

# Making It Over the Last Mountain

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the dangers of laziness and the necessity of self-discipline in realizing one's potential and fulfilling God's purpose.*

**Duration:** 31:01

**Scripture:** Proverbs 6:6

**Topics:** "Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of laziness and its consequences. He emphasizes the importance of taking action and not procrastinating. The preacher highlights the wasted potential of individuals who have been gifted by God but fail to develop their talents due to laziness. He also criticizes the negative influence of video games and encourages the audience to prioritize personal growth and development. The sermon references biblical passages, such as Proverbs 6:10-11 and Proverbs 24, to support the message and warn against the dangers of laziness.

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## Transcript

How many are open today for God to help you in an area where you need help? Just say amen. To get help from God, you have to be vulnerable, you have to be open. You can't be in denial, as we're gonna find out.

So listen to these verses about a special kind of person that Proverbs talks about. Listen, the sluggard says, that's the lazy person, there's a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets. In other words, I'm not going out, there's a lion will surely get me.

Now, Proverbs 6, go to the ant, you lazy person, consider his ways and be wise. The ant has no commander, no overseer, no ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest, it knows what it's doing. How long will you lie there, you lazy sluggard? I'm adding, as you can tell.

When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, just notice, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man, but there's more, Proverbs 24. I went past the field of the sluggard, the lazy person, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment, thorns had grown up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and I learned a lesson from what I saw.

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man. I want to talk briefly about a problem that we all deal with. Every one of us have had to battle with laziness one time or another in our lives.

Now, what's amazing about these verses is that it would almost seem comical because the word sluggard is not a word we use too much, but lazy person we use, and some people are very sensitive about it. But I want to cut through all of that and speak with compassion to all of us because the writer of Proverbs says, I went to see somebody's land and all the potential it had, and I went to see the fence and the wall that would keep out thieves, and the wall was broken down, nobody fixed it, and there were weeds everywhere, and all the potential of that land, which is a picture of a person, all the potential of that land, all the fruit that it could have brought forth, all of the blessing that God could have put on it, it all went for nothing because of one thing, not a demon, not an attacking army, not a bad king, not terrible laws, one thing made for all of that waste, laziness. Laziness attacks us all in different ways, and especially can get to you when you're tending toward depression.

It's a lack of self-control, it's a lack of self-discipline where the things you have to do, the things you just have to do are somehow put off because it's so much easier to do nothing. To get a lot of things accomplished in life, you have to have an intent, you have to exercise energy, and you gotta get off your back end and do it, but laziness tells us mañana, tomorrow, not now. Let me text a friend, let me watch one more TV program, and it happens so gradually, and yet the writer says, when I looked at the whole thing at the end, what a waste.

Wall broken down, weeds everywhere, and the guy's in the house doing nothing, and now he's gonna pay because his land didn't develop the way it could. That's a tragic picture. Just think of all the human beings, hopefully none here tonight, but let's talk real talk.

Just to think of all the people who have been gifted by God, mentally, emotionally, intellectually, talent-wise, gifted by God, could be a blessing to other people, could develop certain things that God has put inside of them, and it all goes for nothing, and they're ripped off, the Bible says, as if an armed robber came, but the tragedy is they've ripped off themselves. Is there anything sadder than that? It's one thing to be robbed, it's one thing to be mugged, it's another thing to mug yourself, to rob from yourself, all under this innocuous term, this soft word that we call laziness. The lack of the ability to get up and be real and face life and do what you have to do, because if we don't, we end up with the results of laziness.

We'll get to the different kinds of laziness or lazy natures that we have to deal with, being slothful, putting off things, lack of self-discipline, never wanting anything to hurt, always looking for the easy way. But before we get to that, we saw two verses there, not only the wasted ground and potential that comes from poverty, self-inflicted, there are some people who are poor because they made themselves poor. There are some people that are poor because the bottom fell out, but other people are playing the system right in this country because they're too lazy to work.

And they know that we have a system here that will support people, so rather than be self-respectful, they just play the system. Am I not speaking the truth here? I don't mean that mean in any way, but how many know what I'm talking about? Just lift your hand. They're playing the system.

