

THE REASON

how I discovered a life worth living



Lacey Sturm



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In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



To Brittany Wigand. Thank you for caring about the passerby behind the music you fell in love with. Your story always reminds me of how God can turn my worst moments into glory in the lives of others, if only I will let him. It's with you—your encouragement and your story—in mind that I wrote this book. I believe in you so much.

To the one like my teenage self, who is a breath away from finding the beauty of a life worth living.

To whoever needs to know that God loves you and has a plan for your life, and though you will die one day, he doesn't want you to die tonight.

You are important, loved, and prayed for.
Love, Lacey



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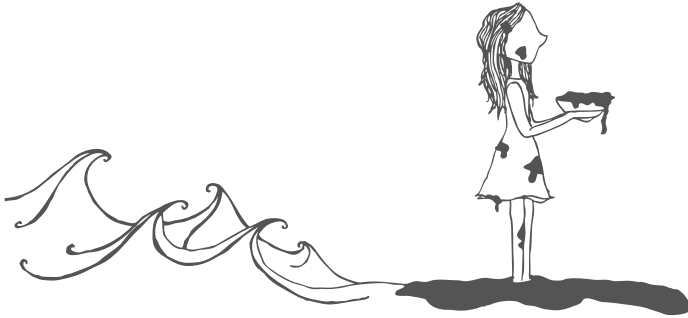
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It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong,
but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about
with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered
us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud
pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by
the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Foreword

There is a state of being that, unfortunately, countless people have fallen into. A place so empty that words fail to accurately express the hopelessness felt in the soul. The person feels completely and utterly lost. Besides the heartbeat keeping the body alive, all else seems dead.

The end.

But that very “end” can become a new beginning where a brand-new structure rises out of the gloom of emptiness.

There have been countless stories about this mind-boggling change of existence, and my life happens to be one of them. I cofounded the rock band KoRn in the early 1990s. My success exceeded way beyond what I ever could have hoped for. But my failures totally shattered all of my accomplishments, and I was left to waste away in a prison of drug addiction, depression, and despair.

I was spared for a *reason*.

The heart of a human being isn't only an organ that pumps blood through the veins. The heart is at the very core of who a person is.

It has the capacity to experience the bliss of heaven.

It has the capacity to feel the miserable hollowness of hell.

Lacey Sturm has experienced both of these extremes, and she has been given an incredibly important platform to help turn our generation around.

I've known Lacey for a few years now, and her story will always be one of the most jaw-dropping life transformations I've ever heard. Each time I hear her story I can feel her hopeless pain and sorrow as she reached the point where she gave up on life after trying to satisfy herself with the world's antidotes, which only left her soul in agony.

Lacey was spared for a *reason*.

Pain is an interesting experience we all have to go through. In this race of life, pain has the power to drag us down and ruin the rest of our lives—or it can be used as wind under our wings to lift us to the glorious heights of destiny. We've seen it countless times.

Parents of a murdered child fall into a lifetime of depression—or they start an organization in their child's name to help others.

A rape victim becomes an alcoholic to deal with her pain—or she starts a program to help other rape victims get past the horrors of their experience.

Lacey has yielded to the process of pain turned into power. She has lifted and inspired so many people, male and female, and this girl is barely getting started! Lacey is a true poet and songwriter who speaks the language of the heart. Her soul is a hope magnet for countless other souls slipping away into nothingness like she once was. I am proud to call Lacey and her husband, Josh, my friends, and I can't wait to see

Foreword

the results of this book for decades to come. A book with this much substance will, without a doubt, live on to change lives for generations.

I truly believe Lacey's story has fallen into your hands at the perfect time. Dive right in and find out the reason.

Brian "Head" Welch
(Korn / Love & Death)



This Today

I wasn't supposed to wake up today.

My bedroom here feels huge compared to the other places I've lived. It feels too big for a girl like me. Maybe one day I'll move into an old van and feel more at home. Over there is the poster of my dream car, a Volkswagen camper, hanging alone on the big wall across from my bed. An empty Ben and Jerry's chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream container filled with dried flowers sits on my dresser. It's from my "friend date" with Jacob. At the time, I secretly hoped he would break up with his girlfriend of three years, the one he fought with all the time, and fall in love with me. That way we could stay up late together, reading Robert Jordan epic fantasy novels.

