

A MAP
TO
FAITH

Dear Reader,

"Sometimes the journey of faith can feel like walking through a foggy canyon... in the middle of a rainstorm, during a rock concert, while aliens are invading. Which of course makes it difficult to navigate, and even more difficult to explain to anyone who's watching. So I decided to make a map of my journey, in hopes that it will help you on yours. Now don't get too excited, it's not exactly a grid with street signs; more like a drawing on the back of a napkin, where you're not always certain whether you're following the map or a mustard stain. But, at the very least I hope you'll come away with some sense of how to navigate this crazy thing we call the Christian life, and most importantly, realize you are not alone on the journey."

~Devin W.

Chapter 1: *False Advertising*

Chapter 2: *Submission*

Chapter 3: *Reliance*

Chapter 4: *Agreement*

CHAPTER 1

False Advertising

Learning to walk with God sounds really simple when they tell you to raise your hand on Sunday morning. Just accept Jesus and you'll instantly get a new job, find an amazing mate, comprehend the mysteries of the universe, and never have any problems that aren't being worked out for your good!

Easy, right? Or Maybe not...

If you've been a Christian for very long, you might have experienced something a little more like this:

You accept Jesus and begin replacing everything you know with a bunch of new Christian stuff. Then, you discover half of what you were taught is wrong, so you leave organized religion and decide to figure things out for yourself.

Along the way, someone introduces you to the Left Behind series. Shortly after, you find a pair of empty shoes on the sidewalk, have a minor heart attack, and start reading the book of Revelation to make sure you weren't left behind.

During your reading, you discover there are pre-tribulation and post-tribulation belief systems and become even more confused about whether we're coming or going. So you decide you should just read the Bible for yourself.

You start with the one-year Bible plan. Halfway through Numbers, you give up on the one-year bible plan and start opening the Bible to random places, hoping God will just show you something.

The first verse you open to reads "*judgment is coming upon you, your loved ones, and your whole household.*" You decide this isn't a good strategy and switch to the Message translation. Then, someone tells you the Message translation isn't accurate and directs you to the "only accurate translation": the King James Version.

Shortly after, you start referring to your co-workers as "thee" and "thou" and decide to look into other translations. In your search you discover there are over 30 translations, all with a Reddit column discussing how they're inaccurate. So you give up on reading the Bible and decide to go back to church.

After a quick Google search, you realize there are more denominations than there are translations, all with their own Reddit columns. So you give up on organized religion (again) and look for something less mainstream. Someone introduces you to house church. Three Sundays in you realize they're doing the same stuff, just with less seating and no coffee bar.

You give up on house church and decide you're better off with just you and Jesus. After sitting in your prayer closet for 20 minutes, you reach for the Bible again for further

instruction. The first verse you read says not to forsake gathering with other believers.

You throw the Bible out the window, yell at your church friend for false advertising, and have a nervous breakdown because you're definitely getting left behind now.

If any part of this experience sounds familiar, you're not alone. Following Jesus, as simple as it sounds, can feel really complicated sometimes. I know this because, even though I grew up in a Christian home, I left the church when I was 17, questioned my faith, met God, and have been on a crazy ride ever since.

That's why I decided to write this book. I realized that walking with God is a lot like raising kids. There's no real handbook. Just a whole lot of opinions, perspectives, and a constant feeling that, somehow, you're screwing it up.

I wish I could tell you that this book was the answer—the quintessential guide to Christianity. It's not. However, after losing my parents and grandmother to a car accident on Christmas Eve, experiencing back to back layoffs, almost being evicted (twice), and a number of other things we'll get to later, I've come to realize faith happens in phases.

Three phases, to be exact: Submission, Reliance, and Agreement.

There are, of course, plenty of sub-phases; alternate routes; and additional principles, but these three seem to be universal. They are what the Bible describes as “precept upon precept,” meaning you have to master one to understand the next.

