

It's the 13th day of November, 2008.

You might wonder what it is about this day that is even slightly significant? Perhaps like so many, you struggle to find anything that sets one day apart from the next. Perhaps the days melt into one another and perhaps you might even have lost a few along the way. I used to be like that...

This is my story (thus far). It's really only a brief account, because let's face it, to tell you it all in any detail would take hours, and time is precious, especially so when you see how much can be achieved in a short space of time. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

If this is the first time you've heard my testimony you are about to learn things about me you didn't know. Some of it might shock you, Some of it may not come as a surprise at all, but for the most part,

My prayer is that;

You'll find new hope, for the child or friend you are praying for that seems so far from God...

That you'll realize the people you meet, so obviously deceived, are just one moment, one decision, away from the truth.

But most of all I pray you get the revelation, that God's purpose and plan for YOUR life, doesn't begin tomorrow or even today. But that it was conceived 'In the Beginning' and is just waiting for you to claim.

14383. That's the number of opportunities I've had to make an impact on the world around me. It's the number of days since I was born.

The first 4018 days (11years) were fairly normal, at least I saw them as normal.

I grew up in a loving family environment. My dad had a great job, he provided well for us.

He taught me to ride a bike (a motor bike, Honda 250xl) at the age of 2557 days (7yo). He taught me to water ski at the age of 5113 days (5yo) and how to bring a full grown adult male to a crashing halt, making me a valuable asset to every family football game. I was the son he always wanted. My mum was a typical '70's stay at home mum'. She was there to see me off to school and there to greet me again each afternoon. She baked, she helped out at the school canteen, she was my girl guide leader, my school assignment/project coordinator and creative team, my nurse, my tutor and my Idol. I have a younger sister, who was mummy's lil girl.

My very first childhood memory, was of mum taking me to Sunday school. My very next memory was trying to memorize the books of the bible.

I don't ever remember doubting that God was real. My mums family are all Christians, generations of pastor's, ministers, and missionaries. But it took 11 years for me to realize He (God) was interested in me.

I grew up in The Blue Mountains west of Sydney. As children we would explore the bush fire trails that traced their way through the national park (conveniently located at the end of my street). One afternoon I was showing a friend a cave just under the cliff face at the end of one of those fire trails. Easy enough to get down to, we did it all the time. This particular afternoon though in my haste to show off I placed my foot on what looked like solid ground but turned out to be a grass over hang. The bluff we were climbing down is called 'The Leap' , It's 600ft to the bottom.

4 people have fallen from that point. 3 have died....I don't remember the fall... But I walked out with only a broken shoulder.

It took me a week to get up the courage to go back to that spot.

It was a rainy afternoon, I stood on the edge and looked over. The mist was rising up from the river below, the clouds hung so low they touched the tree top's just above me, the space in between was where I met God... for the first time... I was 11 years old and I realized I should have been dead. I was told the trees must have broken my fall. I knew in that moment, it was the hand of God that caught me... And then I had the revelation, that I was spared for a reason... There was something He wanted me to do!

What happens when you combine abundant curiosity, with a revelation of purpose, stir in a good size helping of teenage hormones and peer group pressure... Mmmm! It's a recipe that in my case, spells disaster.

I didn't find the answers I was looking for in church. The problem, I see now, was I that I was looking for answers, not relationship...

I never seemed to fit. Not that I was an outcast quite the opposite, I was a very popular person, but the other popular people were so shallow they drove me nuts. Its not like I struggled with studies, I was actually very bright and in all the top classes, but the other brainy kids were so boring, they drove me nuts also. The girls were catty and superficial, the boys were unable to look past the dimples, even when I was covered in grease striping back a car engine; splattered in mud having just beaten them again in a race to the top of the mountain on a trail bike or out pacing and passing them in touch football.

I never seemed to fit...

I grew up never doubting I was loved, never wanting for anything, except to belong.

There were a lot of afternoons I would walk up that fire trail.

Tears blurring my vision. My feet knew the way, they followed my heart.

I would sit on the edge of 'The Leap' and think
"No One really knows me,"
"No One would really miss me"
"No One really cares"
"What are the odds you could survive a fall like that a second time?"
The quiet voice in my head would reply,
"What are the odds you could survive it a first time?"
There was still something I had to do? So I would dry the tears of my
cheeks, go home, and search for the answer.

