

# **BARRACKS 28**

BY ERIC LUDY

*special limited edition manuscript*



# BARRACKS 28

The couple crazy enough to still hope

*the twenty-year retrospect  
of my extraordinary marriage*

ERIC LUDY



BARRACKS 28 (*manuscript*)  
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## **Dedication**

For Leslie, of course.



## **Special Thanks**

To those courageous enough to love the Truth, humble enough to yield to it, and strange enough to follow it wheresoever it should take them. This special sneak peek edition of Barracks 28 is right down your alley. You have proven gracious enough to stand with us in and amidst this battle for Truth and generous enough to show your solidarity in and through the giving of your financial resources. Thank you. I hope and pray that this humble little book reminds you that our God's grace is abundantly revealed, not just through the blessings we receive, but even more so through the difficulties we face.



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# A WORD BEFORE

I wanted to give you a peek inside Barracks 28. Forgive me up front for the brevity of the tour. One of the privileges of living in Barracks 28 is that I am kept surprisingly busy, and so, unfortunately for this book, I don't have much time for being a tour guide.

Just a little FYI, Barracks 28 was where Corrie and Betsy Ten Boom stayed during their imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp, as detailed in the book *The Hiding Place*. And Barracks 28 has also become Leslie's and my personal name for our marriage, which today, I'm thrilled to announce, has just turned twenty years old. So, I wanted to celebrate by having an open house.

No, we don't actually live in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Giving this name to our marriage is merely symbolic, as you will understand after reading this book.

You will quickly notice how snug this Barracks is. As you read this book, you will probably think to yourself that all the memories captured within these pages could not possibly have fit into our twenty short years together. But, alas, they have. It's tight quarters for all our many adventures. But, though sometimes it is difficult to find a bunk for our next major event to cram onto, we love the intimacy that the smallness of the room affords.

Before we enter, there are a few things that are important to understand about Barracks 28 prior to stepping foot inside it. For many, a great love story would be described as a peaceful hermit's cottage hidden in the vale of ease and comfort and wholly untouched by the struggles and battles of this life. And whereas, I agree, that such a love story would be outwardly appealing, it would be missing something. It would be missing the one necessary ingredient that makes love stories grand. And that one ingredient, though it is often deemed the enemy of romance, is in fact, the great advocate of it.

Difficulty.

Leslie and I have had more difficulty in twenty years than most marriages would have in twenty lifetimes. And as a result, we are possibly the happiest couple on earth.

You see, “difficulty” is not the damper to beauty, but the catalyst to it. Like the torrential winds that make the oak tree strong, or the heat and pressure that make the diamond shine. Difficulty is the great gift to a marriage. It's fragrance is not of the Bath-and-Body works variety. And though it is an acquired taste, it is the most supremely delicious odor to the soul, especially when that soul chooses to welcome it instead of run from it.

Leslie and I do not live in a peaceful hermit's cottage. But that isn't to say our life isn't marked by an extraordinary peace. We don't live hidden in the vale of ease and comfort. But that isn't to say that our life isn't marked by the most divine heavenly comfort. And, no, we do not have a marriage untouched by the struggles and battles of this life. And yet, I wouldn't trade places with one other man in all of world history. I don't want a cozy romantic hideaway. I want Barracks 28.

What you are about to see is precious to me and Leslie. It is our life. For a couple that is always smiling, always laughing, and always singing, I realize you may have expected something quite different than a roughshod barracks like this one. There may be a bit of an acclimation period for your souls as you enter. I mean, it's Eric and Leslie Ludy, the authors of *When God Writes Your Love Story* and *When Dreams Come True*. You expected flowers, rhymes, and the endless whispering of sweet nothings. And you probably didn't expect...um... Barracks 28!

How could we, you ask, name our love story, *Barracks 28*?

When you step into our humble abode, you will see why we call it Barracks 28. We actually live in a war zone.

We, the Ludy lovebirds, are...well...(how do I say this?)...we are...ahem...not liked by everyone. For those of you that are fond of us, you may not understand this. After all, we are both known as warm, smiley and caring people. But Leslie and I constantly hear the cacophony of threats, jeers, and taunts outside. Over the years, false accusation has been spray painted on our marriage like graffiti, and betrayals have shaken our little abode like bomb blasts.

Now please don't think that this is some kind of creative plea for pity. There is no need for pity. We love our life.

This is the very stuff that has made our love story so amazing. We love our cozy marriage in this midst of all this danger. We cherish our Barracks 28.

Leslie and I love the stories of the suffering Christians before us. Wurmbrand in Romania, Esther Ahn Kim in Korea, and the Ten Booms in Holland are some of our favorites. We have read and reread these stories,

and hundreds like them. We cherish the triumph that flows out of difficulty when Christ supplies the grace.

Leslie and I have a special spot in our heart for Betsy and Corrie Ten Boom. Their story, though it may not be the most dramatic of all the amazing tales, to us, has been probably the most endearing.

Leslie and I named our marriage after these sister's actual residence during World War II. For they really did live in Barracks 28 at the actual Ravensbrück concentration camp in Nazi Germany. It was in this death camp that over 50,000 women were ruthlessly killed. And it was in this place of difficulty that Betsy and Corrie demonstrated to Leslie and me how to transform the challenges of life into the true strength and beauty of life.

Ravensbrück was a place of despair for tens of thousands of women who had nothing to hope for in life but a miserable death. But it was said that those who lived in Barracks 28 were crazy enough to still hope.

That simple statement means so much to us. "The people crazy enough to still hope".

In the midst of a generation where the heavenly beauty of married love is nearly lost, Leslie and I desire to be known as "that couple crazy enough to still hope".

This is not just a short tour of our last twenty years, but it is a tribute to the one who has shared this beautiful battle-worn barracks alongside me.

I wrote this for Leslie – my love, my bride, my companion, my dearest friend, my confidant, my constant encourager, my girl.

Corrie Ten Boom was not alone in Barracks 28. God gave her Betsy.

Leslie, you have been my Betsy.



# THE FLEAS

When Corrie and Betsy first arrived in Barracks 28 they found that it was infested with fleas. Not only was it the famed death camp, but it was the famed death camp with millions of fleas flourishing in their very barracks.

Betsy took Corrie by the hand and softly asked Corrie to thank God with her for Barracks 28. At first, Corrie balked. To thank God in such circumstances seemed impossible. But they began to thank God for everything that He had done.

They had each other.

They had miraculously been able to sneak in Corrie's Bible.

They had a bunk together.

They were still alive.

Then Betsy thanked God for the fleas. But Corrie could not join in that prayer. She refused to thank God for fleas.

But Betsy pled with her to remember how God can take everything and use it in our lives for His good. And, then, after a bit of pondering, Corrie finally complied and thanked God for the fleas.

Leslie and I were married three weeks when the same test came our way.

We had each other.

We had the Word of God.

We had a bunk together.

And we were very much alive.

But, what do we do with these fleas?

I had spied out an amazing house on a gorgeous lake in Michigan. It was used as a bed and breakfast during the summer months, and so during its off-season, a young couple like ourselves could actually rent it out. It was a great situation.

But there was one problem. It wasn't really winterized.

We arrived in early January of 1995 straight from our honeymoon. We were flying high and madly in love.

And right around our arrival date at the lakeside lodge, someone else moved in. I guess they didn't realize that a newly married couple typically prefers a bit of privacy. There were seven bedrooms in the place, but they didn't take one of the bedrooms. They moved into the fireplace.

It was a family of raccoons. And come to find out, 98% of all fleas that survive through the winter, survive by living symbiotically with raccoons. Whether that is true or not, it sure did explain our flea infestation. If you walked across the wood floor of the vast living room in white socks, at any given time you could count seventeen fleas on your right sock alone.

We had fleas, thousands upon thousands of them. We had raccoons beating against the piece of plywood that covered the fireplace. We had sub-zero temperatures for weeks on end.

And we had... fun.

Now, I need to admit that we approached the fleas at first more like Corrie than like Betsy. It took us a bit to thank God for the gift of those fleas.

Corrie and Betsy found that it was because of the fleas that the German officers left Barracks 28 alone, which allowed them to hold nightly Bible studies without threat of danger. It was the fleas that protected this sacred time of fellowship every night.

For Leslie and I, we found the fleas supplied us our very first trial. And after twenty years, that first trial is still very precious to us. It taught us how to work together through difficulty. It taught us how to thank God in all circumstances. And it taught us how to laugh together.

Leslie, our love was so innocent back then. We didn't know what challenges lie around the corner. And it was a good thing. For we didn't care about what was to come. We knew we had each other and we had Jesus.

And Leslie, I will never forget discovering your spunk in that time. You are a fighter. Through all our adventures, you have never stopped swinging your sword. And, oh, how I cherish your resolve to see Jesus come out on top in each and every circumstance.

Dear Lord, thank you for those fleas.

# THE LACK

In that first year of marriage, Barracks 28 was not yet named Barracks 28. Technically, we didn't have a name for it, but if we had, we certainly would have referred to it with nomenclature much more innocent and sweet.

