

WHY DO I WANT TO GET BAPTIZED?

To understand my journey towards baptism it is important to share a little of my history and what has got me to the point where I am today.

I was born in Vietnam, the middle child of immigrant boat people. Like so many others in their position the struggle was real for my father and mother. They fled a country damaged by war and an unstable Government with nothing but the clothes on their backs. No money, no food and no real direction. Cramped together on a small fishing vessel with hundreds and thousands of Vietnamese citizens they set sail in the hope of finding a better life. That life they called the '*American Dream*'.



On a stopover in the Philippines island my younger brother was born. As my family welcomed new life into the fold, they also came dangerously close to losing another. As a one year old I contracted a cold which escalated into a life-threatening condition. No medication my fragile body grasp on to every little breath I could make. My mother desperately losing hope as the voices of others on the ship repeatedly echoed in her head.

'End her suffering'

'Throw her overboard'



My mother's thoughts ached but the love of a mother is a far stronger force than you can imagine. Through all the storms, heatwaves, sickness and famine my Mother held me tight until...Finally! The sound of sirens from Marine ships indicating the sound of victory! The sound of help, the sound of hope, the sound of a new beginning in a new country. This was even better than the '*American Dream*' it was the '*Canadian Dream*'!

As we docked, I was rushed into urgent medical attention and here I am today healthy and alive. Not a day goes by where I do not give respect to my mother and father for the struggle, they went through to give their children a better life. The only thing I still do not understand, out of all the places in Canada to be sponsored and raised, how did I end up in Regina, Saskatchewan?!?!

“Just kidding.”

Growing up my life was good. Despite all the hardship of my background I felt 'normal' like most of my friends. Soon after finishing high school I met the love of my life when we were both young adults and we grew together into adulthood and started a family. I was given the precious gift of a beautiful son. Yes, I had the perfect life. A life that my parents had struggled so hard to provide, but it was not perfect, I did not feel perfect. To be honest I did not feel anything at all. There was an emptiness inside of me. Becoming a mother at such a young age meant that I had to grow up fast. Late night feedings. Sleepless nights. Spending more money on a tiny person that I would ever think to spend on myself. The countless pick-ups and drop-offs from school to activities. The struggle of being a Mom on top of being a supportive housewife. Sometimes I wonder if the husband was more work than the son.



I do not regret any of the love and time spent on my son and husband. What I do regret is somewhere along the way I lost myself. I lost my own identity. I was so consumed with the idea of being the perfect housewife and mom. I got into a routine of it being the 'normal'. That was all I knew. Everyday was the same schedule. At the time I did not think anything was wrong because it all went so smoothly but like any story there must be an end. We all know how it should be. Kids grow up, move on with their own lives and the parents finally get to relax and maybe even party a little bit.

Not me! I was still stuck in my old life. Through all those years of taking care of my family, I had forgot how to take care of

myself. I pushed my own needs aside for so long that when the day came that I was 'free' I suddenly came to the realization that I was not needed anymore. I was no longer necessary. I suddenly had all this freedom, all this time in the world just for me. For my wants and needs. I should have been excited. Instead I felt lost and scared. I had no idea what to do with myself. I did not even know what foods I liked; I only ever ate what the boys liked. I had no hobbies. No friends. My social circle existed only of the Neighbourhood watch group. The only person I talked to all day was our dog. I had a closet full of clothes only to end up each day wearing the same staple black leggings. Hey! They went with everything and worked just as well as pyjamas! Being a housewife and mom gave me a purpose and

meaning in life.

Change is hard. Extremely hard as I found out. I slowly began to sink into a state of emptiness. My love supported me as best as he could, but as he was hard at work most days, we did not have time to hang out. I craved his company so badly but when he finally arrived home each day, I was not excited to see him. Having wallowed in a state of depression would bring about a change in my mood and the way I acted towards him. I resented his purpose and my lack of it. My relationship struggled a lot and eventually we parted ways in the most difficult of circumstances.

