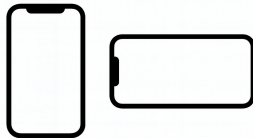


HOW TO SLAY GIANTS

OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE

NATHANIEL JAMES JOHNSON

**For Best Reading
Experience.**



**Turn Your Phone
Sideways.**

How To Slay Giants: Overcoming The Impossible

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Welcome To The Fight

Most people don't wake up planning to mess their life up.
They wake up trying to fix it.

That's where this story begins.

How to Slay Giants isn't about being brave or having it all together. It's about what happens when the pressure is on, money runs out, and the wrong options start looking like the only ones left.

This is a modern parable about survival, temptation, exhaustion, and the moments where grace shows up without warning.

If you've ever said, "***Just one more, then I'm done,***" you'll understand this book.

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The Notice

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. — **Psalm 34:19**

DJ stared at the **eviction notice** taped to his apartment door like it was personally offended by him. Thick paper, **bold red letters**, the kind landlords use when they want **fear** to hit before the message does. He already knew the words:

Rent due today. Eviction tomorrow.

What stung wasn't the notice, it was the fact that he'd done **everything** right this time. No shortcuts. No schemes. No pride plays. **Just honest grind**. Extra shifts. Selling old clothes. Doing lawns in the heat. It wasn't fast money, it was **earned money**. **Character money** and he was proud of that.

Today was supposed to feel safe. Instead, **anxiety** sat in his chest like something heavy and permanent. He walked straight to the closet and reached for his **shoebox** on the top shelf, his secret vault, his only real peace the last few weeks. The box felt light. **Too light**. He opened it. **Empty**.

The world didn't spin, **it dropped**. Like the floor vanished and his stomach **fell** through it. He checked again. He looked under the bed. Inside old jeans. Behind the dresser. **Pointless**, he already knew. **\$1,137 gone**.

His throat tightened sharp, like swallowing broken glass. There was only **one person** who knew where that money was. He called **her**. She answered with an **attitude** already loaded in her tone.

"You take my **money**?"

"**I needed it.**"

“The kids needed—”

“That was **rent** money.”

“You act like you ain’t **want us** there. We still gotta live.”

“**I never said that**, why didn’t you **call me**.”

“You don’t get to **treat me any kind of way** and still **expect** me to check in with you.”

She didn’t apologize. She just ended with the **coldest** line ever:

“**I spent it already**.” Click.

He stared at the screen, **frozen**. Hit call again. Straight to **voicemail**. He tried again. Voicemail. “**Damn...**” he whispered, throat tight. Called again like maybe the universe would change its mind. Voicemail. Once more, Call failed. “**She blocked me**.” His voice cracked, **anger** and **heartbreak** mixing like poison in his chest.

He dropped the phone onto the bed. Silence heavy enough to crush **the spirit**. This wasn’t just losing money. This was **losing trust**. Losing safety. Losing the one thing that was holding his life together. He sat there breathing hard, jaw locked, palms sweating, heart shaking inside his ribs. Then slowly, like a bruise forming under skin, came the truth:

Nobody’s coming to save you.

The Lesson

DJ didn't panic because he lost money. He panicked because he lost **control**.

He did everything the way people say you're supposed to. He worked hard. He stayed honest. He avoided shortcuts. He sacrificed. And still, life pulled the rug out from under him. That moment hurt because it challenged a belief most of us carry without realizing it: *if I do the right things, nothing bad should happen*. But life doesn't always work that way.

Psalms 34:19 says:

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say the righteous avoid affliction. It says they face many of them. The promise isn't prevention, it's deliverance. Not escape, but presence. Not protection from pain, but help inside it.

Science points to the same truth from a different angle. Studies published in the *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* show that when people believe they can control outcomes, their stress levels actually increase when things go wrong. The human brain is wired to feel safe through predictability. So when something unexpected hits, especially around money, housing, or survival—the nervous system reacts fast. That's why DJ's chest tightened. That's why his thoughts spiraled. His body wasn't overreacting. It was responding to uncertainty.

The shoebox wasn't just savings. It was peace. It was proof that he was handling life. When it was empty, it didn't just take money away—it took meaning away. And when meaning disappears, fear fills the space quickly.

This is where most people first meet their giants. Not when they're lazy. Not when they're reckless. But when they've done their best and still come up short. That's when the illusion of control breaks. And that's when faith is tested—not in comfort, but in chaos.