I was twenty-four, Leslie was nineteen. We were young, innocent and naive, and struggling to understand things like insurance premiums and personal tax returns.

We had been searching high and low for another place to live. But, the \$300 a month we were paying for our flea-infested lodge by the lake was hard to beat on a budget like ours.

I had a job. It didn't pay a lot. But we had something. But a fixed income is exactly that. Fixed.

Our original budget included enough to rent this \$300 place by the lake. We had maybe a \$200 buffer each month, but those of you who are married know how likely a buffer is to still exist come the end of the month.

Everything we looked at in the newspaper was out of our price range. The closest thing to our \$300 current rent price, was \$550. So we went and checked the place out. It was situated next door to a known drug dealer in the area and, let's just say, there was a reason why it was the cheapest place for rent in all of Kalamazoo, Michigan. There was no way I was going to leave my wife there everyday while I was at work.

The next best option came in around \$700. It was small. But it was clean. So, we snagged it up.

We didn't technically have the money for it. But, as a new husband, I had to do something to move us into a more viable living place. After all, a house full of raccoons and fleas is certainly fun, but not ideal for the long haul.

This move to West Main Street was amazing for the two of us. Leslie fixed up the place the way Betsy fixed up Barracks 28. She made it... heaven.

Without a dime to spend, she somehow made it beautiful. It was ours. And it was without fleas.

But this move to West Main Street also came with some new challenges. We had absolutely zippo in the bank, in our pockets, or in our catch-all drawer in the kitchen. We used everything we had to make it through each day.

Corrie Ten Boom used to tell the story of her vitamin bottle. While in the concentration camp, Corrie somehow had a Bible and a vitamin bottle. These were her daily sustenance. And neither emptied throughout her entire time. As strange as it may sound, her vitamin bottle never emptied. Like the widows oil, it never ran dry.

Twenty years of marriage has shown me something very similar. In Barracks 28, I can testify that neither the Truth of God's Word nor the vitamin bottle have ever run out.

But to say it was easy to have nothing in the bank nearly every day for our first year of marriage, wouldn't be honest. It was extremely difficult. As a man, I yearned to supply richly for my new bride, to adorn her in jewels and to insure that she was clothed in the most posh clothing. But, I simply couldn't do it. I was a romantic with a limp. I had big dreams, but God had given me something precious. He was teaching me how to give my wife something even better than earthly substance.

I'll never forget the great test of 1995.

Our friends were coming in from Colorado for a visit. It was the first time any of our friends from Colorado had come for a visit since we got married back in December. It was a big deal.

Somehow we paid for the gas to and from Chicago to pick them up from the airport. We arrived back at our little condo and were filled with such excitement. They toured the place and we showed them the makeshift guest room. They asked for an ironing board to spruce up their clothes. We obliged. Everyone was smiling. And then it happened. Leslie grabbed the hot iron to put it away, but it was still on. She burned her hand.

It wasn't really a terrible burn, but it needed some ointment.

We had eight dollars to our name. This was the money that we knew needed to carry us through this entire week with our guests. And our guests had no idea that we didn't have any way of feeding them.

Without hesitation, I hopped into the car with my friend Ryan and we headed off to the drugstore to pick up some burn medication. All eight dollars was spent on a singular bottle of ointment and the gas needed to get to the store and back.

Gulping, I hopped back into my red Camry and began the drive back to our snug little condo on West Main.

On the trip home, a policemen noticed that my right front headlight was out, and pulled me over. He gave me a ticket and said that I wouldn't need to pay the \$100 fine if I got the headlight fixed in this next week and had a policeman sign off that the work was done.

Gulping, I started back up the car and drove home.

Leslie and I clung to each other that night and prayed. It was a desperate form of praying.

The fleas were a test. But this constant niggling ache of having nothing was an entirely different sort of trial for our marriage. But, like the fleas, it brought us together.

Corrie and Betsy used to share the same pillow in their Barracks 28 bunk. They didn't do this because it was more pleasant, they did it out of necessity, so tight were the women packed inside that building. Corrie and Betsy's noses would often be touching throughout the night, and they shared each other's breath.

This is our marriage. In many ways, you could call our marriage a shared pillow and a shared breath. In nights like this, Leslie and I learned to breathe our prayers in unison, and often in tears.

It was the following day that I picked up the mail. In the mailbox was a letter from Leslie's Aunt Pat. A financial surplus had come into her life and she wanted to share a bit of it with us. There was a check for \$100 inside that envelope. Startled and bewildered by the timing of this strange gift, I held back the tears, walked through the living room, past my house guests, and found Leslie in the kitchen.

I tapped her on the shoulder and silently pointed to the letter. I unfolded it for her to see the check. And together, in the sacred silence of that moment, we shared the joys that only those that share a common pillow and a common breath can fully appreciate. Tears streamed down both our faces.

That same day, our dear friends, the Staples, had invited us over for a barbecue. They wanted to meet our Colorado friends and so, with joy we drove to their house in our red Camry.

Doug Staples, the father, overheard some kerfuffle about Eric being pulled over last night by a policeman. He silently slipped out the door into his driveway and looked at my car. The next day he went into town and bought the parts and then called me up on the phone.

"Eric," Doug had said, "It appears that I have the parts to fix your Camry

here at my house. Why don't you four come over for dinner again tonight, and I'll get things fixed for you."

Only God can turn empty pockets and an impossible situation into such a picture of His faithfulness.

Leslie, we have shared a common life and a common breath for twenty years now. And all I can say is, thank you for allowing me so close. Thank you for breathing the breath of Heaven alongside me.

And thank you for being willing to live a life of dependence. I'm not a rich man in a material sense, but I have found that material riches is not the secret to lasting love and marital bliss, but that the secret is simply having Jesus.

# THE PARALYSIS

I'm a guy who likes to have things figured out before I do something. I'm not in the least bit impulsive. In fact, I think I've done three impulsive things in my entire life.

Moving from Michigan back to Colorado at the close of our first year together presented yet another trial. Not having a lot of money had forced me to depend on others in the Body of Christ for help and assistance. We had different pieces of furniture that we moved out with us from Colorado. But, in the lakeside flea-infested lodge we certainly didn't need furniture, and then, in the tiny condo, we certainly didn't need much furniture. So, instead of sticking these pieces away in storage unit, our furniture was strewn about southwestern Michigan in three different locations. So, when it came to packing up our stuff and moving, the task was a big one.

I wanted to do all this in an organized fashion. After all, my name is Eric Ludy and I like to have things figured out ahead of time.

But, in this situation, like the fleas and the empty pockets that proceeded it, Eric didn't have a lot of options but to trust God.

The problem is, I didn't trust God in this situation. I don't think that I even considered asking God for help. My strength has always been systems, processes, and organization, so I took it upon myself to try and solve the situation. I rented a Ryder truck, emptying my pockets once again. We had just enough to pay for the necessary fuel, one hotel stay in Iowa, and a few snacks along the journey. It was going to be tight. But, I could do it.

We did make it back to Colorado, but not without casualty. The casualty was inside of me.

After that trip, I lost my joy. I had always been the smiler, the happiest man anyone had ever met. But something in this trial broke me down.

I had survived the fleas. I had survived the empty pockets. And so, you

would think that I could have also survived the Ryder Truck packing experience. But, I didn't.

After stressing, complaining, tying down, rushing, breaking, muttering, and generally making a fool of myself. I finally closed the door to the Ryder truck and locked it. I leaned against the side of the truck and sighed. I was frustrated. I was even mad. Mad at what? I'm not sure I could have told you. But, in my opinion, things shouldn't be that difficult.

Difficulty to me was still a negative idea. It was a dark specter, and something to be feared. And as a result, I fought it. I kicked at it. I complained. And like the stiff-necked Israelites in the wilderness, I was making a bad decision.

After I had crammed everything we owned into that truck and let out a heavy sigh, I ventured back into the house to see Leslie.

As I opened the front door of our condo, I saw it. If my gaze had been a movie camera, it would have zoomed in on it with ominous music playing in the background. It was my barbecue grill. Just sitting there on my back porch. And there was not a single square inch of spare room left in the truck for it.

I gave in. Anxiety had been knocking all day long, begging to come in and take over my life. And, well, after that miserable day, I guess I felt obliged to say "yes". And it came in. It came in and nearly destroyed my life.

I collapsed onto the floor unable to function. I lie there motionless, strangely paralyzed.

Leslie came running over to me wanting to know if I were alright. But I couldn't speak. I couldn't do anything.

This proved to be a multi-year lesson for my soul. At the time I didn't understand what I had done. I didn't realize that I had yielded to the operation of anxiety in my life. I just thought, that must be the result of dealing with such difficulties.

For the next four years, I was followed by this paralyzing power. To the point that I actually ended up in the hospital at the age of twenty-eight.

Leslie, I'm so embarrassed to think about how poor of a protector I was in that season. I allowed in that terrible power of anxiety into our home. And the unnecessary pains that brought to your unsuspecting soul are too many to count.

But, you, my dear wife, have never once scolded me for those years. But instead, you tenderly and lovingly stood by me as God taught me how to be a man.

