

Wrestling with an Angel' Dad finds release in writing about his son's difficulties



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HUNTINGTON — The inspiration for Greg Lucas' book was desperation. The Barboursville police officer and father of four chronicles his experiences raising a severely disabled son with wife of 22 years, Kim, in "Wrestling with an Angel."

"I always tell people the book was not created out of inspiration as much as it was born out of desperation," said Lucas, father to Jacob, 17; Noah, 16; Aaron, 15; and Hope, 5.

All of the Lucas' children are adopted. Jake lives with numerous mental and physical disabilities, including autism and cerebral palsy. He functions on the cognitive level of a 2-year-old.

"The writing began as a personal journal, which served as my temporary escape for dealing with the difficulties of raising my severely disabled son. I used to lock myself in my study and vent in writing.

"Eventually, I discovered that by thin king through some of the most painful moments and writing about them, I was able to step back and see the bigger picture of what was really going on," he continued. "And, in that bigger picture, I was able to see God's grace in all of the difficulty and pain."

The journal, he said, morphed into a public blog — sheepdogger.blogspot.com — where he encountered thousands of hurt people experiencing the same challenges as his family.

Through the blog, Lucas was contacted by relatively new publishing company Cruciform Press and asked to submit a manuscript for consideration. "Wrestling with an Angel" was born, giving Lucas a new venue in which

to chronicle the day-to-day challenges of dealing with a special needs child.

“One difficult morning, I came into Jake’s room to wake him up and get him ready for his day and, as usual, he was very combative. He was covered in feces and urine and we went through the typical fight and physical struggle to get him cleaned up. While I was trying to get him clean, he kicked me in the face and bloodied my lip,” Lucas recalled. “In reaction, I just sat back on the floor and began grumbling at God for all of Jake’s disabilities, wondering why God would allow this to take place and why Jake would not let me take care of him. I was willing and wanting to meet all of Jake’s needs.”

In his frustration, Lucas said he learned a valuable lesson.

“There on the bedroom floor in the midst of feces, urine, blood, sweat and tears, God displayed to me, in the most gentle way, how much He had loved me and how willing He was to care for me,” he said.

Lucas crawled across the floor to his son.

“While he continued to fight me, I simply held him and whispered in his ear, ‘I love you, I love you, I love you ... no matter what,’” he said. “That one incident became an incredible, lasting illustration of God’s grace in my sinful life.”

Lucas said he hopes the book speaks not only to families dealing with the challenges of disability, but families who have never been affected by the stress of physical or mental disability.

“It is a book about coming to the end of your rope, the end of your strength, the end of your understanding and finding that God’s grace really is enough,” he said.

“Wrestling with an Angel” is available online at cruciformpress.com or amazon.com and locally at Empire Books and News at Pullman Square.