Memory boxes fill the underside of my bedside table. One is filled with the evidence of my first love, Ryan—notes he

gave me in between classes, the lighter I used to burn a smiley tattoo into my hand the first time we got high together, his copy of *The Vampire Lestat*, the book he was reading the first time I saw him, the one that distinguished him from the other seventh grade boys.

I have a drawer full of pictures that my little brother and sisters drew for me. They remind me to see the beauty in every day, to keep going.

A bass guitar sits in the corner wearing a fuzzy purple strap called Purple Haze. My backpack beside my closet door is filled with books and a script for a play I planned to audition for next Friday. I had tacked my ticket to next month's Pantera show at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum to the wall beside my bed, next to a picture of Dimebag Darrell I had torn out of *Guitar World* magazine.

This is how they would have found my room.

Apparently I had some dreams, goals, things I valued about my life. But if I'm honest, none of the things I thought mattered were really important to me. If they were, then I don't suppose I would have planned to kill myself yesterday.

But now, here I am. I'm here waking up. I'm rising to a new today. And this today looks and smells different to me. I'm just lying on my bed looking around, noticing all my stuff. But it feels like I'm really opening my eyes for the first time. On *this* today I forgot to hate that I woke up again, like I have done every morning for years. Something lingers in this room. It's something real and full of meaning.

What will replace my hate? Is it this lingering thing I feel all around me?

Today I'm fully alive—for the first time. And I don't want this freedom from my hate to go away. I want it to stay. I want it to soar. And I want to soar with it.



From Shadows

Shadows remain. Daily we war with our own hearts, pushing down the hurt, pain, disillusionment, disappointment, bitterness, and betrayal. God's brilliance, however, compels us through the shadows. We long for it.

Timothy Willard, *Home Behind the Sun*

1



THE REASON I Lived

*M*y mother lay unconscious, covered in blood. Blood smeared her face and hair and soaked her entire gown. Granny screamed for help.

The nurse rushed in and tried to calm her. “I know it looks bad right now, but she’s going to be okay.”

Eventually the nurse admitted that they had almost lost both of us, but they were relieved to stabilize my mother. They continued working on me, trying to help me breathe properly. But the whole scene was a mess, and this bothered my granny. And when Granny’s bothered, you know it.

She cussed the nurse out.

“Why didn’t you clean her off? Someone get some water and towels and clean the blood off my baby! I’m serious! Who

treats people like this? I'm reporting this whole hospital! Get my baby something to clean her off!"

The nurse tried to calm her again.

"We've stabilized the mother, but we need to care-flight the baby to Miami, and we need someone to go with her."

Granny pointed to my sixteen-year-old mother and yelled at the nurse, "THAT IS MY baby!"

Now she began to cuss the whole hospital out.

"How in the world do you treat people as badly as this and still have a job here? I thought y'all were supposed to be helping people. She looks like y'all have been trying to kill her! How come nobody has even wiped the blood off her face and her little hands? I ain't leaving her with y'all! Look at her! No one is taking care of her!"

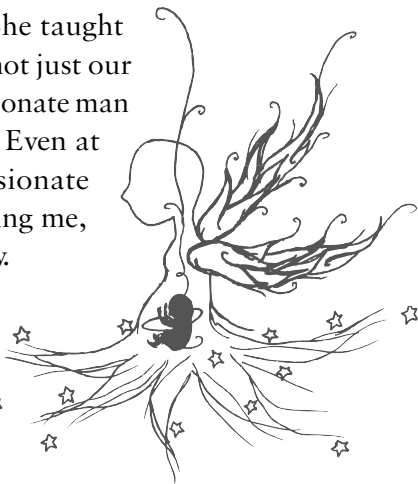
That was my granny: a striking twenty-nine-year-old woman with long platinum blonde hair that fell in beautiful heaps down her back. Her dark lashes curled long and elegant against her brows and revealed her deep blue eyes. Her penetrating gaze held steady and true, even when she laughed. Beautiful and unafraid, she had a passion for her loved ones.