When they say your heart is broken, it is not just a metaphor, it really does break, and it really does physically hurt. I have felt the heartache, pain and sadness of a Million lovers. I have cried enough water to fill an Olympic sized swimming pool. I got the point where I wanted to fall asleep and never wake up again. I slept so much of my time away. I was in such a dark point in my life that I locked myself in our room for 3 months straight and did not come out. I slept so much, hoping to sleep the hurt and pain away, but I woke up feeling the same. I began to spend more and more time on Social Media. Social Media can be a great way to connect with friends and family, but I became addicted. I was obsessed, crazy, fixated, captivated, gripped, dominated. Well you get the point. I was on social media 24/7.

What was I looking for? Answers. Why was my life like this? Why did my relationship crumble? Why did I have no one left? I wanted so badly to heal. I wanted closure. I wanted to fill that void, but the void only grew wider than when I started. During my obsession on social media i was prone to Facebook. I got hooked at looking at other people's pictures and how they portrayed their perfect life. I was so jealous that I hurt and damaged a lot of people. What I thought was justice was just an act of unacknowledged truth that hit me back with a force.

The more I searched for answer the sicker I got. My weight dropped severely. I was 70lbs soaking wet. I survived each day on 3 packs of smokes and

drinking just enough energy drinks to give me substance to keep tapping away at my laptop. This was my life. Me. The four walls of my room and my laptop screen.

Then my life took a turn. Remember that beautiful son I wrote about earlier? He unexpectedly came back into my life. Every mother dreams of that visit, where your arms are wide open, and you are so excited to see your little boy all grown up and all you can do is smile. Instead I saw my door kicked open. My son was scary. He dragged me out of bed screaming and yelling. He was angry, he was drunk, and he was mean. Why is it that one horrible word can outweigh a lifetime of nice words and stay engraved in your mind forever? Why would he do this to me after all I was going through? But out of the confusion his words also resonated with me.

I was done being locked away. I was no longer a prisoner. Basically, I had no door left to keep me in my room! I pulled myself together and I got better. I gave away my laptop and I turned off my phone. I started eating right and going to the gym. I moved away from the home I had known for years and started over in a different province moving back home with my parents.

New Life. New Beginning. Yet still I had that same frame of mind. I was free to live my life however I wanted still I lacked purpose. It was not long before I found myself locked in a new room. Different walls but the same prison. I slept my days away. I had my family and friends around me, but I did not want any of them near me. I felt so alone. I sought out professional help, but nobody understood the way I felt. I visited Therapist after therapist, support group after support group. Watched so many self-help videos and audio tracks but the more I heard the more I became enraged at all the negative detail I was learning. Did I really need to know how others act in order to figure things out for myself? Did I really need someone to tell me what was wrong with me? What I wanted was purpose. Someone

to tell me what to do with my life. The more I learned the less I wanted to live. My mind was a jumbled mess. I tried to escape my feelings and

Reality came to me one day in the form of my Grandma. Why is it that Grandmothers can tell you the awful truth in the bluntest way, yet you can never get mad at them? Because they are always right, and my Grandma was right. She told me I was not ready to leave. She told me I needed to return to my old life. To reconcile with my love and to begin the healing. Once I was healed, I would then be ready to know what I wanted for myself. To find my purpose.

So that is what I did. I reconciled with my love and with my son. I returned home. I sat in the room that was my prison for 3 months and took in every moment of silence. I opened a new laptop, turned it on and erased all my social media accounts. With the stroke of a keyboard I wiped my bad passed away and it felt so good. For the first time in a long time I felt strong. I felt like a new me.

I also knew that my strength could soon go away as fast as it came. I still needed a purpose in life. While I still had dark feelings during this period. I tried to hide it as much as I could. I focused on repairing the broken relationship with my husband. I joined him on work trips, going camping and travelling, focusing of rekindling the flame between us, yet I still found I was battling with myself. Where was my purpose? Why did i feel this way?

There is a saying that 'people come into your life for a reason' and I found this to be so true. As I struggled to manage the relationships already in my life, I was thrown more and more people into my life to deal with. As they say when it rains it pours.

