

TIM TEBOW

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

**SNEAK
PEEK**



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ONLY**

SHAKEN

**DISCOVERING YOUR TRUE IDENTITY
IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S STORMS**

WITH A.J. GREGORY

Praise for
Shaken

“Tim Tebow is not an athlete—*athlete* is what Tim fills in on his tax return. That does not begin to tell the story of who he is. Tim is a role model, an inspiration to those who have a dream and are willing to accept life as a journey full of ups and downs.”

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“*Shaken* shows us a side of Tim Tebow that we’ve never gotten to see before. In this book, Tim comes alongside his reader and says, ‘I’ve been there too,’ and proceeds to show us how God is faithful even when our entire lives feel shaken to the core.”

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—CAM NEWTON, quarterback for the Carolina Panthers

“Whether or not you’ve followed Tim’s career, *Shaken* speaks to something we’ve all had to deal with—trusting God when the plans for our lives don’t work out as we expected. Tim shares his journey from the Broncos to the Jets

to the Patriots and beyond with refreshing honesty. He comes alongside us as a friend and gives us hope for the days our lives take an unexpected turn. I am so grateful to call Tim my friend; his life and passion constantly inspire me! Whatever Tim does he does with all his heart, and this book reflects that incredible commitment! I love Tim, and by the end of this book, you will too!”

—JUDAH SMITH, lead pastor of the City Church and *New York Times* best-selling author of *Jesus Is* _____.

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To the two best things in my life:

Jesus, the greatest gift I ever received.

My family. The thing about family is that you don't get to pick them. But if I could, I'd choose every one of you. I love you, Mom, Dad, Christy, Katie, Robby, and Peter!

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INTRODUCTION

I'm grateful for the life experiences I've had—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sure, I've had my ups and downs. As I've done things a little bit differently, the world has tried to force me onto a roller coaster of identities, defining me by my circumstances and not who I really am.

Was my identity found in the highs when I won the Heisman and later when the Denver Broncos were making a play-off run? No. Was my identity found when, a year later, I was cut? No.

One day, according to the world, I'm on top of my game, adored, praised, and respected. And the next, I'm at the bottom of the heap, cut, criticized, and torn down. You know what I've learned in the process? How important it is not to allow either the highs or the lows in life to determine who you are.

It's tempting to define ourselves or to measure our worth by the external—by how much money we have, by how we look, by the applause of others. The list is long. Think about this. Who are you when everything is going

great—when the money is in the bank, when your home life is peaceful, when your future seems certain? And who are you when your world is shaken—when your bank account is overdrawn, when your relationship is on the fritz, when you haven’t a clue what tomorrow holds? Sometimes it takes a challenging time to really find out.

While many know about my career highs, few know the details about the lows. Like having to learn that God’s plans are better and bigger than mine, feeling torn about the future, and working through my dreams being shattered after getting cut from three NFL teams. I admit, writing this book hasn’t been easy. It was tough to relive some painful moments. But I’ll say that in those places of doubt and even of darkness, I’ve realized that who I am has nothing to do with wins or losses, applause, or negative criticism. It has to do with whose I am. Knowing this, I can live out what the king of ancient Israel wrote in Psalm 16:8:

I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

While in this book I share parts of my personal life and football journey in the NFL, this is not a memoir. It’s about the truth I’ve discovered along the way. And, it’s also about some amazing people I’ve been inspired by in life as well as through our foundation’s W15H (pronounced “wish”) outreach program. Though our mission is to bring faith, hope, and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need, they have, without fail, given those very things to me. While I wish I could tell you about every single child and family I’ve met who has inspired me, I’m excited to be able to share a few stories with you.

Here’s what you can expect to find in this book. The first seven chapters will reveal some of the lows I’ve experienced, glimpses into my life and parts

INTRODUCTION

of myself that I've never shared publicly. They'll also uncover the lessons I've learned through that time, like what it means to stay grounded in the face of doubt, fear, and criticism; why others matter; and how our objective in life is not to be like everyone else.

