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—Max Lucado, pastor and best-selling author

# COLT MCCOY MATT CARTER

# THE REAL WIN



Pursuing God's Plan  
for Authentic Success



Praise for  
*The Real Win*

“Colt McCoy and Matt Carter have joined arms to lead men to win. Not just win in athletics or careers, but to win in life. The pages of this book are packed with inspirational words and practical guidance. I heartily recommend it.”

—MAX LUCADO, pastor and best-selling author

“*The Real Win: Pursuing God’s Plan for Authentic Success* is a really good book. It is honest, transparent, convicting, challenging, and instructive. It makes plain what it really means to ‘be the man!’ Colt McCoy and Matt Carter invite men to a higher and greater calling as they follow hard after the real man’s man, Jesus of Nazareth.”

—DANIEL L. AKIN, president of Southeastern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

“Men hate asking for directions a little more than they hate to read. It isn’t that we can’t read; it’s just that we need something that keeps our interest and gives us practical help. Welcome to that book. *The Real Win* will help you grow in your faith so that you can be the man God has called you to be.”

—DARRIN PATRICK, lead pastor of The Journey

“A gut-wrenching, soul-piercing book that wrestles honestly with questions every man asks and emotions every man feels, whether he ever admits it or not. I will recommend this book to all the men in my church. You won’t be able to put it down.”

—J. D. GREER, author of *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart:  
How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* and *Gospel: Recovering  
the Power That Made Christianity Revolutionary*

“A wonderful and raw work that gets to the heart of all the areas in which men have historically struggled. This book is immensely valuable, not because it

points men to success, but because it points men to Jesus and practically walks through how to win by seeking Him in every area of life.”

—NATHAN LINO, senior pastor of Northeast Houston  
Baptist Church

“I can’t speak highly enough about the way this book addresses manhood in our culture. Biblically challenging and radically applicable, it honestly addresses the deepest longings and fears a man faces.”

—MATT CHANDLER, author of *The Explicit Gospel*  
and *Creature of the Word*

“This is not your typical formula for a book on success and manhood. By humbly and honestly walking through their failures, Matt Carter and Colt McCoy teach the difficult truths we face as men and leaders. I have great hope that through this book, more and more men will begin to see their struggles in marriage, career, and family as a way to point them to the ultimate picture of success: Jesus Christ.”

—BRAD LOMENICK, executive director and key visionary  
of Catalyst

“As a young man fresh out of college, I know I’m going to chase something with the rest of my life. *The Real Win* helps me lock in on exactly what that should be. This book identifies what’s truly satisfying, what’s worthy of being chased. I’m in for the win.”

—CORY COTTON, cofounder of Dude Perfect and author of *Go Big*

“We live in a world full of scoreboards. Matt and Colt have experienced both wins and losses, and I’ve seen them both want God more than all of it. They are men who fight well, and they will lead you to fight well. This is worth it. In *The Real Win*, Matt and Colt will move you from a life of striving to one of fulfillment, living for the God who has already won the ultimate victory.”

—JENNIE ALLEN, Bible teacher and author of *Anything*

THE  
REAL  
WIN

COLT McCOY  
MATT CARTER  
with Marcus Brotherton

THE  
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Pursuing God's Plan  
for Authentic Success



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*Colt: To my wife, Rachel. It's a joy living life with you every day. May we continue to grow stronger in the Lord together each moment He allows.*

*Matt: For my wife, Jennifer, who has walked beside me on my journey to manhood. Your love for Jesus is inspiring. Your love for me is humbling.*

Trust in the LORD forever,  
for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

ISAIAH 26:4, ESV



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# It's Time to Redefine Winning

Guys, quick! Can you name who won last year's...

- Super Bowl?
- World Series?
- NBA Finals?
- Daytona 500?
- PGA Tour Championship?

How did you do?

If you're like a lot of guys, you're probably surprised by how few of the winners you can recall, especially considering what a big deal those championships felt like to a lot of people at the time.

Inside each man is a desire to set goals and achieve them, to get ahead and finish strong. And God Himself put a desire within us to drive hard and live with excellence. But things can go terribly wrong as we pursue our goals, can't they?