If you're into video games, it's a bit like an RPG. The early phases consist of a lot of wandering around trying to figure out what things are. You'll meet some strange people, gather some skills, fight a few battles, make some friends; and eventually a sort of story starts to emerge. It's not always clear at the beginning where the story is headed or what part you play in it, but you begin to get the feeling that maybe you're not actually wandering, but being guided.

CHAPTER 2

Submission

When we first come to Christ it's usually under the pretense of forgiveness, which is a very attractive proposition. All of your past mistakes wiped away with a prayer and a hand raise? Who wouldn't want that deal!

Unfortunately, there's a bit of fine print that isn't frequently reviewed at the altar: once you're forgiven, you're expected to stop doing the things that God forgave you for.

At first this seems pretty straight forward; don't kill anybody, don't steal, don't cheat on your spouse. For most of us, this is business as usual. Then you read the scripture that says not forgiving someone, or hating someone, is equivalent to murder in God's eyes. You realize that streaming movies you didn't pay for counts as stealing and lusting after someone you aren't married to is adultery. All of a sudden, this submission thing starts to look a bit more involved.

You see, accepting Jesus isn't just something you say to receive forgiveness. It's a commitment to take every single part of your life—your friends, your family, your favorite TV show, your job—and submit it to Jesus' authority. It's a trade. Your old life that you controlled for a new life that he controls. That's why the early going of your Christian walk is often bittersweet.

At first you have the overwhelming joy of being unbur-

dened from your sin, but quickly find yourself confronted with a startling truth: your life is so intertwined with sin, it's unsalvageable. It's as though you went to the doctor with incurable cancer and the doctor told you he can save you, but you have to go live in a colony on another planet. You're overjoyed that you're going to live, but also grieved over the loss of your former life.

It's important to understand this when you start following Jesus, because grieving doesn't happen all at once. It's a process that happens slowly as you begin to realize where he is going. Little by little you make your way up that hill, and little by little the reality of your destination starts to settle in. But it's too late; you've already tasted the gift—the glorious unburdening, that unshakable peace. You don't want to give it up, but you also don't want to go up that hill because you know what's up there.

This is why so many believers find themselves cycling through the 5 stages of grief when following Jesus. Because, like Peter, when you realize he's heading to the cross, the first reaction is usually denial.

Denial

I'd say most of our bad theology stems from people who didn't make it out of the denial stage of grieving their former life. So many Christians enter the faith with joy, but quickly find themselves in denial because they can't reconcile scripture with their lives. Then, because they couldn't accept the truth, they start manipulating scrip-

ture to fit their thinking, instead of allowing it to change their thinking.

The denial stage is the place where we discover that our thinking is incompatible with God's. It's the unnerving moment where we begin to realize the kingdom of God isn't a democracy. There's no voting or changing of the laws. Only the promise of unending mercy and forgiveness, and one non-negotiable rule: His way or the highway.

This is where most new believers have their "Rich Young Ruler" experience; because everyone wants Jesus' comfort, but no one wants his cross. When you reach this stage it's important to realize that, for a while, things are probably not going to make sense. That is because you're trying to transition from thinking with your natural mind to thinking with your spiritual mind.

The hardest part of this first step is getting your natural mind to let go. Up until the moment you met Jesus, your brain had you convinced that it was the most reasonable, intelligent, and sophisticated being in the universe. Your brain taught you how to breathe, how to find pleasure, how to protect yourself, and how to determine if something was good or evil.

Most importantly, it told you that you were in control. That's why this first stage is so hard. When we first encounter God, we go to our brain to determine what it is we're experiencing, and our brain doesn't like the idea that there is something more intelligent than itself. When this hap-

pens, your brain will do everything possible to deter you.

First, it will attempt to diminish your experience. It will tell you how you had a great experience with Jesus, but that doesn't mean you need to be a weirdo about it and start actually changing your life. It will tell you that Jesus is a spiritual thing; it's something you do at church, but when it comes to real life things, like paying bills and relationships, obviously your brain is more qualified to be in the driver seat.

