

# TOUCHED BY HEAVEN

*Inspiring True Stories of One Woman's  
Lifelong Encounters with Jesus*

NANCY RAVENHILL



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*To the Praise and Glory of God, my Father, and Jesus Christ who gave His life for me and called me to fulfill His purpose that I might serve Him with love in His Kingdom. I thank Him for guiding me to David, my wonderful husband, and for giving us our three beautiful daughters, whom we named Lisa, Tina and Debra; our very special treasures. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."*

Luke 1:37 kjv



I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Psalm 40:1–3



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## FOREWORD

Reality television is showing us that we love to learn about real people and their daily lives. Everyone loves a good story, especially a true story.

The incidents you are about to read are true. What is even more important is that they happened to someone just like you. My good friend Nancy Ravenhill has been a Christian longer than I have been alive. In this book, she opens her heart to share some trials and triumphs, and lets us see the extraordinary ways Jesus has revealed Himself to her from her childhood to the present.

While we might not have the exact same experiences as Nancy, we should all expect God to reveal Himself to us as the great I AM. My prayer is that as you read about these encounters with Jesus, you will come to experience the touch of heaven in your own life. Remember, He is the same yesterday, today and forever; He will never stop being who He is—the supernatural God!

Mike Bickle,  
International House of Prayer of Kansas City





## PREFACE

Every person I know has a life story to tell! I find it fascinating to listen to people talk about their lives. The past is always interesting, the present can be daunting—but we look to the future with eyes of hope and expectation, by faith.

My story begins when I was five years old, and my life changed dramatically. I could not imagine how I would walk through the difficult days that were to come. But the Lord Jesus Christ had compassion and love for me, and so began a journey with God that I never expected. I began to know Jesus as my true Father and found Him in my heart. I learned that we see Jesus most clearly in the hard times—when we cannot make it unless He helps us.

The supernatural experiences God has given me have quickened my spirit and shown me how very real, dear and near our heavenly Father can be. I never forget Jesus' divine visits, His amazing appearances, His voice to me and, most of all, His face.

## *Preface*

It was in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1981 when the Lord came to me on a beautiful sunny afternoon and told me, *You're going to have to write a book about your life one day!*

I turned around abruptly and said, "Lord, I'll never do it. I don't want anyone to know about my life." I said no, but I knew that day that this assignment, the writing of God's visits to me, would be completed by His grace.

That day has come. I pray that you will be blessed, encouraged and quickened by God inside your heart as you read and live these stories with me. In the words of the beautiful hymn,

Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same,  
All may change, but Jesus, never—  
glory to His name! . . .  
All may change, but Jesus, never—  
glory to His name!

Nancy Ravenhill  
Siloam Springs, Arkansas

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Recently, while in a small village in Turkey, my husband and I watched a young girl weaving a carpet on a loom. Above her hung numerous colorful threads that had to be carefully selected and then tediously, skillfully, strategically placed and knotted by hand in order to produce a true authentic Turkish carpet. We were told that a large carpet could take more than a year to complete.

Without Ann McMath Weinheimer's skill, patience and ability, my book would never have been enjoyable and readable. While I supplied Ann with the various threads of my life, she wove them into an accurate account of my experiences. Ann, it was a pleasure and privilege to work with you. I can truly say that without you, this book never would have been written. Thank you so much!

I also want to thank my husband, David, for his much needed wisdom and help, as well as his willingness to write the epilogue.

My thanks also to Jane Campbell, who began this journey with me and encouraged me to the end.

### *Acknowledgments*

Finally my thanks to Linda Valen, who was the first to suggest that I contact Jane at Chosen Books. Linda believed that my experiences should be told and that they were worthy of being published.

Above all, my thanks to my wonderful Lord. To Him be all the glory.



# 1

## THE STORM BREAKS

And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

2 Samuel 23:4 NKJV

I walked timidly into our living room, curling my small finger along the pink flowers in the wallpaper and making my way quietly to the big chair beside the picture window. Our house was a short walk from the shores of Lake Michigan. On this day, the late afternoon sun streamed through giant puffs of clouds onto her dark waters.

My parents did not seem to notice me. They stood facing each other, feet planted, eyes locked. Their voices were almost indistinct in the shrill and uncontrolled effort to be heard one above the other.

I had listened to these same words and angry sounds many times in the past few months. Like those other times, I climbed up into the thick arms of the green flowered chair, drew up my legs and crunched myself into the cushions. I felt particularly inconspicuous that day in my pink and green plaid shorts, my long brown hair pulled back into braids. I am not sure why I was drawn to be close to them. Seeing them filled with anger made me desperately sad, but still I came. Not making a sound, I peeked out from my garden of fabric leaves and blossoms.