So many men start out to achieve what they think is the real win, but at the end of their lives they feel a sense of defeat, even though they achieved everything they set out to win. They think they're achieving what matters most in the long run, but it doesn't pan out the way they had hoped. Or they find that their goals disappoint them, or their accomplishments are quickly forgotten, or they achieve their goals but destroy their marriages and families in the process, or they never fulfill their destinies and end up frustrated, angry, hurt, and cynical. What then?

Lately, the two of us have been doing a lot of thinking about what constitutes authentic success for a man.

## RAISED TO BE A WINNER

Since boyhood, I (Colt) have been trained to win. I have wanted to win and have been expected to win. I even grew up thinking that if I did everything right, God would make sure I won.

A few years back, when I graduated from college, I ended up being the winningest quarterback in college football history. (That record's been broken now, but it felt good to achieve that goal at the time.) Yet even with all those successes, I still came up short with my goals and didn't achieve a couple of big wins I really wanted. And that hurt. I've gone on to play in the NFL, where I've had some successes as well as some challenges. My professional story is still being lived out even as we're writing this book.<sup>1</sup>

I get that most men don't play professional sports for a living. And some men reading this book aren't even football fans. But I'm pretty sure you can

**We want to talk about what real winning—winning according to God's definition of success—means, and how you can build a life as a man who makes winning a sure thing.**

relate to my story, because no matter what you do for a living or how you like to spend your free time, all of us can relate to this: we hate to lose. All of us want to be a success, in one way or another. That's why we want to talk about what *real* winning—winning according to God's definition of success—means, and how you can build a life as a man who makes winning a sure thing.

I'm still learning a lot as I go along, and that's one of the reasons I'm writing this book along with my friend and pastor, Matt Carter.

## WINNING OR LOSING?

Some people think of pastors as guys who don't have a competitive drive, who don't have a desire to succeed like everybody else. But I (Matt) am wired like every other man reading this book. I know what it's like to want to win. The church I planted started with a core group of fifteen people and now has more than eight thousand active attenders. Only God can bring dead souls to life, and He gets every bit of the glory for what's gone right at my church. But still, on my end there was a lot of work to do, and I know what it's like to drive hard. When it came to planting Austin Stone Community Church, humanly speaking, I did succeed.<sup>2</sup>

But I've also learned a thing or two about losing in the process. For one thing, I've faced death (more about that later). For another, I've faced a crisis in my marriage—a crisis that showed me how close I had come to losing everything when I actually thought I was winning. Through these events and many more, I've realized that if you're going to win in the short time you have here on earth, you have to redefine success. You have to make sure you're winning, not according to human standards, but according to God's.

Today Colt and I want to deliver a cautionary tale for men: If the pursuit of God and trusting Him fully isn't at the core of your life, then it's going to be impossible for you to really win. In fact, in every way that really matters, *you'll lose*. That's what we want to talk about in this book. What does true success for a man, particularly a follower of Christ, look like?

It's been great to work on this book with my good friend Colt. Even though I'm an Aggie and he's a Longhorn, and the two don't normally get along (that's an understatement!), we've developed a great respect for each other over the years. Colt's got a lot of insights in this area. He's a man of wisdom well beyond his years.

Sometimes in this book Colt will be talking to you directly, and sometimes I will be, but every part of the message between these book covers is something that we both fully own and that we can't wait to share with you.

## THIS IS FOR YOU

If you're concerned about winning at what really counts before your life on this earth is done, then this book is for you. Maybe you've had some successes, maybe *many* successes (though probably not as many as you would have liked), but you still have a nagging sense that what you're working so hard for may not be the right goal after all, at least not entirely. All of us know the awkward feeling when we start to wonder if we've got our ladder up against the wrong wall. As a Christ follower, you want whatever God wants for you, because deep inside you sense that that's where the real win for you must lie. We respect your desire. And we believe God does too. But what you *do* with that desire is what really matters.

Your quest for authentic success starts here.

Now, if you're a woman and you're checking out this book to see what it's got to say, no need to feel guilty about peeking! There are no secrets here, only revelations from the Word of God and the lives of men. Maybe you have a son, a husband, or some other important male in your life, and you want to

All of us know the awkward feeling when we start to wonder if we've got our ladder up against the wrong wall.

know how to better encourage him in his pursuit of godly manhood. That's great—this book will open your eyes as well as his. Share with him the insights you read here, or propose that the two of you read the book together and discuss it.