And how precious are those lessons. Now, at the age of forty-four, I can stand up and declare that anxiety has no place in my life, in our marriage, or in our ministry.

## The Paralysis

The weights that we carry nineteen years after the fact, are a thousand times heavier, and yet through those difficulties God has taught us the great power of leaping for joy when the downward pressures of life strike.



# THE STAND

It may sound strange that while I was struggling with anxiety, Leslie and I were traveling the world speaking boldly about Jesus Christ. But it's true. I have always been a work in process, and I'm fairly certain I always will be. The fact that God uses unfinished business like us is one of the most startling aspects to the Christian life.

All this "traveling the world" started with a book. In fact, our first book was written during the flea infestation next to lake. In three weeks, while raccoons pawed and fleas hopped about on our socks, Leslie and I wrote down our love story.

People everywhere, all over the world, wanted to hear our story, and to be quite frank, we weren't actually that interested in talking about it. Not because we didn't think our love story was special, but because it was such an intimate and sacred thing to us that we didn't want it to ever lose its specialness.

So, we wrote it down. And we decided that next time someone asked us to share, we would stick a little book under their nose and say, "You can read this!"

It worked...for a while. And then...it backfired.

A publisher got a hold of that little book and gave us a call. I'll never forget that phone call.

"I think this message needs to go around the world!" he had stated. "Would you consider allowing me to publish this amazing story?"

Many times since we have wondered if we made the right decision in saying "yes". For that one singular "yes" has been the source of 90% of the difficulties we have faced over the years.

However, that one singular "yes" has also supplied us 90% of the kindling needed to stoke the fires of our precious marriage.

Corrie Ten Boom's sufferings in Barracks 28 gave her a message to share

with the world of Christ's great love even in the darkest places. Writing down our love story has given us the ability to know what Corrie learned in Barracks 28 and to recognize Christ's great love.

It was around September of our first year of marriage that the invitations began to come in. They started with a trickle and then that trickle turned into a flood.

We had absolutely no interest in traveling around and talking about love and relationships.

But, our personal feelings on the matter didn't seem to have much weight. God had His hand pressing against the small of our backs. And so, we began to speak.

Our first international tour happened in the summer months of 1996. We headed to Australia. The interest there was big. And a twenty stop tour was quickly put together by a Christian leader who had heard us speak at a family conference in Colorado.

The fleas, the empty pockets, and the Ryder Truck debacle were small trials next to the size of the test we faced in this trip to Australia.

Australia itself was beautiful and the people were lovely. The trial came in a new form to us. It was a spiritual battle unbeknownst to us before.

Truth seemed lost inside the church. In every stop along the tour there seemed to be a spiritual void. There was talk of revival every where we went. But it was not the sort of revival that Leslie and I prayed for daily – you know, the kind where humble understanding of our sinful condition leads to repentance, and repentance leads to the seeking of forgiveness and restoration. This particular revival sweeping through Australia in the summer of 1996 was called a “laughing revival”. In this bizarre revival people would laugh, they would bark like dogs, roar like lions, and even slither like snakes.

I was utterly bewildered. Don't get me wrong, I love to laugh. But this was strange and bizarre. And we had near twenty stops in which this behavior was a very real thing.

I was twenty-five years old. Leslie was twenty. And we were about to face the greatest test of our young lives.

As a forty-four year old pastor, standing strong for the Truth is not as much of a surprise. But, when you are twenty-five in a foreign culture – to stand strong for the Truth against a prevailing system is nearly impossible.

But we had no choice.

On one of our first stops on the tour we ran into this strange phenomenon. The pastor sat us down and informed us of the mighty movement sweeping

through his church. He was ecstatic. He assumed I would be equally delighted.

I truly wanted to be. But, I was at odds inwardly.

I grew up with the simple reasoning that the Bible is the only way to determine right from wrong, light from dark, true from false, and spirit from flesh. And, no matter how much I wanted to just agree with this “laughing revival”, in my young conscience I couldn’t.

Leslie and I found ourselves bracing for a storm. She looked at me. I looked at her. We both knew that Jesus must come first. Financially speaking, we desperately needed to sell all the boxes of books we had shipped down to Australia. If we chose to speak on something other than relationships, then we certainly would not sell any books on the theme of relationships.

The pastor had said to me earlier that day that the last twenty-eight times someone had spoken in this pulpit, revival had broken out. He was such a sincere man. I ached within as I listened to him. I just wanted to be quiet. I just wanted to be the guy that all the Australians loved.

Leslie and I together decided that we needed to speak about *true* revival. The knot in my stomach made me feel like I had swallowed a porcupine whole.

I got up to speak that day in Brisbane. I was the twenty-ninth orator to address this expectant crowd. The twenty-eight before me had all stimulated a great response. A response so big, mind you that this church was being covered in the national news. The pressure on me was enough to nearly crush me.

My knees were knocking, my palms were sweaty, and I had a gigantic lump in my throat.

I spoke on “true revival”; revival of soul, repentance of sin, and complete surrender to Christ.

No one appreciated the irony. And ironically, no one laughed. In fact, no one said anything. Every one just sat there stone silent.

I saw Leslie out there as I spoke. That one cherished island of support nearly lost in the vast sea of stone-faced humanity.

I gave my all. I spoke with love, with fervor, with concern. But there were no “amens” and no “hallelujahs”. No one moved. No one did anything.

I don’t know what caused me to do what I did next, but I told the silent audience that I was done, but God was not done. There were those in the crowd that needed to make things right with the Body. There was sin in that church, and I told them I was going to set down the microphone on the top step of the stage and invite them to come forward and confess their sin one unto another.

Even as I was doing it, I couldn't believe I was doing it.

I set down the microphone and walked past the stoic crowd and sat down in the very back of the church.

What followed was the longest ten minutes of my life. I had a demon hovering overhead screaming at me about how stupid I was. The demon kept shouting, "No one is laughing! You have ruined what God was doing here in this church!"

I sat there and sweated as it were great drops of blood. Not really. But, at least I took one forward step in understanding Gethsemane.

After ten minutes of complete silence, a girl arose from her seat and came forward. She grabbed the microphone and then immediately began to sob. She cried and sought forgiveness from her father, who was there in the crowd, for showing public disrespect towards him. The father came forward and hugged his daughter and there wasn't a dry eye in the entire room.

Suddenly the floodgates opened and a line began to form around the church, with men and women yearning to confess, to make things right, and to establish truth in their inner life.

Over two hours later, the line was still long, and a woman arrived at the front and said that she had actually left when I first set down the microphone. But she told God that if this was still going in two hours, then she would speak. Two hours later it was still going, and she spoke.

Leslie and I witnessed this power of truth reverberate through Australia. Everywhere we went, we followed the "laughing revival" and time and time again, God would move me to stand for Truth in the midst of a misled church.

Leslie died a thousand deaths in that twenty-stop tour. The amount of embarrassment for being married to me, would have sunk most women. Leslie realized in that tour that she is married to a strange sort of character.

But you know one of my favorite things about Leslie? She doesn't want me to be normal. And, so, technically, when I get up onto a stage and say something that might not be politically or religiously correct. It's not Eric all by his lonesome saying something kooky. It's actually Eric AND Leslie saying something kooky together.

Remember, we share the same life, the same breath.

Leslie, I am the man I am and I am bold to speak the things I speak, because I have you behind me pushing so hard. Thank you for putting your shoulder into it. And thank you for standing with me and not running away when I receive my public floggings.

# THE CALL

Originally, Leslie and I moved back to Colorado back in late 1995 so that I could go to med-school. That was the plan.

The plan was certainly not to travel the world and speak on love and relationships.

Neither of us grew up in ministry or missionary families. This idea of traveling and speaking was wholly foreign to us both. In fact, we couldn't seem to make rhyme nor reason for why people were so excited to have us come to them and speak anyways.

We both agreed that we would be willing to do this whole "traveling thing" for one year. After that one year was completed, we could then settle back into the life that we were *supposed* to be living. I could go to school for medicine and Leslie could pursue nursing studies and write music on the side.

We were interested in serving and both of us were passionate about sharing the Gospel in whatever career path God directed us into. But neither of us had even considered that God may want us to do more of this traveling and speaking number.

Neither of us liked it in the least.

I remember the day that it began to dawn on me that just maybe there was more to this particular ministry...

It was in the latter months of 1996 and our one year commitment was almost up. And yet, there were ten more speaking invitations sitting fresh in our mailbox.

Leslie and I were trying to figure out how to say "no" politely to a whole bunch of Christians.

That was when I asked the question. "Les, what if...?"

We were driving through her parent's neighborhood. I don't know why I picked that exact moment to bring it up, but that was the moment I selected.

She looked at me.

How could I even say it? To say it and have the answer be “yes” would almost be too much for me, let alone my wife.

But, the Spirit of God pressed it out of me.

“Les, what if God wants us to do this full time?”

Her answer was precisely what I would have expected. She matter-of-factly said, “No way!”

