

STILLBORN:

THE QUIET CHILD, SHHH.....

BY: MATT LUECK

Tragic Introduction:

Let me set the scene for you: The date is October 17th, 2006 at approximately 2am. My wife Jen is stirring in a restless sleep because she is 36 weeks pregnant. She gets up to go to the bathroom and I ask if everything is alright. She says that she is fine, that Kai is just hiccupping. I get up at 5:15am to be to work at 6am. Jen picks me up from work at 8am because we have a 9am Doctor appointment for her 36 week checkup. We get to the appointment and the Doctor proceeds to start the ultrasound and she says “move to your side please” “when was the last time you felt the baby move?” Jen tells her on the way here less than an hour ago. Then we hear the dreadful words, “I’m sorry, there’s no heartbeat.”

Just like that our lives were flipped upside down forever. Another Doctor came in and confirmed our worst fears, that our son Kai Easton Lueck was dead. Jen is crying hysterically and panicking. I am hugging Jen, but just too numb from shock to even cry. The doctors tell us that we should go home, calm down and take some time to think of everything that has just transpired. Both Jen and I are thinking, “what is there to think about?” Get us out of here and over to the labor and delivery unit and induce Jen so this baby can be born today.

We are rushed over to the labor and delivery unit of the hospital. While the doctors and nurses are prepping Jen, I make a call to my supervisor at work to let him know what just happened and that I won't be at work for a while. I then proceed to call my parents and tell them. Of course because I am a jokester, my parents think I am kidding, but I can't joke about this people. This is real life, this is a tragedy.

I know that every day has 24 hours in it, but let me tell you, October 17th 2006 felt like the longest day of both Jen's and my life. Throughout the early part of the afternoon, my parents, Jen's grandmother (who was like a mother to her), our pastor, my sister and brother-in-law, the doctors and nurses kept filing in and out encouraging us. Everybody kept telling me that I needed to be "strong" strong for Jen, strong for the baby, strong for my family and strong for our daughter Halia. Strong, I'm thinking to myself, "How can I be strong?" The answer was simple, I can't be. Just put everything in God's hands and let whatever emotions loose. Philippians 4:13-I can do everything through him who gives me strength. At approximately 4:45pm, October 17th, 2006, Kai Easton Lueck was born weighing in at 6 pounds 11 ounces and measuring in at 20 and ½ inches long. Not to shabby for being born four weeks early and deceased.

Now most of you are probably thinking: "Why am I continuing to read this, all it is is tragic excerpts of one man's life." You are probably also thinking, "How can this help me?" The answers are quite simple: they are tragic excerpts of one man's life and this book can help, just keep reading. This is only the introduction and you are already in deep thought.

THE LOVES & JOYS OF MY LIFE

Matthew 3:17-And a voice from Heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."

The age old adage is that nothing brings together a family like a death in the family.

However, I feel that my family has always been a close knit group. We have lost our ways or taken each other for granted for a point of time, but have always rallied around each other when push comes to shove. 2006 was a very difficult year. The year started out with a death in the family. My grandmother on my mother's side of the family, Maryann Phalin, better known in Southeastern Wisconsin as Mrs. Clause. She was a staple in the Milwaukee Holiday Parade as Mrs. Clause and also a staple with the H.C. Prange Company as their Mrs. Clause as well. How fitting that she made it through Christmas and passed away right after the new year during her favorite time of the year. "We love you Grandma."

In the spring we had to get rid of both of our dogs because my allergies were becoming too much to bear, and also one of our dogs nipped at our 2 year old daughter Halia. We did get rid of both of our dogs to either friends of the family or family members. Corgy, a Pembroke Welsh Corgi that we had since he was a puppy and now was six years old had to be put to sleep because he went into a diabetic reaction that was too much for him to bear. We think that he died of a broken heart because we had to let him go. "We miss you little roo."