And that brings us to another opportunity. You see, we need to acknowledge that men have a tendency to remain in their own isolated silos, trying to work on their problems all alone. So, male reader, while you *can* read this book alone and try to apply it to your life individually, we encourage you to read it and talk it through with others, especially a group of men you can trust. Use the study guide at the back of the book with a male friend, with your mentor,

in a men's small group, on a men's retreat, or in any other setting where you can be honest with some other guys. Iron sharpens iron, and if we've been getting spiritually dull, we can help each other get our edge back.

Our promise to you is this: the teachings in this book are based on biblical principles, and if you learn and pursue God's way of doing things, your definition of success will change in the key areas of your life for all the seasons of your life. We want to help you win the way God intended, because it's the only way that lasts.

If that sounds promising to you, then turn the page.

# Transformed by Trust

*The real win is trusting God to lead you into the life He wants you to have.*

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.

—ISAIAH 26:3, ESV

What do you want in life more than anything else?

Can you picture it? Be completely honest. What do you think about the most, dream about, plan for, and strive the hardest to gain?

If you're a Christian, resist the noble urge to answer "to follow Christ" too quickly. That might genuinely be the case, and we certainly encourage you in that direction. But if you're like most men, your goals might be more mixed, more earthly, even if you are a Christian.

What you want more than anything else might be more along the lines of...

- having a great job;
- living an adventurous life;
- being married to the hottest, most understanding woman you know;

- driving the right car and living in the right house;
- having fun with your friends or family;
- climbing the ladder and succeeding in business;
- being financially secure;
- having people respect you; or
- doing something important, maybe even changing the world.

For too many of us, whether or not we would ever come right out and say it, those are our definitions of success. None of these goals are wrong, not if they're seen in the proper perspective. But what we've discovered is that so

**Who you trust and who you serve. Those two decisions change everything for a man.**

many men start out to win what they most want but in the end don't get it. Or they think they're achieving what matters most, but in the long run life doesn't pan out the way they'd hoped. What happens then?

If we're truly going to succeed, most of us need to redefine success. The real win for a man is built on two simple but strategic components—who you trust and who you serve. Those two decisions change everything for a man. And that's what we're going to explore more in the pages to come. Pursuing the true win takes resolve, and the decision to shoot for it is a choice you make more than once. It takes courage, determination, and faith, and it certainly isn't always easy.

Take it from us. We've both learned the hard way.

## MATT'S STORY

In May 2005, I (Matt) was thirty-one years old, and life was going great. I was happily married to my wife, Jenn. We had three healthy young children. The church I had planted three years prior was growing fast and was already up to about a thousand people.

Then one night—completely out of the blue—I began to have massive



pains in my stomach. I was taken to the hospital for an emergency appendectomy, stayed in the hospital overnight, and was released. Problem solved. Or so I thought.

A couple of days later I was sitting at my desk at work, and I got a phone call from my wife. The doctor had told her that they'd found a malignant tumor in my appendix.

Cancer.

It turned out to be a carcinoid tumor of the appendix, a fairly rare type of cancer. The tumors typically start to spread either when they become 2 centimeters long or if they break through the appendix wall. My tumor was 1.9 centimeters long, and it had already broken through the wall, so this was bad. Doctors told me that if this type of cancer spreads into your lymph nodes, you're done. Chemo doesn't work. Radiation doesn't work. It's a slow-growing cancer, so it takes a few years to kill you, but there's no hope.

To see if the cancer has spread, they test your blood, then they do a CAT scan to see if your lymph nodes are enlarged. I had all these tests, and my blood levels came back abnormally high. That was bad news. Then it turned out my lymph nodes were significantly swollen. Double dose of bad news.

Doctors told me that either the cancer had spread and I was going to die or my blood markers were high because of the original tumor and my nodes were swollen because of the surgery. One option meant death. The other option meant life. The only way to tell which scenario was factual was to wait a few months to see if my blood markers would go down. The second option was slim. As a thirty-one-year-old man, I was preparing to die.

For the next three months, I sat on pins and needles, thinking, hoping, praying. I experienced every dark emotion imaginable. What would happen to my wife and children? What would happen to my church? I struggled to understand why God would allow this to happen to me.

