

I MET
GOD
IN
HELL

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WITH DANA EHMANN

BroadStreet
P U B L I S H I N G

INTRODUCTION

I see both realities: heaven and hell.

I've been there.

—TIM EHMANN

On the night of September 1, 2000, I overdosed from shooting too many successive speedballs of heroin and crack. I collapsed in my upstairs bedroom, my heart stopped, and my spirit left my lifeless body. Within moments, I was in hell. It is without a doubt the most dreadful place to experience—and it is *real*. But it was where I belonged. After all, it really was my choice at the time.

I met God in hell.

I wasn't looking or asking for Him, nor had I ever cared to. He made it no secret, though, that all He wanted was just me. That alone surprised me. Why would He want *me*? What could He possibly see in me? I was just a hell-bent, self-centered show-off rock 'n' roll musician who lived only for all the drugs, women, and possessions I could obtain. By that time in my life, I didn't care about anyone or anything—especially about looking for God.

Everyone I knew back then is shocked that I'm alive today. Most of my rock 'n' roll friends died way too young. Untimely deaths. The lengths God went to just to get me were crazy and wild! This God truly is 100 percent love, and I can assure you there are no bounds that can hinder Him and no place He cannot go to find you. There's no way you can hold Him back or stop His outrageous love for you, no matter who you are or what you've done. His is a persistent, pursuing love that's totally radical and unintimidated by anything—even your unbelief in it.

My life is a miracle story. It started with miracles, and the miracles have continued all the way through it. What I've learned is, no one else has the power or authority to save you from that awful place, hell. In fact, God is the only one who can save you from yourself too.

My story is just one example of so many that reveal the true character of God and the depth of His passionate, unrestrained, and unstoppable love for us. God *is* love, and I am living proof that His love is *always* outta control!

ENCOUNTER

This is for you, son. Use it, use it!
I'm giving you My very heart.

– God

It was March 2010, ten years after the fateful day I died and went to hell. I was spending a quiet evening alone at my home in Dormont, a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The cold weather had finally eased after a long, bitter winter, and the beginning of spring was melting the last of the snow and liberating the trees and flowers to bloom again.

I anticipated a trip to Chicago for a meeting I'd been invited to attend by the speaker. After packing my bags, I reviewed the itinerary one last time. The trip would start with an eight-hour drive, and I planned to leave that night so I could arrive in time for the first early morning session. Satisfied that I was ready, I lay down to get a few hours of rest.

I settled onto my bed, a simple air mattress on the floor at the time, and talked with God for a while, praying over the trip ahead. But as I wondered what might be ahead for me, my mind wouldn't relax. Finally, a thick blanket of peace fell over me. That's when I noticed that a tiny angel had come into the room. It flew over and sat on my left shoulder. I'd seen this same angel before, just sitting there quietly and hanging out with me.

God had been letting me see His angels quite often by now,

and their presence always reminded me that He was with me and watching out for me. As well, they also came for special purposes. As I lay there pondering why this particular angel had come and what God might be up to, the bedroom door behind my head suddenly flew open with a loud *thwack* against the wall.

I looked back to see what had happened. To my astonishment, the entire doorway was illuminated with a brilliant white light, and it emanated powerfully into my small bedroom. I squinted, trying to see into the near-blinding light, and there I found the awesome being of a big, beautiful angel. It stood right on the threshold of the doorway, its size filling the entire doorframe. I lay there frozen, not daring to move and wondering what would happen next.

Then I became aware of the sound of music coming into the room. I followed the sound, turning my gaze back toward the foot of my bed, and saw the window on the opposite wall also radiating brilliantly. As I looked into it, I could see what looked like hundreds of angels outside the window, jockeying for a position to peek into my room. That's when I realized they were the ones singing. The music was unbelievably beautiful, and it flowed effortlessly right into the room. As I listened more intently to their amazing unearthly song, I distinctly heard the words of their repeated chorus. Covered in a supernatural peace, I lay there still, trying to take it all in. Soon I just *knew* the name of their song. It was called "Eulogy," and they were praising Jesus.