During a work trip with my husband, I encountered a little old lady at our motel. She sensed my troubles and dragged me along on a quad ride up to the hill that oversaw our accommodation. When at the top of the hill she kept moving me closer and closer to the edge. My mind was so jumbled that I thought why this cute little old lady wants to push me over – but she told me instead to just stop and breathe in the air. I thought that was a bit awkward but i did it anyways. During the same trip I met an old man while camping. Busy unpacking and setting up

went on vacation. But the respite was short lived, and the darkness set back in upon my return.



camp, He asked me to help pull his boat to shore. I guess our campsite was the only one with a suitable passage and He recently had hip surgery and was struggling to pull his boat to the water. Maybe that is why that campsite was vacant when we got there.! Then There was a strange encounter at a support group I went to. 10 people had signed up yet only 3 people showed up. The lady who ran the group had not even bothered to show up. After 30 minutes one person left, and I was stuck staring at a young fellow who did not even needed the support. As I was biking home after that weird support group experience, I lost my way. I took the wrong path and lost all my bearings. My cell phone was dead. The battery pack on my bike was dead and I found myself at 11:30 PM walking back up a freeway in the cold of the night. At the top of the road stood a shadowy man. I seriously thought I was going be dead.

My final encounter or so I thought was the lady from my Mom and Dad's church. Who taught me Vietnamese? My parents thought it would be a good idea for me to freshen up on native language as it had been a long-term

dream for me to one day retire to my home country. I was excited by the prospect as I thought it would be something to lose myself in and distract me from my hurt and pain. But I was also a little wary about the motive behind this suggestion and felt this may also be a ploy to convince me to join their church. I did not grow up believing in religion. My Mother's family is Buddhist and my Father's family is Christian. How can two people of different faith marry? As I said before – the struggle was real. Arrange marriages are now a thing of the past. I felt torn between two faiths, I opted to not follow any. I was firm with my parents that I only wanted to learn Vietnamese and that I was not interested in having their faith pushed on to me. My parents backed off and I started to see the tutor firm in my belief that this was a language lesson only. Little did I know that my tutor could see another path for me – a way to learn not only the language of my home country, but to also experience a new language – the language of God.

One day as we sat and did our lesson, she could sense the pain in my heart and witness the sadness in my eyes. As we practice saying sentences to each other in Vietnamese.

She stopped and said, *'tell me what is wrong'*.

I was so focused on the lesson that I repeated the phrase back to her in Vietnamese.

She said *'no were not doing a lesson now, Tell me what's wrong. I want to hear your story.'*

I poured my heart out and told her of my journey. All my feelings of loss and isolation. My tutor listened intently and then shared her own story with me. My heart, body and eyes opened as she told her tale. Even though our stories were so different she

felt the pain and hurt that I was going through, she knew the steps I had taken as she too had taken these steps. I could feel her words grow within me as she spoke and as the words grew louder and louder, I was blinded by a flash just like that of a camera. Right then and there. At that moment I finally could feel him, I understood him, and I saw him.

He was always with me. Every time I felt alone, I had always had him with me. God was there in the form of my son, who drank and drove to my house, who had the courage to break down my door when no one else did. To give me the attention I needed but could not accept. He bathes me, held me and he saved my life. He was there in the wisdom of my Grandma. He was there in the form of the old woman who knew I needed a friend, who showed me how to stop and breathe. He was the old man with the boat who showed me the joy of helping others, who in turn rewarded me by gifting me the only fish that he had caught that day, a fish that I shared for supper with my husband. God was that lady at the campsite next to us, that was tired from her camping trip with her children yet still helped us in our time of need by providing ice and water allowing us to clean our fish and keep it cold. He was the young man who showed up to the group when no one else did, he was so intrigued by my story and the desire to help that he sat with me and talked for 3 hours straight. He was the shadowy figure at the top of the hill who guided me back to my parents' home. He was there in the form of my tutor, who listened, who shared her own experience and who spoke the words of God.

I finally realized all this time when I wanted to end it all that it was the lord who was keeping me alive. That emptiness and lost inside me was gone. When I felt like I had no one and no direction. I had him and he was giving me direction. My life was not as empty and meaningless as I thought, and I was no longer scared of changing. He was changing me everyday. At last I finally knew I had a purpose.