I nodded my agreement. We both tried to be fine with that. After all, you can only live in the midst of bomb blasts and constant spiritual harassment for so long. A year commitment is a year commitment. And that year was almost up. We will be free to pursue our own course. Right?

If I could have heard a thunderous Eric Ludy sermon at this point about total givenness unto the purposes of God, it might have made this process a bit easier. But I still had in my psyche the notion that my life, my marriage, and my future somehow were my property, and that at different times along the journey I allow God to borrow them. But such is the growth process of us all.

This was the wrestling match that Leslie and I faced.

I thought it was high time that we returned to normalcy. I could start making some good money, we could move out of Leslie’s parent’s basement, and we could finally really get on our feet.

I didn’t say “yes” to God that day. Leslie didn’t say “yes” to God that day. The best way of putting it is that we both together, as one, said “yes” to God that day.

We basically agreed, “God if you want us to live our entire lives in Barracks 28 – we say ‘yes’”!

# THE BAIT

I don't know that I have words to describe the onslaught of difficulty that entered our lives due to this course.

The amount of criticism that began to come our way was startling. And we simply were not ready to be the punching bag for people's emotional retaliations. We were built in the classic American format which causes one to thrive when liked and wither when hated. We were withering.

When we traveled, Leslie was almost always sick. Her body was breaking down under the stress of it all. And usually, she was the prime target of people's ruthless attacks.

We witnessed so much hypocrisy in the church. We met all the leaders back stage, which seemed to be such a privilege. Until we had to somehow process the many forms of duplicity that we began to witness.

Oh Lord, what has happened to Your Church?

We began to fray at the edges. We began to wonder if all of Christianity was merely a joke. Does anyone really take the truth seriously?

This was when the devil hatched "The Deal".

It was simple. Satan seemed to say, "Eric, you let go of this message, and I'll let go of you!"

He was speaking my language. I was tired of this emotional battering. I was exhausted in this spiritual combat. And, to be honest, it didn't seem like the Church really wanted this Truth anyway. Call it self-pity, and you would probably be right.

"Okay," I said. "We're done with this!"

We sat down with Leslie's parents to make our announcement. We sat awkwardly in their living room. We had told them we needed to let them know some important news. I'm sure they must have mused that we were pregnant, but our sour expressions must have really messed with their minds.

“Leslie and I are stepping down from speaking and touring.”

I said it. I got it out. Phew! It was done.

Leslie’s parents unfortunately were not quick to let this subject go. They began to ask questions. And eventually I admitted that I’d had a discussion with the devil on this matter.

I’ll never forget the statement from Janet, Leslie’s mother.

She looked at me and stated frankly, “He’s lying to you! He will never let you go until he kills you, Eric. You both know too much and he simply wants you quiet!”

That was precisely what my soul needed in that hour. I needed something to fight. I needed to once again rally around something bigger than my own wants, needs, and comforts. I needed to come to the Cross afresh and remember the shed blood.

I stood up in that living room. I gritted my teeth. And though it was painful, and though part of me still yearned to be free of this difficulty, I made my public commitment.

“We are not going to stop speaking!”

# THE RUSE

My memories get a bit foggy around January of 1999. There is still a latent dizziness that shrouds my memories like a cloud.

By January of 1999, we had been traveling and speaking for just over three full years. We had resolved to not let the enemy stop us, but at that point, we were still very young in our understanding of resisting the devil and wielding the authority of the believer's position in Christ Jesus.

As a result, we were desperately weak and uniquely fragile. And it was right in this time frame that the enemy struck us with a seismic blast.

In late 1998 we had decided that we needed to bring on a full-time tour director, someone who could put together all the details for our many events. We were realizing that we just couldn't carry all the weights of our every-growing ministry.

This was a big decision for us. We didn't have the money to pay someone for this position, but if we gave up most of our resources and cut back in every area of our organization, we felt that this position would begin to pay for itself.

A man was chosen for the job that was highly esteemed by many in the industry. He was a husband and father of two. So, he came with a pretty stout price.

Leslie and I sacrificed greatly to make this happen.

I don't wish to infer any purposeful or conspiratorial guilt upon this man. But this man, whether purposely nor not, set out to destroy us. His actions may have been completely innocent, and maybe he didn't realize he was lying. But we proceeded to set up a sixteen stop tour of the northwestern United States. It was a huge tour with huge venues. And it demanded a lot of cash out of pocket.

Leslie and I borrowed money to make it happen. We knew that the revenues from these sixteen huge venues would make our little investment

on the front end seem like small potatoes. So, airline tickets were purchased, posters and flyers were printed, and tens of thousands of dollars was spent.

But there was one problem. The tour was a scam. It didn't actually exist.

I'll never forget the day when Leslie called up one of the churches to find out some specific details for sending out flyers.

They had never heard of us, and no, they did not have us on their schedule.

The undoing of Eric and Leslie Ludy was in full motion.

Our tour was to start in one week. We were out of money. All was spent. The tour couldn't arrive quick enough.

And suddenly...it was all gone.

Leslie went through the entire tour schedule, calling the churches and finding out the same thing. They had no idea what we were even talking about.

For three years Leslie and I had scraped together our funds to somehow get out of Leslie's parent's basement and into our own place. We had bought thrift store furniture. Leslie had spent two years decorating the place with the magical touch that only she possesses.

For three years, we had built an organization. We had six people on full time salary.

And suddenly...we were at our end.

The pain of this ruse touched Leslie and I deeply. We felt a strong impulse to despair. We wanted to get out of ministry. We wanted to get as far away from Christianity as we could.

But there was one thing that held us. We knew Jesus.

Through this bomb blast, we did actually lose everything. We had to lay off everyone in our organization including ourselves. We had to give up our home, sell our things, and move back into Leslie's parent's basement.

The humility of it was almost more than I as a man could bear.

But, this low point, has proven to be precisely what my soul needed most. I have needed every single one of these tests. They have been the catalyst to my manhood. For God was working a deep runnel of humility into the basin of my soul.

For at the precise time we were moving back into Leslie's parent's basement, we received notice that our book, "When God Writes Your Love Story" had spiked to number eight on the Christian bestseller list. And it continued on that list for eighteen straight months.

While we were at our lowest, God was speaking through us. And such is the story of our lives.

Whenever we have found any measurable success, it seems that it has

been accompanied by events that would remind us of our smallness.

And these events, though profoundly difficult, have worked like a deep tissue massage, driving these essential oils of God's humble Spirit into our souls.



# THE STEP

Leslie and I traveled and spoke to hundreds of thousands of people between the years of 1995 through 2003.

The rule of thumb was, if we traveled and spoke then we sold books, if we sold books then we could survive.

When you continue in Christian ministry just because you don't know how you would survive outside of it, something is amiss.

Leslie and I were both suffering from a spiritual lowness. We wanted to stop speaking, but we were booked over a year in advance, and, well, we needed the money.

In the summer months of 2002, Leslie and I decided that it was time to stop traveling. We were spiritually exhausted, physically spent, and emotionally limping. We knew that God was wanting us to trust Him, and to begin to take steps toward the formation of a discipleship ministry.

And we were also convinced that burn-out and spiritual thinness was not how ministry was supposed to be. But we didn't know what to do other than step away from the traveling and speaking and throw ourselves upon His mercy.

As authors we had received initial payment on our some of our early books. It was enough money to carry us through the writing of the books, but up until April 2003, we had never actually received any royalties.

So, when we decided to stop speaking, we knew we were walking away from our lone source of income.

So, in the summer of 2002 we stopped accepting any more events for the future, leaving our last event scheduled for the end of March 2003.

April of 2003 was to be our new beginning. And if we looked at it on the calendar. It was a month without any money.

Leslie and I held onto God through this transition. Leading up to the date,

we couldn't get another job, because we had a full-time speaking schedule. We couldn't spend time looking for another job, because we had a full-time speaking schedule. But, we could pray. And pray we did.

This trial pruned any remaining need within us to control our life. For whatever reason it is a painful thing to relinquish the helm of life. To trust our precious Lord for everything, is truly precious, but not without its difficulty.

Our God is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord God who provides. This means that He sees our needs beforehand and insures that what is needed is always there and waiting.

March 2003 was a painful month. We knew it was the end of our tour. We had declined every future event. We were finishing. And the money that was coming in from that source would officially stop flowing as well.

In the first week of April something happened that still to this day amazes me.

Our very first royalty check for "When God Writes Your Love Story" appeared in the mail on the 1st of April.

It had taken five years, but suddenly, our revenues on that book had crested the advanced payment we had received. We had money coming in. It wasn't a huge amount, but it was enough.

On the outside, Barracks 28 doesn't probably look that attractive. But on the inside, there is a glow of heavenly warmth and beauty that never goes out.

Inside Barracks 28, Leslie and I know the providing hand of Jehovah Jireh.

Don't ever judge a life by its cover. Under that dust jacket, you will certainly find that the greatest, most romantic stories are found inside the marriages that face the most challenges.

Pray that your marriage someday might have all the necessary challenges in order to be considered amongst the "greats".