If you haven't guessed it yet, my family is the love of my life. My wife and children are my life. I will do whatever humanly possible to make sure that they never feel an ounce of pain. Obviously I failed my son Kai, but I would like to think that I am a good man. When I pass on from this world as long as God says "Well done my good and faithful servant, well done" and people here on earth say that I was a loving and caring individual, then I will know I have lived a full life.

Speaking of loves of my life, some of you are probably asking yourselves, "with names like Matt & Jen, where did you come up with children's names like Halia and Kai?"

These are very valid questions. Before having Halia, Jen miscarried at just over 8 weeks with what would've been Halia's big brother or sister. After the miscarriage we were looking at baby names because we knew we wanted children. We decided on Halia for a girl and Easton for a boy. Halia is Hawaiian for "in remembrance of a loved one."

Easton is a baseball equipment company and I used to be a semi-professional baseball player. We came up with the name Kai, which is Hawaiian for Ocean or Sea. We decided to use Easton as a middle name.

Low and behold, on March 18th, 2004 we had a baby girl, Halia Diane Lueck. How fitting it is to have a daughter named Halia which if you remember, means: In remembrance of a loved one. Originally as I mentioned earlier that we chose the name because it was unique and we had miscarried before Halia was born. Now her name takes on a whole new meaning.

We just had a baby boy on September 11th, 2007, and we named him Makaio David Lueck. Makaio is also a Hawaiian name and means “Gift of God,” so does my name, Matthew. So in essence Makaio is the Hawaiian version of Matthew. Also if you notice the spelling, the name Makaio has his big brother’s name Kai in the middle. “You will always be with us Kai, we love you.” I know that the middle name David is common and doesn’t sound unique, however my wife and she believes that it was the Lord telling her to use the name David. My father also said that this little boy is going to be a great leader. If you look in the bible, David was a great leader. Who am I to question God? I will do whatever you ask me to Lord, just keep my family safe and healthy.

1st Corinthians 13:4-8-Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. Love never fails.

READING

This is the point in the book where I am going to give some helpful hints on overcoming such an awful tragedy and adversity. Stick with me people and hopefully I will help or at least inspire you. If I help just one person from writing this book, then I will consider it a success.

When my son Kai passed away, not only was I a husband and father, but also a working adult and full time college student. My point in that last sentence is that I was used to reading a lot. However, I went into full out warp speed reading anything from self help to inspirational books that I could get my hands on.

I realize that everything happens for a reason, but I am also a very strong Christian and realize that God may not always reveal these reasons at the exact time that you want these answers. I did find solace in reading. My dad is a pastor and he gave me a book entitled: 36 Hours With An Angel, by Lindsay Roberts. Lindsay and her husband Richard have gone through great trials and tribulations just to get pregnant, let alone keeping a child. Richard is the son of Oral Roberts the Evangelist and currently an Evangelist and President of Oral Roberts University and Ministries. This book taught me a lot about travesties and how to overcome these adversities. I highly recommend it.

Another book that I read and highly recommend is Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Myers. If you have not figured it out by now, I am a devote Christian. Most books that I

read have some sort of Christian connotations and background. Battlefield of the Mind is a modern day book of GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) and the power of positive thinking with a lot of really good spiritual versus tied into the book. I will get into these versus in the Reference section of the book at the end.

Still another great book that I read was A Purpose Driven Life by Dr. Rick Warren. Dr. Warren really puts our lives into perspective by saying that our life here on earth is just a very small fraction of our time overall. I can't wait to see you again my sweet baby boy Kai. What a day of rejoicing that will be. Save a game of catch for your dad.

All of these books that I read have a few common themes. They are all self help books and they are all based on the most influential book in the world, the Bible.