I finished year 10 in the top 5% of the state. I could have stayed at
school gone on to tertiary studies and been anything I wanted, I couldn't
decide what I wanted to be when I grew up, So I moved out of home and
decided to try growing up before making that decision, I was 5632 days
(15yo).

I shared a flat with an older friend. I had a great job, followed by another
great job followed by yet another great job. I always had heaps of money
and by the time I was old enough to get my license 6118 days (16years
&9 months back then) I had a car as well.

I travelled. The world was full of interesting places to visit, and interesting
people to meet. When you travel you are always a foreigner, you never
stay anywhere for long so you don't have to try to fit in. You can just drift
on through.

*When my friends were finishing High School and going on to Uni I was
"seeing the world"*

I was 6209 days (17yo) when I got engaged. We met at a night club
dated for 365 days (a year) when he asked me to marry him I didn't
hesitate.

Of all the things I could have chosen to be the thing I really wanted was
to be 'my mum'.

A husband who loved me, children to love... that was a nice picture.

30 days (A Month) before the wedding I woke up one morning next to the
man I was going to spend the rest of my life (approx 43800 days) with
and realized we had nothing in common.

That weekend I made a huge mistake. I went out with the girls from
work, but never got home, to my home anyway. The next morning I lied
to my fiancé about where I had stayed the night and about with who.

I was 6574 days (18yo) when we broke up... I moved into a unit in
Parramatta. My parents were pretty angry with me. My Dad wouldn't
answer my calls, for 365 days (a whole year).

That Christmas I spent alone, I wasn't invited to spend it with my family,
my dad didn't want to see me.

Christmas morning I wandered the deserted street of Parramatta City, tears blurring my vision.

I followed my feet like they knew the way, they followed my heart.

I stopped outside of St Johns. A beautiful old church in the middle of town.

I figured I would see if God would talk to me here like he used to at 'The Leap'

I found a quiet alcove, in the deserted church. Staring up at the stained glass windows and beautiful wooden carvings.

I don't know how long I sat there for, But the quiet voice beside me startled me.

"I'm Sorry"

"But I really should have locked the church up half an hour ago"

" My wife has lunch laid out, would you like to join us?"

I wish I could remember their names. The young Pastor and his wife... I wonder sometimes what they saw? If they knew how desperately I wanted to hear God's voice.

That Christmas Morning was the last time I was in church for a very long time. I was 6755 days old.

So, 6791 days (18yo), I had a high paying job setting up and administering the first corporate superannuation funds in Australia, I lived in a great unit in the middle of Parramatta, I got up every morning, Instructed an aerobics class, took another at Lunch, then instructed another after work before sneaking in a quick weights session before hitting the nightclubs and dancing till 3am. I'd snatch a couple of hours sleep then do it all over again, except on the weekends when I wouldn't sleep at all.

Legal substances weren't doing enough to keep me alert but It was the 80's and speed was the pick me up of choice. 14 days (2 weeks) without sleep and 28 days (4 weeks) without eating, my weight dropped to 43kg. One morning I was trying to do my skirt up to stop it slipping of my hips when I realized it was already done up.

The reflection in the mirror looked vaguely like a girl I used to know, but the dimples were replaced by hollow cheeks. And the Beautiful brunette with sparkling eyes, was a wraith of a girl who's eyes were dead and lifeless.

I hated who I had become... that's when I found the mask.

It fitted perfectly and when I put it on No one really knew who was underneath, but better yet no one really cared.

I quit the speed, started eating carrot sticks, put on a couple of kilo and landed a job as a lingerie Model.

6940 (19yo), 3 well paying jobs, a wardrobe full of pretty lacy things, to put under the designer label outer things, an eating disorder, and a social circle who's Daddy's all owned newspapers or football teams; No real friends, cause nobody likes a corporate ladder climbing, socialite who can bench press more than she weighs... and I kept the mask. Just in case.

From the outside I seemed to have it all and what I didn't have was just a snap of the fingers away... I'd decided marriage and raising kids was for someone else... I was going to unravel the secrets of the universe one champagne bubble at a time.

7205 days (20yo) I had lots of questions, and a restless spirit that was never satisfied, no matter what I achieved it never seemed to be enough to fill me. The world and it's endless possibilities just didn't seem to have a place for me. I just didn't fit.