A lot of us go through life blaming others for everything that happen to us. That was me. I blamed the actions of my love for our failed relationship. Instead of working on making things better I wasted time focusing on where it went wrong and comparing our relationship to others. I blamed my son for damaging me with his words, when it was his words that freed me from my prison. I blamed my family for confusing my faith and lead me to a path of not believing anything. I blamed everyone for not being

sensitive to my needs and wants after I had done so much for them. I forgot that having them in my life was the proof that they cared.

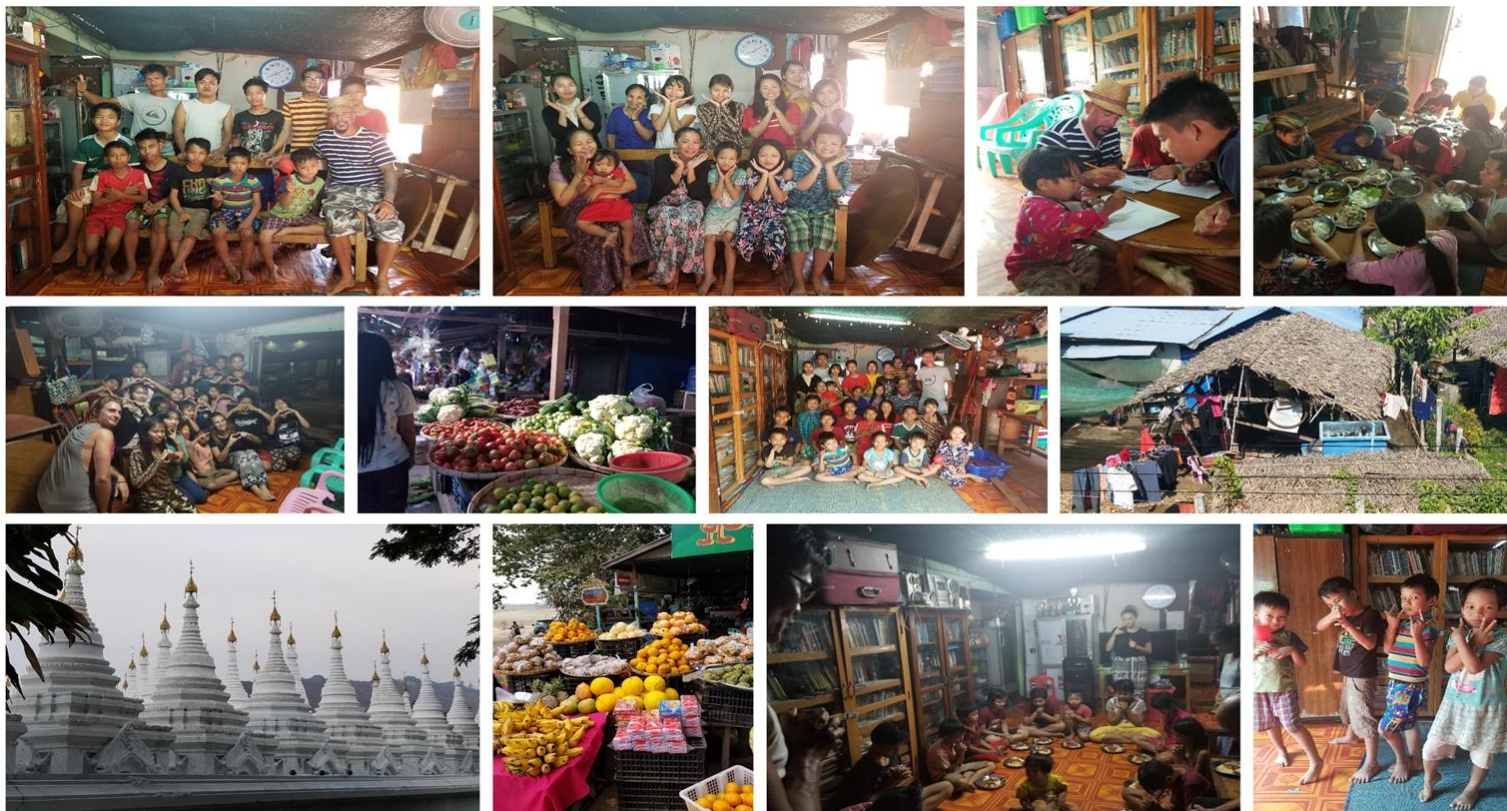
No one was to blame for anything but myself. I did not want to stop and see why all this was happening. Now that I have God in my life the one main thing, I have learned is that you can't change anyone, but you can change the situation around you. Great things happen when you do. Like anyone, I still have my struggles, I still have my ups and downs. But now I know that each struggle is not the end. I continue to grow and get stronger as a person and I now know that I am no longer walking this journey alone. I said earlier that when it rains it pours, but this is the type of storm that comes full force and when it stops you can smell the freshness of new growth, the sun shining brighter than ever before and everything is so clean and new.