TOGETHER FOREVER

As I stated earlier that our son Kai Easton Lueck was stillborn on October 17th, 2006. I can honestly say that October 17th, 2006 was the worst day and even still, one of the best days of my life. I have grown to realize that I will be with my son one day again in Heaven. There have been signs after signs that my son is watching over our family and is waiting for us in heaven. One of the first signs that my wife and I received was that after Kai's funeral we went to a local lake that we would always walk near when my wife was pregnant with Kai. We threw two white roses from the funeral into the lake and said a prayer to honor Kai. We were really struggling with Kai's death and even questioning our faith, however we stayed strong. We went back to the lake three days later and said a little prayer for God to give us a sign that our son was safe and that we would be OK and persevere. God led us to a part of the lake that we always walked past, but never stopped. We stopped by the edge of the lake and there floating in the water was the two white roses right next to each other. How incredible is that? I would never have expected to see these roses ever again, let alone together still. Kai, I know you are watching over your family and I just want to let you know that you were a stronger man at birth than your daddy will ever be. Still another sign that Kai is with us forever was that my wife wanted to see a rainbow as a sign that Kai was warm, safe and watching over us from Heaven. Low and behold a rainbow appeared. It was a bright sunshiny day, not a cloud or rain in the air for that matter. Still another sign was when our daughter Halia said that we shouldn't worry, that baby brother Kai told her that he was ok. Both my wife and I of course freaked out when Halia told us that. We asked her when Kai had told her this.

She then told us that she sees Kai when he comes to visit her at night and tucks her in to bed. Now if that isn't a sign from God that our sweet baby boy Kai is truly our Guardian Angel, then I don't know what is. At first we were hesitant to believe that Halia could actually see her baby brother that she had never seen (we didn't let Halia see Kai before we had him cremated.) Halia told us in detail how he looked and the accuracy was scary good. We then thought that because she was so young and innocent that she was totally pure and could see our sweet angel. Halia even told us that her and Kai talk to each other.

I kiss Kai's box that contain his ashes each and every night. Sweet baby boy Kai when your family reunites with you in Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. Since that day that you figured out the loophole and beat us to the ultimate finish line-Heaven, you mommy has had another baby boy. We named him Makaio. If you notice his name, it has your name in the middle; we did that on purpose to honor you. Also, as I am writing this excerpt, your mommy is pregnant again with another little baby brother. I can tell you this right now baby boy, the first thing that I want to do with you once we are reunited is give you a long hug and kiss. After that I want to play catch with you and then just walk and talk and listen and look at you.

Before I move on to the next section of this book, I want to explain another incidence of Kai being with us. If you remember, I said that Kai passed away on October 17, 2006. You probably also remember that I said that we named his middle name Easton because it is a baseball equipment company and that I used to play semi-professional baseball.

Well, here is the ironic part, my jersey number with Cardinal Stritch University and with the Howards Grove AC's was #17, coincidence, I think not.

Kai, since I know that you are a better athlete than I could ever be, you are my honorary #17, always. Another example that Kai is with us and likes some of the same things as his daddy was a month after he passed away. I am an avid deer hunter and can spot a deer from a mile away. The problem is that I'm not really that good at hunting. I either am not prepared when I see a deer, get nervous, and forget to take the safety off or my gun jams. You name it and I have probably had the bad luck that everybody hears about. In fact, in all the years that I have hunted, I have only shot one little buck. Usually my father and I deer hunt in Door County, Wisconsin, which is approximately two hours north of our hometown of Sheboygan. However with Kai just passing away not quite a month prior, I decided to stay close for my wife. My father owns a little 10 acre parcel in Cedar Grove, which is in Sheboygan County and only 15 minutes south of the city of Sheboygan. My dad decided to stay with me for opening weekend. My father and I made our way out to the woods for opening morning. I climbed into my tree stand, connected my safety harness and said a little prayer for a safe hunt and for God to show me a sign that Kai was hunting with me. Legal hunting time started just past 6am and just before 7am a little buck walked up to about 30 yards away from me. To make a long story short, I shot the buck and gave all the credit to my son. The next morning (Sunday), my father and I made our way out to the woods again, this time accompanied by my uncle as well. I stayed in the same tree stand and my dad decided to go the furthest into the woods in case the deer were going to use the same path that I shot the

