



Hi,

My name is Anna Lee from Sydney Australia. I consider it a privilege getting a chance to come to the US to attend the YDC conference this year. (I am happy to share my life testimony with DuPage coworkers because the representative of DuPage UBF, Shepherd Jeremy Hajek, attended the Australia Summer Bible Conference, 2006, served CBF and visited my house and had eating fellowship with my family. I am thankful his humble servant-ship. I am thankful to God who blessed him to establish a beautiful house-church with Missionary Susanna Hajek.)

The title of my life testimony is

Deny yourself and take up your cross

Key verse - Luke 9:23

“Then he said to them all: “if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

I was born to Missionaries Aquila and Priscilla Lee on the 14th of May 1988.

My parents left Korea as missionaries to Australia in August 1995. I adjusted to the environment fairly quickly, and started a new life in Australia. Not many things stand out throughout my younger days. From a very young age the things in the Bible, the identity of Jesus and what he had done had been drilled into me and I took it as a fact. I neither questioned nor really understood its implications on my life and just simply believed. Yet when I look back I didn't truly believe. It was just my family's way of life.

In high school although I went to a Christian school it my first time being exposed to many people who did not believe in the bible or Jesus. I started to question the things that I had thought to be the facts of life. Year 9 I started to realize that I didn't really want to just believe because my parents believed and I gave up my Christian faith for a life defined by the things I wanted and wanted to achieve. The word “deny” was foreign to me, my life was going to be all about me and my success. I thought it would be a carefree life without limitations and boundaries I thought surrounded the Christian faith.

I started playing tennis and aspired to becoming a professional tennis player. By some kind of fate I met a retired tennis player from Korea who had come to Australia for a year. She started living at my house as a live in coach. I started getting intense training and plans and expectations were high. I would train for a year and I would go back to Korea with my coach and start playing tournaments, but I wasn't motivated enough or in plain English lazy. I often skipped training thinking I'll try harder tomorrow. But soon a year passed by and my coach was gone.

This was half way through year 11. I had nothing left. All my great plans and expectations of becoming a tennis player had slipped through my fingers. I started blaming myself, my lack of discipline and self control. My parents tried to encourage me to get back into my school studies

that I had neglected for 2 years. I tried to study but I couldn't let go of my dream. I couldn't study I couldn't do anything. Every day I woke up wondering why I had bothered waking up to such a purposeless life. Although I had pretty much failed year 11 I had somehow been able to continue onto year 12. I was saddened to see my lack of ability and determination to continue trying. I feared failure. Around this time I was referred to a counselor by my English teacher who was worried about me and started getting treatment for depression. Year 12 went by quickly with no apparent improvement in my marks and in the end I gave up on going to university the next year and decided to go to TAFE to repeat the HSC. I thought by repeating it I would be able to erase my past mistakes and was determined to achieve the best marks in the HSC.

I thought that if I tried my best that I could achieve the result that I wanted, but this was not the case. I had no real purpose for wanting to achieve my goals. What was the point of studying; getting a degree, earning money etc when in the end it would amount to nothing? I had no hope for my future and fell into a pattern of fatalistic thinking. Around May of that year Missionary Christine came from the US and my mum encouraged me to have bible study with her. I declined many times but through her persistence I finally agreed thinking "I just have to sit there". As I started studying the bible I started to see the truth in the words of the bible but I was still confused as to what made a person a Christian. Was it by the religious activities one participated in or was it by their good works? All this time I didn't really know if I was a Christian or not. Through the study of 1 Peter 1 I was able to see that if I had living hope through Jesus I was a born again Christian. It was then that I decided that I was a Christian. It was at this point in time that I realized that I no longer wanted to live a fatalistic life or fear failure but I wanted to have hope in God's plan for my life. I had living hope in the death and resurrection of Jesus, by which freedom from sin and death had been won.

Though I had become a Christian it was hard to change my habits and my way of thinking. As they say "old habits die hard." I tried to study but again and again I would fall into despair at my inability and continued to try and do things by own strength. The exams approached quickly and I wasn't prepared. I forced myself to sit the exams but I knew I hadn't done too well. Many people prayed for me to get into university and although my marks were insufficient God somehow enabled me to get accepted into UWS to study Food science.