The final three chapters move in an outward trajectory, focusing on how we can impact others in our journey of faith and purpose. When we are grounded in whose we are, not only can we handle the storms that come, but we can also begin to move forward in a more purposeful direction. We can begin to live in a new way. We can impact others even when our circumstances look bleak. We can use our stories to help others in their own.

Look, I'm not perfect. I'm on a faith journey just like you are. I have good days. I have bad days. Sometimes I get it right. Other days I struggle. I know that when I'm settled in my identity, I live at my best.

While this book doesn't offer cookie-cutter answers or a concrete plan about what to do when you stand on shaky ground, my prayer is that it strengthens your faith, gives you hope, and shines light on your dark places. My prayer is that after reading this book, you can walk away inspired, armed with courage, ready to tackle life, and make a difference.

1

CUT

**We must accept finite disappointment,
but we must never lose infinite hope.**

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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The locker room was somber. A strange mixture of sadness, tension, loss. Guys stood in front of giant wooden lockers, where stored on hooks and shoved in corners were more than just sweaty shorts and worn helmets. More than stuff. My teammates were staring at the tangible signs of unmet expectations. Shattered plans. Good old disappointment.

It was late August, time for roster cuts. NFL teams start out with ninety guys, and by the end of the week, the number drops down to fifty-three. And during those seven days, you can't help but feel on edge. Especially as you walk into the locker room after a workout and, from the corner of your eye, see a buddy, someone you trained and worked so hard with, now glum, black trash bags in hand. It was like that all day.

One by one, a handful of my New England Patriots teammates started cleaning out their lockers. Told to go home. That it was over. Some could

hide well the obvious disappointment they felt. And with others, it was written all over their faces.

I felt an uncomfortable blend of emotions. On one hand, it wasn't me getting called into a conference room and then later dumping protein shakes, deodorant, and cleats into a noisy trash bag. On the other hand, I felt for them. These were my friends. And their run with the team was done.

As awkwardness hung in the air, weaving through tense, quiet chatter, I clapped one guy on the shoulder and said, "Hey, man. God's got a plan. He's got this." To another, I gave a bear hug, saying nothing.

As the day unfolded, I thought about my standing on the team. I felt like I had gotten more comfortable with my performance. We had just beaten the New York Giants 28–20 the night before, August 29, 2013. In this preseason finale I had finished 6 of 11 in passing for 91 yards with two touchdowns. Yeah, maybe I didn't do my best, but I was just starting to click with the team.

And then, sucker punch.

It was my turn.

I didn't see it coming. Maybe because I was one of the last players to get released.

I spent that Friday training in the Patriots facilities at Gillette Stadium. As I worked out, in between squats and deadlifts, I was tuned in to the grim atmosphere. I was probably subconsciously waiting for someone looking for me to pop his head into that room packed with an arsenal of steel exercise equipment. But no one came. That helped to take some of the pressure off, letting me breathe just a little bit easier.

After my workout, it was hard walking into the locker room, where a trail of trash bags and worn football equipment flooded the floor. Seeing teammate after teammate getting released made me tense up again. I said good-bye to the guys while metaphorically looking over my shoulder, waiting for something to happen. Maybe someone to call me into an office. Maybe a text. But nothing. A part of me began to think I was safe, and a sense of security began to sink in.

Sometime earlier, Robert Kraft, the owner of the Patriots and a man I respect and really like, had told me he was looking forward to seeing me at his get-together the next day. He was hosting a barbeque for the team and the staff at his home. Thinking about his words, I felt like it was a sign, a good sign.

Feeling semi-settled, I left the facilities and hung out with my brother Robby and my longtime friends Bryan and Erik. I love these guys. We can be pretty sarcastic with one another and quick with our jabs, but we're also not stingy about offering encouragement when needed. It's a good combo.

