

# NOTEBOOK!

for Eric Elder's



A companion notebook  
based on Eric Elder's  
ultimate guide to help you  
WRITE + SELF-PUBLISH  
that book on your heart!

BY ERIC ELDER + FRIENDS

Write With Me! NOTEBOOK!!!

A companion guide to help you WRITE + SELF-PUBLISH  
that book on your heart! Copyright © 2023 Eric Elder.  
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*Your working title:*

*Your name:*



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# Preface

This book is a companion guide to my original book *Write With Me!* in which I describe how I've written and self-published 36 books (this is #37!).

You can read the chapters in *Write With Me!* then answer the prompts in *this* book to get great start on creating your own book from cover to cover!

Just start with Chapter 1 and answer the questions as best you know how. You may be surprised that within a few weeks you'll have a complete version of your book, even if in simplified form!

My main encouragement with both of these books is to help you WRITE & SELF-PUBLISH that book on your heart, getting it out of your head and into a form that others can enjoy. If the stories on your heart have helped you, I know they'll help others, too!

More than 30 years ago, I was given a wall hanging from a young man I met on a missions trip. Something I said had touched him deeply, and he wanted to encourage me that what I said mattered. I pray they will encourage you.

*"God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a special song to sing, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak your message or sing your song or offer your act of love. God has entrusted these only to you."*

A few years ago, when I was in the throes of writing one of my books, my friend Greg Potzer (of *This Day's Thought* at [thisdaysthought.com](http://thisdaysthought.com)) sent me 21 quotes on writing and perseverance. The quotes gave me the

boost I needed to keep writing. I've included them below in hopes they'll give you a boost, too.

Remember, words have power. God created the whole world and everything in it with just a few words. Maybe your words go forth and touch the world, too.

*Eric Elder*



## 21 Quotes on Writing and Perseverance

*I only write when I am inspired. Fortunately I am inspired at 9 o'clock every morning.*

William Faulkner

*A poem is never finished, only abandoned.*

Paul Valery

*Of the making of books there is no end.*

King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 12:12)

*If it takes a lot of words to say what you have in mind, give it more thought.*

Dennis Roch

*I have made this letter longer than usual, because I lack the time to make it short.*

Blaise Pascal

*From my first experience of writing a screenplay, I had learned something about the process of revision. You can always make something better, and if you make it worse, you'll know it. I had learned to have no fear of rewriting. All writers should be so lucky.*

John Irving

*You know that I write slowly. This is chiefly because I am never satisfied until I have said as much as possible in a few words, and writing briefly takes far more time than writing at length.*

Carl Gauss

*The story is told of an accomplished artist who was applying the finishing touches to a bronze sculpture. He*

*kept filing, scraping, and polishing every little surface of his masterpiece. "When will it be done?" asked an observer. "Never," came the reply. "I just keep working and working until they come and take it away."*

Unknown

*"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."*

Thomas Edison

*If you knew how much work went into it, you wouldn't call it genius.*

Michelangelo

*I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.*

Mother Teresa

*All our dreams can come true — if we have the courage to pursue them.*

Walt Disney

*If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.*

Henry David Thoreau

*Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.*

Dr. Seuss

*Quit now, you'll never make it. If you disregard this advice, you'll be halfway there.*

David Zucker

*There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though every thing is a miracle.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

*Most of my friends who are novelists have told me that they never know the end of their novels when they start writing them; they find it peculiar that for my novels I need to know, and I need to know not just the ending, but every significant event in the main characters' lives. When I finally write the first sentence, I want to know everything that happens, so that I am not inventing the story as I write it; rather, I am remembering a story that has already happened. The invention is over by the time I begin. All I want to be thinking of is the language- the sentence I am writing, and the sentence that follows it. Just the language.*

JOHN IRVING

*Do not write so that you can be understood, write so that you cannot be misunderstood.*

EPICETUS

*No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.*

ROBERT FROST

*Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.*

RUDYARD KIPLING

*When you sell a man a book, you don't sell him 12 ounces of paper and ink and glue — you sell him a whole new life.*

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



# 1. Write with me!

Describe the book on your heart in two or three sentences. What is it you *really* want to write about?

## 2. The beauty of self-publishing

What is your greatest barrier to writing and publishing that book on your heart?

How might you overcome it?

### 3. Think "books," not "book"

If you were to write *multiple* books, what are a few of the topics you'd write about?

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## 4. which book to write FIRST?