The music itself filtered right through the light beaming into the room. Its sweet rhythm flowed through the light like it was alive. *Yeah! This is pretty cool!* I excitedly thought. Then I became aware of movement directly above me. I looked up and saw a giant hand slowly come into the room—right through the ceiling. I was in awe but felt no fear; the atmosphere was too full with such tranquil peace. I recognized this familiar hand, as I'd seen it before on several occasions. It was the hand of God.

His hand was cupped and in it He held a huge multi-faceted white diamond. It too was brilliantly lit up, and it glowed with

sparkling brilliance, pulsating and vibrating with a life all its own. Probably two feet wide by two feet deep, it was cut in the shape of a heart. Slowly and steadily, God's hand floated down from the ceiling toward me in a soft, rhythmic flow in perfect time with the angels' serenade and paused right above my belly. It opened wide to reveal the gem's wondrous living beauty to me, and I gazed at it in awe, my heart beating wildly with excitement.

I heard the voice of God say, "This is for you, son. Use it, use it! I'm giving you my very heart." Then His hand just dove seamlessly into my belly and He released that heavenly gem directly inside of me!

When He gently pulled His emptied hand out, it again floated slowly, rhythmically back up and right through the ceiling. The motion of His hand flowing with the angels' chorus was so tranquil, smooth, and free, just like the flow of Heaven is, with nothing out of sync. The angels outside watching through the window still sang their beautiful Eulogy song, and the angel in my bedroom doorway continued standing there, still emanating that brilliant heavenly light powerfully into the room. About eight minutes later it all faded away, with the big angel leaving last.

There I was on my bed, alone again. The bedroom door remained wide open though. That in itself was a revelation to me: the sign of the "Open Door," another name for Jesus—and a message God often repeats to me.

God often gives me love gifts like these, but this one was quite special. After that awesome divine appointment, I was intrigued. I know from experience that there's *always* profound and precise meaning in every minute detail of what God does or says. It's full of revelation and layers of more treasure gifts from Him. Sometimes He even continues to give more understanding of those deeper layers over years throughout life.

God's far from boring, and He likes to play treasure hunt games with His children. Like a big kid having the time of His life, He'll entice you along with wildly creative clues to lead you to

the grand reveal of each and every treasure from Him, if you'll just stay in the pursuit. He doesn't hide His treasures *from* us; He hides them *for* us. Sometimes I don't know who gets more excited when I figure them out. He loves to watch us have those "aha" moments when we discover them, and He doesn't make His treasures too hard to find. It's all part of the fun and adventurous love relationship He wants to have with us.

After this special encounter with God, the more I thought on every detail, the more He revealed. I just needed to find a dictionary to look up the word "eulogy." I wanted to see if it provided further clues to what the word really meant. I learned that its root meaning is "to praise" and that a eulogy is typically an event performed in order to express words of love, gratitude, and remembrance of someone on a special occasion. This only added to the wow factor of it all. I'd discovered another deep layer of what God was saying to me. Then I realized that God had considered this gift-giving event such a special occasion that He sent a stunning herald angel with a backup choir to celebrate it with Him. God is *really* cool!

Even the angels love to watch in awe of the things God is currently doing. They're especially curious and still ever learning themselves about the creative ways He continually showers His love, mercy, and grace on His most beloved creation—people. His love for us never stops, and everything He does is new and different just to specially reveal Himself to us. God loves to give His children gifts, and with them always comes some sort of special impartation of Himself. He'll let us have, see, and use His gifts even before we go to live in heaven. These gifts are meant for the individual, and often for others as well.

There's no way I could describe in a book all that I've experienced so far. I've had so many encounters with God; they're innumerable and perpetual. How do you describe twenty thousand or so encounters with God per year? They come when I'm awake, and they come when I'm asleep—in visions, dreams, and

awesome events where I know I'm actually there. Some mornings I wake up in heaven. Either I'm caught up in heaven with God, or the realm of heaven is with me, encompassing me in my bedroom as I first open my eyes. That familiar bright heavenly light surrounds me, and God's awesome presence and peace fills the room. It's one of the many ways He likes to greet me first thing in the morning.