# THE FIRST

We had just celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary when our our first child was born. And we named him Hudson for a very specific reason.

His precious life arrived in the midst of this soul tsunami. His labor and delivery was thirty-nine hours of unanesthetized pain, and the East Asia Tsunami that caused the death of over 235,000 people, took place during those very same thirty-nine hours.

His life symbolizes to both of us the grace of God in the midst of difficulty. He is a symbol of life out of death, joy in the midst of a concentration camp.

One of Leslie's and my favorite Christian heroes is missionary Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor endured incredible difficulty, but remained joyful, steadfast, and constant throughout every trial. This example of buoyant strength in the midst of terrible circumstances was one of the most significant illustrations that Leslie and I had ever heard.

And this is what Hudson is named after – great spiritual strength amidst great physical weakness.

We could just call him Barracks 28, but instead, we call him “B” for short.

Hudson's arrival changed our life. Come December of 2004, our ability to laugh had begun to wane. We had always been laughers, smilers, dancers, and singers. But we had begun to take life far too seriously.

Hudson brought that simple childlike wonder back into our souls. And it was his preciousness and innocence that gave us such great strength in the upcoming years when we endured unprecedented exposure to pure evil.



# THE RISK

To go from a public speaking ministry to a non-existent discipleship ministry is like going 95 miles per hour down the Interstate and suddenly turning off onto a country dirt road with construction workers lining the streets telling you to slow.

We entered an entirely different world. But it was a world in which our spiritual lives would spark anew, and the fight for Gospel Truth would ignite within our souls unlike ever before.

In hindsight, I can honestly say that, on a scale of one to ten, our traveling and speaking days offered a difficulty level of two. And seeing as how “difficulty level two” was nearly enough to crush us, how were we going to fare when the difficulty levels began to be turned up to three and four?

Most would think that the devil would have been delighted to have us off the road. While on the road, we were speaking to tens of thousands of people and exhorting them toward the narrow way of the Cross. You would think that the devil would line such a transition with rose petals and dollar bills and even push us off such a stage if he could.

However, to think such a thought is to underestimate the power and significance of discipleship.

To speak the truth from a stage is important, but to train people day-in and day-out in that very Truth is *essential*. And it's a functionality of the Church that the devil is hell-bent on stopping.

In 2003, we began to host small-group discipleship weekends in our own home. Financially speaking, these events made us a fraction of what speaking to thousands was making us. But, spiritually speaking, we were at home (literally AND metaphorically).

By this time we had published six books and because of the significant sales numbers our books had produced, our per book value in contract negotiations

was quite high. That was, until we stepped off the road. The moment we stopped traveling, publishers weren't quite so interested in us.

In one fall swoop we had lost contact and influence with hundreds of thousands of people by stepping off the public stage and we had lost much of our moxie in the publishing realm.

Financially speaking, we were right back in the days of the condo on West Main Street with a broken front headlight. But though we were no longer in stride with common business sense, we were in stride with what the Spirit of God was doing in our lives.

Leslie and I currently have a discipleship training organization called Ellerslie. Ellerslie opened its doors in 2010. But Ellerslie truly began in our hearts back in 1993, even prior to our marriage. It was seventeen years of wrestling prayer for this to come about.

We love discipleship. We are built for it. Sure, we could travel and speak, we could write books, and could write and record music – but those things don't move us the way that discipling and personally training students does. Discipleship is our sweet spot.

That said, nothing has created greater pain in our lives than to personally invest in people's lives. Our choice to disciple instead of travel and speak has led to our deeper scars.

This is because, when you speak from a stage you can be attacked, but the attacks are of an impersonal nature. You don't really know the people you are speaking to. This isn't to mean you don't care about them, but that you simply don't know them personally. But the opposite is true in the discipleship process. When discipling, you share your life, you share your heart. You know these students and they know you.

Therefore, the difficulties that you face in and through the discipleship process are far more acute and painful. And the risk of personal injury is extremely high.

In the third year after our transition off the road, we began a small group discipleship process involving about fifteen all-for-Jesus Christians. We invited them into our house and into our lives. It was a taste of the Body of Christ that Leslie and I had never before had. And it was a truly beautiful and remarkable season of intimacy and deep sharing of lives.

This was the period of time that Leslie and I were developing all the curriculum for the Ellerslie discipleship process. Our study times were invigorating. The richness of conversation in our home was amazing. The name of "Jesus" was always in the air.

As a group we prayed. In fact, we prayed always, with all kinds of prayers. Many times God would ask us to keep praying, and we prayed all the way through the night. The marvel of that season is hard for me to express. But as grand as the triumph was in that season, equally was the pain that accompanied it.

That season brought Leslie's and my first taste of deep and personal betrayal. Of course, betrayal by individuals in ministry had been a companion of ours throughout our first ten years of marriage. But this betrayal was something altogether different.

Don Richardson, the famed missionary to the Sawi tribe in Papua New Guinea found in working with this shockingly reprobate people group that the highest virtue in and amongst their culture, was to betray their closest friend. And not just to betray them, but to eat them. The triumph of such an accomplishment ranked, in and amongst them, as the highest and most esteemed achievement.

As I write this, I can say that Leslie and I have encountered this strange and devilish mentality multiple times throughout our twenty years together. This time was merely the first.

I still have trouble swallowing the notion that individuals actually came to us feigning friendship and yet, the whole while, were conspiring to destroy us. But, whether or not such a notion sounds credible, Leslie and I have witnessed that the spirit that empowered the Sawi tribe is not isolated to those New Guinea islands.

In this stretch we faced the power of Satan up close. We looked it in the eye. We witnessed the devilish grin of satisfaction as it saw us wince with pain and reel in shock.

The purity of those days is so precious. And yet, even now, I struggle to look at those days as pure. In so many of our grand and precious memories during that time, the conspirators were there with us in the room. They were laying their web, planning their move, and plotting how they might spend their thirty pieces of silver.

Please forgive me for being vague in my descriptions of this period of our life. I honestly don't know how to describe what we witnessed. However, suffice it to say that what we went through prepared us to understand the tangible reality of the spiritual realm. There is an enemy, and he is very real.

We gave everything we had to those fifteen Christian men and women. We held back nothing. And yet, in the end, Leslie and I lay in Barracks 28 sharing a singular pillow, nose-to-nose, holding one another close and trembling from the blow.

In those two amazing years we had put together thousands of pages of curriculum. We had spent upwards of forty hours a week for two straight years studying, writing, and organizing. We had never been more prepared to take the next step forward. And yet, as the final months of 2006 unfolded, we weren't sure that we even wanted to utilize the curriculum that we had labored so hard over. And we weren't sure that we could bear to risk opening up our hearts to even one more student for discipleship.

The pain of it all was just too great. And, honestly, we didn't know if we could endure such pain again.

# THE LOSS

The joys of learning that Leslie was pregnant again came as such a beautiful and profound encouragement in the latter months of 2006.

In the midst of this strange attack upon our lives, this joy-filled news was a shot of pure spiritual adrenaline into Barracks 28.

But six weeks into the pregnancy, the pregnancy abruptly ended. We lost the baby to miscarriage.

At this juncture we were twelve year veterans in the marriage business and I was certain that we could walk through this with a stout soul and head high.

But losing a baby is different than being betrayed. It's different than standing boldly in a room full of skeptics. It's different than living life with empty pockets. For some reason losing a baby feels like you lose a part of you.

As the husband, I attempted to push us through this trial with sheer guts. I guess I had the thought that, with all the other things swirling about us, we don't really have time to mourn, to weep, to get all worked up over this thing. I proposed, with stereotypic Marlboro Man toughness, "Let's just move on!"

But God thought differently on the subject.

This little life was not insignificant. It mattered to God. And God wanted this little one to matter to us.

I remember sensing that God was saying, "If you don't weep over the loss of this little one, then who will?"

God's intense love for this unknown, six-week-old life startled me. And it awakened me from a deep stupor that modern ministry had lulled me into.

Leslie and I had started out in ministry with a heart for the poor, the weak, the orphan, and the widow.

But when you are trying to make ends meet, market an event, prepare a message, give a message, sell a book, write another book, do an interview, and pray for the success of it all – it doesn't leave a lot of time for that other

stuff. You know, the kind of stuff that doesn't pay.

That season of traveling and speaking had dulled us. It's like the innocent sheen of Christian givenness had worn off, and we had become professional Christians.

Even the sound of it was revolting to me as God began to open my eyes to this compromise in my soul. I wanted to throw such a garment off of me as if it were a great big hairy spider.

God began to show Leslie and I that the stuff that doesn't pay is at the center of His heart. And though the world doesn't pay for a Christian to do these things, He, Jehovah God, will personally tax the remotest star and the last grain of sand to assist any and all who step forward to do such work. He will back them with all His Almighty power.

To lose this little baby led to a grief beyond any grief we had ever before known as a couple.

But to lose this little baby started something in Barracks 28 that renovated the entire atmosphere. And still to this day, Barracks 28 burns with an inner fire that was ignited in and through that singular loss of life.

