

Ron, here is the **complete "Earn This" section** formatted the way you like so you can copy and paste.

Earn This

This is not really my story. It is a combination of things I have experienced and things I have seen in life.

Most people have seen the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. There is a scene near the end where Tom Hanks is mortally wounded. Private Ryan leans over him as he is dying. With the last of his strength, Tom Hanks pulls him close and whispers two simple words.

"Earn this."

At the end of the movie, Ryan is now an old man standing in the military cemetery. The entire movie has really been his memory unfolding before our eyes. He stands there looking at the graves of the men who died so that he could live.

His wife and his family are beside him.

With tears in his eyes he turns to her and says, "Tell me I've been a good man."

What he is really asking is this: Did I earn this? Did I live a life worthy of the sacrifice those men made for me?

In some way, I think all of us ask that question.

For me, it takes me back to the night I accepted the Lord.

I could almost feel the Lord's hand resting on my head. In my mind I could see Him hanging on the cross, absorbing my sins, suffering in ways I can barely comprehend. And I realized something very clearly.

He never said, "Earn this."

His grace was sufficient.

But even though grace cannot be earned, I still owed Him something. I owed Him the honor of trying to walk through life with integrity. I owed Him discipline. I owed Him my best effort to live as the Christian man I was called to be.

Have I done that perfectly?

Not even close.

I have fallen flat on my face many times. I have made mistakes I wish I could erase. But as I move toward the later years of my life, I find myself asking a similar question.

Did I earn this?

Not salvation. None of us can earn that. Grace is a gift that no man deserves.

But what about the life that follows?

Especially for men, there is a responsibility many do not fully understand. You are called to protect. To provide. To give security. To carry burdens that others cannot carry. And when you stumble and fall, you are expected to get back up and keep going.

Each night I thank the Lord for His grace.

But grace is not a “get out of jail free card.” It is an invitation to live differently.

When I look back over my life, through all these stories, I can say something honestly. Not proudly, but honestly.

I tried.

I tried to serve my family.

I tried to serve my customers.

I tried to serve my church.

I tried to put other people first when I could.

That doesn't make me a perfect man. It just makes me a man who understood that the gift he was given mattered.

And maybe, when my time comes and I stand before the Lord, I will hear something far better than “Earn this.”

Maybe I will hear:

“Well done.”

Nuggets of Wisdom

- Grace cannot be earned, but it should never be wasted.

- A man cannot repay the sacrifices made for him, but he can live in a way that honors them.

- Integrity is not measured by how few times you fall, but by how many times you stand back up and keep walking.

- The question at the end of life will not be, "Were you perfect?" but "Did you try to live worthy of the gifts you were given?"

Proverbs

****Proverbs 20:7****

"The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him."

****Proverbs 4:25–27****

"Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.

Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

****Proverbs 3:5–6****

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

When you're ready, we can also ****fix the letter to Jody**** and change the mule wording to ****workhorse**** and remove the bordered format like you asked.