought in that day.

It was a true miracle!

Some days, he would make two or three hundred dollars for me, and all I had to do was go to meetings and drop by my studio and he'd do all the work. My brain wasn't able to do any high functioning for a while. I had to focus on sobriety at all costs.

I still had the whole car accident situation to deal with, which basically ended up with me losing my license for a year and having to pay some little fines. The people I crashed into dropped all charges and their insurance companies paid for everything. In fact, I even got my license back in three months for no good reason.

Maybe it was because I quit drinking and doing all drugs. Maybe it's because I went to three meetings a day and shared, and cleaned coffee cups and did all the voluntary service I was asked to do.

Maybe it was because I got on my knees every morning and night and prayed for humility and non-judgment and sanity and worked the steps. Maybe it was because I learned that God stood for "Group Of Drunks" and that I was supposed to "Keep It Simple, Stupid, One Day at a Time" and be of service to the newcomer. Maybe it was because I saved up ten grand and then quit dealing, once and for all.

That was the beginning of how I found God in Hollywood.