If that doesn't work, then it will play the victim card. It will point out how unfair it is that God is burdening you with all these rules. Eventually, it might even use grace against you, pointing out that God couldn't possibly expect you to actually follow all this stuff, and telling you that that's why grace is there.

If you persist past this point, that's when things get tricky. Instead of resisting, your brain will start to pretend like it's agreeing, but will always have a counterpoint. It will pull the ol' "I know that's what God said, but is that really what he meant?" This is where you find yourself reasoning with the scriptures and coming up with things like "I'm not married, so sleeping around isn't technically committing adultery."

If you're a Christian and you find yourself spending a lot of time parsing out technicalities, there's a good chance you're still in the denial stage.

The truth is, you can't reason your way out of denial, because your natural mind will never agree with God's laws. It can't. That's why this first step is truly a leap of faith. You have to let go of your own reasoning and trust that, somehow, God's going to catch you on the other side.

It's scary, it's uncomfortable, it's uncontrollable; and these are all things that your brain is going to be very unhappy with, which is why the next stage is anger. It's not always immediate, but it is inevitable; because when you strip a ruler of its power, anger is the most logical response.

Anger

The anger usually kicks in right around the moment that you finally come to terms with the fact that there is no reasoning with God. You begin to understand that you can't have it your way and follow his ways, and like anyone backed into a corner, you may find yourself flashing out.

Some people experience an immediate outburst, like the last temper tantrum when a toddler finally realizes it's not going to be able to reason with you. The most dangerous response, however, is the slow burn when someone begrudgingly accepts their plight.

I can't tell you how many believers I've met who agree with the scripture, but are angry they have to follow it. These are people who see the incredible logic in God's

ways, but completely miss his heart, leaving them cold and judgmental because they spend their lives upholding the rules without experiencing the relationship.

If this is you, chances are you're someone more prone to living by what you consider rational or responsible, rather than emotional. This happens a lot with firstborn children. They have a deep sense of responsibility that overrides their feelings, but what looks like responsibility is often just repression. So on the surface it will look like you're submitting, but just below you are developing a deep bitterness about your own obedience.

Here's the hard truth: You may think you're being mature by gritting your teeth and "doing what's right," but that's not submission. You're still doing it in your own steam. Submission is meant to break your reliance on your own power, and free you to engage God's power. When you grit your teeth and "do what's right," you only enslave yourself to your own self-righteousness.

So if you find yourself angry at the Lord, don't fall for the trap of thinking it's childish to have an emotional outburst. That's your ego talking—the part of you that wants to read the Bible, understand it, and execute it perfectly without ever having to be vulnerable enough for the Lord to correct you.

That's the real reason we don't yell at God. It's not some heightened sense of reverence. It's that we know deep down that yelling at him would expose our heart. So don't

believe the lie that it's irreverent to yell at God. Just go read the last few paragraphs of Jonah and you'll see that God can more than handle your frustrations.

Instead, you need to recognize what's actually happening in your heart. All of this bluster is your natural mind making it's last-ditch effort to maintain control. So scream, yell, curse, and let it all out; but whatever you do, don't hold back. Because the greatest failure in a relationship with God isn't violating spiritual protocols, it's not trusting him enough to tell him how you really feel.

Now what a lot of people don't realize about anger is that it's a shield, so when you finally let go of it, it leaves your heart completely open. I visualize this as the moment when the cross comes into full view. Up to this point, you knew deep down where you were headed; but some part of you hoped there may still be a way out, so you tried to deny the truth, but your reasoning failed you.

Then you raged, seethed, and fought, but Jesus still refused to alter his course. Finally, as his destination comes into full view and the certainty of the cross sets in, there is nothing left to deny. No fight to be had. So, stripped of dignity and devoid of pride, you are finally ready to forfeit your ego and resort to bargaining.

Bargaining

This is one of the most vulnerable parts of the submission process because it's where we really get to the heart of

things. It's the place where we start making promises that we can't keep.