Aware of the ongoing cuts and my corresponding tension, my three buddies hung out with me the rest of the day. We hit up a movie theater close to the stadium, hoping a good action flick would help ease some of the remaining tension. And after wasting an hour and a half of our lives watching what was a terribly boring movie, Erik and Bryan headed to the airport to fly home to Jacksonville as Robby and I headed back to the hotel room. As the rest of evening wore on, I still hadn't heard from Coach Bill Belichick or his staff. While the absence of communication boosted my comfort level, I still felt pretty overstrung.

By the time my alarm blared early Saturday morning, I was thinking, *Phew! I made it!* And it was likely in that same breath of relief that I noticed an incoming text message on my phone from Coach.

“Timmy, will you please come in?”

My stomach dropped. I stared at those six words for a minute, my mind reeling. The feeling of security began to shatter.

I drove to the facilities, trying to stay above the mental fray. In moments like these, there’s such a temptation to get caught up in the unknown, trying to figure out a situation that’s beyond your control. Whatever was going to happen was going to happen. It was that simple. And as equally hard to let sink in.

I tried to focus as I pushed open the glass front doors. The place was practically empty because most of the team was headed to or already at Mr. Kraft’s barbeque, which I still had planned to attend. I kept calm as I walked down the gray hallway, not thinking much, my flip-flops flapping noisily on the tiled floor. But when Coach Belichick’s poker-faced assistant led me to the sparse conference room, I knew. In an instant.

Enter the sucker punch.

The room was empty, save for a dark wooden rectangular table and a few chairs. There may have been a window or even a tap-dancing flamingo wearing a cocktail dress, but I wouldn’t have noticed. My eyes were laser focused on the two men who I was certain were going to change my future on the team.

Coach Belichick sat in a chair on the opposite side of the table. Coach Josh McDaniels, who had drafted me to the Denver Broncos three and a half years earlier, stood in a nearby corner to the left of him. Someone motioned me to sit. Their faces were matter-of-fact, flat, void of expression.

While I can’t remember who spoke first or what he said, I think Coach Belichick broke the silence by saying, “Good job on the last game, Timmy.”

I nodded, staying quiet. My relationship with Coach Belichick had been good since my Gator days. He would watch me train, encourage me. I liked



the guy. And I wanted to play for him, work hard, and prove I was the right choice.

I remembered when I had signed with the team in June. Then I'd had an offer on the table to make a one-day appearance endorsing a product for a million-dollar paycheck. I'm sure you'd agree that a million bucks is a lot to make in just twenty-four hours. But I wasn't quick to say yes.

When I came on the team, Coach and I had a long and deep talk. "I want to make you one of the guys," he told me. "This is not going to be a media circus. I'll control it if you do your part. You're part of a team, Timmy. We're in this together."

So when the offer for the one-day commercial turned up, I was sure to discuss the opportunity with him. "I want to know what you think, Coach," I said. "I respect you and I want to fit in. I want to be one of the guys. Should I do it?"

He thought for a moment and then shook his head. "Timmy, I would really appreciate it if you didn't."

Highly respecting the man, I turned down the deal. I didn't even think twice about it. I wanted the chance to impress Coach Belichick more than I wanted the money. I'll say that if I were on any other team, I would have probably said yes to the offer. But the thoughts he offered in our initial conversation mattered to me—even more than a million dollars.

Back to the conference room.

"It's not the right fit," Coach Belichick said.

My stomach reeled in that moment. I felt disappointed. I felt I had let myself down. I didn't believe I performed as well in practice or the preseason as I could have, but I was getting better. I had been stoked about the opportunity to learn and train under Tom Brady, one of the best quarterbacks of all time, and planned on using that experience to become one of the best

quarterbacks of all time too. At the beginning of training camp, I put a lot of pressure on myself to be like Tom and train like Tom and do like Tom, but then I realized it wasn't about being Tom Brady; it was about being me and doing my best. Yet, despite improving my performance during the preseason, my effort wasn't enough.