My school friends were all finishing Uni and heading of OS to see a bit of the world, I was establishing my career.

7640 days Just before my 21st birthday I had an offer to move to Melbourne to take a job with a new superannuation company. My dad and I had sort of patched up our relationship but it wasn't what it used to be. I left Sydney and decided that when I hit Melbourne I was going to get serious about life.

I fell pregnant on my 7670th (21st) birthday. I couldn't fulfill my contractual agreement so the job was given to someone else.

Having a child was not on my list of to-dos any more, but the father of my child had other ideas and we agreed that he would have custody of our child and I would provide financial support.

(7876 days) At 7 ½ months he changed his mind, and left town with out a forwarding address, with everything I owned, including the balance of my bank account.

I had \$80 in my purse the train ticket home was \$76. Not enough to pay for another nights accommodation or even enough to pay for a cab to the station. I carried everything I owned in a duffle bag, on foot, 8kms at 10pm through the center of Melbourne no one even noticed.

I sat on Melbourne's flinders street station through the longest night of my life. I didn't know what was going to happen when I got home... or if I could even call it home.

The train trip home wasn't any easier...

I spent the whole trip rehearsing the speech I would give my Mum and Dad, and thinking of how many ways I could say sorry for all the things I

had messed up... But when I saw them waiting at the door, I couldn't remember a single thing... But I knew it didn't matter.

My dad just hugged me and said, "It's ok" "we'll work it out"

My mum put a cup of tea in my hand asked what I felt like for dinner... told me she had invited some friends over and suggested I take a shower... It was just the way I remember them, Impromptu party that lasted well into the night.

The next day I took a walk up to "the Leap". I sat on the edge and thought

"What now?"

No answer was forthcoming.

At this point I'd really like to suggest that God's plans were all working out but that would be a gross misstatement. No matter how I tried or even since then have tried to reconcile it. I was not in any position to suggest this all was His idea. The truth is I was way out of His will. I was living in sin and had made bad decisions. The only reason I think I had escaped even more disaster was that I had a family that spent a whole lot of time on their knees, praying for me.

Day 7994 was a day that was slightly more significant than most.

At 8:26am the midwife passed and screaming, new born child to me and in the other hand she held out a tiny pair of scissors.

"Here you go Mum, cut the umbilical cord"

I looked over at my Mum

She was looking back at me as quietly said, "She's talking to you... Mum"

At that moment I realized I couldn't choose...

To stay a child or become a mother, wasn't an option, But I could choose what sort of Mother I would become.

I chose to do whatever it took to be the best parent I could possibly be, no matter what I had to sacrifice. My daughter became my anchor, when my life seemed like a shipwreck about to happen.

God didn't plan this for me, but as I look back on the last 6570 days (18 years) I know that he has made this one thing turn out to be the greatest blessing of my life.

Have you met my daughter TJ? Well, you know then what I mean!

Most people think it's just general parental bias when I talk about the incredible young woman that shares my life, then they meet her. She has a greater purpose and destiny than even she can dream, and she's the creative one in the family.

I still didn't fit. My friends were kicking off their careers, and I was a starting a family.

Life as a single mum is no picnic. It's plain hard work, Life as a single working mum quite frankly... sux. I tried it for a while and took on another corporate position. Up at 5, dress and feed, drop TJ off at day care, drive into Sydney, start work at 7am, finish work about 6pm drive home, pick TJ up from daycare, fed and dress for bed. Do a few loads of washing clean up, crash get up and do it all over again.

I realized something wasn't right when the day my daughter got chicken pox. I rang the day care to say she wouldn't be in and then was stressing over how to tell my boss... The day carer told me not to worry all the kids had either had it or were currently infected with it. "Drop her off, she can watch the TV with the rest of them for the day"

I got to work, and realized I had my priorities all backwards.

It was a great job, and the money was better than most people could hope for. My daughter would never want for anything...

... Except today, she might want her mummy to hold her when she feels unwell.

I walked into my bosses office and told him I Quit! He offered me another \$10k. That was day 8310.

I walked out the door knowing I had made the right choice, Peace is a great thing.

Unemployment however did not suit me.