Now, if somebody can't work, if somebody's in a rough situation, my goodness, you have to have compassion on people. But there are a lot of other people who just don't want to work because they're lazy. They're just flat out lazy, and we all know that because we've all battled with laziness.

It's easier to sit than it is to go, to expend energy, even mental energy. That takes, it takes a lot. And the temptation always is, especially in our Western civilization and in America, there is another way you can go.

But beside the wasted potential and wasted lives, did you notice that it says, it only takes a little laziness to do it? Did you notice that in both those passages, it says, just a little sleep, a little slumber. I should get up and do it. I have, ah, now the bed feels so good.

It's cold outside. Now it's hot outside. They say it could rain today, and I don't have an umbrella.

Here's the evil quality of laziness. It just takes a little every day to have you mess up your life. You can mess up your life.

You can mess up your body physically. You can mess up what you could be in God and what he's gifted you to do. Listen to me, young people that are here.

It just takes a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, and poverty comes on you like a thief. And although very few admit it, you have nobody to blame. We have nobody to blame but ourselves.

This is true in so many areas of our life, this lack of self-discipline, which God said he would give us. For God has not given, this is the odd thing when we quote this verse. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, but of love and of power, and leave out the last one of a disciplined mind.

It's not a sound mind as if it's unsound. That word in the Greek means a person who's disciplined, a person who takes care of what they have to take care of. And not everything's fun in life.

You know, I was riding on an airplane the other day, and the woman and man sitting next to me started to talk to me, and they're from South Dakota. So we started to chat, and the guy telling me he raised cattle. They looked fairly well to do.

They were going on vacation up in Maine. I said to him, so what do you do like out there? You know, I've never been, that's no, I have been to South Dakota, but there's about three states I haven't been to. In that part of the country, I have never been very much, and I know it's tough territory in the winter and in the summer.

So I said, so what do you do? You have cattle? He said, yeah, I got about 450 head of cattle. We sell beef, and then we farm the rest of the land to sell and to feed the cattle. So I said, well, you must have a lot of land, or a fair amount of land.

He said, yeah, I got about 13. And I was thinking, how in the world in 13 acres could he do that? I said, 13? He went, yeah, 13,000 acres. I said, what are you talking about? We're looking for 13 feet here in New York City, aren't we? 13,000 acres.

So I said, you know what? My wife's mother on that side comes from southern Wisconsin from dairy farms. And she very wisely said to me, oh, now you're talking about something really hard, dairy farming. She said, we can let the cattle just roll.

And other people can, you've gotta wait. You can't harvest every day. But dairy farmers, that's something else.

I said, you know what? When I was a kid, I went out and worked one summer in a dairy farm in Wisconsin. They had about 55 cows every morning, every night. You have to milk all 55.

Is it 10 degrees with a wind chill of zero? You gotta go out and get those cows and bring them in the barn. And some of the stuff that you walk in in that barn is not clover, if you understand what I'm saying. Every day.

You can't take a day off. She looked at me and she said, you know, when you dairy farm, you can't take off one day. And you can't call in sick.

And you can't play the boss because you're the boss. Every day. But I don't feel good.

I said, every day. But it's cold every day. Twice a day.

And she said, that's hard. And I was just thinking about it. The discipline and the lack of laziness that people have who founded this country, who broke into new territory without the conveniences we're used to.

Every day. So I got there. I went to bed at night.

Some, my best friend Richard Hutchins, his uncle shaken me at five o'clock in the morning, quarter to five. Tell me I gotta get up to have breakfast, to go out in the field. I said, have you lost your mind? I'm from Brooklyn.

I don't go in any field at five o'clock in the morning. He said, oh yeah? Then you won't eat. I said, well, then I'm going.

I'm going out to that field. And I went out to the field. I just did it for five days.

I thought I was going to die. Just five days. Doing all kinds of things.

And they can't say, sorry, I'm tired, or sorry, I don't feel like it today. You ever hear people say that? I'm not in the mood. Oh no.

You gotta be in the mood. If your life depends on it. Now, the thing about laziness is, and let's just face it, because I don't wanna be offensive, I don't wanna be up in your grill, but at the same time, I wanna help you.