buck on the day before. My uncle decided to stay closer to the road and only about 50-75 yards away from me. At about 7:30am I thought I saw movement over my right shoulder. I turned slightly and there behind me was a doe (female deer) just standing on a creek bank. She was actually closer to my uncle than she was to me. I looked at my uncle to see if he was getting ready to shoot. I managed to get into a good shooting position but checked again to make sure my uncle wasn't getting ready to shoot. Needless to say, Kai helped me shoot a second deer in as many days. I told you that Kai is a better hunter than me and was there with me the whole entire time. "I love you baby boy and will take you hunting with me each time out to the wood. Daddy misses you. When I get to Heaven, we'll go hunting for Whitetail Deer; I hear the bucks are bigger than Buicks."

FOCUS & DRIVE

Since Kai passed away, I have had a fire burning inside of me to go out and do all of the things that I wanted to do for a long time. Some of the things that I wanted to accomplish are to finish my Bachelors Degree, and get a position of leadership within my company. A few other things that I wanted to accomplish are to become an Alderman, start my own company and become some sort of head coach for Baseball or Softball. The biggest goal I have is finishing this book on Stillborn Children and honoring my son Kai. If you are a betting person, do not bet against me to accomplish all of these goals. I have already completed my Bachelors Degree in Management from Cardinal Stritch University and started a position of leadership within the company that I work for. I am also in the process of interviewing for a Head Softball Coaching position for a high school and starting a company with my dad. I will complete these goals and the biggest will be completing this book and honoring Kai. "I will not fail you twice baby boy."

Now if you noticed above that I said that the biggest goal that I wanted to accomplish was to finish this book about stillborns and honor my son Kai. Well, I will finish this book and I will honor my son and those stillborn children before him and unfortunately those still to come. For those of you reading this book, I am sorry for your loss and I want you to know that I love you. Do not ever forget your little ones and use the experience to honor our precious little angels. For me honoring my son meant to put everything in my life back into perspective and get my priorities straightened out.

I want to encourage everybody that is reading this book that has had a stillborn child to find something to honor their children and go after it. Not only go after that goal to honor your children, but go after it with a burning passion that you didn't even know that you could muster up. Trust me, there will be peaks and valleys along the way, but once you actually start whatever you set out to do and see progress, it will make you want to complete it even more. It will also be a lot more special and mean that much more once you do complete your goal.

COMMITMENTS & PRIORITIES

In this portion of the book, I will let you know what the priorities and commitments in my life are and what the commitments & priorities in your life should be. I normally am not the type of person that would flat out tell another person what they should and should not do, however this is something that I am adamant and passionate about.

My commitments and priorities are to God, and my family in that order. I realize that people from all walks of life and from all different backgrounds have grief. However, I intended this book for those parents that have had stillborns. I realize that more than these parents will read, decipher and try to understand the meanings in this book.

I strongly feel that God needs to be at the center of everybody's life. People from all different intellect levels are encouraged to debate me on this point. I will provide proof positive results from my own life and also various verses from the number one book in the world (also the number one stolen book). That book is the bible. If it is the most stolen book, people are obviously wanting and needing to read God's words. I think those statements should tell you something already about the bible. I will also leave my email address at the end of the book for those that would like to reach out to me.

I can't really describe the feeling of having Christ in the center of your life better than saying that it is just a calming feeling and a feeling of peace in your life. You can start your journey by just praying a simple prayer, sort of like this: Dear God, please forgive

me of my sins and come into my life. I thank you Lord for sending your son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins so that I may be spared and have the opportunity to spread the good news to others that will listen to me. I thank you that I too can have eternal life. Please help me to know you more. I pray these things in Jesus name, Amen. If you just prayed that prayer, CONGRATULATIONS!!! You just reserved your seat in Heaven and have begun an amazing journey as a Christ follower.