My mother took a deep breath and, pointing her finger in the air, spoke with deliberation. "If you would get a steady job, we wouldn't always have to be worried about money."

My father, who had begun pacing, stopped long enough to glare in her direction. My father was not tall, and they were nearly at eye level. "I could get plenty of jobs," he said, his voice like a growl. "But we'd have to move and you won't give up your teaching. You're just working to make me look bad—to make me look like a bad provider!"

"That's not true, Billy! You know that I only went back to work so that I could earn a living. Nancy has to have the proper things." My mother's voice faltered for a second, then took up her charge: "I have to pay for her to get through a good school. And she needs the right clothes to wear in the right places. You aren't working," she added, "so somebody has to."

Her accusing tone must have hit a nerve. "That sounds so noble," my father shouted. "You spend money to dress up a five-year-old. I suppose what I want doesn't matter!"

At the sound of my name I had instinctively drawn back. It felt like an unfortunate intrusion into an adult world that

I did not understand. The arguments about money were unending; yet money seemed always to be available. My mother did her best to improve our humble surroundings. She bought beautiful things with her teacher's salary—our matching “mother-daughter” dresses from Marshall Field's, the marvelous department store just around the lake in Chicago, my new bedroom furniture, and even a piano so that I could take lessons.

And Daddy *did* work. I loved to hear him play his pearly black and white accordion. At least, he wanted to work. He had given up his nightclub jobs, and requests were not plentiful for a Christian accordionist; nor, when found, did they pay well.

So, they argued. Words like *mission field* and *service to God* were part of Daddy's new vocabulary now that he was saved and we were attending the Baptist church. He wanted passionately to become a missionary—and dreamed of returning to the Caribbean to live. The previous summer a church there had paid for him to come and minister, and he longed to return, for they loved both his accordion music and his preaching.

But his appeals fell on deaf ears. My mother, also newly converted, was determined to keep her job with the Michigan school system to provide “the proper things” for me, which meant that he was stuck in St. Joseph. Was money the problem, then? I wondered. Or was I really the problem?

The dark and sudden rumble of thunder that was Daddy's voice startled me. I had not moved an inch toward the storm, but neither could I move away from it. It turned on me with fury.

“This is Nancy's fault!” Daddy roared.

With two strides he was standing in front of me. He reached down and grabbed my upper arm, pulling me out of my chair, and steered me roughly into a corner. With my father before me, I was now flanked by two windows on the attending walls—the large picture window on one, and a high side window up near the ceiling on the other. There was no place to hide, nowhere to go; the corner seemed, rather, to hold me prisoner under two watchful, silent eyes.

“This is Nancy’s fault!” he bellowed again. “And she’s going to find out what it’s like!”

I watched his hands twitch with furious motion as he unclasped his brown leather belt and pulled it quickly through the loops of his trousers. I had never been hit before and did not know what he was doing. Then with his arm drawn fully back and leaning the weight of his body into the blow, he ripped the leather across my legs.

The jolt shot through me like electricity, burning my flesh and numbing my brain. Stunned, I managed to lift my arms to cover my head.

“You are going to learn!” he shouted, berating me with every blow to my torso and bare legs.

I bit my lip till it nearly bled, fearful of making a sound, sensing that cries would enliven his rage. Yet I could not help wincing each time he raised his arm. I squeezed my eyes shut to block out the vision of the next explosive strike.

Eight . . . ten blows. . . . My legs were going numb and my body was beginning to sway.

Then at last, when I felt as though I might crumple to the floor, the booming thunder ceased and the earth grew still again. I opened my eyes and lowered my arms. Daddy was breathing hard and putting his belt back through his pant



loops. After cinching the strap through the buckle, he turned with a kind of swagger and faced my mother.

I looked between them, from his lifted chin and searing eyes to her shocked silence. Neither looked at me. Neither offered me help. Slowly I put one foot in front of the other and walked painfully past them, past my silent garden chair, up the gray carpeted stairs and into my bedroom, where I collapsed onto my knees at the side of my bed.

My little room, normally so cheerful with its pastel stripes, was a blur as my eyes flooded with tears. Sobs shook me uncontrollably; I buried my face in the bedspread to muffle the sound.

Two things were clear to me, young as I was. One of them I had suspected, but it was painful to comprehend: I was utterly helpless in a violent world. I sensed, correctly as it turned out, that this was not the sole incidence of my father's brutality. In part because of my mother's non-interference, his rage at her had found an outlet. Their only child had become a mute sacrifice to brutal passion.

The other thing clear to me was that I had only one place to go. I marvel at this comprehension, but it was true. In all the world I knew that no one could help me; no one would believe me—even assuming I could lift the veil of shame and tell; no one would walk with me through the terror.