Frankly, it hurt. I had hoped Coaches Belichick and McDaniels would give me the benefit of the doubt. They were some of my biggest supporters. If they didn't believe in me, who would?

The meeting lasted ten, maybe fifteen minutes. I listened, fixed in posture, not having the courage to take my eyes off these two men. Though I felt they were sincere and genuinely apologetic about the end result, their explanations were vague. I wanted to know what I didn't do or what I should have done, but I didn't get any clarity. Or closure. Just a lot of talking without any answers. I figured my agent would probably call me in a few days and give me a clearer picture.

As Coach Belichick continued to talk, using what I felt were blanket statements, my mind was bombarded by a number of overwhelming thoughts.

Why wasn't I enough? Should I have trained differently? Should I have spent more time studying? Or more time throwing? Is this it?

This wasn't unfamiliar territory for me. In the spring of 2012, I was traded from the Broncos to the New York Jets, a move that felt like a betrayal of sorts. A year later, the Jets let me go. This was a pattern I did not like.

As I nodded, still unwavering in my eye contact, I shifted my thoughts toward God, the One I believed had led me to New England. *I thought this was going somewhere special! I thought this was a plan You designed for me. If that was true, then why, God, why is this thing crashing and burning?*

I thought of the endorsement deal I had turned down two months earlier, questioning and maybe even regretting my decision. *Was it the wrong choice? If I had said yes, would that have put me in a better situation than*



where I am right now—sitting in front of two coaches who are firing me without telling me exactly why?

Then, the meeting was over.

I gave Coach Belichick and Coach McDaniels hugs, wishing them and their families well. I genuinely meant what I said. I deeply respected these two men. They are great at what they do. And I didn't blame them in the least. I blamed myself.

As I closed the door behind me, stepping out into the empty hallway that would lead me for the last time to the Patriots locker room and my very own black garbage bags, my heart sank. I felt cornered by regret and its companion, shame. *You could have, you should have done more, Timmy. Why didn't you push harder? Train better? Work out longer?*

I pictured the thousands of letters, cards, and e-mails I had received from kids who looked up to me and had rooted for me. I had failed them. Again.

Thankfully, the locker room was nearly empty, quiet. As I grabbed a few garbage bags and stood in front of my locker, I felt like I was going to throw up. *Is this it? Will I ever wear an NFL uniform again?*

I stared at the bottles and jars of nutritional supplements that cluttered a shelf. Green fuel, protein shakes, vitamins, antioxidants—all the things that were supposed to help me get stronger, faster, better. *Dang, I thought, they were no help at all.*

I stared point-blank at the Patriots gear. It taunted me. A uniform I was proud to wear, that I'd never put on again. In a blur, I grabbed some of my personal stuff and chucked the items one by one into a trash bag. As I tossed in a pair of running shoes, I knew the news of my release would be broadcast shortly to millions of Americans.

In the spirit of transparency, I'll say I was embarrassed. I struggled to humble myself and not wallow in the cesspool of conflicting and raw emotions. I knew I'd have to make a statement soon and wanted to do it right. I

wanted to say, with total sincerity, that I was grateful to God and to the Patriots for the opportunity.

In that moment, it wasn't easy. I knew God hadn't left me. I knew He still had a plan for my life. I knew He still had a purpose. And though my foundation in Him was solid, much of what rested on top of that was shaken. I love what Mike Tyson reportedly said, something like "Everyone's got a plan until they get punched in the face." That's just what it felt like for me.

A few teammates and coaches were there to say good-bye. They were extremely cordial and supportive, wishing me the best of luck. I can't tell you how much time had passed, but by the time I started filling my second garbage bag, I was over it. I took what I could, left the Patriots equipment untouched, and walked out of the facility, giving more hugs and saying thank-yous to the few people I passed on the way.

