

# Taking God Personally



## TouchPoint 2

Welcome back! It's Mic again, and I'm glad you are curious about TouchPoint 2. In this reading, the Bible, also referred to by Christians as the Word, the Word of God, the Scriptures, will be our ProofPoint to discover just how wide is God's span of interest in your life.

I felt this would be something you'd like to know about, because many people who concede they believe in God don't necessarily believe He's a personally involved God. They believe He's out there somewhere, maybe even created us, but is either too busy or we're too small to gain His notice, or He just created us and moved on.

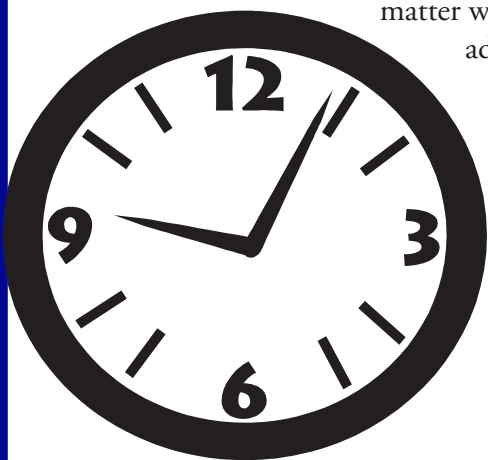
Ravi Zacharias tell a haunting, true story in his book "Cries of the Heart" that illustrates how painful distance and abandonment can be:

A middle school principal said that one year "they had an eighth-grade student in the school whose situation brought much grief to the school community. All of a sudden, and for no apparent reason, this thirteen-year-old boy had started coming to school one hour late every day.

"I couldn't get this boy to come to school on time. First, I sent notes to his parents. He would bring the note back the next day signed by the parents – an hour late!" the principal said. "Second, I paddled the young man. The next day he showed up at school – an hour late." No

matter what disciplinary method the school administrators tried, the following day the boy would still come an hour late. Finally, they suspended him for a few days. His first day back at school he returned – an hour late.

"I just couldn't take it anymore, so the next day I contacted the department of welfare. The welfare agents accompanied me to the boy's home.



We walked up to the front door and knocked. No one answered. So I turned the doorknob. It was open so we walked in, and what we found wasn't very pretty. We were to discover that two months earlier, while he was at school, the boy's parents had left home.' They had left a large supply of groceries in the cupboards and refrigerator, but they themselves were gone. The boy had no idea where they were. He felt abandoned and betrayed, ashamed to tell the story to the school authorities. So every day he would get his eight-year-old sister and six-year-old brother out of bed, bathe and dress them for school, and then walk them to the elementary school two miles away. Try as he might, he could never run fast enough to get to his own school earlier than one hour late." (Cries from the Heart, page 138).

**“My hope is that you’ll see that people matter to God.”**

My hope is that you'll see that people matter to God – that you matter to God, and that He created you to be in his family! And that none of us have been abandoned, and left to fend for ourselves.

### Let's Get Started...

Now I know you are not supposed to spoil the ending of a book by reading the last page before you read the rest of it, but if we want to see just how connected God wants us to be with Him, knowing where we will end up helps the journey to understand God make more sense. These words come from near the very end of the whole Bible and speak of a time yet to come:

<sup>1</sup> “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

<sup>4</sup> “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’” (Revelation 21:1-5, New International Version).

For the next few moments, write down everything in those words that speak of God's personal involvement with us:

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Did it surprise you to see how intimate and personal God is with his people? Think back to your childhood to the first time you saw "The Wizard of Oz" on TV. Remember the scene when Dorothy and her Oz fiends came into the presence of the wizard for the first time? I was really scared!

Sometimes we think of God that way, but we can see from Revelation that He will have a wholly different kind of relationship with His people.

And it's not just at some future time that God was this personal. Let me take you on a very brief tour of just a few TouchPoints in Scripture that talk about God's personal involvement with us:

From Genesis 2:7: "...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

Imagine that! The God of the universe on His hands and knees, getting the dust of our existence under His fingernails as He fashioned us with His own hands!

**“Men and women both were made by God's own personal touch.”**

From Genesis 2:21-23: "So the LORD

God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Men and women both were made by God's own personal touch. Right from the beginning, God was intimately involved with our very being. Write down what you think the implications are of having a body formed by God Himself:

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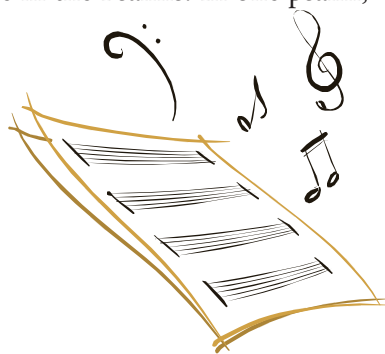
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King David, the greatest king the nation of Israel ever had, wrote a significant portion of the book of Psalms in the Bible's Old Testament. An accomplished musician, he put into music many thoughts about life and God. In fact, virtually every human emotion is given voice somewhere in the Psalms. In one psalm, David talks about God's intimate involvement with humans even before our birth:

Psalms 139:13-16: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."