No one, that is, but Jesus.

Through watery eyes, wiping my nose with the back of my hand, I looked up at the picture of Jesus that hung on my wall. It was a painting of Jesus in a garden, surrounded by three children. Under the painting was written a question that the children were asking: "What happened to Your hand?" I would often lie in bed at night, look up at that painting and

long to be one of those children. They were safe there with Jesus. He would help them.

But I was not one of those children. My days were destined to be sad and lonely, stretching out past any hope I might try to envision on the horizon. I was not even like the other children in my Sunday school class. As of that day, I was the caretaker of a terrible dark secret: the shattering rejection of my parents. I was numb with the insecurity and pain that reality brought me, and wondered how I would make it through the rest of my life. Who would take care of me and guide me as I grew up?

But still I knew, somehow, that the answer to my hurt would be found in Jesus. One of the Bible verses we had learned in Sunday school was a promise from Him: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” I loved to hear my mother quote those poetic words from the King James Version to me. “Lo, I am with you always. . . .” I clung to the hope that those words were true, that He was somehow with me as the Bible said.

Filled with loneliness, barely able to whisper, I mouthed syllables of a prayer to the One who was the only answer to my broken heart. I told Him about the good changes I had seen in my father. I explained that I did not know what I had done to provoke such a whipping. Even as I spoke those words, though, I knew that I was not really to blame. Not really. I told God that He was the only One I could trust, and the only One who could help me.

After some time, I tried to calm down. I had stopped hoping that I would hear a kindly step on the stair. I glanced sadly at the door, then more positively around the room. The ceiling slanted down on one side, meeting the yellow, pink and

green striped wallpaper that rose halfway up the wall. This was a wonderful feature, for it felt closed-in and protective. Two little windows on the opposite wall looked out over the redbrick street.

Then, my eyes were caught by movement—something appearing. . . . Was it possible? I scrunched my face to focus more clearly. Yes, there stood a man in a white robe! Incredibly, I had no doubt that what I was seeing was real. And then I knew, somehow, that God had heard my prayers. Not only that, the true living God had come to help me and was standing in the corner of my room.

I was not afraid, and looked at Him steadily. I had learned about the Trinity at church and wondered which Person this one might be—the Father? the Son? the Holy Spirit?

As He looked down at me I sensed in my innermost being that this was Jesus. He had brown hair touching His shoulders, and His face was serious, but kind. His whole presence was serene and quiet. In my amazement, the tears slowly stopped spilling out of my eyes.

Though He wore a robe, He looked very natural. I had seen Sallman's famous *Head of Christ*, everywhere present in churches and Christian homes, and I thought how He resembled the depiction offered in that gentle brown painting.

With Jesus there, I was in no hurry to get up from the side of my bed. I watched Him for what seemed like ten or so minutes. Then I looked away for a second, and when I looked back He was gone.

I had never heard anyone say that Jesus would come and visit this way, but at that moment, His love went deep into my soul. I could not comprehend how the Lord could be there with me, or even how I could sense the Spirit of God,

but one thing was clear: Jesus was with me, and I was His. The Holy Spirit had filled my room. I wanted to live for Jesus the rest of my life.

Another thought rose in my mind, equally difficult to comprehend: What would His presence in my heart mean for me? What difference would it make in my world of arguments and isolation and pain?

That day as I knelt by my bed, battered and bruised, I did not know the answer. Both of my parents had shattered any hope of the world as a secure place. I was in a tiny boat on the vast sea, with turbulent and angry waters threatening to drown me. I could do nothing on my own to reach the safety of shore. How would Jesus help me navigate through the overwhelming feelings of rejection and worthlessness?

Perhaps you, like me, learned early in life that pain is not a one-time experience. If so, then I want you to know this truth: God is with you as you walk out the hard times, the times you cannot make it unless He helps you.

I could not imagine it that afternoon as I knelt on the floor, but God was going to allow me to taste the powers of the world to come. Jesus would appear to me multiple times on earth and in eternity—and He would even show me the second heaven, the realm where evil resides.

Why? So that I could know in my own heart and share with you that the supernatural is very real. Help is at the ready from heaven for you and for me.

Jesus does not have to appear physically to do that—although sometimes He does! God even answers our requests to see more visibly into the supernatural realm. We cannot force a vision to occur, but we can walk in deep intimacy with Jesus so that experiencing the supernatural is the natural

outcome. More and more, people all over the world are finding this to be true. Jesus is always with us, and we see Him most clearly in the difficult times.

The Bible says, “Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, ‘This is the way you should go,’ whether to the right or to the left” (Isaiah 30:21 NLT). As you become attuned to the supernatural in your own life, you will see that the world to come is the *real* world.

Heaven exists—and it can touch your life.