What many people don't know is that God is not only righteous and holy, but He's also wild, free, and fun! He has a great sense of humor, even telling jokes sometimes, and can be incredibly funny. He *loves* laughter and joy. He also loves adventure and sharing with us the things of His heavenly kingdom, where all things are possible on a daily basis—and it's available to us now.

I've learned to stay open to what God wants to show me, because I've found it rarely comes close to what my limited mind or natural reason can understand. He most often teaches me about Himself and His ways by choosing to vividly show me what He sees, thinks, and knows.

One thing I know is, God's heart is crying out for His children to come home to Him. Perpetually seeking after each one of us is the full-time most important task on God's agenda. Sometimes it's hard to understand that we are truly His main focus; we don't realize what great worth we are to God. He's always demonstrating how deeply He loves and cares for me, but He also shows me His love for this world and its people, which He made for such a great purpose. God loves us with an outta-control love. It's like He can't help Himself.

Because He places such a high value on us, we are a major prize, caught in a mostly unseen battle between two kingdoms, light and dark, good and evil, and we are fiercely contended for. But God has a place available right inside Him that's safe, peaceful, and pure, where we can know the truth of what's really going on, walk in His protection, and rest in complete assured trust that we're forever loved and already home.

THE UNSEEN PERIMETER FENCE

He is the God who does it all—
that's a true salvation!

—TIM EHMANN

My life didn't start out with my knowing and experiencing all these things. My story is one of an outrageously determined God who wouldn't stop chasing after me my whole life—though I sure wasn't looking for Him or asking for any of this. While I went about my days doing things my own wild way, He pursued me, sovereignly protected me, kept calling me, and patiently waited...for a long time. He gave me a lengthy amount of rope to run on (much more, it seems, than He gives many others), and I ran it out all the way to the end—and then some. But no matter what I did or how much I didn't believe in Him, He never stopped chasing after me.

It was kind of like having a loving, protective dad allowing his wild, rambunctious kid to run himself silly in every direction, getting away with all kinds of things, for as long as he needed to, but in a yard so big that he couldn't see that he had a high protective perimeter fence keeping him safe the whole time. I took my unhindered freedom to the max; that is, for forty-four years I ran and my watchful, heavenly Dad patiently waited until I was all run out doing things my own way. I believe the bottom line to my story is that if God could save me, He can save anyone.

Throughout my entire life of running at breakneck speed down the wrong roads, I was continually covered by an unseen hand of protection through peril after peril, most of which were admittedly self-inflicted. The protection He had around me defied any natural explanation for how I could have survived them. Most of the events were just surreal.

Yet even in all my stupid stuff, I was allowed to run. My life-long vocation of being a touring rock 'n' roll musician only added to the crazy opportunities and trouble I could find. I got away with a lot. Nothing ever seemed to touch or stop me, no matter what I did. Because of this, eventually a godlike complex took a hold of me, and this made me even more brazen and bold. I started to believe I was just invincible. I should have died multiple times through those first decades of my life. Even when I saw some of my fairly young friends dying, I never thought that would happen to me. I never gave much consideration to death, though everything I did, every day, was always on the edge of it.

Unbelievably, this relentless God who had been chasing after me my whole life—the one I didn't even want to know—also chased after me straight into hell, which is where I went after I overdosed on drugs and died. Somehow He was determined (peculiarly confident, in fact) that He was going to get me, and to get me to the planned destiny He had intended for me since before my birth. His stubborn, outta-control love for me just wouldn't let me go.

Many people believe God is all about judgment and condemning people, but that certainly wasn't the way I came to know Him. I knew who I was and what I stood for, and I lived it every day to the max. That included writing and performing some pretty nasty songs about Him and inciting others through my music and lifestyle. I loved the shock reaction it brought, and many in the crowds really ate it up. I didn't believe in God. I didn't know Him, and most of all, I didn't care to.

Despite who I was and the wild way I was living, this unseen