I realize that in the rushed society that we live in, that it is really easy to put other priorities such as career, worldly possessions such as cars, houses, clothes and friendships over God. This is an easy trap to fall into, but if that happens, you feel like there is something missing in your life and that you always have that proverbial monkey on your shoulders. That proverbial monkey on your shoulders is really the devil trying to derail you. Some people have the misconception that Christians do not have any problems, are always happy and never have to battle Satan again. That is definitely a misconception. As a Christian, you will always be battling the devil, but as you grow in your walk with the Lord, you will be given the tools to turn Satan away.

The next commitment in your life should be to your family. Your spouse or significant other, children, parents, in-laws and extended family should all be next on your priority list. Take this time to reconnect with your family if you have lost touch. Your fallen children should be a constant reminder that family should be a top priority in your life. It shouldn't even matter if that relative that you lost touch with spited you or you spited them in the past. Swallow your pride and take the initiative to reconnect and apologize.

Reconnecting or at least attempting to will not only honor your child, it will also be another burden lifted off your shoulders and another way of defeating Satan.

Some very important secondary commitments and priorities are becoming involved in your church and tithing. Becoming involved in your church or finding a good church home and tithing are definitely key. This will not only help your church, but it will also honor the lord and your loved one. Being part of a body of believers and tithing will also be more tools to use against Satan when he is trying to steal your joy and still another burden lifted.

My wife Jen and I had decided to start tithing just before we lost our son Kai. Once we lost our son, we knew that we wanted to have Kai cremated and also hold a special memorial service for him. Wanting to honor our son and affording those luxuries are two different things. We met with the Funeral Director of a brand new, modern funeral home that fit our tastes and likes. My wife and I get a little creeped out by older, cold, dark funeral homes (if you own one, we are not trying to slight you in the least). We were expecting transfer services, cremation and the memorial service to cost us thousands and thousands of dollars that we did not have budgeted being a young couple and not expecting this. The Funeral Director, John Wenig told us that there would be no charges and that everything was free. He said that it was his policy for any child under the age of two because he and his wife lost a two year old son and the funeral home that they went to did the same for them. You can chalk it up to coincidence; however we are firm believers that God is a Gracious God and was looking over us because we are believers

and tithers. Being a tithing couple brought us much closer to the Lord and allowed us to become members of our church and active participants. I became an usher and a group leader of our Celebrate Recovery team and my wife has been blessed with being able to utilize her awesome singing voice to show her skills with the Praise team. Becoming part of an active body of believers is a feeling like no other feeling. It is like being around family, a big, extended, God fearing and God loving family.

THE TITLE

As you saw on the cover of the book, the title is Stillborn: The Quiet Child, Shh.... Kind of an ironic title isn't it? Of course a stillborn child is quiet. There is no joy of hearing that precious little baby cry for the first time, or struggle to take their first breaths. For those of us that have stillborn children, there is no first of anything; there is a birth, but not a live birth, just silence. For those of you that have had a stillborn child, you have my deepest condolences & sympathy.

Another point of mine for the title is that not only are stillborn children quiet, but so is everybody else around you. It seems to me that people think if they don't talk about the event or the child, that nothing really happened and everybody can just go on with their lives. For instance, some friends, co-workers and even family members don't even acknowledge my son. For those of you that don't, shame on you, you know who you are. I have some advice for those that think like that, approach me and ask how I am doing, ask how my family is. I will include my firstborn son Kai into the conversation. Guess what? I won't even get sad, angry or any of those emotions. I will talk just as candidly as I would of my daughter Halia or my other boys Makaio & Kauai. So my point is this part is for friends, relatives and co-workers should not be afraid to approach us parents of stillborn children. We are still the same people as we were before the event, we just happened to experience a tragedy that could happen to anybody.