Which of the books on your heart would you like to write FIRST? Think about what you know, what you want to know, and what people ask you about the most.

### *what do you already know?*

It's been said that an "expert" in a field is someone who has spent 10,000 hours working in that area. By this definition, what are there some areas in which you've likely spent 10,000 hours?



## *What do you want to know?*

What *other* topics are you curious about that you might want to spend a book-length amount of time researching, writing, publishing, and promoting?

## *What topics do people ask you about the most?*

What are some topics which people already come to you for advice?

## 5. What's your main theme?

After people read your book, what do you want them to know, to feel, and to do? Answer each separately.

What do you want readers to  
KNOW?

What do you want readers to  
FEEL?

## *What do you want readers to DO?*

Based on your answers, is there a good “working title” and subtitle that you could give your book?

List a few ideas here. If one title stands out above the others, write it along with your name in the “working title” box on Page 3 of this book! This might not be your final title, but that’s okay! It will at least support your main theme and keep you moving forward.

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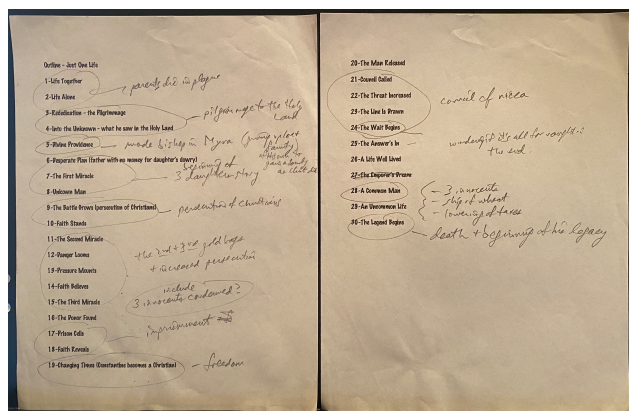
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## 6. which stories support your theme?

Whether fiction or non-fiction, sci-fi or mystery, the stories you want within your covers will be the meat of your book. In two or three words, which stories, remembered or imagined, come to your mind that would support your main theme?

As an example, here are a few of the stories I wanted to include in our book *St. Nicholas: The Believer*.



- His parents died in a plague
- He traveled to the Holy Land
- He became Bishop of Myra
- He saved three girls from devastation
- He was imprisoned for his faith
- He attended the Council of Nicaea
- He died, and his legacy began

Start your list here. Jot down a few words for each story that supports your main theme. Don't edit and don't worry about the order! Just jot them down as they come to mind. We'll sort them out later.

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## 7. No scene that doesn't turn

Good storytelling contains a series of turning points, those moments where a person's inner or outer world changes from a positive value to a negative. If you can, arrange your stories in a natural way that highlights those turning points. Ideally, the highs should get higher and the lows should get lower as the book progresses.

Jot down here a few of your story ideas below that you consider to be highs (+) or lows (-). Then try diagramming as many stories as you can on the next page.

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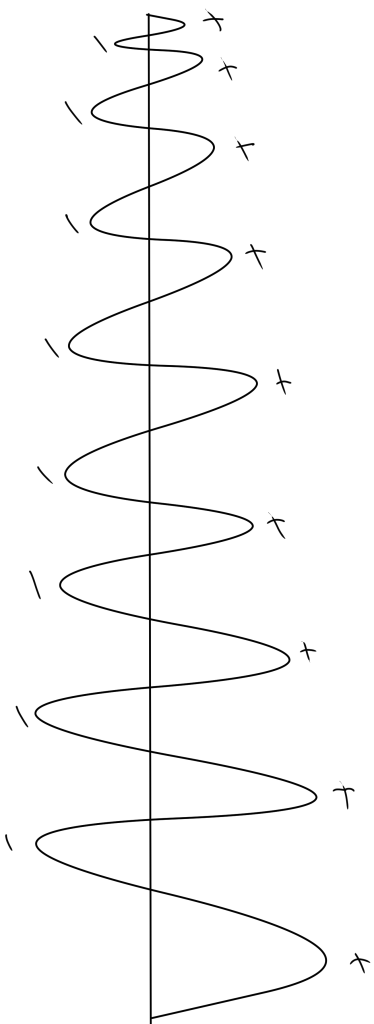
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Diagram of your highs and lows (starting and ending values are up to you!)





## 8. Now write!

Now's the time to write!