I began to take careful inventory of my life. Some of the first verses of Scripture I read during those days were from Jeremiah 2, where God talks about people who have forsaken Him and tried to do life on their own. I knew

in my heart that in so many ways those verses described me. A friend of mine who had gone through a similar trial said these words about his experience: “The Lord brought me into the desert to win my heart.” That pretty much summed up what I was experiencing. I knew that whether I lived or died, God was definitely trying to get my attention. Honestly, I had some unconfessed sin in my life and was pursuing a thousand other things besides Jesus.

Then one day, in the midst of my wrestling with God, I got a phone call from a longtime friend, Neil McClendon, a pastor in Houston.

“Matt,” he said with his characteristic gravelly voice, “I was spending time with the Lord this morning, and you came to mind. I believe I’ve got a message from God for you.”

“Okay, I’m listening.” My heart raced in my chest. I had no idea what Neil was going to say.

“Matt, I don’t know whether you’re going to live or die. But here’s the message: the Lord wants you to live with unction.”

“‘Unction’? What does that mean?”

“Matt, it means holy urgency. That’s how God wants you to live.”

“I still don’t get it, Neil.”

“Read Psalm 39:4–5. Then you’ll know.” Neil hung up.

I grabbed my Bible and turned to the passage.

Show me, O LORD, my life’s end  
and the number of my days;  
let me know how fleeting is my life.  
You have made my days a mere handbreadth;  
the span of my years is as nothing before you.  
Each man’s life is but a breath. (NIV)

I chewed on that. Ever breathed on a window during a cold winter’s day? Did you notice how it fogged up, and then the fog instantly disappeared? That is what the psalmist David is saying the life of man is like. Here for a brief mo-

ment, then gone. Why would David ask God to show him the shortness of his life? David knew that when a man grasps how short his life is, he begins to live with a new sense of what's truly important.

After reading that verse, I had my first glimpse of how God was trying to change my heart through the trial I was facing. God wanted me to live with a holy urgency. Live with *unction*. Whether I lived for two more years or five more decades, compared with all eternity my life was short. I needed to live with a sense of life's fleetingness, of how, in the eyes of God, my life was a mere breath. If I truly believed that, it was going to change the way I lived.

## WHAT CHANGED FOR ME

Think of it this way. If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, how would you spend your last hours?

- Would you watch reruns on TV or spend every second you could with your family?
- Would you daydream about other women or look your wife straight in the eyes and tell her you love her more than anything?
- Would you bury yourself behind the newspaper or sit down with your kids at dinner and point them to Jesus?
- Would you look at porn? Would you cheat on your taxes or talk negatively about your coworkers? Or engage in any number of the sins that so easily entangle us? Or would you strive for Jesus as never before, knowing that you would soon see Him face to face?
- Would you read your Bible and pray and live each moment you have left in the conscious presence of God?

God was showing me that there is a direct connection between understanding how short my life is and the urgency in which I would live that life. God wanted to teach me how to number my days, how to know time was short, and how not to live in vain. God wanted me to live with holy urgency.

It's a hard lesson to learn. Three months went by, and it was time for my

next round of tests. The night before my tests, I paced around my bedroom. I vented to Jenn about how frustrated I was that I'd done everything I knew how to do, I'd confessed every sin that I'd ever committed, yet God was still not freeing me from this trial. Finally, out of anxiety, exhaustion, and nervousness, I lost my cool and yelled at the top of my lungs, "Jennifer, what does God want from me? I've done everything I can think of. What is He trying to teach me?"

Calmly, my wife looked at me and said, "Matt, I don't know what God's trying to teach you. But I know this: He wants you to *trust Him*."

The next day I went to the cancer ward and sat in the waiting room, surrounded by dying people. My Bible in my hands, I began reading the story of Jesus on the cross. While Jesus was up there, some guy started mocking Him, saying things like "Hey, I thought You trusted God. Why are You on this cross, then? Why don't You *trust Him* to get You off the cross?" (see Matthew 27:40–43). Right in front of me were the two words my wife had said the night before:

**Sometimes trusting  
God means you don't  
get to climb down  
from your cross.**

*trust Him*. And while I was reading, the answer to why I was still in a place of difficulty hit me like a bolt of lightning. The Holy Spirit impressed these words on my heart so strongly: *Sometimes trusting in God means you don't get to get off the cross.*

That was the start of my beginning to understand this strange win that God was pointing me to. When Jesus was on the cross, He *was* fully trusting God. The cross didn't look like a win that most people would imagine for someone who was going to save the world. Yet the cross is still exactly what God wanted for Jesus. The nails were in Jesus's hands for a reason.