"Okay God, if you'll just let me keep this one thing; this one relationship, this one job, this one habit, I'll do everything else you asked."

When you hit this stage you'll likely experience a feeling of desperation. All of your natural reasoning will fail you, but somehow that peace, deep inside, will point straight ahead. I want to warn you, if you haven't hit this point yet, it's going to be messy and that's okay. When you hit the bargaining stage you just need to let go.

I won't spend a lot of time here because, honestly, the bargaining stage usually doesn't last long. Most people either try to bargain and fall back to being angry when bargaining fails because God won't bargain with them, or they quickly move to the next stage and fall into heavy depression. Either way, bargaining is an important stage because it signifies that you're finally ready to give up.

Depression

I know I'm probably going to ruffle some feathers by suggesting that it's natural for a Christian to go through depression. You may even be tempted to cite the "*count it all joy when you face trials of many kinds*" scripture (James 1:2), to which I would then point to "*there's a time to laugh and a time to mourn*" (Ecc 3:4). As you can see, scripture, like statistics, can be used to prove just about anything. But I

digress.

Nonetheless, it is important to realize that this is a natural part of the process. You can't truly move on from your former life if you don't allow yourself to properly grieve it, and depression is a part of that journey.

Now that doesn't mean you should stay here, it just means you need to allow yourself time to process the losses. For some people, following Jesus comes at a tremendous cost: friends, family, careers, possessions, and even dreams.

If you don't take time to consciously consider what you're putting on the altar, it can create unresolved bitterness that will become a snare to your new life. Past relationships that you ended, but never properly grieved, will return in a moment of weakness. A past job that you had the boldness to quit will reach out right after you get laid off.

It is so important that you allow yourself time to feel the losses, and then consciously decide to let them go. You can't take hold of faith for your future without letting go of the comforts of your past. So, after a time of grieving and counting the cost, you will eventually find the strength to stand up, wipe your tears, and accept whatever comes next.

Acceptance

The final stage of grieving your former life is acceptance.

This is where you say “I don’t understand it, but you’re God and I’m not.” A lot of people try to say this at the beginning, but when you say it this time, you’ll know you mean it.

I wish I could tell you that there’s a magic guide to get you through this. *7 Habits of Highly Submitted People. Think and Be Submitted. Who Moved my Submission?* Someone should really write these books. In the meantime, the best advice I can give is that it’s not complicated; it’s just hard. So hard, in fact, that you will be tempted to overcomplicate it. Don’t.

There’s no secret. You just start by accepting that there are things in the universe that are bigger than you; and if that’s the case, then maybe there’s a being out there who knows something you don’t. It will be difficult to swallow at first, but little by little you’ll start to see things his way.

Then, one day, you’ll look up and realize you’re standing in the middle of the ocean with Jesus, with nothing but the waves beneath your feet. And that’s when reliance begins.

CHAPTER 3

Reliance

Now, if you're starting to suspect that you're ready to move on to reliance, here's the test:

If you've done everything in your power to bring every aspect of your life into submission to Christ and still failed, you might be ready. If that sounds counterintuitive, then you're beginning to understand why you can't start with agreement.

You see, submission isn't the process of becoming submitted; it's the process of discovering how impossible it is to submit in your own power. As you learn God's ways and try to walk in them, you'll discover all your tools—your self-discipline, your mighty intellect, and your incredible persistence—all fail to bring the natural mind into submission to God's ways.

It is only through this period of attempting to submit in your own power that every ounce of pride and self-reliance is exposed and shown to be insufficient. Then, when you are fully broken, hopelessly desperate under the crushing weight of your own inadequacy, you are finally ready to abandon your ways and rely on God's.

Now, most Christians would say they rely on God and point to how they pray, read their Bible, and fully trust God for their eternity. But the first time they lose a job or face a tragedy, the great certainty with which they posted

on social media is nowhere to be found. This is probably the most infuriating part of learning reliance; when you come to grips with the fact that you trust God fully to resurrect you from the dead and make you immortal, but completely lose faith when you need him to pay a phone bill.