Pick one story and give it a working title. These may or may not become your chapter titles in the end, but at least you'll have a target to shoot for while you're writing each story. You can rearrange, combine or split up stories later.

For now, just pick one of your stories and spend 10-15 minutes (or maybe 30-60), and write the highlights of that story as they comes to mind in just a few paragraphs or bullet points.

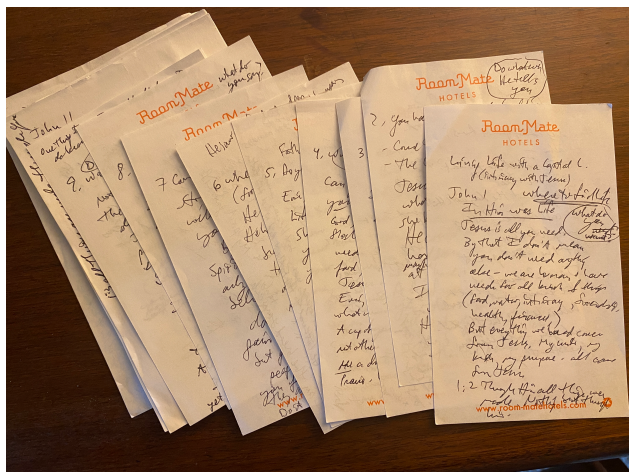
Don't stop to look up the details. Don't try to to edit while you go. Just tell the story as it comes to your mind, whether from your memory or from your imagination.

Then do this again with each of your stories, one per day (or maybe a few) until you've finished jotting down highlights from each of your stories.

If you have more than 30 or less than 30 stories, that's fine! You might end up using more or less in this book, and you can save some to use in your *next* book. (Think "books," not "book," remember?!)

But if you *do* have 30 stories and write one per day, you'll have a really good start on your entire book—from beginning to end—in just 30 days!

Here's a sample of the notes I took for each chapter of a book I wrote called *Living Life with a Capital L*. In the end, this book had 21 chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion.



Now it's your turn! Pick a story... and write!

# Story 1

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(working title for *this* story or chapter ^)



## Story 2

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## Story 3

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## Story 4

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## Story 5

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## Story 6

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## Story 7

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## Story 8

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## Story 9

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## Story 10

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## Story 11

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## Story 12

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## Story 13

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## Story 14

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## Story 15

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## Story 16

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## Story 17

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## Story 18

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## Story 19

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## Story 20

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## Story 21

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## Story 22

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## Story 23

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## Story 24

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## Story 25

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## Story 26

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## Story 27

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## Story 28

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## Story 29

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## Story 30

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## 9. Flesh out your stories

Once you've jotted down your stories, take a break for a few days or weeks. You've just completed a massive undertaking!

After your break, you can come back to each of these stories and flesh them out with fresh eyes.

Now is the time to do your research: to look back at your journals, to look up dates and details, and to find old pictures, articles or ticket stubs—anything that will help jog your memory to add color and flavor to your stories.

You might find that what you remember is different from what actually happened! That's okay, too. This is the time to make those corrections. This is why you're doing your research: to make sure you're telling the story the best way you can to get across your point.

Note: this step will take longer... much longer! I usually take about five or six months for this step. You're writing the actual book now. So take your time, tackling perhaps one or two stories per week, for as many weeks or months as it takes.

## 10. Tips for self-editing

As you flesh out each story, you can go back through and self-edit each one.

When I finish a story, I like to read it aloud to myself or have my computer read it to me. This method reveals errors that may have been overlooked with just your eyes.

What other ways can you self-edit? Write your ideas here, then do it!



## 11. *Send it to a few trusted readers*

Who are some “trusted readers” who might be willing to read your story? List them here.

These are not necessarily your “proofreaders” who point out all the errors, but rather “encouragers” who can help you know if you’re on track or not.

You don’t need many—just one or two or three—but enough to give you some honest feedback about your stories and your storytelling.

I like to send my chapters one at a time to my trusted readers. That way, I can get their feedback and make changes along the way.

### *Some possible “trusted readers”*

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## 12. Receiving feedback

Prepare yourself for feedback. The biggest surprise might be that people actually *like* your writing! Still others might not. That's okay. Take the good with the bad. In the end, make the changes you feel good about, and in the end, be yourself!

As you receive feedback, make some notes here.

*Positive responses*

*Tempering responses*

Your own thoughts on your work  
(if you were to be your  
authentic self)

## 13. Getting endorsements

Starting with responses from your “trusted readers” jot down a few words or sentences you might use for endorsements of your book. You can use these when promoting your book. Then continue collecting these snippets as you share your book with others.