Something turned in my heart, and I realized it was true that sometimes trusting God means you don't get to climb down from your cross. Meaning, whatever difficulty you're bearing, whatever goal you're not achieving, staying in that difficulty might be a part of God's perfect plan for your life. Losing in the eyes of the world just might be success in the eyes of God.

After my second round of tests were done, I went back to my office, got on my knees, looked up at the ceiling, and prayed, “Lord, if it’s Your will for me to die, I trust You.” I’d said this to Him before, but this was the first time I really meant it. I fully surrendered right then. I let go. A peace and confidence came over me like I’d never felt before. Without a shadow of a doubt, I knew that every moment of my life was in God’s hands.

The next day a phone call came. My blood work was normal. My lymph nodes were normal. All my test results were normal. There was no sign of cancer anywhere. As of the writing of this book, I’ve been completely cancer-free for seven years. I don’t know if God healed me miraculously or if I’d never had any more cancer than the appendix tumor. And I’m not saying that if you trust God, He’ll solve your problems in the same way my cancer was taken away from me. But this is what I know for sure: God brought me to a place where I said, “If You want to keep me on the cross, then I trust You.”

Can you say that about your life? No matter what happens—good or bad—can you fully trust God? That’s the truth that we men so desperately need to learn.

Yes, we want to succeed. We want so badly to reach our goals, and our goals are not wrong at all. In fact, they’re usually very good goals. But if you don’t achieve what you want to, can you still say that you trust God no matter what?

That’s a question Colt and I worked on together for more than a year.

## COLT’S STORY

For my whole life, I’ve been hard-wired to win.

If you’re a boy growing up in Texas with a football in your hands, it’s your dream to play at the University of Texas for Coach Mack Brown. It’s your dream to lead your team to the National Championship. And it’s your dream to win the Heisman.

By the time I was a junior in college, I’d achieved a lot of that dream. It was 2008 and I was quarterback for the University of Texas Longhorns. We were

ranked number one in several polls. We went through a long stretch of the season where we beat some of the best college football teams in the country.

Then we came to a big game that would likely determine whether we would go to the BCS National Championship or not. It was toward the end of a tough stretch of conference games, we were up against Texas Tech, and both sides fought hard all game long. Finally, with the clock ticking, we scored to take the lead, 33–32. There were eighty-nine seconds left in the game. We kicked off to Tech, and they threw two long throws down the field. They ended up scoring on the last play of the game. I couldn't believe it! One second stood on the clock. We lost the game and didn't go to the National Championship.

One dream lost.

Then came the Heisman. The Heisman is the longest-standing award and one of the most prestigious in college football. The award is voted upon strictly by media members. Winning the Heisman is like being voted college football's most valuable player. I'd won other awards, lots of them, including being a consensus All-American for two years (meaning the Associated Press had voted me best college quarterback two years in a row). But in the back of my mind, I thought that for myself and for my teammates it would be an amazing honor to win the Heisman.

That same year, as a junior, I went to the Heisman award ceremonies in New York City. I was up against two other players: Sam Bradford, the accurate and very successful quarterback from Oklahoma, and Tim Tebow, Florida's quarterback who had won the Heisman the year before. All three of us had had strong seasons. Any of us could emerge the victor.

When the ballots were counted, Tim came in third, Sam won the Heisman, and I came in second. Being runner-up for the Heisman might sound good, but it was actually a huge disappointment to me. It's hard to fully explain, but ask yourself this: Who *lost* last year's Super Bowl? Can you remember the team that didn't win? That's what it felt for me to be runner-up for the Heisman—not good enough. I was just as disappointed for my teammates and coaches and fans as I was for myself.

Two dreams lost.

So the stakes were really raised in 2009. I decided to come back for my senior year after a couple of weeks of seriously contemplating entering the NFL draft. I was well within reach of one last shot at winning the Heisman, and more importantly, my team had one last shot at winning the National Championship. My final year as a college player would be my last chance to achieve what I'd been working toward all my life.