That's why the true test of reliance isn't found in a person's decisions, but their reactions. Think of reliance like a tree resting on the top of a mountain; no matter how stormy it gets in the valley, the tree remains unaffected.

In the same way, when you are truly reliant on the Lord, you become unshakable. If you're still consciously reminding yourself to rely on the Lord when you see a storm in the valley, then reliance has yet to finish its work.

I wish I could tell you that reliance is easier than submission, but the truth is, it's just a different kind of hard. Where submission is difficult because it feels like you're going crazy, reliance is difficult because that crazy starts to break out into your actual life.

This is most apparent in the trials you'll encounter. If you were strong in finance before coming to the Lord, you will likely be given opportunities to trust him with your money. If you were strong in self-discipline, you will likely encounter things that are too big for you to push through on your own.

Where most of the submission phase is about unlearning,

the reliance phase is about learning something new. The metaphor of *"The Potter and the Clay"* (Rom 9:20-24) is really understood here. During submission he softens us in preparation to be reshaped; however, in the reliance phase he begins to show us what we will become.

The most difficult parts of this phase for me were the ups and downs. If you've ever watched a potter make a pot, he will sometimes bring it all the way to completion only to smash it and start over because the final phases revealed an imperfection. The reliance phase is similar.

The Lord will bring you to a place where you feel complete and ready for use, only to take you out and start the process over again. I've been through this so many times that I started to wonder if I was defective. If you're in this phase today, don't lose heart. God is faithful and brings to completion the things he sets out to create.

When you're nearing the end of this phase, it will feel like being stretched between two worlds. In the submission phase, there's a lot of focus on behaviors; so it feels more natural even though, mentally, it's incredibly straining.

In reliance, however, you're beginning to transition to relying on spiritual power, which requires you to let go of a lot of your reliance on your natural abilities.

If you try to find the middle ground, this phase will be very painful. Everyone's experience here will be different, but I'll share mine in hopes it will help you on your journey.

I have always been gifted in business and I was never without work. However, there was a period in my life that the Lord told me I was to rely on him for my provision instead of on my abilities. Prior to this point, I'd consistently overachieved in everything I put my hands to. Youngest manager in the company. Top performer in every sales job. I launched a startup that did over half a million its first year.

I had been so successful so early on that, by the time I was 21, I was paying my bills three months at a time. I don't say this to point out my achievements, but to help give perspective to what happened next.

Over the next seven years, I went from paying my bills quarterly to working for less than minimum wage in a mechanic's shop. Then, from managing Radio Shacks to losing my parents and grandmother in a car accident and spending a year wandering around Kansas City with my inheritance.

Then, from consulting for a company that sold for over a billion dollars 5 years later to being unemployed and almost evicted three times. Then, from being hired to re-brand a \$50 million company to being laid off, running out of cash, and having to move my wife, two nearly infant children, and two cats into a single bedroom of a friend's house (all while working at a mall kiosk).

Finally we moved into my wife's grandmother's rental

house, where I worked with a junk hauler, driving around neighborhoods and picking up things that needed to be moved to the dump. During this time, we reached the point where we were so poor we had to walk to the grocery store because we couldn't afford groceries, and gas.

I wish I could tell you of my great faith and how I held firmly to the Lord, certain of his provision. The truth is, I spent a lot of time afraid, hopeless, depressed, and eventually angry. After being in this situation for over a year, and at the complete end of myself, I was finally offered a position that would have immediately gotten us out of the situation we were in. But after praying on it, I felt like the Lord told me to say no.

We then confirmed that answer with other spiritual council and eventually turned it down. Our car was repossessed the next day. What I learned there is that reliance on the Lord isn't like submission; it's not something you do. It's something he does in you. As I sat there on the porch, watching the car being hauled away by the repo man, something finally changed.