Endorsements might come from your editors, your early beta readers, or those who read your book after it's published.

Ask their permission, make modifications if necessary, then include these endorsements in your both your initial and ongoing promotions.

*Endorsements (list a few words  
or sentences and who said them)*

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## 14. Formatting your book

What books come to mind that are similar to what you envision for your own book, whether in look and feel or content? List those books here.

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## 15. Interior design

Take note of the interior of the book you'd like to mimic. What fonts are used for the body text and headings (the size, shape, look and feel). List some possible fonts you like here (such as Times New Roman, Garamond, Sabon for body text or Arial or Helvetica for headings).

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What are margins on each page, the “white space” from the text to the edge of the page? Take out your ruler and enter them here.

Top: \_\_\_\_\_

Bottom: \_\_\_\_\_

Inner: \_\_\_\_\_

Outer: \_\_\_\_\_

What elements are contained in the header and footer of each page, such as the author's name or the book title or chapter title?

Left header: \_\_\_\_\_

Right header: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if different)

Footer: \_\_\_\_\_

What *other* pages are included in your sample book, whether at the beginning, the end or in section dividers of the book (such as a dedication page, an acknowledgements page, a table of contents, an epilogue, footnotes, or a list of other books available)?

Other pages: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 16. Cover design

What do you picture on the *front* cover of your book, if anything? If you don't have any ideas, describe the main theme of the book or an attention grabbing scene that might hook readers.

Sketch or describe it below!

What do you picture on the *back* cover of your book, if anything? Consider things like a catchy description, an author photo and bio, or a bullet list of “What’s in it for me (the reader)?”

Sketch or describe it below!

What do you picture on the *spine* of your book? This is often the book title and author's name, and sometimes a logo or publisher's imprint or a series number.

Sketch or describe it below!

## 17. Uploading your book

When uploading your book, you'll be asked to include a description, three categories, and your pricing.

Write a few thoughts after each prompt below, then use those answers to create a complete description of your book. You can use parts of your answers on the back of your book, or use all of the answers on your book's description on Amazon, because that description can be *much* longer and search engines will index every word for potential readers.

*What you want readers to know,  
to feel, and to do*

*A few endorsements*

A table of contents

An introduction or sample  
chapter

A few books and authors that are  
similar to yours

What categories are appropriate for your book? You can choose three. Consider which section in a bookstore you might find your book, such as Young Adult, Historical Fiction, Self-Help, Memoirs or Christian Living.

The more specific you can be, the more likely you'll find readers interested specifically in your book (and the more likely you'll rank higher in that category on Amazon than a broader category). Take a look at similar books in a bookstore or on Amazon to see what categories they use.

Then list a few categories here and choose your top three.

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## 18. Creating your eBook + hardcover

In what formats would you like to offer your book? Paperback? Hardcover? eBook? An audiobook? A video series? Note below the different variations you'd like to create and rank their order of importance to you.

Format	Importance (1-5)
Paperback	_____
eBook	_____
Hardcover	_____
Audiobook	_____
Video	_____
Other	_____

## 19. Turning your writing into speaking

When speaking about your book, perhaps at an event you or someone else organizes, what would you want to say to your audience? Fill in the blanks below to create an outline of your talk.

### *Main topic*

Consider what you want listeners to know, to feel, and to do.

### *Opening words*

Consider memorizing these opening words.



### 3 main points

What three main points would support what you want listeners to know, to feel, and to do? Consider arranging these points from *least* important to *most* important, as that will help your talk get more exciting as you build to the final point.

Point 1

Point 2

Point 3

## *Closing words*

Consider memorizing these closing words. Remember what my childhood dance teacher said: always nail your opening and closing. People will forget about any mistakes in between!

## 20. Seven touches

Traditional wisdom says it takes “seven touches” before someone commits to buying a product or learning a fact or deciding to come to an event.

What seven ways, or “seven touches,” could you use to let people know about your book?

Consider these in your brainstorming: telling your story behind the story, posting reader reviews, offering to do a book reading, creating a video, giving away a few books, asking others to share about your book, and throwing a launch party.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

*other ideas*

## 21. Start writing your NEXT book!

Look back at Chapter 3 (Think “books,” not “book”), and write down which books you might like to write next.