Matt began to disciple me just before the start of that year. We met almost every week in his office, poring through Scriptures together and praying. The things I was telling Matt about myself felt kind of trivial at first. My “problems” were nothing compared to his having cancer. I wasn't dying of a life-threatening disease. I just wasn't winning how I wanted to win. But Matt showed me that the level of difficulty a person faces isn't the issue. Everybody encounters problems in life in the pursuit of his goals, and the problems are valid to each person. No matter what difficulty you're facing, God wants you to trust Him through it.

For me, that proved easier said than done. I'd say, “Oh yeah, Matt, I know I need to trust in God.” But then when something bad happened, I'd still get frustrated because God wasn't blessing me in the way I thought I needed to be blessed.

For example, a few weeks after Matt first told me his cancer story, I threw an interception during a big game and it folded me up inside. Matt pulled me aside and said, “Colt, God sometimes has us go through difficult things because He's trying to get us to trust Him. It doesn't mean you don't go out and play your hardest. It doesn't mean you don't strive for the best. It doesn't mean you don't work as for the Lord. But it does mean that when bad things happen, you're not shaken; you trust.”

**Ask yourself this:  
Who lost last year's  
Super Bowl? Can you  
remember the team  
that didn't win?**

I took Matt's words to heart. I didn't need to give up my quest to win. In fact, the verse that he was alluding to—Colossians 3:23—had been my favorite verse for years. As a matter of fact, I put that verse under my name every time I sign my name for an autograph. It says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (ESV). In light of this verse, every day I showed up for practice, every game I played, I was going to do everything I could physically, mentally, and spiritually with the gifts God has given me, and yet still remember that my life was in God's hands, regardless of what came about. I still live that way today.

But it was awhile before my decision to fully trust God took hold. At one point Matt asked me directly, "Colt, you always point to the sky and give God glory when you throw a touchdown or your team wins. But have you come to the place where, if you don't achieve your goals, you can still point your index finger up at heaven and say, 'God, I trust You'?"

I wanted to do this. I truly did. But I wasn't sure if I was genuinely there yet. I had yet to be tested.

## WHAT CHANGED FOR ME

In December 2009 I went to New York again as one of the candidates for the Heisman award—my second year in a row. But I returned to the awards ceremony only to see the trophy handed to Mark Ingram, Alabama's star running back. Toby Gerhart of Stanford came in second, and I came in third. It was the closest points race since 1985.

One dream lost—again.

I kept pressing on. At the end of the regular season, Texas beat Texas A&M, and my team was headed to the BCS National Championship. This was my absolute final shot at winning the college football championship.

The National Championship was played in California. We traveled there, but my body was still on Texas time. So the evening before the game and all game day prior to kickoff, I had a lot of time to think and prepare. We were the



underdogs, but I was confident we could win. By then I'd played with my team for four years. I was the leader of the team, and I knew how everyone ticked. We were all ready. It was on. I was going to do all I could to put our team in a position to win. I'd never been more prepared going into any game as I was that day.

As I was reading my Bible, I came across Isaiah 26:3–4.

You keep him in perfect peace  
whose mind is stayed on you,  
because he trusts in you.  
Trust in the LORD forever,  
for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. (ESV)

Go ahead and take the time to read that verse again.

That passage is what I meditated on going into the 2009 National Championship, and it's become the passage that undergirds what my life is about today. Really, the themes found in that passage are what this book is about too. I didn't know it just then, but that verse would become incredibly important to me. It works best if Matt and I alternate to tell you this next bit of the story.

### ***Matt:***

The National Championship began. It was the Longhorns versus the number-one-ranked University of Alabama. I was watching the game on TV at home in Austin, and during UT's first possession, Colt absolutely dominated the opponent. I mean, Colt drove his team down the field like there was nobody playing on defense. The game was off to an incredible start, and the National Championship looked well within reach. I was shouting at the TV, urging Colt on. Colt and I had been praying for this moment all year, and nothing could stop this kid.

I had to blink twice when I saw it happen. It was still the first main drive down the field, and Colt's team was on the opponent's five-yard line. They were ready to score. The ball was snapped, and from the blindside a 296-pound

defensive lineman broke free and plowed into Colt's shoulder, and Colt went down. Colt had been hit harder than that dozens of times before. He should have bounced back up, shaken it off, and run back to join his team in the huddle.

But this time when Colt stood up, something was wrong.