# THE CHANGE

Our twelfth anniversary celebration in December of 2006 was possibly the most extraordinary we had ever enjoyed together as a couple. The year of 2006 was marked by more difficulty than we had ever before experienced, and yet, the closeness Leslie and I enjoyed, and the joy and strength we had found in the midst of this pain, defied all natural law.

In December 2006 Leslie and I were awakened. It's as if we returned, full force, to the purity, the tenderness, and simply beauty of our wedding day.

Our faith was bursting forth with new blossoms. Our energy to do the work of the Kingdom was so strong that we were glowing. Songs were in our heart. For the entire month of December, it seemed that we lived in the cloud of glory.

And it was in this month of December 2006 that Leslie and I entered into a new way of living and a new way of thinking. It was in December of 2006 that we finally began to agree with God about living in Barracks 28. We began to praise God for the war zone, rather than grumble and complain.

This simple change of mind regarding suffering, was like flipping a light switch in a dark room. It set us free.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ felt new to our souls and we couldn't stop reading Scripture, for it felt like we had never read it before. It was fresh, living, and dynamically working in our lives.

The Holy Spirit filled us in a manner that we had not previously known. And though we were approaching the end of the most difficult year of our entire life together as a couple, you would have thought that, instead, we were celebrating the conclusion of the greatest season of our lives.

It was a new power that was living inside us. A holy power. And God knew that this baptism of gracious strength was absolutely imperative for us to have in order to survive what lie up ahead.

The year 2007 was marked by extraordinary triumph. It was as if out of an ash heap grew a glorious flower garden.

In late December of 2006 and throughout 2007, Leslie and I entered into a life of prayer. We had always prayed together, but this was different. Our burgeoning prayer life was purposeful and aggressive.

For far too long we had played passively in our Christianity in regards to Satan's attacks. But it was now time to rise up in the strength of Heaven and take a stand against the powers of darkness.

During the year 2007, Leslie and I prayed usually at least three hours a day. Many days we spent even more than this, but prayer was on our breath always. The previous two years we had spent our days studying, writing, and organizing. And now, we were spending our days wrestling to see the realities of Heaven come to this earth.

I became a preacher in that stretch of time. Up until 2007 I was a teacher. But something happened inside of me during this time period that turned my soul into a volcano.

And I remember the precise moment it happened.

Leslie and I were in our special prayer room above our garage, praying. Our term of endearment for this spot in our house was "The Upper Room".

We had spent the past two weeks praying specifically for God to give us his heart. We wanted to ache with God's aches, and we wanted to grieve with God's griefs. It was a dangerous prayer, but one that we knew we desperately needed to pray.

At one juncture in our praying, Leslie walked across the room to where I was and set her hand gently upon my shoulder.

She silently stood there for a stretch of time and then boldly began to pray. And that one singular prayer that she prayed that day still to this day ranks as probably the greatest prayer any one has ever prayed for me.

"Father," she prayed, "put a fire in my husband so that he would pray like a man!"

Of course, when she was praying this prayer I had to ask myself if she had thought that my prayers up to that point were of the girlie variety. But such a thought was quickly lost in the powerful surge of grace that suddenly began to well up within my soul.

From deep within my spirit roared a roar. It was as if a lion bare his teeth and shook his mane. A growl, a power, a grrr began to expand and grow louder within my chest.

And out of my mouth came a prayer. It was a prayer that was foreign to

Eric Ludy up to that day. But a form of praying that has been my constant companion ever since. It was bold, strong, authoritative, and blistering with conviction. It was otherworldly. It was Spirit-groaned.

A man emerged out of that prayer time. I had an entirely new swagger in my spiritual step from that day forward.

Leslie had a totally different husband on her hands. When I spoke truth, my words suddenly shot forth as if coming out of a cannon. When I prayed, my prayers growled with the fierceness of man who knows the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

For twelve years we had given our best efforts to serve Jesus. But in our thirteenth year of marriage we learned the secret of allowing God to do the work in and through us.



# THE ONE

In 2007, Leslie and I were praying unlike we had ever prayed before. And in this process, God began to stir within us a passion for the vulnerable and weak.

We realized that we had a platform of influence, and so we surrendered that to God and told Him it was His to use as He saw fit.

I remember when the idea of “orphans” first came up in early 2007. Both of us sort of looked at each other and knew this was something God was emphasizing.

We didn’t quite know what to do to practically help “orphans”. In fact, we really didn’t know anything about the orphan-crisis at all. So we began to study.

We started reading magazines on orphans, books on orphans, and go to conferences on orphans. And the one thing we realized in and through all of our study was that the problem was a lot bigger than us.

In late March of 2007 we were feeling a pressing to do something. But we had no idea what to actually do. We didn’t have much money, but we had a lot of raw passion.

The next two weeks, we decided, were to be dedicated to prayer on the subject. We didn’t want to do any more ministry work in our own power and our own wisdom. God needed to be the one doing the work. So, we prayed.

When the two weeks were done, we only had one small step that we thought we should take. We decided to visit a local adoption agency and find out if there would be any practical way we could serve them.

We didn’t have money to adopt. And, strangely, we had never really even thought about adopting. So, when we arrived we were simply attempting to gather more data and learn more of how we could serve these precious little ones.

It was during that short visit to A.A.C. Adoption Center in Berthoud,

Colorado that we encountered something. In one sense, we were not prepared for what we saw that day. But, in another sense, we were prepared. We were prepared to say “yes”.

We had heard A.A.C.’s standard presentation about adoptive children, and, to be honest, nothing really tugged at our hearts or gave us any indication of how we might be able to assist. They had told us of the multitudinous families on their waiting list and that it would be near three years in order to bring a child home from Korea or China. So, for Leslie and I, it sure did seem like there were plenty of couples to help out with the problem.

When we were preparing to leave, Leslie asked a simple question.

“Are there any other children?”

The lady answered, “Well, yes, there are waiting children.”

When we inquired as to what constituted a “waiting child”, she proceeded to tell us that waiting children are usually either older children or children with special needs. They were children that were made available for adoption but had been passed over by the families waiting to adopt a child.

Leslie asked what was meant by “special needs”.

The answer to that question caused the lady to give us an illustration. She told us of a little two month old baby that was missing her fingers on her hands, had a club foot, and deformities on her little feet.

She brought out a picture of this little baby’s hands and set it down before us.

Leslie asked what would happen to this girl if no one adopted her.

The lady explained that each child had a window of opportunity for adoption. And if the child wasn’t adopted in that window of time, then they would be institutionalized for the rest of their life.

This picture lying on the table in front of me was grainy and unimpressive in an artistic photographic sense. But it was probably the most precious and beautiful picture I have ever seen. It was a close-up of two little eight-day-old hands. These hands were missing fingers but had cute little thumbs jutting out of them.

I hadn’t even seen this little girl’s face, and yet I loved her. She was an orphan. She had been passed over by all of the eager-to-adopt families. She was in need. Her window of opportunity was almost over.

It was a strange and bizarre experience for my father’s heart and I cried throughout the drive home. I ached for this little one. It was totally ridiculous for us to consider adopting this little girl ourselves. We didn’t have any money and we had two book deadlines staring us in the face over the next five months.

But Leslie was stirred in the same exact way as I was.

We had been praying. And this is what we had been praying for. We had asked God to show us a next step.

And somehow we knew this was it. We knew that even if it seemed an illogical course of action to the world around us, that we must pursue the adoption of this little child.

Since Harper's story is well chronicled elsewhere I won't go into the many miraculous details of her adoption. But suffice it to say, God turned our miscarriage into a story of triumph. For on almost the same day Leslie would have delivered our baby that was lost to miscarriage, a little package named Harper Grace Ludy arrived from Korea into our home.

It was the fastest adoption this agency had ever done since their inception. God taught us on Harper.

We were looking to change the orphan crisis. But such a crisis was simply too big for us to tackle. When there is more than 143 million orphans in the world, what is one couple to do?

So, God showed us that to change the world, we should start with one. We did. And, oh, how precious that one is!



# THE INCREASE

We waited ten years before we had children. And yet, by our fifteenth wedding anniversary, we had four of these little cuties on our hands. It felt like an explosion of preciousness in Barracks 28.

First was little Hudson in December of 2004. Then it was Harper in 2007. The amazing experience and grace we found in adopting Harper led us to engage in yet another adoption (this one an “open-domestic” adoption) in late 2008. And that is when we brought adorable little Kipling home. And while we were still in the hospital with Kipling, Leslie was realizing that a fourth one was one the way. I think the quote was, “Uh, I think I am pregnant.” And precocious Avonlea arrived on Father’s Day of 2009.

Little children test the soul in a completely different way than the various other forms of difficulty we had endured. It felt like we didn’t sleep for four years and that the smell of dirty diapers had officially become our new home fragrance of choice.

Barracks 28 was just Leslie and me for ten years. We had learned to let the trials bring us closer and we had shared in the bomb blasts together. But now, in what felt like the blink of an eye, there were six of us in the Ludy home.

Those early years of children were taxing, yes. But they were also pure bliss.