List all of your ideas here, then rank them in terms of the topics you’d like to write about the most. If one bubbles to the top... get another *Write With Me! Notebook!!!*

God and I are both inviting you: *Write With Me!*

Topic	Rank (1-5)
•	_____
•	_____
•	_____
•	_____
•	_____

I love hearing from my readers!  
For questions, comments or help with *your book*, visit:

*ericelder.com*

# Endorsements

Here are a few comments from others I've helped with their writing or publishing. I'd love to help you!

*"Eric's help made all the difference!"*

Greg Potzer, *Our Favorite Christian Quotations*

*"He was with me every step of the way."*

Brent Knapp, *Testimonies of Grace*

*"Eric gave warm fellowship, encouragement, and expertise."*

Clayt Irmeier, *Not to be Lived Single-Handedly*

*"His expertise was just what I needed."*

Karen Neal, *Bella Bella Cinderella*

*"Eric has an uncanny ability to motivate people to write."*

Tim Wilkins, *More Than Words*

*"He helped me self-publish in an easy, economical way."*

Larry Booz, *Say it to Stick*

*"His passion for writing is contagious."*

Mary Felkins, *This I Promise You*

*"He provided practical guidance with genuine interest."*

Aaron Chan, *book forthcoming*

*"Eric was the bridge to help fulfill my life-long dream."*

Camie Quinn, *Follow the Wind Home*

*"I've seen him help others, and he's now helping me."*

Al Lowry, *365 Daily Bible Readings*

*"Without him, I would not have completed my book."*

Sandy Egle, *Ministering to the Least of These*

*"I know of no one better-equipped to guide writers."*

Kent Sanders, *The Faith of Elvis*

*"He never doubted I would bring my idea to completion."*

Laurie Bliese, *Will the Lights Go Out?*

*"He believed in my writing before I was sure myself."*

*Caleb Dossett, They Call Me Mr*

*"He helped me finally finish my 10-year project."*

*Jeanette Smith, book forthcoming*

*"Eric held my hand the whole way."*

*Melanie Lisa Davidson, Loved. I. AM!*

*"I don't think I could have done it without him!"*

*Elizabeth Giger, Beyond the Front Door*

*"Eric gave me confidence when I had almost given up."*

*Steven Lonske, On the Bank of the Chippewa*

You can do this! I'm glad to show you how!



# More by Eric!

## DEVOTIONALS

- *Two Weeks With God*
- *Exodus: Lessons In Freedom*
- *Acts: Lessons In Faith*
- *Jesus: Lessons In Love*
- *Ephesians: Lessons In Grace*
- *Nehemiah: Lessons In Rebuilding:*
- *Romans: Lessons In Renewing Your Mind*
- *Psalms: Lessons In Prayer*
- *The Top 20 Passages In The Bible*
- *Israel: Lessons From The Holy Land*
- *Israel For Kids! Lessons From The Holy Land*
- *The Inspiring Thoughts Collection*
- *Water From My Well*
- *365 Daily Devotions With Eric Elder*
- *My Stories Of Faith*
- *Living Life With A Capital "L"*

## HISTORICAL FICTION

- *St. Nicholas: The Believer (with Lana Elder)*
- *San Nicolás: El Creyente (Spanish Edition)*

## MUSICAL

- *His Name Was Nicholas (with Lana Elder)*

## PIANO BOOKS

- *Clear My Mind*
- *Soothe My Soul*
- *My Favorite Classics*

## JOURNALS

- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Prayer*
- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Faith*
- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Love*

## SEXUALITY

- *What God Says About Sex*
- *Fifty Shades of Grace (under pen name, Nicholas Deere)*
- *Loving God & Loving Gays*
- *Cómo amar a Dios y a los gays (Spanish Edition)*
- *15 Tips For A Stronger Marriage*

## GRIEF

- *Loving Thoughts (with Greg Potzner)*
- *Making The Most Of The Darkness*

## WRITING & PUBLISHING

- *Write With Me!*
- *Write With Me! Notebook!!!*

## ALBUMS

- *Clear My Mind*
- *Soothe My Soul*
- *My Favorite Classics (with Eric's children and sister)*
- *His Name Was Nicholas EP (with Matt Ludwig)*

## STAGE PRODUCTIONS

- *One Life (a ballet with Cynthia Dewar and Erin Morton)*
- *His Name Was Nicholas (a musical with Lana Elder)*
- *San Nicola (a puppet opera with Girolamo Botta)*

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