The summer sun felt warm on my face, the air calm and still. Walking toward my rental SUV in the middle of a lifeless parking lot, I remembered the last game I had played for the Broncos. On January 14, 2012, the Patriots killed us 45–10 in the second round of the AFC Championship play-offs. During the game, unknown to me at the time, I had broken my collarbone and second rib. Now, a year and a half later, climbing into the SUV, I slammed the door shut and thought, *This is the second time I'm leaving Gillette Stadium—broken.*

I sat for a minute, key in the ignition, eyes glued to the windshield. I wasn't looking at anything specific, just thinking. *Did that really just happen? God, I thought we were in this together! I thought we had a plan, a purpose! We were supposed to do some great things here!*

On and on these split-second thoughts blasted their way through my brain with fury. Finally, I unfroze.

I picked up my phone and called my brother Robby, or my friend Erik,



maybe both. I can't remember. But they graciously arranged an immediate conference call with my circle of trust (#meettheparents). My family (Mom and Dad, sisters Christy and Katie, brothers Robby and Peter) and a few close friends rounded out this amazing bunch. While I needed to lean into their support, I also didn't want to have to share the same news twenty different times. I'm not a big fan of repeating myself, especially when it's bad news.

As I made the fifteen-minute drive through the back roads of Foxborough to the hotel, I told my loved ones the Patriots let me go. Heartfelt condolences, words of support, and what I needed most, prayer, poured out.

"I'm so sorry, Timmy."

"This is not over."

"God's got a plan."

And then together, we worked our way through what I would post on social media. How do you respond publicly to such a personal loss? What do you say? After much thought and reflection, I tweeted on August 31, 2013, 12:16 p.m.:

I would like to thank Mr. Kraft, Coach Belichick, Coach McDaniels and the entire Patriots organization for giving me the opportunity to be a part of such a classy organization. I pray for nothing but the best for you all. I will remain in relentless pursuit of continuing my lifelong dream of being an NFL quarterback. 2 Corinthians 12:9: "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

I was trying to mean every word. I really was. I knew in my heart it was true, but my emotions kept trying to override that.

That afternoon, not having the energy or the will to face a barrage of reporters or disappointed fans that were sure to flood the airport, a friend graciously offered to send a private plane that was already nearby and fly me to Jacksonville, where my parents lived. Since Mom and Dad weren't around, having previously committed to attend an event somewhere in Michigan, I planned to spend the rest of the day at Bryan's house with Robby. I had nowhere else to go. I'd been living in hotel rooms and rented apartments for the last few years. In fact, most of my stuff was in storage from the last cut.

When Bryan picked me up, I was pretty upset, quiet. Definitely no smile on my face. As I neared the car, I could hear loud bass thumping. Weird. Bryan's not really a bass-thumping kind of guy. When I opened the passenger door to hop in, the speakers blared at full volume Miley Cyrus's song "Party in the USA." Bryan smiled sheepishly as Miley belted out lyrics that mentioned feeling pressure and homesick and finally okay after hearing a Jay-Z song. I had to laugh. Out loud.

Once at Bryan's, I knew I wouldn't be able to leave for a while. I'd be blasted by media and others about being released. People were already giving their two cents about the decision, both spewing hate and offering encouragement on social media, blogs, and of course, every sports-media outlet. One source said I failed to take advantage of a great opportunity. Another said no one wanted me. And let's not forget the thousands upon thousands of critical comments and finger-pointing that followed each news blast.

As I walked through the front door of Bryan's beautiful home, my mind raced back to April 2010. The house had swarmed with family and close friends who munched on chicken fingers and mac and cheese while the seventy-fifth NFL draft blared on a large flat-screen TV. I can't tell you for

how many years my brothers and I had watched the draft together at Bryan's house, but this was the first time we were waiting to hear my name.

Moments before the genesis of my professional football career was announced to the world, I took a call in Bryan's home office, shutting the door to drown out the excited background chatter. It was the Denver Broncos coach, Josh McDaniels. The team was about to choose me. I was officially a Bronco.