I wanna see God help me. Because I've battled with laziness. There is inside of me, my wife doesn't believe it, people close to me don't believe it, there is a lazy, lazy person inside of me that wants to come out.

How many have a relative of that person inside of you? Because I could escape and do nothing for about 10 years. And so if someone says, no, no, you're too active, your mind doesn't, I say, trust me, I know who I am. What would you do every day? Nothing.

How many have ever wanted for a year to just do, lift your hand, come on, if you've ever had that, just do nothing. And then after you do that, do some more nothing after that. The thing about laziness is this, the lazy person, the sluggard, always has an excuse.

Proverbs is almost funny that way. It says, the guy says, no, I can't go out to my job today. I heard there's a lion somewhere in the area and he will eat me.

I'm staying where I am. If I go outside, another proverb says, I'll be murdered. Look at me, everybody.

And you might be forming your defense mechanisms as I'm speaking. Laziness always has a story. It has an excuse in all of us.

But the wasted potential, the things that could be accomplished in our lives, physically, emotionally, I mean, mentally, spiritually, which I'll get to in a second, it's sad because you're being held up. Think of all the things that you've done and all the people who die because of a lack of self-discipline, they won't exercise. And the main reason they won't exercise, look, there are some people who can't for physical reasons, but most people don't exercise.

And God made the body that if you don't move it, you get in trouble. I didn't get one amen, let me say that. You didn't hear it.

Let me run it by you one more time. God made our bodies that if you don't activate them and move, it has a negative effect on you, physically, mentally, emotionally, every way. But the battle that you have to overcome is laziness.

Because most of us, we have the choice of working out or doing some exercise or sitting and having some Oreo cookies with milk. How many know which has a stronger attraction to us? You know, John Wesley, the father of the Methodist Church, no, this is serio, listen. John Wesley said that any minister who doesn't exercise 40 minutes a day is living in sin.

In the 1700s, he said that. You go, oh, no, but his reasoning was sound. He said, wait a minute, the body is a gift from God.

How many say amen to that? It works by certain laws that God has told us about. So if you take this body so marvelously made by God and you harm it, you're hurting a gift that God gave you. All the excuses have to go.

I want you to focus in with me now, no excuses. To the lazy person, the Bible says, consider the ant, they think ahead. You know, a minister told me a long time ago, he said, Jim, always study the word and always be thinking ahead that you have something in your heart in case you have to preach or share with someone that you'll have something.

You can't not study and read the Bible and then just hope. Oh, well, something will just come to me. No, you gotta be filling yourself with truth.

But you know the hard thing of filling yourself with truth is you gotta stop and discipline yourself to get in a chair and open the book. And the laziness that we all battle with in reading the word and spending time with God in prayer, it's amazing. It's amazing.

So we don't know verses that we ought to know. We don't know truth. We haven't grown like we ought to.

We don't have an overflow of stuff that other people could be blessed by. Why? It's not because the devil took it from us. It's because we haven't stored up the bins like the ant does.

The ant thinks ahead. Like those bears who put away food for the winter and they know they're doing exactly what they need to do. Squirrels storing their nuts.

There are no lazy animals. You never see squirrels hanging out. Have you ever seen a squirrel hanging out? Squirrels are just, they're like, let's get this thing on.

Come on, how many get what I'm saying? Just lift your hands, say amen. Squirrels, birds, everything, they can't be lazy. The more intelligent we get, the more we tend toward laziness.

I heard this in Israel. This is true. Our missionaries to Israel have sons, two sons.

Well, they have a bunch of kids, but they have two sons who work in Israeli intelligence and military, okay? Their lifeline are the German shepherds they have. They live with the German shepherds. They sleep with the German shepherds.

They eat with the German shepherds. They spend every day with the German shepherds. If for some reason they're apart, they get back with the dog and they re-acclimate themselves to the dog.

Why? Because their life depends on that dog. If the dog should die, they treat it like a soldier died. These are incredible animals.