We were on the verge of being destitute, but instead of a gnawing dread I had held at bay by reminding myself of the scriptures, there was only a steadfast truth: "God is good." It wasn't my truth. It wasn't something I was holding onto, but rather it was something holding onto me. A truth planted deep in my soul. A truth that was only revealed after everything else had been stripped away.

From that moment, I just knew that the Lord was going to move. I didn't know how, but I knew that no matter what happened, he was good; and if it wasn't good, then he wasn't finished. A few weeks later, the company I turned down called back and offered me a better position, almost double the original salary, a sign-on bonus, and paid for us to move.

That was the difference between taking a week to recover financially instead of years. Things didn't always work out that way, though, and there were plenty of times that saying no to something led to more difficulty before it led to breakthrough. But one thing has remained constant: God has always been faithful and has never left us hanging, even when it felt like it.

While the quiet inner-peace is the thing you must hold on to in submission, the certainty that God is good is the truth you will need to hold firmly to in reliance. It is the lens you must learn to see everything through. It is the dichotomy that divides darkness from light; if God is good and something evil happens, then there must be forces other than God at work.

It's through this lens you begin to see the damage sin creates instead of just the potential pleasures it can offer. You begin to go to God to understand what's best instead of what's allowed. Finally, you will reach a place where you start to notice your reactions are different. Your spouse yells at you and you are concerned about why they're upset instead of being angry that they're yelling. You lose a

job and instead of feeling fear, you are curious where God is leading you next.

These are the tests to know if you're ready to go on to agreement. Because reliance isn't revealed in how you behave; it's revealed in who you've become.

CHAPTER 4

Agreement

When we started this journey together, I pointed out that the Christian life can feel really complicated. Is it about being a good person? Is it about getting into heaven? Is it about loving people? Or going to church and repping Jesus on social media?

At some point in this faith journey, after you've minimized your sins to yelling at people in traffic and watching the occasional Showtime series; sometime after you've relied on God to answer a prayer or two; yes, somewhere after all of that, you may find yourself wondering, "Is this really all there is?"

If this is you, I'm happy to report that reliance is not the end of the journey. However, to understand where you're going, we need to take a quick trip all the way back to the beginning. Not the beginning of this process, but the beginning of time.

The journey of faith didn't start with your introduction to Jesus. It started when Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God. One of the reasons the Christian walk gets so confusing is because, somewhere along the way, people decided you only really need the New Testament since Jesus is ultimately all that matters.

The problem with this is that, if you don't read the Old Testament, you don't really understand what problem Jesus was trying to solve. I'll give you a hint: it's not just

getting us into heaven. While that is certainly an unbelievably important result, it wasn't his main goal.

I know; that's crazier than the time when I said it's normal to grieve your former, sinful life. But, what can I say. I didn't write this story; I'm just trying to help you make sense of it. So, if getting into heaven wasn't Jesus' main goal, then what exactly was he trying to accomplish? Let's take a quick look at Genesis 3:

"4 The serpent said to the woman, 'It is not true that you will surely die; 5 because God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it had a pleasing appearance and that the tree was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate." (Gen 3:4-6)

Now, what you'll notice here is that the serpent didn't challenge Eve's trust in God's power, his provision, or his protection. All of those things were self-evident in the garden of Eden. Instead, he challenged Eve on the one thing she didn't have an answer for: God's intentions towards her. He knew that without the knowledge of good and evil, she lacked the capability to determine for herself if she agreed that God was good and that his ways were right.

That's why when it lists her reasons for eating the fruit, the last one says that *"it was desirable to make one wise"* (Gen 3:6). This is important because Satan's trick wasn't convincing Eve that she wouldn't die if she ate the fruit; it was showing her that she couldn't verify God's intentions for

herself without the knowledge of good and evil. And here's the kicker: he wasn't wrong.

Without the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were fully reliant on God; however, they weren't in agreement. Without the capacity to evaluate God for themselves, agreement wasn't even an option. To put it another way, you can't agree with someone if you only have their side of the story.