Now three and a half years later, I walked into that same house under much different circumstances. No party. No cheering. No high-fives. And definitely no chicken fingers or mac and cheese.

I gave Bryan's wife a hug. She looked at me with tears in her eyes and, not knowing what else to say, whispered in my ear, "We love you, Timmy." Bryan, Robby, and I crashed in Bryan's room. Remote control in hand, I flipped to the obvious choice—football. I have a joy in watching the game, especially college football, that just might be unrivaled by anyone. It's always been that way.

But that night, watching Clemson crush Georgia and highlights from other games, I realized my heart wasn't in it. One of the things in my life usually guaranteed to bring me joy was not, in that moment, cutting it at all. It was the first and only time I couldn't stomach watching football. I'm sure it didn't help that during every game and on every sports channel, the ticker kept running like a broken record: "Tebow gets released from the Patriots." We all saw it, but no one said a word. Why comment on the obvious? Wouldn't do me any favors.

"Hey, Bryan," I said. "Can you please find something else to watch?" I'm sure my tone betrayed annoyance.

"Sure, man," he nodded knowingly and started channel-surfing. Hundreds of shows and movies, and nothing to watch. First-world problems right there.

We finally settled on some movie. Though I fought so hard not to think, talk about it, or replay the conversation with my former coaches a thousand times in my head, it was hard not to. My mind and heart were elsewhere. While the film played, and with Bryan to the right and Robby to the left, piping up with funny or sarcastic commentary now and then, I fought an internal battle.

When your world is shaken, when the plans and dreams you've created, perhaps even banked on, get obliterated, when the path on which you walk is moving in an unknown and a particularly unwanted direction, what do you do? Better yet, what do you hold on to? I knew in that moment, I had to hold on to truth. It was the only solid ground I had. I had to remember what God said.

And I would have to do this over and over and over again.

I brought to mind Bible verses that I was taught growing up and that I've held on to over the years, like Jeremiah 29:11: "‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’" And Psalm 56:3: "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You."

I remembered the things my mom had always said to encourage me when I was down, like "God has big plans for you, Timmy; just wait on Him."

It was late when the flick ended. I'll never forget what happened when the ending credits rolled. Robby got up to return a phone call. Bryan got up to say good night to his wife. In other words, life was moving on for them. Their dailies were unchanged. Normal. Steady. Secure.

And for me, sitting on the edge of the bed, watching my friend's family cockapoo dart around my feet in wild figure eights yapping to no end, it felt like my world had exploded.

What am I going to do? What am I going to be? What am I going to strive for?

I don't put a lot of chips in different bags. I was devoted and committed to a career as a quarterback in the NFL. Period. End of story.

I prayed, my words weaving between questions and faith, doubt and surety. *God, I don't know what's happening, and I don't have a clue what You are doing, but I believe You have me here for a reason. I believe You've got a plan. I know this is not the end of my story. I may not be ecstatic about what You have in mind, but I'm in this with You. Whatever happens, I'm in.*

Though I carried the crushing weight of disappointment, I was working so hard to reenergize myself with confidence. Not in myself. Not in my abilities or my athleticism. I was drawing inner strength in whose I was. In the One who created me. In the One who loved me beyond all love.

Sometime that night I got on the phone with one of my agents. A few things happened when we talked. "Timmy, a bunch of teams are calling and hoping you'll play for them," he started, before rattling off the names of this one and that one. I was starting to get my hopes up, feeling a bit better.

My agent continued, trying to keep the momentum going. "So this one wants you to play tight end. That one wants you as an HB . . ." His voice trailed off. No mention of quarterback.

While every offer he told me about had really big selling points, I wasn't passionate about any of them. Know this: my attitude wasn't centered on arrogance. I wanted to continue to fight for what I *was* passionate about, for what I believed in. Since I was six years old, I didn't just want to play football; I wanted to be a quarterback. I didn't want to be in the NFL for the sake of being in it, or to make a lot of money, or to get famous. I wanted to pursue my passion of playing as a quarterback. To me, that was worth fighting for more than just making it in the NFL. I wanted to strive for my dream, not let others define me or my future.