So they train them and the dog will go, listen, 200 yards ahead of them into a building that might have terrorists or a bomb or something. And they have a microphone, a speaker little thing hooked up to the dog's ear. And by the training that they've gotten, they'll be telling the dog, go to the right, go to the right, 10, keep going, keep going, stop, sniff.

And they're giving directions to a dog, 200 yards away. And that dog will pick up terrorists or someone hiding and then they'll move in. It's amazing.

So I was talking to them. I'm saying, could dogs be that smart? They said, these dogs are so smart. They said, they're too smart.

I said, what do you mean by too smart? They said, listen, we trained these dogs. We work with these dogs. And you know what my dog did the other day? I was doing the drills with him and going through the whole thing.

And then he acted like he had to go get something. And he just ran from me and then made a turn around a building. And I said, what was that about? He's not obeying a command.

So I went and around the building, he was just laying down, just chilling. It's like, yeah, this guy's nuts. He's always training me, man.

I gotta just chill. Dog was chilling. And I said, you're joking.

He said, no, they're so smart. They know when they wanna just be lazy. And they'll fool you.

They'll make believe like they're on an important mission and they're doing nothing. But that's in all of us. Go to the ant, you lazy person, and see how they operate.

Look at Hebrews. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become, say it out loud, but to imitate those who through faith and

patience inherit what has been promised.

I just wanna talk about three areas. Do not be offended by any of these areas. I just wanna attack and pray as we close areas of laziness and lack of self-discipline that are hurting us.

For some of us, it's physical. It's a lack of self-discipline for exercise, for moving about. It can even include diet.

It could include a lot of things. But I am slow and lazy to do what I know is best for me physically. And that will catch up and bite you.

It'll bite all of us. So if there's an area where you say, pastor, that's an area I struggle. I know this is hard to talk about, but someone's gotta talk about it.

It's in the Bible. What, am I gonna make believe it's not there or be afraid that you would be offended I would talk about these things? No, I can't do that. Secondly, how about some of you that have a gift where you wanted to learn and develop your mind and because of laziness, and oh, the poor young people today playing video games till the cows come home, violent on top of that, profane.

I saw one that was advertised recently, armed robbery too. And instead of reading something, instead of developing their mind, they're gonna watch and be firing at people. And in one of these video games, I saw they were stepping over a woman who they had knocked down on the street.

They're playing that. That's gonna develop their mind. And we all have things that are holding us back.

Some of you, there are books you've wanted to read. I'm talking real talk now. There's books you've wanted to read.

There's things you wanna develop. There's an instrument you wanted to take up. There's some talent you wanted to develop.

And what's held you really back? Real talk. It's not your schedule. I know your schedule's tight.

I know everybody's busy. But for a lot of us, it's, oh God, help me to have the discipline. Help me.

Help me, God, to have the discipline. I wanna make the most of my life. We only go around once.

Don't you wanna make the most of the life that God gave you? But lastly, and to close, most importantly, spiritual laziness is a killer. The walls come down. The weeds are growing.

Some of you oughta be teachers by now yourself and be helping others. And you still haven't grasped everything because it takes time and energy to learn the Word of God. You gotta have energy.

Mental energy is harder than physical energy to expend. Thinking is much more strength sapping than playing paddle ball. I went and played paddle ball for an hour and a half yesterday with some of the guys in the church and it was a great workout.

It was a beautiful day. But mental energy, oh my goodness. Sometimes when I'm at a conference and I have to think of what I'm gonna preach, I don't even wanna go to my hotel room because I know that Bible's gonna be looking at me and I have to start thinking and I don't wanna think.

Have you ever got like that? Come on, anybody ever battled with that like I battled with that? I can't, my mind just says do nothing, be numb. Turn on the TV and just gaze at it. The Word of God, prayer, developing your spiritual gift, all of it takes an expenditure of energy.

And that's why Satan loves to just whisper in our ear, take it easy. But the Bible says study to show yourself approved. I don't want you to become lazy, the writer to Hebrews says.

Don't be lazy. And we all have areas in our life we have to deal with. That's how I wanna sum this up.

All of us deal with it, but it's in different areas of our life. There are some people who will work out every day, stay on a diet, physically they're amazing, but mentally and spiritually, they can't get it together. Other people are letting their bodies go, but they'll pray and they're a little bit better in one area.