My mother is her firstborn daughter. Still today, she calls my mom her baby. We are all her "babies" in her mind. Back then my granny would stand in a room wearing baggy sweats and drinking a Coke, saying nothing, just minding her own business—and capture a room with her beauty. That's the strange thing about physical beauty. It makes people notice, wonder, and doubt themselves. It can be a lonely gift.

As a child I looked at my grandmother the way a young girl would look at a real live princess. I hung on her every word. When she said my name or looked in my direction, I blushed and felt honored. When she praised me, I felt like everything was right in the world. She taught us to fight for what we believed in, to do whatever we could to help rescue

whomever needed rescuing. She taught us to treat strangers this way, not just our loved ones. She raised one passionate man and three passionate women. Even at sixteen, my mother was passionate enough to risk her life delivering me, a child expected to die anyway.

And as my mother fought for me to live, not thinking of herself, Granny now fought for my mother, knowing that no one in that hospital loved my mom like she did.



It was suggested months earlier that my mother not risk having another baby. They didn't think it would be safe because of complications she'd endured while delivering my brother Eric just ten months earlier. Not only were there medical risks for both of us but it was also complicated because of what she had been through with my father.

He was a young, handsome Native American man. My mother said he was daring, protective, and had the most beautiful heart. But that was only when he was sober. The Hulk-ish person he became after a typical night of drinking landed him in jail many times. By the time my mother was pregnant with me, an extended stay in prison was just around the corner for my father. In the future, his stay in correctional facilities would bring him salvation in a few different ways, but at this point in time it only left my mother on her own, at sixteen, with one child and another on the way. So the doctors suggested she abort me.

My mother ignored their suggestion.

My granny continued to argue with the nurse until finally they sent me on to the hospital in Miami alone. My mother

laughs now and says, “You were on tour from day one.” Before I left for Miami, the doctors didn’t hold out much hope. I was born two months premature, and since lungs are the last thing to develop, I was having some critical issues. They feared I would die at any moment because I couldn’t breathe correctly.

Three days later, however, those same doubting doctors declared me a miracle. No one could explain why—no explanation, no real reason. I was breathing fine and could go home.

When they finally handed me to my mother, I was small enough to fit in the palm of her hand. She said I looked like a little monkey because I was covered in hair. I was so fragile she was scared to hold me, let alone allow anyone else to. She was afraid I’d break. Maybe this was why she was always so tough on me. Maybe she wanted to teach me to be much stronger and more unbreakable than I looked.

More to Overcome

Not long after I went home with my mother, I caught whooping cough. I once again struggled to breathe. I wouldn’t take a bottle. I began to lose weight.

My mom took me to the emergency room, where doctors and nurses worked to bring me back to health. Eventually they wanted to transfer me to another hospital in a different town. My mother became distraught at this suggestion.

My mom had been trying to work things out with my dad. She was in love with him. She wanted him to be around to know his children. When my granny announced that she and her husband were moving a state away, my mother resolved to stay put with my father. She clung to the vain hope that perhaps having two children would curb his appetite for alcohol

and violence. But now, with her mother gone and her love in jail again, she was all on her own.

Putting me in a different hospital a town away for who knows how long now presented more stress than just worrying if I was ever going to get better.

“But, what about my eleven-month-old son I have at home? I don’t know anyone in that town. Where will we stay?” she asked.

The people at the hospital couldn’t give my mother any answers for that. After asking around she finally found some friends who were willing to help out. It was a difficult thing to leave her son for an indefinite amount of time, knowing she would be so far away from him. But it wasn’t nearly as difficult as what would come next.

We stayed so long in the hospital that my mother lost her apartment. Now she had two children and no home. I was getting better but had to be force-fed with a feeding tube. It can be fatal to force-feed a baby if the tube accidentally goes into the lungs instead of the stomach, and that can happen easily. My mother understood the risks, and felt uncomfortable trying to do it exactly right on her own. She knew it was an important part of my survival. So, with a heavy heart, my mom agreed to place me in foster care. There was a kind couple who were willing to take me home and give me the special care I needed. But by the time she went to pick up my brother, she had no place to live with him. It was hard to find someone willing to take both her and her son in until she could get on her feet again. She went over the desperate situation with some of her friends, and they gave her some logical advice.

