

SERMON SERIES: WILLPOWER
LAZINESS

We are in a series we are calling “Willpower,” and the big idea is that in important things in life like developing our character or growing to be more like Jesus, our willpower is NOT enough. Just trying harder is only going to go so far in shaping the qualities of who we are.

In the Bible, Paul describes our situation! He wrote: *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.”* Romans 7:18-19 *“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Romans 7:24-25

Last week we talked about the struggle many of us have with anger. We discovered not only God’s instructions on how followers of Jesus should handle their anger, and the power of God that is found in the cross of Christ which transforms us into people of peace. Today, we are learning how to deal with laziness.



This is a sloth: A sloth lives in Central and South America, hangs out in trees, and doesn’t do much of anything. Especially in the summer months, sloths can just hang there, and end up covered with this green mold or fungus stuff.

It’s really icky! A sloth gets its name because of its sloth – it is lazy.

And, this is sloth: Not an animal that hangs from trees. A Vegetable -- A couch potato!



We often hear a lot about the movers and shakers of this world, about the Elon Musks and Jeff Bezos. Our world focusses on people who do a lot or accomplish a lot. But, here are some sayings about why it’s *better* to be lazier.

Early bird gets the worm, but the **second** mouse gets the cheese.

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do **the day after**.

Never put off till tomorrow what you can **avoid all together**.

Hard work never killed anyone, but why give it a chance?

Hard work has a future payoff. Laziness pays off **NOW**.

Eleanor Roosevelt, was the wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, and earned her reputation as a social reformer. She said **this about laziness**: “So much attention is paid to the aggressive sins, such as violence and cruelty and greed with all their tragic effects, that too little attention is paid to the passive sins, such as apathy and laziness, which in the long run can have a more devastating and destructive effect upon society than the others.” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

And Thomas Edison once said: “The reason a lot of people do not recognize opportunity is because it usually goes around wearing overalls looking like hard work.” ~ Thomas A. Edison

Here’s what the Bible has to say about being lazy: ***The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*** Proverbs 26:15 Can’t even feed myself. Can you imagine at home -- “Honey, will you feed me? Will you lift the fork to my lips? I can’t do it myself.” How many of you would put up with that? We’d say, “Feed yourself! You’re old enough!”

When it comes to our spiritual lives, we are often the same. We want someone else to feed us spiritually. I’ve heard many believers complain about their faith-life, and they say, “I’m just not being fed.” “Pastor, I’m just not being fed.” And the expectation is – they want *somebody ELSE* to feed them.

The question *should* be: What are you doing to FEED YOURSELF? Are you in worship every week? Are you in a Bible study group with other believers where each week you learn and apply God’s lessons for living? Are you feeding yourself every day by making it a priority to take time for prayer, Bible reading, and journaling?

God expects us NOT to be lazy in our relationship with Him. He desires that you LOVE Him and WANT to do everything possible to keep that relationship strong.

LAZINESS KEEPS YOU FROM REALLY LIVING!

Laziness is more than just getting extra sleep and eating extra chips while watching extra TV. Laziness is dangerous. It is a dangerous lifestyle because of the stuff you DON'T do. It's the relationships that you never deepen. It's the people in need that you never serve. It's the great, desperate, needy, urgent prayers that you never pray. It's the noble thoughts that you never think. It's the races that you never run, the battles you were made to fight that you never fight, the laughter you don't laugh, and the tears that you never weep.

God made you to spend your life in a risky partnership with Him. Laziness is a sin that damages you deeply because of the LIFE you never REALLY LIVE!

LAZINESS KEEPS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY FROM REACHING THEIR POTENTIAL.