So thanks, truly, truly, thank you, but no thanks.

My agent also gave me strict orders to stay under the radar. The biggest

distraction to being on a team is attracting a media circus, something I've been told I have a tendency to do. This meant saying no to opportunities, appearances, and endorsements. And this meant basically doing nothing that could generate a paycheck. Well, I wasn't going to sit around all day and twiddle my thumbs.

I remembered Tom Brady once telling me about Tom House, whom I had met sometime previously in a roundabout way. House left quite an impression on me. He was crazy—in a good way. A fierce trainer who tutors athletes on mechanics and also pitched in the baseball major leagues for eight years, Tom was someone I knew I needed.

Sometime before the call with Tom House, and even while on it, pulling from the series of mental conversations I'd had since getting cut, I made a conscious choice not to quit. Not to gripe. Not to pout. Not to let others define me. And not to live in disappointment or regret. Believe me when I tell you, I wanted to be angry! And I was tempted to stay in that place. But I had to go back to the place of trusting God.

So I made the choice, on purpose, to put in the hard work of training while lying low. I was going to work with House, the best of the best. I knew my effort might not pay off in the way I wanted. I knew I might not make it in the NFL as a quarterback, but no one in the world was ever going to out-work me. I didn't know exactly what lay ahead, but I continually made the choice to trust God with the plan while doing my part and putting in the work. It wasn't easy and I didn't necessarily feel good about it, but I did it.

I can't tell you how many people around me recommended that I take a break. "Take some time off," they said in a hundred different ways. "You've worked so hard, at least rest for a week." But I couldn't. Taking a break wasn't in my vocabulary or my mind-set. Oh sure, in theory, taking a break sounded awesome. I would have loved to rest and just hang out with my family. But

instead of what I wanted to do or even felt like doing, I chose to work. I chose to train. I chose to keep going and fight tooth and nail for my dream.

My agent made a phone call that night. And two days later I was in Los Angeles, where I'd stay for about eighteen months, training with Tom House at the University of Southern California. I'd live in someone's spare bedroom. I'd walk past students, professors, and members of the community, some of whom would come up to me, pity in their eyes, and say, "I'm sorry." Others would simply ask for a picture or an autograph. And then there were those who would offer unsolicited feedback and opinions of what I shouldn't have done or should have done and what they believed with pretty strong conviction I should do with my life.

But I'm getting ahead of things.

That night, after Robby walked out to make a phone call and Bryan went to see his wife, and as I was fighting for my future, I couldn't avoid the truth in the present. The ugly reality.

I had no job. No car. No home.

I'd let down the people who looked up to me.

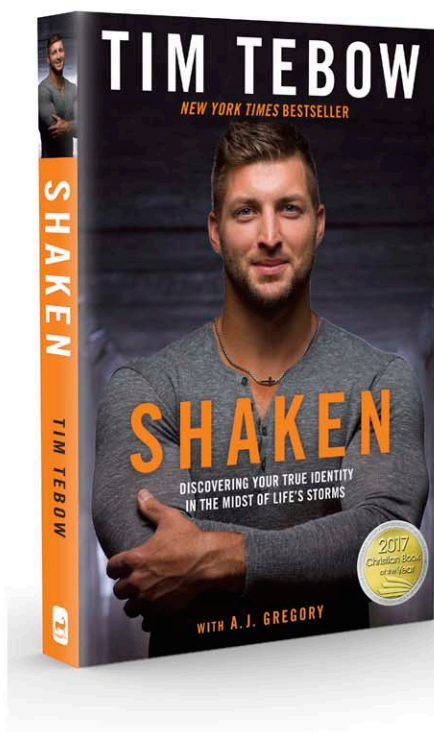
No team wanted me to do what I'd dreamed of doing since I was little boy.

What exactly did the future hold?

I hadn't a clue.

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