I can't list the number of jobs I held since then, but I have never not had a way of providing for us. I used to think myself lucky, I always found a job that suited the hours I needed to work around being a parent and they always paid really well.

I was financially doing well but not all my decision were good ones.

8584 days...For the most part I made lousy choices in relationships.

One in particular that I should share with you, still causes me to shake my head and ask who was that woman and is it possible I was really so messed up.

It was great to start out with, but soon enough I realized he had a drinking problem...And a gambling problem... And a problem holding a job... And a problem holding his temper.

But no problem at all beating up on his girlfriend... for 12 months I put up with it. I kicked him out time after time, but I let him back into my life again and again.

The mask... it came in handy those days when I had to pretend I wasn't living in my own worst nightmare. I fell pregnant... I wasn't thrilled, I wasn't even slightly happy, He was even less enthusiastic. That night he got so drunk he could barely stand up. The argument he started seemed to sober him up just enough to make him dangerous... Why I didn't just grab TJ and run I don't know...? Perhaps the thought crossed my mind. Why I Didn't just shut up and let him get it over with...? I don't know!

But I chose to fight back... words no matter how educated you are no match for a good right hook and a solid uppercut... he had the advantage. No one knocked on the door to see what was going on, no one called the police... no one paid the slightest bit of attention to my cries for help.

He had me pinned over the table his knee to my chest... my hands bound behind my back with his belt that he had just finished beating me with... with one hand he held my hair and pulled my head back... with the other held a knife to my throat...

I looked pure evil in the face that night... and thought, "I probably deserved to meet with this end."

TJ started crying... from her room she called out "Mummy".

He put the knife down and released me.

"Deal with your bastard, then we finish this" He hissed.

I took my time settling TJ, trying to work out what to do.

He didn't call out and after half an hour I thought he must have left.

I went out to the lounge room. He had crashed on the couch. Beside the new set of golf clubs he had just purchased.

I stole quietly into my daughters room, grabbed a bag and stuffed what ever I could lay my hands on in to it... lifted her from the cot and slipped out the back door of my own home, like a thief...

Should I tell you... it was my second choice...? I don't even want to recount what my first thought was.

Tears blurred my vision...

I followed my feet... but my heart led the way.

I was barely 8796 days (24yo), beaten to within an inch of my life, with my child in my arms and a poorly packed bag on my shoulder, pregnant... I walked 10kms through the night and nobody even noticed.

I slept the next night in a friend's garage, the night after that on another friend's couch.

I stayed for a week at yet another friend's place but every time he found me. In the end I called the police, and took out an AVO... Anyone who has ever been in an abusive relationship will tell you that doesn't mean a thing. It just means if the abuser actually does catch up with you, you know there is a fair chance that they are the first person the police will interview if you meet with an untimely end...

I couldn't keep going like this...

The next decision I made was not one I am proud to admit to... and I have had many years of self torment over it, but it's a part of who I am, It's God's overwhelming Grace that freed me... knowing He won't condemn me that makes it possible to even share it with you...

I left TJ with a friend and made the trip to Sydney alone... The clinic I had booked into was busy that day. I sat in the waiting room with possibly 30 other women, mostly young girls.

As I looked around I wondered what their story was. Most of them had someone to support them through it... one by one they went in through one door and weren't seen again... mine was the last name called. I was the last appointment of the day.

I lay on the table and focused on the picture on the ceiling... Penguins, lots of them, all huddled together in a big group... all but one that stood off to one side...

The nurse that held my hand said I did well... I'm not sure what she meant... I should have felt something, But emotionally, I was numb...

I was 14 weeks when I had the pregnancy terminated...
8888 days old.

My friends were buying houses. I was homeless. I still didn't fit.

How much distance can you put between yourself and a bad decision? No amount of distance is enough... Its what you close the gap between your bad decision and the place you are at that makes the difference, but I was still more than 3650days (10years) away from working that out... so I did the only thing I knew how to do... travel, keep moving.

Gypsy... the name that had been so easy for me to adopt only a few years earlier now fit me so well.

9056 days...We drove out of Sydney that mid Autumn day heading north, no destination in mind just north. I had plenty of money in the bank, I had organized for a friend to clear out my house and sell all my stuff... The first petrol station I filled up at, I took my watch off and gave it to the young girl serving behind the counter, I haven't worn a watch since... Time moves at a different pace when you have nowhere in particular to be... You eat when you get hungry, you sleep when you get tired you find the torch when it gets dark and you get up with the sun... For 730 days (2 years) we traveled...