So we ate the fruit, and from that moment, began testing God's ways against our ways. We tried sex without marriage which lead to orphans, abortions, and broken homes. We tried violence as our means of acquiring the things we need, which lead to wars, destruction, and unthinkable atrocities.

We tried every method we could conjure up to provide, protect, and bring pleasure into our lives. In the end, his ways proved superior, consistently yielding peace and prosperity where our ways yielded only destruction; so much so, that we formed innumerable religions, all sharing the same basic principles which God laid out from the beginning.

But, despite all of this, the most important question still remained unanswered: are God's intentions towards us good or evil? And that is where Jesus comes in. Jesus' death and resurrection wasn't to save us from condemnation; at least that wasn't the primary purpose. It was to answer the question once and for all: is God for us or against us? Because no matter how horrific the genocide or how evil the situation that befalls us, if God would sacrifice his own son

for us, then how could he possibly have bad intentions towards us?

When we finally get a hold of this truth, it creates an unassailable argument that can defeat every accusation Satan brings against God. When you experience tragedy and Satan points to God, you can point to Jesus. When you encounter pain, loss, and brokenness and Satan points to God, you can point to the cross.

That's why Satan has worked tirelessly to convince us that reliance on God is the end of the journey. Because he knows that if we ever realized the truth, we would have the answer to all of his accusations. So, for centuries, he has manipulated church doctrines to reduce the purpose of the Christian life to submitting to God and relying on him to save us from hell; when in reality, the Christian life only really begins after we've learned submission and reliance. The real goal is to go on to agreement.

This slight twist is the root of most of the confusion in our faith. We are so focused on teaching submission, reliance, and righteous living that we have missed the goal entirely. Jesus didn't die so we could spend our entire lives in pursuit of a righteousness that he already paid for. God did not send his only son to a brutal and unthinkable death so that we could behave better. No! God sent his son so that we would trust his intentions enough to believe him when he shows us that sin is a prison.

Before we met Jesus, we were literally addicted to sin. Like any drug, the addiction blinds you to its downsides. That's why the process starts with submission. Until you have

the ability to see through your spiritual eyes, God's ways just look like rules and limitations—guardrails that steal your freedom and prevent you from enjoying your life. Until you get free of your physical mind, you can only see through the eyes of your addiction.

But, when you submit—when you begin to tell your body no—you allow your consciousness to break free from your physical entanglements. Submission is rehab for your mind, so that you can finally see the side effects of sin. Then, once you start to see it, the next step is reliance. Not because God wants us reliant on him, but because he has to do a work in us before we'll have the strength to walk in His power.

When you begin to understand this, you can boil every temptation down to not trusting God. We chase money because we don't trust that God will provide. We chase sex because we don't believe God's version of relationships will be as good as the world's. We chase addictions because we don't trust that God will comfort us. We step on people to progress at work because we don't trust that God will elevate us.

Every place we stumble can all be traced back to not trusting God, and not trusting God can be traced back to one simple question: are God's intentions towards us good?

That's why when you finally realize the incredible, audacious, and scandalous nature of grace, you begin to see that Jesus' blood isn't there to protect you from messing up and going to hell; it's there to provide you the safety net required to learn to trust God so sin loses its power over

