

THE STRANGE DAYS OF JUNE

(A series of events that truly had me wondering, "Is God talking to me?")

by Jim Myers

This past June, several incidents took place that seemed to defy logic when combined as a whole. I need to begin with a brief background leading to that month. In November 2013 I joined a men's group at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. My wife Karen had gone on a five-day trip to visit her sister. When I arrived home from work that first evening, I found divorce papers sitting on our desk along with a note stating (among other things) "Think it over." Despite the shock, I understood why she felt this way. That was a Monday.

I immediately went online to seek *something* to help me through this. I found a men's group at Saddleback Church that met on Wednesday evenings called MEN ON THE EDGE (MOTE), a support group to help men struggling in their marriage. Two nights later I attended my first session. I'm still attending today. Karen was surprised and pleased that I would make the effort to work on our relationship through self-improvement. More than a year went by and our life together seemed to be working. Then, along came June 2015.

Wednesday, June 3rd - Continuing to attend MOTE, I struggled with some of the ideals they presented regarding God and Jesus Christ. It's been a life long struggle. Gary Hoffman (whose book *Don't Give Up!* is our text for the men's group) asked how I was doing. I told him of my nagging doubts. He put his arm around me and said, "Let's pray to God." In his prayer he asked God to give signs of His existence, to help me find Him in my journey. I wasn't sure what to think, but I shook Gary's hand and thanked him sincerely. I don't believe I mentioned this to anyone, even Karen. I thought she and I were fine, it was me and God.

Monday, June 8th - As is often the case, complacency took over my relationship at home and had for some time. I had begun doing *AND SAYING* things as I had before, consciously unaware of my slide. Arriving home from work that evening, Karen greeted me, asked me a simple question, to which I responded sarcastically. I didn't blink an eye. Later, she told me that she'd had enough of these verbal attacks and did not want to live with the old Jim Myers anymore. My jaw dropped. I'm going to church now, this can't be happening. But it was because Karen was right again. Neither one of us liked me.

Wednesday, June 10th - I went to MOTE as frightened as I was the first night I attended. I never felt the downhill skid but when looking back you can see just how steep it is. It takes perseverance and I was not paying attention. The subject for that evening's discussion was not from Gary's book but ironically a study called HOW DO YOU CHANGE, FOR GOOD? (I think the comma there gives this a dual meaning). I won't go into detail but every item presented was a bullet aimed at me. I found it strange and gratifying that this topic came to MOTE the night I needed it. Around 9 p.m., I left our group and on the short drive home, I turned on my radio. A song began playing by Simon and Garfunkel called MRS. ROBINSON. In Karen's previous marriage, she was Mrs. Karen Robinson. I listened to the lyrics, "And here's to you, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you more than you may know... God bless you please Mrs. Robinson, Heaven holds a place for those who pray..." I parked in front of my house and stared at the radio. I entered our home and Karen asked how it went. I immediately began weeping. She came to me and asked what was wrong and I told her what you've just read. Did it really mean something?

Talking Points

M.O.T.E.

Men on the Edge

Wisdom for a Healthy Marriage

Thursday, June 11th – During lunch at work, I do crosswords puzzles. One of the clues this day jumped at me like bright red letters. BELITTLE. The answer: ABUSE. Believe me, it truly did pop!

Sunday, June 14th – Karen agreed to attend Saddleback Church this day. We had been several times before so it wasn't a new experience. But this day was. Remarkably, the services that day were devoted to dozens of couples (including Pastor Rick Warren and his wife Kay) renewing their wedding vows. It wasn't a legal ceremony but it was certainly spiritual. Rick said that if anyone in attendance wanted to join, they could do so from their seat and complete the registration process afterwards. Karen looked at me and asked if I knew about this. I didn't. I was completely dumbfounded. I quickly realized my biggest fear... asking if she wanted to participate. What if she answered NO? However, convinced of my honesty, Karen stood with me and echoed the words Pastor Rick gave to all the couples. Then, we softly kissed. After the services, we registered which provided us a certificate and a photo of Karen and me for a permanent record (attached). We left Saddleback, joyful, I believe, but slightly confused. We went out for lunch. On the short trip home, I turned on the radio and to our utter amazement, Mrs. Robinson was playing again. Jesus loves you... Heaven holds... etc. Karen looked at me in stunned disbelief. Indeed, this was a great Sunday.

Wednesday, June 17th – Feeling secure in what was happening in my life, I left to attend my weekly MOTE gathering. It was a few minutes before 7 p.m. I knew now that I would need MOTE more than ever and I needed God in my life to keep me always moving forward, living the way He wants me to live, to be the loving husband I should have been all along. I turned on the radio – **Oh my God** – Mrs. Robinson... AGAIN! I called Karen at home so she could hear it. Neither of us fully grasped it. I just shook my head and smiled. Is this real? Is it a coincidence? I'm choosing to believe it **IS** real.

FINAL THOUGHTS - What adds to the credibility of this story is that none of the above has happened since. My drive to or from Saddleback Church is less than 10 minutes. Hearing a 47-year old song three times coming or going from there is a bit "out there." I emailed my brother Bob, a retired Episcopal priest, telling him a brief version of this happening. He has always been there to help me with my doubts. I stated to him, "I believe I may have met God." I smile thinking about it. He agreed.

At my next MOTE gathering, I told this story to my MOTE brothers. I appreciated the opportunity to tell it and the surprising applause I received for it. What I most enjoyed were those who later told me how much the story affected them. Goodness, is God actually working through me? I'd like to think so.

FOLLOWUP - It is now 2017. Sometime in July (I didn't track the day), I was driving home from work. I was stopped at a red light at the corners of Portola Parkway & Purpose Drive in Lake Forest, CA. Purpose Drive is named for Rick Warren's best-selling book THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE. Of course, Saddleback Church is on this street. I changed radio stations and (you guessed it) Mrs. Robinson once again. I chuckled and thanked God for reminding me. A couple of weeks later I was heading to a store and stopped to chat with the Godliest friend I have. I soon left to continue my journey and Lord Almighty, Mrs. Robinson came on again. Had I not stopped, I would have been in the vicinity of Saddleback again.

I laughingly apologized to God for messing up His timing. But I did thank Him.....