My Daughter loves it when she leaves a door open and someone says, "TJ were you born in a tent!" I chuckle at the reply I know is coming... "nope! But I grew up in one!"

TJ has some memories still, of places we have seen... for her life was like a progressive playground... beaches, parks and wild terrain, deserts, mountains, forests, lakes... no where more beautiful than the next place.

It took for me to loose myself, to begin to discover who I am... and I say begin because I'm still on that journey of discovery.

When you are not defined by what you do, or where you live, you tend to be defined by what you believe...

My friends were all getting married. I was trying to work out what I left to give....

At 9496 (26yo) I was still seeking answers, I was still trying to find something to believe in that didn't turn out to be another empty promise, another lie, another reason to keep moving.

When the money ran out we came home... My plan was to work for a while, build up a balance in the bank account and then take off for a few more years... My Plans as you may have notice don't always work out the way I think they will.

9862 days (27yo) I settled in Leura, and went to work for my brother in law running his plumbing business. Before long I was working on jobs with him, and he had to teach me a thing or two about plumbing... apparently little old ladies feel more comfortable with a lady plumber under their sink or unblocking their toilet... and who knows the upper mountains have a lot of little old ladies... I was a very busy tradeswoman! It worked out well TJ was enrolled at the same school as my Nephew. My sister didn't work so she was always available to pick up the kids after school... We spent a lot of time together, and though I haven't mention her much, I should say we were always close growing up and stayed that way even though life had us off in different directions.

Our families blended well together and my brother in law was always looking out for me.

I was 10227 (28yo), single and happy to be so, I had a job I loved that didn't keep me from being a Mother. Family nearby to rely on, and lots of friends... I guess a couple of years alone traveling taught me how to make friends easily, The social butterfly had swapped champagne for Rum & Coke (no ice thanks) after all that's the way they drink it in Bundaberg... if only I had a dollar for every time I said that.

I shared a huge house with a friend just off the main street of Katoomba... the place was a gathering place for all sorts of people... most Fridays I would get home from work to find the kitchen full of people set up along the huge central bench, all preparing some kinds of meal... Open door policy, meant you could turn up when you liked, if was meal times either you bought something to chip in to the pot or you made the bread...

The old wood stove kept us warm on the freezing winter nights and the company kept us entertained...

That's when I met my Husband... he was someone else's boyfriend at the time... and my best friend was just waiting for them to break up (a fact she was sure would happen soon).

Of course when It did, she was no where to be found, and I ended up with him crying on my shoulder... we were living with each other within a week... it seems crazy now but I knew even then we would end up married...

He chose Wollongong over Gosford I wasn't fussed either way... where ever we settled was fine with me but I wanted to finally put down some roots and grow. 10592 days

My friends were getting divorced. I had finally found 'the one'

I was 11110 days (30yo), Married, we were madly in love, everyone said we were the perfect couple and we were I guess, we were happy and I finally felt like I was living the life I should have had... But something still was missing.

Remember I said earlier "When you are not defined by what you do, or where you live, you tend to be defined by what you believe..."

It was at this point in my life I realized I really didn't know what I believed, and therefore, began wondering what is it that defines me... the restless spirit stirred again and the seeker began to knock on doors that might have been better left alone...

In the course of my life I have studied and practiced;

*Buddhism,

*Taoism,

*Islam,

*Hinduism,

*Native American Shaman traditions,

*Norse Mythology,

*Greek mythology

*Celtic mythology and all their related pantheons

I've hung out with cults, and dabbled in divination

Practiced healing arts from 3 different continents

I trained as a Druid high priestess

Everything I studied I threw myself into whole heartedly believing this was the answer...

All I found was more questions... How deep did the deception go...?

I used to say what you believe in you give power to... but I realize now that denying the enemy doesn't cause him not to exist, it just means when things don't work out you don't blame him... For him it's a win-win situation, all calamity, no care or responsibility taken.

Putting down roots and growing was one thing but the soil was bad and soon enough things started to die off.

