

**AN UNFORGETTABLE PARABLE OF ADVENTURE, AWAKENING,  
AND THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF GRACE.**

A photograph of three people (two men and one woman) standing on a green golf course, looking away from the camera towards a tall, illuminated light pole. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden glow in the sky and long shadows on the grass. A large tree is visible on the left side of the frame.

# **JUMPING WAS NEVER THE WAY UP**

**How Our Works Get in the  
Way of His Grace**

**Rick Porterfield**

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**How Our Works Get  
in the Way of His Grace.**

By  
**Rick Porterfield**

**Dedication: This book is dedicated to the evidence of  
God's grace in my life, Rebekah.**



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Note: All Scripture references are  
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# **Jumping Was Never the Way Up**

How Our Works Get in the Way of His Grace.

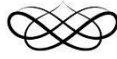
## **Part One**

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### **The Story**

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." - **Ephesians 2:8-9**

# CHAPTER 1



## The Accountant's Dilemma

**M**ark Davidson jerked awake at the sound of his alarm. Another Monday, another week of precision and performance. As a senior accountant at Brookfield Financial, Mark's professional life revolved around balancing books, meeting deadlines, and most importantly, making sure everything was done right. Every column needed to be reconciled. Every decimal point mattered. One misplaced digit could collapse an entire financial statement. His performance was critical to his success, the success of his company, and to the success of his clients.

He reached for his phone and silenced the 5:15 AM alarm. Rising before dawn gave him time for his morning ritual: forty-five minutes of Bible study, twenty minutes of prayer (using his prayer journal to meticulously track requests and answers), and a few minutes to review his spiritual goals for the week. By 7:00 AM, he would be showered, dressed, and ready to face the day, knowing he had pleased God by completing his spiritual duties.

This morning, however, Mark felt unusually weary. Yesterday at church, Pastor Wilson’s sermon had focused on being diligent – doing The Word and staying focused on The Lord day in and day out. The pastor was teaching from Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 13:5:

*“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”*

The pastor exhorted the congregation, “Make sure your faith is genuine. Don’t assume you’re standing when you may be slipping.”

Mark had written it down dutifully in the margin of his Bible and added “examine salvation status” to his spiritual goals for the week. But as the words lingered in his mind, something began to gnaw at him.

Was he in the faith?

Was he doing enough to prove it?

What if he wasn’t praying enough, reading enough, believing enough, serving enough, giving enough? Worry crept into his heart and it reinforced something deeper, something harder to shake: the fear that his standing with God still depended on how well he performed.

The smell of freshly brewed coffee drifted in from the kitchen. He could hear the soft chatter of cereal being poured into bowls and the faint giggles of his children. They were up early as well getting ready to be dropped at school and mothers-day-out. His wife, Jenna, was

already up, managing the morning chaos with her usual calm efficiency. They'd been married for twelve years, and though their schedules were often full, she remained his anchor—unshaken by the spiritual striving that drove him.

Mark had grown up in a strict religious household where faith was measured by performance. His father, a deacon at First Community Church, had been tasked to maintain meticulous records of the congregation's church attendance, tithing, and volunteer hours. "God keeps the books, Mark," his father often said. "Make sure your account stays in the black. No matter what, you want to make sure the good outweighs the bad that we do."

This had been instilled in him from a young age, and it was the filter through which he understood the Scripture Pastor Wilson read the day before, "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*"

Well, let's examine my performance, Mark thought. As he sat on the edge of his bed. Prayerfully he opened his journal to the section labeled "Personal Spiritual Assessment." The page was covered with checkboxes and ratings:

- Daily Bible reading: ✓✓✓✓✓ (*5 out of 5 days. Good job!*, Mark thought.)
- Prayer time: ✓✓✓✓✓ (*Another 5 out of 5 days. Also good!*)



- Tithing: ✓ (*10.3% of income. Giving a little above the required amount. Awesome!*)
- Volunteer hours: ✓✓ (*Only 2 of 3 hours. Ouch. There's room for improvement here* )
- Witnessing attempts: ✓ (*1 of 2 attempts. Hmm – work to do here as well.*)

At the bottom of the page, he had calculated his weekly "spiritual score": 85%. Not perfect, but above the minimum acceptable threshold of 80% that he had set for himself. He figured that an 80% score put him well above the performance of the average Christian. Still, Pastor Wilson's question echoed: Had he done enough? What if 85% wasn't enough? How could he be sure his performance was acceptable?

A soft knock came at the bedroom door.

"Daddy?" came the small voice of his six-year-old daughter, Hannah. "Can you help me with my shoes?"

"In a minute, sweetheart," he replied, forcing a smile she couldn't see.

He turned back to his journal, but her innocent voice had already cracked something inside him.

"Lord," Mark prayed, his fingers tensely interlaced as he sat on the edge of his bed, "I'm trying my best to serve You. I'm following the

rules. I'm doing everything I know to do. But sometimes I wonder if it's enough. Sometimes I feel like no matter how hard I work, I'm still falling short."

A thought surfaced, uninvited and unwelcome: *Hannah doesn't earn my love. Neither does Josh. Neither does Jenna. I love them because they're mine. Why would You, God, make me work for something I don't require of my own children?*

As he considered this question, an overwhelming fatigue swept over him. It was followed by a sense of falling. The room seemed to grow even darker and it began to tilt. Mark pressed his palms to the mattress to steady himself, but the sensation of falling persisted.

"What's this?" he gasped. The last thing he saw as everything went black was the clock. **5:23 AM**