It was in the three years following Harper’s arrival home that we officially started the Ellerslie Training and also started a church. Oh, and we wrote five books in that time.

Never in our life had we carried so much on our plates, and yet it was a season of tremendous beauty – even lightness.

And never in our life had we endured so much flack as in those three years, and yet, you couldn’t wipe the smile from off of our souls.

The difficulties of our first twelve years of marriage began to multiply like bunny rabbits come the thirteenth year of our marriage. There wasn’t

necessarily just one trial at a time as it usually happened in the first twelve years, but we were now reaching the advanced version of Christian living – and receiving a host of extreme challenges simultaneously.

This was the season when false accusation began to really get momentum against us. False statements had been made about us many times up until 2007, but this new wave of lies was much more pronounced and harmful.

And in this atmosphere of false attack, it seems the devils all conspired to have betrayals, revilings, and financial impediments all jump aboard our lives at the same time, with an all-out effort to sink the ship.

But, there was something different about Barracks 28 now. We were ready for it. Before, these trials had always come as a shock. But now, we were beginning to understand how spiritual battle worked. The quantity and intensity of the attacks was our greatest challenge. Because it seemed to grow in direct measure to how strongly we pursued Christ and preached Christ.

The bait was to slow down, to speak less impassioned, to go easier on the sin around us.

But we were getting into the full stride of Barracks 28. We were rejoicing when we faced trials of many kinds. We were giving thanks in all things. We were rejoicing always. We were leaping for joy when falsely accused. It was truly amazing.

When we reached our fifteenth wedding anniversary in December of 2009, we had a campus, we had a church, we had four kids, we had a truckload of people that didn't like us, and we had more joy than we knew what to do with.

Barracks 28 was lit up for Christmas and there was joyful song ringing throughout the Ludy family.

And yet, around the bend in 2010 we were about to find out, that everything we had faced thus far in ministry, was merely friendly fire. Ellerslie Training was set to launch in late May 2010, and all Hell seemed poised to destroy it.

# THE LAUNCH

The ministry of Ellerslie is a testimony of supernatural provision. Everything about its formation was and has been truly amazing. I will reserve most of Ellerslie's story for another book and for another time, but it would be important to note here how significant the launch of Ellerslie was for Barracks 28.

Leslie and I fell in love around a Bible, a piano, and the vision for Ellerslie Training. The vision for Ellerslie originated even before the two of us exchanged of our vows. It has been a deep part of our lives together – a stirring that never left us throughout all those years leading up to the day we launched it.

We had prayed about it together for seventeen years. In other words, we were standing in agreement regarding Ellerslie even two years before we were married.

But what caused this vision to finally open up was the breakthrough in December of 2006. When Leslie and I started praying aggressively and tirelessly, Ellerslie was one of the primary items that we went after spiritually. We knew God was saying, "Wrestle for it!" And so wrestle for it we did!

When we first began to pursue the campus we had literally nothing in our pockets, financially speaking. To access an entire college campus was a work of such amazing grace. Still to this day I stand in awe of what God did.

Leslie and I would take walks on the Poudre River Trail and there was a certain bend in the trail that offered a panoramic view of the empty college campus. There were so many times we would stop there and make our bold and audacious requests known unto our Father in Heaven.

We finally had a breakthrough in the late summer of 2009 when we negotiated access to the dorms. We knew that Ellerslie Training couldn't function with just dorm rooms, but when we had the chance to access them we took it. We were certain the rest would follow.

The week before Ellerslie launched I received a call from one of our ministry

advisers. He said, “Eric, what’s your Plan B? You don’t have the chapel, the classroom, and the admin building. How are you going to function when the students arrive this next week?”

I told him that we didn’t have a Plan B. We were operating on our Plan A with our only contingency plan being the Second Coming of Christ.

Days prior to the arrival of our very first Ellerslie students, God broke through the amazing amounts of red tape that surrounded the launch of this Training program. We signed the papers and the campus, the entire campus, was ours.

In the months leading up to May 31, 2010, it became apparent that what we were doing was no small thing.

In May of 2010, the birth of Ellerslie, was actually a lot like a birth. The little bundle of innocence had my nose, Leslie’s eyes, my chin, and Leslie’s dimple. It was so delicate and fragile, but so utterly precious to the two of us. And, amidst those first sacred moments, the enemy blew the fiercest winds with the singular desire to knock the cradle from the treetops, so that “down would come baby, cradle and all”.

In March of 2010 we experienced a bizarre blackmail situation, where someone that had our list of pending students declared that if we didn’t pay them a certain amount of money, they would send an email to everyone of our students declaring us fraudulent.

In April of 2010 (nearly two months prior to our first student arriving on campus) a group came out publicly against us declaring Ellerslie to be a “cult”.

We were simply dumbfounded. A cult? You mean, we are like David Koresh and Jim Jones?

I politely responded to this group and asked them how something could be construed as a “cult” when it didn’t yet have any students?

The belligerence and arrogance of their response shocked me. It was as if they were purposely attempting to vilify and destroy our work , even before it started. They weren’t interested in discussing it, examining us in humility and truth – but only in labeling us.

Also in April Leslie and I had a septic backup in our house. It was so bad that we had to evacuate our house for two weeks. Our four little kids were sick and on breathing machines and we were holed up in a hotel room.

And, of course, add to all of that, the fact that we didn’t even yet have access to the entire campus and students were about to arrive.

It was in this time that I learned how to lead. There was an instinct within me towards being passive towards these attacks. “Eric” the voice said, “stick

your tail between your legs and take the beating.” But, I realized that these weren’t attacks merely from flesh and blood, they were weapons of the enemy being fashioned against us to thwart something God had been building for decades.

Leslie said to me, “If you are going to be the president of this organization... then act presidential!”

Act presidential? How does one do that?

I realized that I needed to lead as if what I was doing mattered. I need to think and reason as if this job description was a sacred trust from God. There was no room for self-pity. A strong man was needed – a man of faith, a man of action, and a man of humility – to take the helm and do whatever needed to be done in order to guard and protect this fragile little operation.

I needed to lead this organization the way I led my marriage and my home.



# THE BANQUET

On the night that Ellerslie began, we had a formal banquet – a suit and tie affair. Leslie, little five-year-old Hudson, and I were present to witness this amazing night.

Seventeen years of prayer, wrestling, and inconceivable victories had led to this unique evening.

I remember rising up from my seat, grabbing the microphone, and walking up the stairs and onto the stage. It was a surreal moment. When I turned around to face the audience, I realized that little Hudson had come up onto the stage with me.

I looked out at the crowd of around seventy-five persons and felt as if I were in a dream. And in a wave, it seemed as if I relived my life. Countless memories washed through my mind. It was as if the Holy Spirit were taking me on an instant journey back through those many years of travail. He wanted me to remember. He wanted me to see the significance of this moment.

And then I looked down at little Hudson. He looked up at me. And I suddenly realized that God had chosen a time in which to launch this work that allowed for my eldest boy to witness this impossibility first hand. He was here. In fact, he was even up on stage with me.

I couldn't speak. I had a microphone in my hand, but words wouldn't come out. All that flowed out of me were deep and unutterable sobs. Not being the crying sort, this was a truly deeply spiritual moment in my life. For nearly four minutes I sobbed. My chest heaved and tears unashamedly coursed down my cheeks and onto my suit coat.

Hudson just stood there and watched his Daddy.

God had done it. The impossible ministry had officially begun.

Ellerslie is a ministry that is literally despised and hated by many people. Ellerslie is merely our living room expanded. For twenty years Leslie and

I have lived a life of all-out pursuit of Jesus Christ. And that's what we do at Ellerslie.

So, in a sense, Ellerslie could be termed "Barracks 29". It's the outflow of our marriage. It's like our Hudson – for Ellerslie has my nose, Leslie's eyes, my chin, and Leslie's dimple. It's the same vision for manly strength, the same passion for feminine beauty that we have ached to see forged in our lives. It's an environment focused solely on Jesus Christ and on His extraordinary Cross-work. It's a place crazy enough to still hope that true Christianity can once again stroll onto the stage of time. It's a place crazy enough to still hope that the triumph of the Church would return full force in this generation and that mediocre faith would be taken out with the trash.

If Barracks 28 has endured bomb blasts, it's nothing compared to what Barracks 29 has faced.

Some people love to criticize Ellerslie. They paint graffiti on the outside of it while the sound of gunfire is heard all through the day and night like a faint and ominous threat. And yet, inside this precious Barracks is a cheerfulness that is truly incorrigible.

# THE TWO

In April of 2012 we were introduced to two little babies. These two were unrelated in birth, but closely related in circumstance. They were both struggling for life in Haiti.

We were approached and asked to consider helping.

Since December of 2006, our position on such matters is “Yes, Lord!”

Leslie and I laid the situation before God and let Him know that we were agreeable if this was His Spirit’s direction for our family.

Practically speaking the idea was preposterous. Leslie and I perform the equivalent of around five normal job positions each and carry the moral and psychological burden of around seventy-three.

But, we felt a clearness to move forward and agree to this “preposterous” idea.