About 20 years after Jesus died, some believers were taking it easy. They figured Jesus was coming back to take them to heaven at any minute, so why work? God guided Paul to write to these folks. He told them that their laziness is more than just a misunderstanding of theirs. He told them that they were hurting their whole community. Paul wrote: *Keep away from every believer who doesn't want to work. Keep away from anyone who doesn't live up to the teaching you received from us. When we were with you, we gave you a rule. We said, "Anyone who will not work will not eat." We hear that some people among you don't want to work. So we strongly command people like that to settle down. They have to earn the food they eat. Brothers and sisters, don't ever get tired of doing the right thing.* 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

See what's going on here? Some people thought the world was going to end, Jesus would return, any minute. So they stopped working – and there was no unemployment benefit or food banks back then. They are trying to be like “super spiritual” by spending ALL their time listening to preachers, and going from one Bible study group to another to another – like some addict needing a fix. By doing that, they became busy bodies and gossips. Other people in their community had to support them, and that left no money to care for the poor, the hungry, and needy. So being lazy was more than just a personal choice, it hurt *everybody* around them!



So what do we do about our laziness? Grab an energy drink? Do we get big cups of coffee? Maybe add shots of espresso too? We love stuff that stimulates us and gets us going.

GOD'S GRACE -- PUTS YOU TO SLEEP, OR WAKES YOU UP?

For some people, God puts them to sleep. I think they confuse God with some churches that are like museums, where nothing changes, where the message is designed to only offer comfort, never to challenge.

Now, it IS true that God forgives you, not because of how good you have been, or what you've done. You don't have to do religious rituals to get on God's good side. But it is a sinful distortion when we use God's grace as an excuse for spiritual malaise. God's grace should be the fuel that fires us up!

You see, **IN SPITE OF** your laziness; **IN SPITE OF** your wrongs; **IN SPITE OF** whatever you have or haven't done, God offers forgiveness to you for free.

This is where Jesus comes in. We have messed up lives, self-focused, sinful lives. And Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. And by God's gift, Jesus trades records with you. By a gift of amazing love, God counts Jesus' perfect, sinless life as yours. And all your wrongs – Jesus took them on Himself and paid the penalty, the cost of all your sins. He paid that price with His own life, when He died on the cross.

So the great news here is this: there's nothing that you need to do to add to what Jesus has already done for you! Forgiveness of your past, removing guilt and shame, giving you a new way to live, giving you power to start all over, offering you heaven to come – God offers all these for free, because Jesus paid for it all completely. Today, just receive these wonderful gifts from God. Don't turn away from God's amazing, loving offer.

For some people, however, this grace puts them to sleep. "If there's nothing I need to do for God to love me, why do anything at all?" "Why not just sit back, and soak it in?"

A love this great should **WAKE YOU UP!** His love **Supercharges your life.** A personal relationship with God -- trusting in Jesus as your Friend and receiving what He's done for you -- is like *spiritual* Redbull to your life!

You are not saved by your works. But God has saved you FOR good works. You are blessed... to be a blessing to others.

Jesus gave His All for you! –His life – everything He had – He gave it ALL for you. And you respond, by freely, willingly, giving your ALL for Him. You live, WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT, for the One who loves you so much, and has given you *EVERY-THING!*

But here's the deal – When you wake up, and live your life for God, **God doesn't call you to the easy life!**

When in the Bible does God ever say to someone: "I've got an assignment for you, and it's pretty quick, and there's not much demand to it." How often does that happen in the Bible? Rough guess -- NEVER! It *never* does! God never says, If you live in a personal relationship with Him, He's got a life of comfort and ease in store for you.

God came to Noah and said, "*I want you to build an ark in the face of ridicule, and restart the whole human race.*"

God came to Abraham and said, "*I want you to leave everything that's familiar to you. At the age of 99, go to a country that's far away, and I'll show you when you get there.*"

God came to Moses and said, "*I want you to leave a life that's very comfortable – shepherding – and go back to Egypt where you're a wanted man, and then defy Pharaoh, the world's most powerful leader.*"

Now, how high a value would you say God places on making sure that the lives of those who follow Him are filled with ease and comfort? Not very high! The God of the Bible **IS** VERY CONCERNED about you, and loves you intensely, and wants you to grow, and wants you to be strong, and filled with courage, and wisdom, and radiant goodness. BUT, this God is NOT particularly concerned that your life be real comfortable, easy, relaxed, lazy.

What He does promise is this: **God promises His presence.** God offers reassurance, that even in the most challenging jam, He will never leave you.