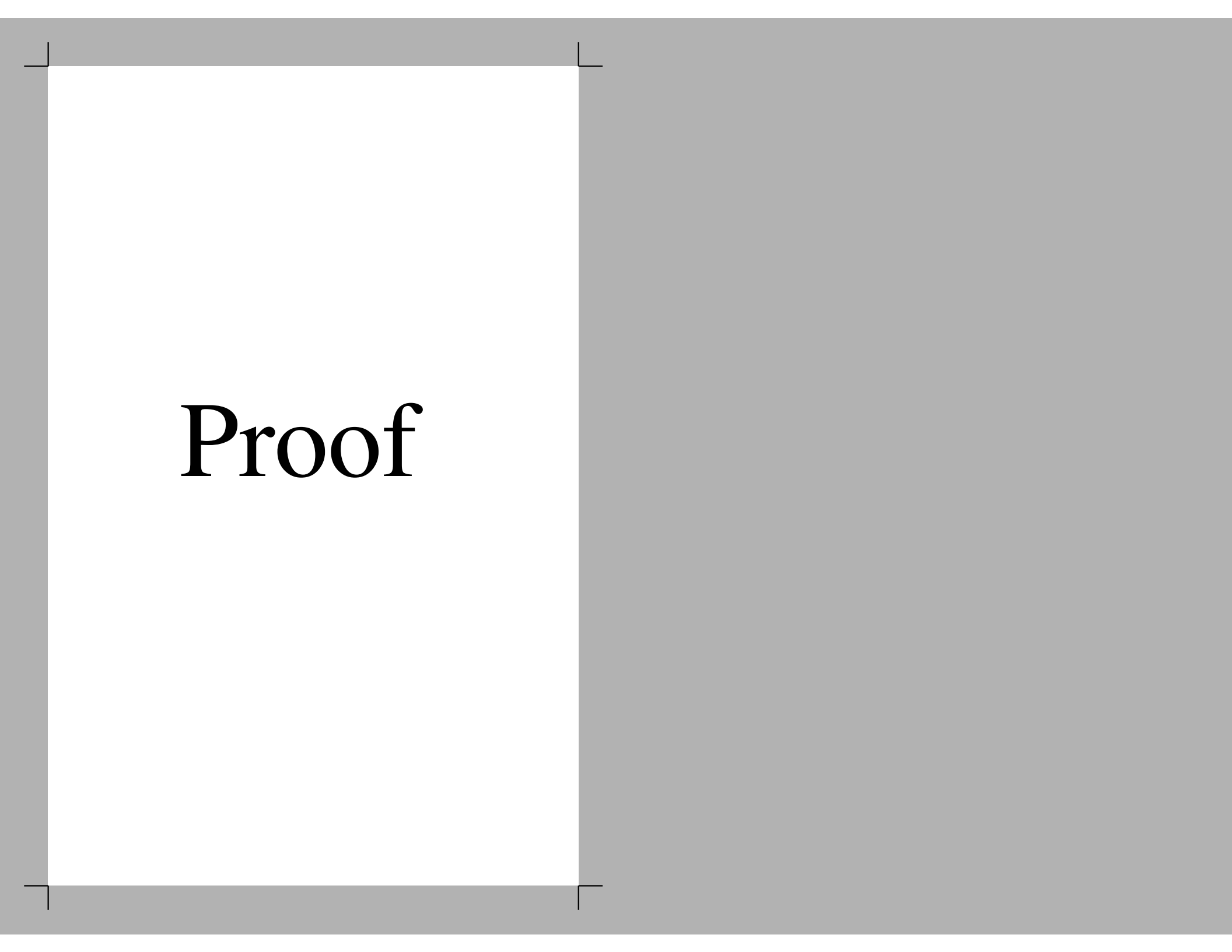
your. It's as God said to Cain in Genesis:

"if you don't do what is good, sin is crouching at the door — it wants you, but you can rule over it." (Gen 4:7)

This is the truth the Adversary has spent thousands of years working to obscure. He doesn't care if you sin; he only cares that you don't realize the truth and agree with God.

One of the greatest lies he ever told was that you are a sinner saved by grace. This has left countless believers trapped in a cycle of sinning and asking for forgiveness, fully reliant on God, but never in agreement. The truth is, you were a sinner saved by grace, but in Christ you are a son or daughter of the king, fully empowered to agree with God and rule over sin.

The great purpose of your Christian life is to get free from sin, develop the spiritual eyes required to see the truth, and to finally, once and for all, answer Eve's dilemma: do you agree that God is good? When you can finally answer this question, there is no circumstance that can shake your faith, and no sin that can entangle you, because your trust in God is no longer based in faith, but on an unshakable certainty that no matter what tragedies you face, God is for you. And if the almighty, unassailable, immortal God of the universe is for you, then what could possibly stand against you?



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