My husband was not a person to believe in anything, he never understood my need to find something to place faith in, other than himself! I guess in my spirit knew that he would fail me...

I remember once toward the end of our relationship saying to him that... he wasn't the center of my universe and that he... couldn't expect me to

be the center of his, because if that was the case we ...would be simply be orbiting around each other, and that would then limit our perspective on everything...

(I must have been studying astrology at the time)

... but my spirit I was aching to center my life on something that was greater than man... I needed a place where faith wasn't just tested... But proven.

We were married on the 28th of November 2000, Day 11476.

On Day 13301, 27 November 2005, he came home from work, and said without a hint of remorse

"I don't love you anymore", "And you're not worth fighting for"

He packed a bag and left.

2554 days all up 1824 days as his wife, not one of them significant enough to be worth more two sentences.

Day 13302.... Where did I leave that mask? Oh! That's right, I never took it off last time.

How can I describe the next 365days (twelve months) ...?

Spiraling out control might give you some Idea.

The light grew dimmer everyday.

Pieces of my life were flying off in all directions. And the more I tried to hold it all together the more it fell to pieces in front of my eyes. I fell back into bad habits, the social butterfly had a whole new audience...

I didn't go out of my way to hurt people, lets remember I was always a generally nice person, but the train wreck my life was about to become, I regret, may have included some unsuspecting casualties.

Day...13654. (November 2006) I hit rock bottom.

I had been sick for some time, really sick.

I was worried about how I would cope on my own if I didn't get well, I was worried how I would look after my daughter. I was worried in general about a lot of things... but overriding all that I was tired of battling on my own.

I was lonely...alone. Defenseless...alone. I was scared...alone...

Everyday I would get up and go to work. The mask was such a good fit now that I didn't even feel it there... No One Noticed...

I faked it through the day, and then when I got home I would go to my room and cry all night... I got up and did it all over again.

One afternoon I bumped into my 15yo daughter in the hall... I started apologizing for not making her lunch all week.

She looked at me, without judgment she said,
"Mum you haven't made my lunch all month"
"You haven't done any shopping"
"Or cleaned the house"
"You haven't even paid the bills"
"I've done all those things"
"You're here but you're no where to be found"

If you're a parent and you are reading this, I know, you're heart just broke.

If you're a teenager, thank God for the parents you have, cause you could have gotten a lot worse... you could have gotten me!

On that day I realized I needed a life raft, not just to save myself, but to stop my little girl from getting washed away.

I found myself on my knees that night, with now where else to turn but to a God I had ignored for 7305 days (20years).

"GOD! I WANT MY LIFE BACK"
"THE ONE YOU MEANT FOR ME TO HAVE"
"GIVE IT BACK TO ME, AND EVERY MOMENT OF IT IS YOURS TO GUIDE"
"BUT I KNOW I'VE MESSED UP, AND I'M SORRY"
"SO IF YOU CANT FIX IT"
"PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME TO DO IT ON MY OWN"

I have this Image of God in the throne room...

He leans over and nudges the angel to his right...

"Whoa! Did you hear that!"

"That's my Girl Tracy"

"And She's BACK"

He waves to the angels to gather around

"Check this out guy's"

"This is what I call a 180"

He leans down and taps me gently spinning my life in a new direction.

As the angels get busy celebrating,

He leans back with a smile

I wonder is he thinking... Now we can get to work, where should I begin?

It's not surprising that the very next day my life change.

I was laying on my back in the botanical gardens watching the dragonflies zipping around.

They stop on the spot turn and accelerate at the same speed they were going...

7305 days (20 years). I had wanted to hear his voice, you know the first thing God said to me,
"I'm going to do that with your life"

My life was heading a hundred mile an hour in the wrong direction.
But God is the master of 180deg turns. He didn't hit the breaks, all he did was re-orientate me.

I've finally found my true north.
And the life he gave me back, every moment of it is his to guide.

The rest is His-tory, or at least the next chapter.
I don't have questions anymore, Just answers...
Conveniently indexed in one purse size book
(Several additions available at lighthouse bookshop)

Oh! And just in case you are still wondering...
What it is about this day, that is significant...?
Let me give you a hint...
He has already counted this day, and no matter what you think it might hold, it was significant enough for Him to record it in His book.
... And that is good enough for me...

Tracy Lee