God told Joshua to lead the people to conquer an entire country. God said: *“Be strong and brave. Do not be terrified. Do not lose hope. I am the Lord your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.”* Joshua 1:9

God came to a guy named Gideon, and told him to go defeat a huge army at incredible odds, and God promised: *“The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”*

And God promises YOU, *“Nothing will ever be able to separate [you] from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* Romans 8:39 Nothing can separate you from God. Nothing! He will be with you ALWAYS – even through the most difficult stuff you will face in life.

GOD SUPPLIES ALL THAT’S NEEDED.

Jesus once told a story about a master going away, and entrusting all his wealth to his servants. It was a common practice then. And it was a *huge benefit* to the servants, because whatever profit they made with the master’s money, the servants got to keep. So, the master gives his servants a real challenging assignment, and he gives them everything they need. *“To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability.”* Matthew 25: 14

When you love God for what He’s done for you, and you live in a personal relationship with Jesus, He doesn’t promise an easy life, but He promises His presence, and He will give you all you need to accomplish His purposes in your life. Someone once said, *“God’s work, done God’s way, will never lack God’s resources.”*

GOD PROMISES GROWING COURAGE AND RESULTS.

That story Jesus told about the master and servants, also promises you something real thrilling! *‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’* Matthew 25: 21,28 The servant who said, “Yes” and used what his master gave him, in the end he received way more! And for YOU, when you say, “Yes” to living for God, your faith grows stronger, your courage gets a little bolder,

and your light shines a little brighter. God promises growing courage, and bigger results for Him.

Years ago there was a show on TV called “Guuu –Go”. Goo-go stood for “Get Up / Get Out.” The show encouraged people to get up off the couch and get out to experience some great things that are offered in the community around us.

So to you, today: **GET UP!**

In the Bible book of Hebrews, God challenges you to get up: *God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. And I want you to especially hear these words: We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.* Hebrews 6: 10-12

This is saying: GET UP! -- **Give it all you've got** to live for the God who GAVE, and everyday KEEPS GIVING all He's got for you!

And that means: **Grow – feed yourself.** Get into a group with other believers where you're learning God's lessons for life. Take time personally to learn from God and pray.

Serve Step up to take responsibility in a local church where you can serve God and help His purposes move forward.

Give Use a generous portion of your finances as a gift of thanks back to God. Doing that will grow your trust in Him to provide for you, AND enable His purposes to be accomplished in this world.

Worship Him every week!

Share Your Faith by building relationships with people far from God – friends, neighbors, ... and in time share with them what God gives you through your Faith in Jesus.

Get Up and **Show Compassion** to the hurting, the hungry, the needy, the lonely people all around us.

And **Encourage** other believers, by building friendships, getting into a Group, caring, supporting, encouraging.

Get Up! & Get out! A lazy life on the couch, isn't really living. So take a step in your life that you need to take, but you've been procrastinating!

GET OUT may involve a RELATIONAL RISK, telling the truth to somebody, or saying you're sorry.

Get Out may mean God is calling you in a different vocational direction, but you've been holding back.

Get Out may mean for you to be generous with your money.

Get Out may mean that there's a secret sin – maybe an addiction or some kind of pattern of behavior that's hurting you. And you've been afraid others will find out, so you've never gotten the help you need. Will you get out, and get the help you need? So that you don't have guilt and shame for the rest of your life?

For some of you, maybe your marriage is stuck and you need to have a courageous conversation with your wife or husband. Or maybe you've been lazy or stubborn in your relationship and you need to start moving emotionally *towards* your husband or wife.

Get Out – may mean “I'm going to get off the starting line, and begin a new life with a personal relationship with this amazing God who loves me so much.” And “I'm going to do whatever I have to. I'm going to get information, read books, get into a Small Group – I'm going to grow in knowing God and living with Him.”

PRAYER: Father, help us to apply Your Word to our everyday lives. Show to us areas in our lives where we have been neglectful, not giving our best. Especially in our relationship with You, teach us how to live fully devoted to You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.