But we all need that spirit of discipline and zeal and I'm gonna do this thing, I'm gonna do this thing. You know, I was playing basketball at the University of Rhode Island. We were preparing a big game with UConn and I remember the coach one time, he said, all right, Jim, Jim, go down there and run the plays with the first team, run those good plays, right? So he went down to do something else.

So we're going like this, you know, I throw the ball and I just run like this and I set a pick and a guy comes off and then we're doing it like half speed. Oh man, suddenly I hear the whistle, he's yelling, he's saying, is that the way you're gonna play? You're gonna be lazy, you're gonna do it that way? Either do it right or don't do it at all. Everybody, off the court, go back to the showers.

You don't wanna do it hard, then don't do it at all, we won't practice. And boy, we were embarrassed and went back. But he was right.

The Bible says, whatever you do, do it with all your heart. You're gonna read the Bible, read it with all your heart. You're gonna be a Christian, come on, let's do it with all of our heart.

You wanna grow in the Lord, let's do it with all of our heart. The worst thing in life is to go through life the way we were going through that practice. Let's bow our heads.

I know this is hard to preach on, but I know God made this real a month ago and I haven't developed it or felt like it was the right moment till now. I write these things to you so that you won't be lazy, but that you follow the examples of all the great men and women of God who through zeal and perseverance, they didn't quit, they didn't give up, they didn't make excuses. Please, we live today in such a society of making excuses that it takes the grace of God just to get out of denial and to face it and say, you know what? God, I need discipline and I need zeal and I need energy in certain areas of my life.

I really need that, God. I just wanna say a simple prayer, but is there someone here who just by standing up where you're sitting, say, pastor, there's an area of my life, that message, it was a little bit pointed, but it was for me. I know it's God, He loves me and He wants me to face my lack of discipline, my lack of fervor, my lack of zeal in this one area of my life.

I don't wanna know what it is. We all battle with it, no one's gonna look down on anyone. Just stand where you're sitting, just stand.

Don't come to the front. Just stand and say, pastor, that was for me, either in my body, my mind, in my spiritual development. I procrastinate, I put it off.

Come on, come on, God will help us if we just say, God, this is the way it is. Anybody else? Anybody else wanna stand? Then it's done. Pastor, procrastination, putting off, I do it all the time.

I know what I should be doing, I can't get myself to do it sometimes, just can't. But I know that's not God's will and He wants to help me. Okay, Father God, I thank you for the people, oh, everyone in the room, Lord, but I thank you for the people who are standing in the balcony or downstairs.

And your word has struck all of us, because it's not a funny word, it's not ridiculous, it's true, this is the way life is. We don't want someone to walk by our life and say, look at it, look at the weeds, look at the lack of fruit. Who was watching out for this life? The wall's broken down, all kinds of enemies have come in.

What's going on here? And it's all because of a little sleep and a little slumber and a little hanging out, little watching TV and little texting. Young people, middle-aged, old people, all of us, Lord, everybody in the building, give us a spirit of discipline. Come on, do I get an amen here? Give us, Lord, give us a spirit of discipline.

Give us zeal, make us alive. Don't let us be dead like a zombie walking through life. Let us be alive, fervent.

Whatever we do, whatever we set our hearts to do, let us do it with all of our hearts, Lord. And when we serve you, help me, Lord, to have more zeal, more fervency, to serve you with everything in me because you gave your life for us, Lord. How can we be lazy in serving you? So bless my brothers and sisters.

Help them starting today, even tonight, that passage of Scripture that needs to be read, that time alone with you, that self-discipline in another area, that developing of a talent, that thing that you're speaking to them about. In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask that you give birth to that today, Lord. And we come against that spirit of sloth and laziness and being a slugger.

We come against that in Christ's name. That is not what we want for our lives. And neither do you, and you're gonna help us, Lord.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. And everyone said, let's put our hands together and just thank God for his word, for his goodness. And now, Lord, get everybody home safely.

Give everybody a beautiful evening. We pray your smile upon us in Jesus' name. And everyone said, turn around and hug somebody.

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