Christian friends from West Kelowna living in Bali

My journey with God has taken me many places throughout the world. I recently travelled with my love to Asia landing in places where teaching of the Lord was forbidden. Amidst the wreckage of hate and chaos we found the face and words of God in the form of other Christians just like us. Everywhere we went we were well taken care of. we could only think and imagine of wanting something and the Lord provided for us each time. I had thought my life meant nothing, but God showed me how wrong I was

Our journey also took us to Myanmar. There I met a loving couple who ran an orphanage caring for 20 to 30 kids in a communist country where the teachings of Christ are forbidden. Even in this environment the word of the Lord continues to grow evident in the children of all ages and sizes reading, learning, singing and speaking from the Gospel.



When I first picked up the Bible I started reading from the beginning. At first, I could not even understand the words and I stopped. In all honesty the only part I have fully read is Genesis and I continue to return to the messages contained within. I feel that is why God planted me within this village in the chin valley. It was the purest form of God's creation. It was magical. Just like I had read in Genesis. This was the garden of Eden. No electricity. No smog. No pollution. What you wanted to eat you had to go search for it. No per-made plastic packaging. Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. A meal is shared in the company of neighbours within the village not by the light of a TV or cell phone. A whole village with only the teaching of the lord. Every night I would lay in bed and just be in the moment of where we were – in the cradle of the Lord's hands.



Pathway to the chin village in Burma



One night the village threw a huge festival and we were asked to speak on stage about the Lord's words.

Hold on.

WHAT!?!

That was our reaction. No way could we speak in front of hundreds of villagers when we ourselves were so lost and damaged. We are not famous! We are no Messiahs! We had no rights to be up there. I had only read the beginning of the Bible – I was far from a scholar. Were they crazy!?

The villagers stared at us blankly as we made our way to the stage, my heart was pounding but the Lord gave us strength to speak our truth. We spoke from our hearts. Whatever came to our minds we said it? We spoke about how they want what we have, and how we want what they have. At the end of the festival we felt so drained but in a good way. From the speeches to the food, the dancing and the performance and singing. The love of God was evident everywhere. We slept so well that night. Each new day was like a whole new festival. We went from village to village speaking our hearts and sharing the truth of God and meeting new friends who joined us on the way. Just like in the bible. The disciples grew and grew in numbers