Over the next twenty-nine months this singular choice would nearly crush us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Though we still don’t know the motive behind the persons that approached us and asked us to adopt these two children. It does appear that there was a spiritual malevolence at work that was attempting to bait us into a situation that would, at the least, compromise us, but at the most, utterly destroy us so that we could never function in ministry again.

The story of those twenty-nine months deserve their own book. However, as of right now, I don’t think either Leslie or I are prepared to write it. The agony of that process was so great, that just the topic makes my stomach weak.

But those twenty-nine months, though the enemy contrived them to destroy us, have served to make us stronger. The joys that have emerged out of those twenty-nine months is beyond words to describe. But the degree that the enemy pushed downward on our lives, God pushed equally and more upwards. And such is the principle of His Kingdom.

*To the degree a man suffers for Christ's sake, to that same degree (and more) will He supply Grace and Comfort to that soul.*

We seemed to have been specifically targeted by this organization. We were studied, marked, and then strategically approached. They asked us to consider prayerfully assisting two vulnerable children, something which they knew we were inclined to do. And this is how the trap was laid.

They accessed our financials. They accessed our home. They accessed our children. They accessed our trust. They accessed our hearts.

The Sawi tribe, mentioned in chapter nine, was a brutal people that lived in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. The highest form of virtue amongst them was to not just betray, but to eat their friends. This same spirit was actively seeking to devour our lives.

In an adoption process the heart is intimately involved, which makes a couple very vulnerable.

The strategy is to tie a couple emotionally to a child and then hold that couple hostage by means of that heart tie. The malevolence of such a maneuver represents a form of evil that is difficult for most of us to swallow.

In those twenty-nine months we were personally introduced to forms of evil that were before unfamiliar to us. And the pain associated with these evils weighed upon us like a fallen building, crushing our insides and rending our hearts. So deep was the grief and agony through this process that Leslie couldn't eat for often weeks on end. We faced extreme corruption, extortion, and even death threats upon the children we were adopting.

Those moments in which we realized that our ankles were, indeed, caught in a wicked trap are probably some of the most defining moments of our lives as a couple. To realize that someone you trusted is a fraud is one thing. To realize that someone you trusted is not merely a fraud but is purposely seeking your destruction is an entirely different sort of anguish and shock.

There were so many moments in the process of adopting little Lily and little Rees, that screamed "This is impossible. This is a huge mess. Just give up!" There was so much corruption surrounding their adoption. So many papers that were fraudulent. So much information that was unreliable. Who were these babies? Were they actually orphans, or were they stolen from their parents for the purposes of profiteering? All kinds of fears and questions haunted us as we searched for the truth. And the whole while, there were two innocent babies in desperate need of a Mommy and a Daddy. They were being used. And the protective father instinct within my chest was roaring.

Throughout these desperate emotional and psychological struggles Leslie

and I refused to let go of what God started. We kept going back to the beginning. We said “yes” to Lily and Rees, because God said “yes”!

We would not change our mind on this matter unless God did. Until that day, we had to pursue these precious little ones and get them home.

Adoption is expensive, but the financial costs of this particular adoption were so greatly hyperbolized due to both the corruption and the fact that we had to start completely over seventeen months into the process.

These weights would have crushed a newly married Eric and Leslie. And yet, in this situation, it was as if God had built us to walk through this process with an indomitable strength.

We didn't go through those twenty-nine months for a new car, a house, a job, or a position of power. We did it for Jesus. He emptied us completely through the process. We had to let go of everything in order to walk this to its end. It cost us dearly. It drained us of all self-confidence. It exhausted us of all trust in man. And it showed us how to put all of our weight on our Father in Heaven.

And what He starts He brings to completion! And He finished this work!

On October 23rd, 2014, little Lily and little Rees came home. An ocean of tears was cried and a thousand thanksgivings were shot heavenward like blissful rockets.



# THE VICTORY

On this day, December 10th, 2014, Leslie and I mark our twentieth year together.

In those twenty years I have never longed for a different life, a different bride, or a different call. I have never stared across the breakfast table and thought, "If only I had done it different." There is no other girl that could be my wife. There is no other girl I would have wanted to traverse this journey alongside. Leslie is my perfect match.

She is just the sort of girl I've needed. She is valiant in all the right ways. She daily polishes my sword, sticks it in my sheath, and then sends me off to war with a delicate kiss upon my cheek and the words, "Fight like a man not like a pansy". She esteems a man who fights for Truth and she doesn't mind the price-to-be-paid because of it. She cherishes the difficulties that come with the call and she doesn't pine for the life of ease. And she loves the Word of God so much that she will bluntly tell me if ever I start veering off the Biblical reservation.

She's a woman the way a woman ought to be.

I wouldn't trade out my life with Leslie Brooks Ludy for any price. These twenty years have been pure heaven.

We have an extraordinary marriage, not in spite of difficulty, but because of it. We are the happiest family on earth, not because we tell knock-knock jokes at the dinner table, but because we pray as a family, wrestle for God's purposes as a family, love Jesus Christ as a family, cherish His extraordinary Gospel of Grace as a family, and heartily rejoice at all the bomb blasts that rock Barracks 28...as a family.

After twenty years we currently enjoy more difficulty than we've ever had. We have more weights resting upon our shoulders, more haters, and more people that want us dead. But, that isn't the story of our marriage. Our

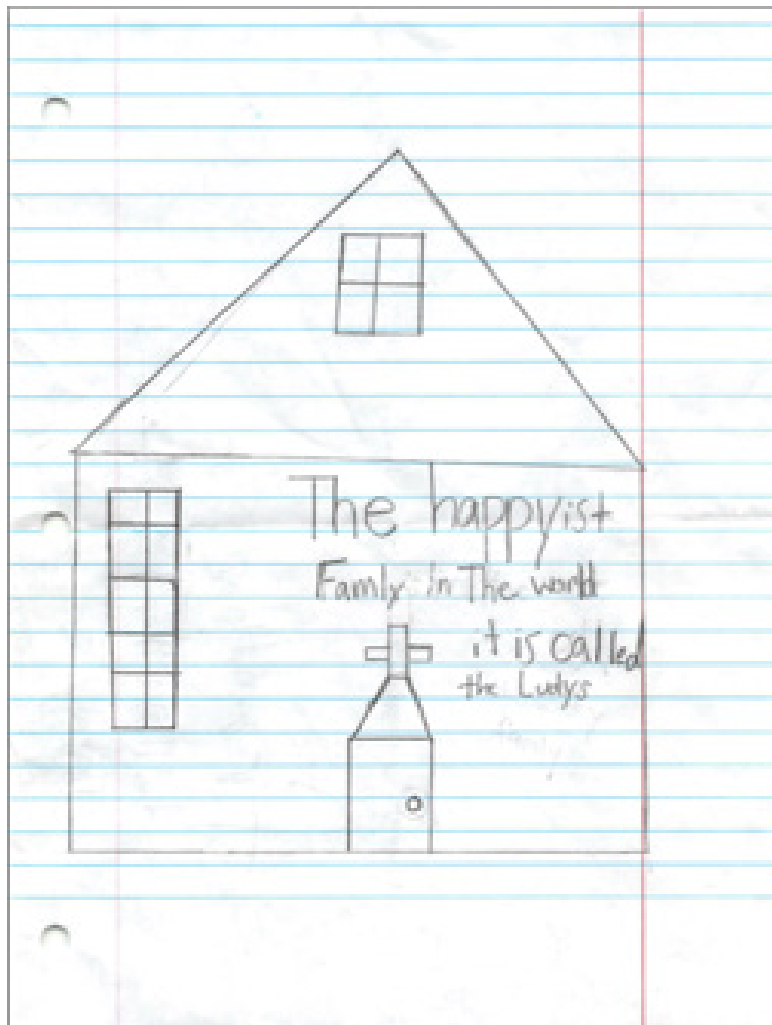
twenty-year-old marriage also possesses more love, more joy, more peace, and more triumph than ever before.

We truly are the happiest family on earth.

And it is because we have chosen the Cross as our Home. We left everything and came to that crazy place where people still hope. We were invited in by our Beloved Jesus and now share in the extraordinary beauty of that Place of Victory. Barracks 28 is simply the Ludy way of saying, "We live in the place where death is made life, where slurs are made encouragement, where pains are made comfort, where nails are made strength, and where loss is made gain."

Little Harper, now eight, drew a picture the other day of Barracks 28.

And, after twenty years of life with Leslie Ludy, I must say, that picture just says it.



Thank you, Precious Jehovah, for the gift of these twenty amazing years. Thank you for Barracks 28.

Though these next twenty years are certain to have their own pains, struggles, and difficulties, please supply our marriage and our home the empowering grace to leap higher, shout louder, sing stronger, and laugh more heartily than we ever have before.

In the midst of a generation that has lost the beauty, majesty, and purity of marriage – may we be “that crazy couple that still hopes”.

*We were like those who dreamed . . .  
Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...  
The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.  
Psalm 126:1-3*

And, what's amazing, is that the best is still yet to come . . .