Colt's arm hung at his side, limp. It looked lifeless. I could see it on camera. Colt wasn't moving it. And a thought struck me: *What happens next has the potential to define Colt's life for a long time to come.*

### ***Colt:***

It had been a beautiful first drive. I had completed five out of five passes up to the point of the hit. We were marching down the field and just about to score. Then—*bam!*

I wasn't really in pain. A ton of adrenaline was still coursing through my body. Instead of joining my team in the huddle, I jogged toward the sideline. More than anything, I was in shock, asking, "What is this? What's going on?" The lineman had come off the edge and hit me square on the shoulder of my throwing arm. My whole arm from the shoulder down to my hand was completely numb. I couldn't raise my arm. I couldn't feel my fingers. I couldn't grip anything. Maybe you've felt the sensation that happens when you sleep on your arm, wake up, and your arm is there but it's heavy and dead. That's what I felt.

So I sat on the bench, and Coach Brown replaced me with my backup, freshman Garrett Gilbert. The trainers began to work on me, and I sat there completely focused on everything the trainers were trying to do for me. I kept thinking, *Surely this is going to come back. Surely!* My right arm was what had gotten me to where I was that day. But everything in my arm stayed silent.

If it had been my left arm, I would have kept playing. If it had been my ankle, I would have taped it up and gone back on the field. But a quarterback without his throwing arm is useless.

I walked back to the locker room with the trainers and kept trying. I put ice all over my shoulder. They took x-rays, trying to figure out what was wrong

so they could wake it up. There was no reaction. Thirty minutes went by. Remember, this was my last game in a college uniform. This was everything. There hadn't been a quarterback playing at the University of Texas besides me for the past four years. But the truth slowly sank in. I was physically spent, emotionally spent. I was done.

**I would have done anything for those guys in that room, and they knew that.**

Halftime rolled around, and Alabama was beating us 24–6. The atmosphere in our locker room was dispirited, to say the least. By this time, most of my team knew I wasn't coming back in the game. I got up anyway and tried to encourage my team the best I could. I would have done anything for those guys in that room, and they knew that.

The trainers were calling it a “nerve impingement,” and there was nothing they could do for it. They told me to hop in the showers and get my street clothes back on. But I was having none of that. I thought, *No way. I'm going to put my pads back on, strap my shoes back on, and go out to the bench with a headset on. If there's any way my arm comes back to life with any amount of time left in the game, I'm going back in.* For the second half of the game, I stood on the sidelines and did my best to cheer on the team. That was all I could do. (It would be three more weeks before the feeling returned.)

We lost. Alabama won the National Championship 37–21. It was a tough, tough thing to stand there watching, knowing I couldn't do anything. It was tough afterward to listen to all the media speculation and all the armchair quarterbacks—people who said I didn't want to play because I was more concerned with the NFL draft status. (If you know me, you know that thought never even crossed my mind. Ever. I could have left for the NFL the year before. I had just as much opportunity then and possibly would have been drafted higher than I eventually was.)

Right after the game was over, I walked back to the locker room. The heaviest disappointment I'd ever felt in my life descended on me. I knew what the

game meant to me, my teammates, my coaches, and the fans. Lisa Salters, the sideline reporter for ABC, tugged at the corner of my jersey and asked for an

Words came out of my mouth that I now know could have only come from an unseen source.

interview. A cameraman stood next to her. I nodded, and the next thing I heard was Lisa saying, “I’m with Texas quarterback Colt McCoy. Colt, what was it like for you to watch this game—the last game in uniform—from the sideline?”<sup>1</sup>

I started to answer twice, stammering, “I... I...” I had no words of my own just then.

I paused to gather myself. Then words came out of my mouth that I now know could have only come from an unseen source.

### *Matt:*

When Colt went down, I immediately started praying, “Lord, let him back in the game.” I was begging God, wrestling with the same issues of trust, asking, “What in the world are You doing? Don’t You know how huge this is, God?”

Then the report came saying Colt wasn’t getting back in the game.

For a moment I sat there in front of my TV, completely deflated. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks: *No, for reasons we’ll never fully understand, what’s happening at this exact moment is part of God’s perfect plan. This moment is what God has been preparing Colt for all year long.*

Instead of worrying, I trusted God and prayed that Colt would do the same.

I knew there was going to be a postgame interview with Colt, and I began to pray, “God, give him the right words to say.”