Another reason that I chose the title that I chose is because of the parents that have had stillborn children that are quiet about it as well. When we had Kai, it was almost like we became part of this secret society. After Kai was born stillborn, so many couples that we knew came up to us and said that they had experienced the same tragic loss. Also friends approached us that either had relatives or other friends that had experienced the same thing. The thing about all of these people is that they do not talk about their precious children, and now their precious angels unless a tragedy strikes somebody else that they know.

I am here to say that we need to stand up and band together as parents of stillborn children and honor our children. We need more than just internet chat rooms, blogs & unpersonable and sad self-help groups. I mean that we need to stand up as Christians and be happy for the families that we currently have and the fact that we will see our children again when we are reunited in heaven. We as parents of stillborns and anybody that knows us to talk about our children and recognize them as children. I don't know about the rest of you parents of stillborns, but there isn't a day that goes by that I not only think about my son, but also kiss him goodnight. Some out there may think that is morbid or sick or that I am a sad, bitter man. I can tell you that couldn't be further from the truth. While I may never know medically why my son passed away, I do know that God called Kai home and had a much better calling for him.

The title that I picked for this book is not only a call for all parents, families and friends of stillborns to talk about these children, but it is also my platform to honor my son and

all of the stillborns before him and those unfortunately still to come. I love you Kai and I will never forget.

Kind of ironic that stillborns are just that: still, quiet and we will never get to hear them cry, laugh, coo, giggle, babble, etc... Also, being part of that so called “secret society” that I spoke of earlier, that we are not supposed to talk of our stillborn children....shh.

GRACE EXTENDED

Now I realize that I said in earlier chapters that people kept telling me that I needed to be strong for Kai, my wife, my family, etc. However, I realize that these same people meant well and had never experienced this kind of loss or tragedy either. They are the same people that I love & care for most in this world. So many people from all walks of life, from many different areas of the globe extended not only their deepest sympathies, but they also told us their stories or the stories of their relatives or friends. Now I can honestly say that everybody surprised us. We had very low expectations of how co-workers, friends, relatives, etc would perceive or accept us.

There were many people that stood out to me from our Pastor, Kirby Andersen and Associate Pastor Tom Leek and his wife Becky to the Funeral Home Director & Owner, John Wenig on down to family and friends. I mentioned earlier that my wife Jennifer and I both work at Kohler Company and the Chairman & CEO Herbert V. Kohler's wife Natalie Black had a tree sent to my wife and I in memory of our son Kai. That was completely unexpected and so much appreciated.

The most amazing grace that was extended to our family came from God himself though over everybody and everything else. God not only showed us sign after sign that Kai was with him in heaven, he also showed us that our family was going to be ok and that we were going to have more children. Our God is an Awesome God!!!

THE CLOSING

In closing I would really like to thank you the readers for taking the time to read these excerpts. I hope they proved to be insightful and I hope you are a better person for having devoted time to read this short article. I hope that you found the bible quotes helpful and I also hope you prayed. I hope you prayed for yourself, for your friends and relatives and for those babies that we never got a chance to see grow.

I would also like to say: really think about the title of this book and help me get the message across about stillborn children and those parents that have had stillborns. I want to spread this word globally and reach believers and non-believers alike. I will leave all of my contact information in the reference section and I challenge each and every person that reads this book to contact me and see if they don't get a response that I have prayed for them. I can guarantee that you will get a response and if you are local, you may even get a cup of coffee out of me. For those that don't know me, coffee has been my vice since losing Kai. I never drank coffee until that dreadful October 17th date, and now I do not want to stop. However much caffeine it takes to get this message across, I will definitely do so.

I hope I challenged you emotionally, intellectually, religiously and most importantly, lovingly. I love each of you and wish nothing but the best for your futures.

Thank you,

Matthew M. Lueck

Kai's Proud Daddy