“Listen, maybe you just need to think about making sure your son has a stable place to stay. There are lots of loving families who can’t have kids that would take care of Eric with joy. It might be the best thing for both of you if you took

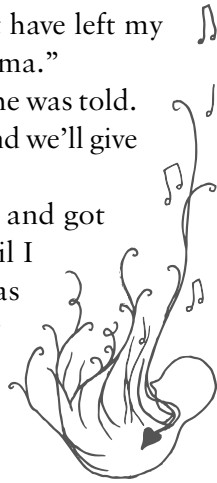
him down to the foster care offices and let them try to find a good place for him.” This was actually very loving and good advice. It was sensible. My mother did not want to give up her son. She had just given up her daughter! It was all too much. But she didn’t know what else to do. Overwhelmed, she reluctantly agreed.

Her friends took her to drop off her only son. But that night, she couldn’t sleep. All night long she wrestled with her decision. In the morning she was back in the foster care offices pleading with anyone who would listen.

“Look, I made a mistake. I shouldn’t have left my babies. They need to be with their momma.”

“Well, find a job and a place to live,” she was told. “Keep your residence for three months, and we’ll give your children back to you.”

Eventually she met the requirements and got Eric back, but they wanted to wait until I was able to eat on my own. Finally, I was fat enough and well enough. Though my foster parents offered to adopt me, my momma, the state, and God decided she would be the one to raise me.




Cause and Effect

I survived, like we all do, against the odds. I should be dead. I should be a statistic. I shouldn’t be scribbling all over this page trying to describe the indescribable. So what happened? Was it chance, an accident, or dumb fate that I’m here now, a thirtysomething rock-and-roll mom looking back and collecting pieces of hope to give you?

I don’t believe in fate or accidents. I believe in cause and effect. Behind everything lies a cause, a reason. Why does the

sun rise? Because the earth revolves once every twenty-four hours. Why do we read? Because, some say, we don't want to feel alone. Why am I alive, writing to you? Because I want to tell you that miracles happen. Because I want you to know how precious life can be. Because I want you to know how valuable you really are. Because the world will throw lies at you—lies aimed at your heart, aimed to kill. I choose not to listen to those lies anymore. Cause and effect.

You and I,
we sparkle
with reason,
a cause,
a plan.



Imagine the scene I described above—the blood, the profanity, the risk to give birth to a child all the smart people thought should be aborted. Now place it all in the hands of a God who cares and has a plan for each person. In the chaos, God's plan was working. His plan for me touched other people—they saw me live and not die; they saw the miracle.

Our lives stretch out like shafts of light reaching into the lives of everyone else. You and I, we sparkle with reason, a cause, a plan. We're like a giant web of light and meaning and sadness and wonder.

What if you and I lived like we knew this?

What if we lived with the confidence that comes from walking in the bright of day?

What if we treated one another with the love we desire for ourselves?


What would happen if we understood how our lives touch every person we encounter in this world?

I strive to rest in the fact that I am made for a purpose. Knowing my life has purpose gives me confidence. When I live in the light of that confidence, it can empower you—it can make you confident as well. It can help you see yourself in truth and live unafraid, and when we live unafraid we live in the light of love. For true love casts out fear. That's how we

sparkle; that's the web of light I see stretching from heaven into my life, into yours.

Chances are, if we lived like we knew this, our lives would shatter much of the sadness and pain that are so common in our broken world. I like that thought.

Death has to wait
because I have a
song to sing and
so do you.



I entered this life barely breathing. But now I'm singing my song out loud, and I'm shouting the lovely sounds of life and grace and hope. I almost died, but death has to wait because I have a song to sing and so do you. My song sounds like the

healing of a soul and the rising of life. What does yours sound like?

I'm no longer just barely breathing. I'm living in the cause and effect of a life seized. I have reason to breathe. Before I disappear into the sound, I want you to know The Reason.