Although I didn't get into the course or the university that I had wanted to go to I was still thankful that God had allowed me to go to university at all. I applied myself to my studies and set my sights on transferring to Sydney University where my parent's ministry was based. But God taught me that year that just because God called me and I decided to follow him it does not mean everything will be handed to you on a platter. God wants me to work hard to achieve his purpose for my life. God was gracious enough to let me transfer out of the country into UNSW.

Finally I was here. It wasn't Sydney University but it was definitely better than UWS right? It didn't take me long to find my footing and adjust to the new university and there were significant improvements to university life in terms of travel time, facilities and the fact that I was studying the course I wanted to study. The 1st semester flew by without too many glitches I guess... (Minus failing a subject). Everything seemed to be going great. But at end of semester 2 through a series of unfortunate events the night before 2 of my major assessments I was unable to complete my tasks. That night I tried to drop all my subjects to defer my studies I didn't know what to do. I cried out to God asking why he had let these things happened to me. I thought my darkest days were over after the HSC boy was I ever wrong. I didn't know what to do. The next day I went to see my course facilitator to defer my studies. But when she saw me crying she had pity on me and tried to convince me to continue my studies. I wasn't convinced. I couldn't see myself continuing this semester. The shock just made me numb and nothing registered.

She made an appointment for me to see a counselor to talk through everything and though the counseling itself was no real help God gave me an extension on my assessments and pushed me into continuing the semester. I struggled for weeks, months and I tried to come to terms with the events of the semester. I had no one really to talk to about the problems as the people involved had asked me to keep it a secret from everyone. With no outlet for my stress and anger I turned to smoking. I didn't want to turn to God. I was angry with him for letting all these things happen to me. I had started to go back to my old self. My mum noticed straight away and started getting really worried. She kept asking me what was wrong. She even went as far as to ask me if I had a boyfriend and had broken up with him. As the end of semester exams approached I was in no state to study. I took the exams and when the results were released as I expected I had failed 2 of my subjects. I came to realize that I was set back yet another year. While I was still at uni studying most of my high school friends had already graduated. I became bitter at God for placing me into such a position, I forgot all the ways God had blessed me in the past. I started hating the people who had caused all this to happen in my life.

I asked God why I had to suffer so much for another's sin. I was just a by-stander yet I felt like a scape goat. Now that I look back its quite funny because that's exactly what Jesus had to do for me. He died on the cross not for his own sins but for the sins of the world. The Christian life is not about me living out a comfortable life. Carrying the cross is not simply completing tasks set out before you. My mum likes to remind me that one of my main crosses is study. But study doesn't define life. Many things in life seem very important to me like achieving good grades, looking pretty, finding a husband, graduating and getting a job etc. But this reveals a life centered on me. These maybe important but in light of the kingdom to come these temporary things seem so trivial God is probably laughing at the fact I spend so much time thinking about these things. Our lives are all inter-linked and life can be defined as an interaction with people in our lives. When Jesus calls us to a Christ centered life he asks us to prioritize the salvation of his people. To Jesus carrying the cross was to sacrifice himself to unite us once again with God. This should not change with us. We all share a common calling, a common goal and ultimately a common cross. Carrying my cross is to deny my needs and my comforts to be able to bear the mistakes of others. Carrying the cross means to love others more than myself to genuinely care for their spiritual well-being. To carry my cross is to lovingly care and serve people and bring them back to God. That I have learnt is the Christian life and it is something that Jesus calls me to struggle with daily.

The most difficult challenge in life is dealing with sin. The Guilt of sin, its consequence and impact it has on the individual and others around them. The only being able to deal with sin is God.

It is only through knowing Jesus that I can gain strength not to be overcome by this sinful world but to rule over sin and subdue it. It is only when my own relationship with God is strong enough that I won't crumble in the face of sin, that I can be a true shepherd being able to help others deal with their sin. If I cannot help myself how can I possibly think to help another? It is like "the blind leading the blind." Although previously I have detested the word discipline I have learnt through all this that it is only by discipline and training that I can build a strong relationship with God upon which I can rely on.

God has shown me that to deny myself is to place my spiritual needs above and beyond the physical and temporary needs to discipline myself so that my own relationship with God will remain strong though all situations in life. To take up my cross is to place other's needs before my own to serve them and bear their faults and weakness. To shepherd them back to God. (May God bless me to learn Jesus through the upcoming YDC and accept God's vision and God's calling upon my personal life and go back to Australia as a prayer mother! May God bless

DuPage UBF to raise many disciples and send them to Australia as missionaries!)

One word: Deny myself and take up my cross