There are many stories in the Bible about God's personal involvement with people. A little known one is about Hagar, the Egyptian maid with whom Abram (later to be called Abraham) would have a child. From Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac would come two of the world's great nations: from Ishmael, the Arabic nations, and from Isaac, the Jewish nation.

When Abram's wife Sarai gave her maid Hagar to Abram – which seems unthinkable to us but very much within the customs of the day – the child Ishmael caused such conflict for Sarai that she ended up banishing Hagar and Ishmael from the family camp. Lonely, rejected, and dejected out in the desert, God appeared to Hagar and spoke with her. After the encounter, she coined a new name for God: El Ra'ah, the English equivalent of the Hebrew words in Genesis 16.13:

"She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

If you've ever thought that God could never notice you and your needs, think of a cast-off maid by the name of Hagar out in the desert all by herself – yet noticed by God. If He can find her, He can find you, too!

Can you list times in your life when you felt most lonely: \_\_\_\_\_

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What difference might it have made to you if you had known that God saw you, even then?

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A few more TouchPoints that people experienced with God. I like this one from the book written by an Old Testament prophet:

Jeremiah 29:11-14: “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD...”

Now I can almost here you say, “But Mic! My life has not always been easy! Some of what I’ve gone through has been really hard. Was God really there with me? Why didn’t He pull me out of trouble if He saw I was in it?”

**“...you will call upon me...and I will listen to you.”**

Reasonable questions all. I can’t answer all of them, but I will tell you that some of them will be answered in later TouchPoints. For now, here are a few words from another Old Testament writer who was also a prophet, one of Israel’s greatest. I have needed these words in my own life many times. They were originally written when Israel was in some of her darkest days:

Isaiah 43:1-2: “But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.’”

There’s a very important word in there. “WHEN you pass through the wa-

ters...” One of the major misconceptions about life with God is that if you serve Him, you will be immune to life’s difficulties. That was never the bargain God made with us once sin came into our world. Sin means trouble. It means pain. It means heartache. It means brokenness.

But it doesn’t mean we will face those things alone. That’s why the word WHEN is so important. It means that even when we experience the worst life has to offer, God is there beside us, walking through it with us.

The God of true Christianity is different than all others who claim divinity! The God of the Christian is the God who is close by, never distant, always trying to connect with his children. God put flesh on that claim when his son Jesus came to earth. Jesus will be the subject of several TouchPoints.

For now, I hope it hits close to home to know that whenever you face one of life’s storms, you are not facing it alone. As Max Lucado, one of contemporary Christianity’s most widely read authors says in his book *In The Eye of the Storm* “God doesn’t calm every storm in your life, but He does calm you in every storm.”

Can you remember times in your life when you felt God was close by? \_\_\_\_\_

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Even though I hope you have begun to see the pattern of God’s personal attention in our lives, let me share just one more. These words come from Jesus, God’s son, as he was about to be separated by death from his closest friends. They were recorded by one of the youngest of his friends, John:

John 14:1-3: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Once again, see how personal His intentions toward you are? And what really grabs me with John’s words is that they give me a reason to hang on, even when life is crazy, because there is a future that God has planned for you and me –

and that He will personally bring you into it!

## **Decision Point**

My personal invitation to you now is to begin to talk to this personal God. Don't worry if there's a right or wrong way to talk to him – just talk. It doesn't need to be complicated. In fact, it could be as simple as this:

“God, I would like to experience your personal involvement in my life. I need you to show me how to discern when you are nearby. And I need to know that you will be with me in every part of my life, the good and the hard times. Show me how to sense your presence, and help me to know how to respond to it. I just want to know you, and I want to know that you know me! So I open my heart and my life to you now. Amen.” •

# Taking God Personally

## Questions

What does the story of all those who choose to follow God end? (Review Revelation 21.1-5)

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What does this portion of the book of Revelation say will be things of the past?

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What does the fact that God made man and woman with His own hands say about our importance to him?

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In this TouchPoint, you read the story of Hagar, a slave woman from Egypt banished from her master's household. What does it say about God that He noticed her, and what does it say about God's field of vision for you?

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From Jeremiah 29.11-14 and Psalm 139, God disproves the notion that he is a creator who creates and then walks away and leaves us from ourselves. From these two passages, what are the indicators that he is a personal and involved God in your life?

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What is one of the major misconceptions about God that sometimes even Christians have to unlearn? (that you will live a problem-free life)

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In John 14.1-3, Jesus made a couple of promises. What are they, and how do they make you feel?

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Please send this answer sheet, either by e-mail or land mail

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