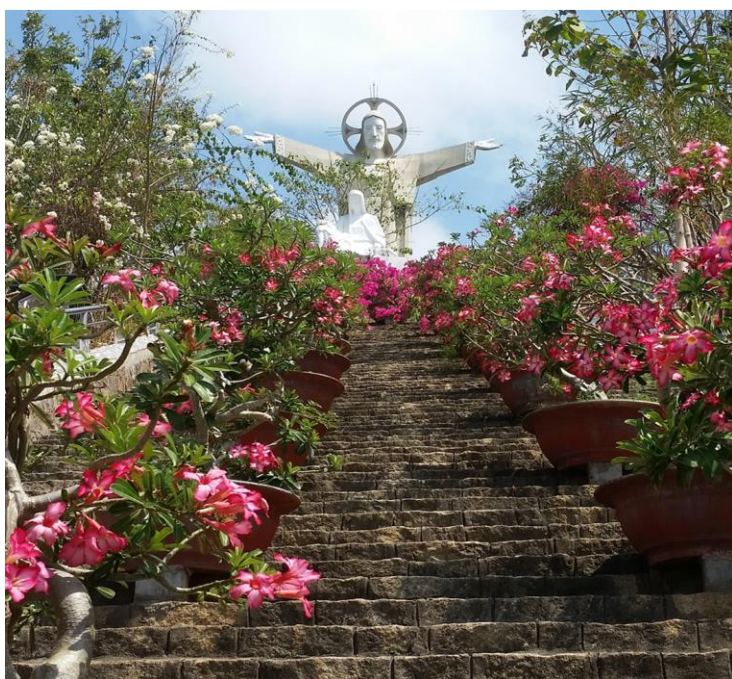


quickly.

Eventually the day came where we had to return home. When you head back to the reality of work and normal life you start to wonder why did all this happen and where do you go from here? Well that answer is now so easy for me. Trust in the Lord. Surrender. Going from believing I had a non-existent life and no purpose. To travelling across the world. I am so fortunate to have had the opportunities that God has presented me with. Helping with an Orphanage. Speaking the word of God on stage to villages who have never seen a cellphone. It really does at times feel unbelievable.

I felt like I was helpless and alone and the Lord appears to me in the face of all these people. I felt like I was of no use to anyone and the Lord presented all these people in need who I can help. I lost my role as a mother and he gave me 30 children all at once to love and for them to love me. When I felt less than human and did not want to live, he gave me a whole village of people who wanted to hear and learn from my story. When I pushed so many people in my life away, he gave me family and friends who still stick beside me. He has given me fellow Christians to help guide me throughout and non-Christians who have joined me into my journey together.

If you ask my why I want to get Baptist – my initial response is why wouldn't I?

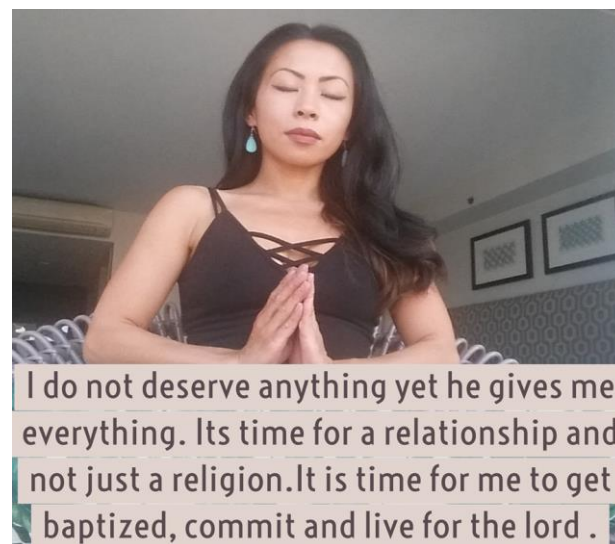


I want to learn and change my ways for someone who has taught me how to be fearless, strong and independent, someone who makes me feel like waking up each day and putting on those beautiful clothes in the closet and ditching those black leggings. I want to dress and look like a million dollars even though I do not have a million dollars because he has made me priceless.

The bible teaches us to better ourselves through stories, facts and lessons. Each time I open it, I find myself relating to one of the characters or an event that mirrors something in my own life. Where once I had darkness the Bible now allows me to smile and share in a moment of

relief.

Throughout all my struggles and sin, I know getting baptized will not rid me of them. In fact, I want to remember them all. It reminds me of how I do not want to be and what I don't need to do. It shows me that for once in my life its not everyone else around me that controls my life, it is the lord and I want to follow in his ways. In the end I know that there is a place of peace, happiness and meaning for us all. Its not a dream it is called **Heaven**. What happens from now till then I really do not know. I may struggle again or I may get even stronger and better but all I know is that no matter what happens that little girl in the fishing boat was kept alive for a reason and that non-



existent life I thought I didn't have well if I didn't have one you wouldn't be reading this. Amen! :)