Sure enough, after the game Lisa Salters came on the screen with Colt at her side. A microphone was in his face. I knew this was the moment.

Colt started slowly at first:

“I... I...” He cleared his throat and began again. “I love this game. I have a passion for this game.

“I’ve done everything I can to contribute to my team, and we made it this far.

“It’s unfortunate that I didn’t get to play. I would have given everything I had to be out there with my team.

“Congratulations to Alabama.

“I love the way our team fought. Garrett Gilbert stepped in and played as good as he could play. He did a tremendous job...”

Then, as Colt finished speaking, he said one last phrase. It brought me to my feet in my living room. I heard the words and stared at the screen.

*Colt:*

I said: “I always give God the glory. I never question why things happen the way they do. God is in control of my life, and I know that if nothing else, I am standing on the Rock.”

*Matt:*

I screamed at the top of my lungs. “That’s it!”

*Colt:*

I know those words came to me because of God. They came because I had been meditating on Isaiah 26:3–4 before the game.

God was keeping me in perfect peace because my mind was stayed on Him.

God was my eternal Rock, and although I was hugely disappointed over not winning, my life wasn’t going to be shattered. God was still in control.

That’s what I told everybody that day, and that’s what I had come to truly believe.

*Matt:*

On national television, with the whole world watching, Colt had just quoted Isaiah 26. Within two seconds of Colt’s interview, my phone started going off. I bet it went off a hundred times. Everyone who knew that Colt and I were

friends started texting me, saying things like, “Unbelievable,” and “God was glorified through that,” and “Tell Colt I’m so proud of him,” and “That’s the coolest thing I’ve ever heard in my life.”

This young man hadn’t only given glory to God when he had won, but he just gave glory to God when he had lost the biggest game of his life.

That’s what it means to truly win. It means that eternity is always in view. Colt could have been shattered, but instead he stood confidently on the eternal Rock of God.

### *Colt:*

It’s true that I was hugely disappointed. If you could imagine what I felt in that moment—my whole life had been built around winning that game. Everything I had spent hours upon hours preparing for was encapsulated in that event.

Yet God chose to use me in that moment of pain and failure to glorify Him. And that was okay with me. Yes, the experience hurt. It was painful. I still have nightmares about it today. I still get upset when I think about it. But that was the route God allowed me to walk down. I know now that things in this life don’t always go as planned, but I’m confident that I’m on the journey God wants me to be on, and I’ll go where He wants me to go.

## THE REAL WIN FOR YOU

So that’s what this book is about: trusting God in the deepest way possible. This is where the real win in a man’s life comes from.

Redefining success is a task for every man, including you. The task isn’t always easy, but the rewards pay off in big ways. With God at the core of your life, your life is rock-steady. You don’t have to wonder, *Am I committing myself to the right tasks? Am I a part of something that really matters? Am I valuable?* You’re not on the shifting sands of your own best notions and efforts; you’re built on the Rock. A peace and an assurance like you’ve never felt before flood your life.

That's the surprising reward of faithfully serving God—absolute confidence. It's not so much a confidence in yourself or your abilities, although that's often a by-product of trusting God. It's a confidence in the righteous character of God Himself. God is good all the time, and God always has our best interests at heart. Trusting God means knowing that our lives are being lived out in the center of His perfect plan.

**That's the surprising  
reward of faithfully  
serving God—  
absolute confidence.**

We don't have all of life figured out by any means, and both of us still make as many mistakes as the next guy. But we want to talk to you in the pages ahead about how God has changed our life stories—how by trusting and serving Him wholeheartedly, we've seen Him change our marriages, families, hearts, careers, and lives. Through the truths we've discovered in the Scriptures, we are learning how to be the men God calls us to be.

We invite you to do the same. To learn how to trust God more fully than you ever have before, and then do it. The way of living presented in this book isn't about shining yourself up or pulling yourself up by the bootstraps. It's about a love relationship with Jesus, about grace and not perfection, about following and obeying a God who cares for you, no matter what.

Consider this your personal call to redefine success in your life. When you trust in the Lord as your eternal Rock, you can be absolutely confident no matter life's circumstances.



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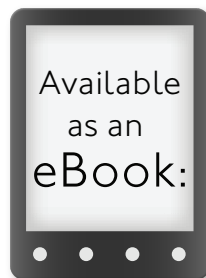
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