Borrowed Pride

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
— Proverbs 16:18

DJ stepped outside, the morning already too **loud**, too bright, too real. His chest still burned from the phone call, not anger, not sadness... a mix so sharp it felt like **betrayal and humiliation had fists**. The air didn't feel like fresh start air. It felt tight. Unforgiving. Like the world was **watching** and whispering,

“Let's see what you do now.”

His first instinct was the one **every proud man** has, **figure it out**. God was silent, the **streets** weren't. And pride rarely lets prayer speak first. He scrolled through his contacts. Not looking for help, looking for **options**.

Mom? No. She already **saved him** once last month, and a man only lets his mother rescue him so many times before he **hates** himself for it. Old coworker? The **“I got you anytime”** talk is only real when nobody actually needs anything.

Then he saw the name he didn't want to see. **Marcus**.

His younger brother. **Clean cut. Married. New house**. Running his little business in that plaza like he invented **entrepreneurship**. **DJ hated calling him**, not because Marcus was mean, but because Marcus was successful. Success can feel **disrespectful** when you're **struggling**.

DJ **exhaled** and hit call. *Ring. Ring.*

“Yo,” Marcus answered, sounding like he was on Bluetooth, probably driving his **new SUV** or walking around pretending to be busy. **“Look... I'm in a tight spot,”** DJ said. **“I need a little help**

just to get through today.” Marcus didn’t even pretend to think.
“**How much?**” “**Seven hundred,**” DJ said, **testing the water.**

A **laugh**, not cruel, just... amused. “**You're aiming high today,** ain't ya?” DJ’s jaw tightened. “It's urgent.” Marcus sighed like he was doing paperwork. “**I can do two-fifty.** But I need it back on Friday.” “**I got you.**” DJ said it quietly, **more pride than promise.**

“And don’t turn this into a pattern. **You grown, bro.** You gotta **tighten up.**” That one stung more than the situation itself.

“Yeah. I know.” “I’ll text you. Swing by the plaza later.” **Click.** DJ lowered the phone. Not anger. Not sadness. Just that low burn **humiliation** gives you when life puts a **mirror in your face.**

He whispered to nobody: “**Love you too, lil’ bro.**”

Then shook his head, breathed deep, and **kept moving.** Today wasn't about pride. It was about survival.

The Lesson

DJ didn't hesitate because he didn't need help.
He hesitated because needing help felt like failure.

When life puts pressure on us, pride often shows up quietly. Not loud or arrogant, but practical. Responsible. Independent. It tells us to “figure it out” instead of asking. It tells us to handle things alone so we don't feel exposed. And it usually sounds reasonable—until it traps us.

DJ wasn't calling his brother because he wanted money. He was calling because he had run out of options. What made the moment painful wasn't Marcus's response. It was the reminder that DJ wasn't the strongest one in the room anymore. Success in someone close can feel personal when we're struggling, not because we envy them, but because their stability highlights our lack of it.

Scripture names this pattern clearly. Proverbs 16:18 says:

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride doesn't always push us toward disaster immediately. Sometimes it just delays the help we need. Even David, a warrior and king, cried out for help instead of pretending to be invincible, saying, “*From the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint*” (Psalm 61:2). Strength in the Bible isn't isolation—it's honesty.

Science explains why this feels so uncomfortable. Studies published in the ***Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*** show that people who refuse to ask for help during emotional or financial stress experience higher levels of anxiety and burnout. The brain interprets asking for help as a threat to identity.

It feels like losing control, even when it's the healthiest option available. That's why pride feels protective at first, it shields the ego, but costly over time.

Most of us don't avoid help because we don't need it. We avoid it because we don't want to feel small. But pride doesn't make us stronger. It just makes the load heavier. And sometimes the real struggle isn't the problem we're facing, it's the part of us that refuses to admit we can't face it alone.

The Offer

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man.
— 1 Corinthians 10:13

DJ walked out into the parking lot like the pavement owed him answers. The phone call still burning in his ear. **Pride** bruised. **Stomach empty** in a way food couldn't fix. He didn't even have gas money yet, but his mind was already grinding for solutions. **Hustle. Move. Fix it. Figure it out.** A man with nothing but responsibility is **a dangerous man**, to himself. That's when he heard a voice behind him. "DJ?" He already knew who it was before he turned. **Tino.**

Fresh hoodie, loud **chain**, leaning against a black **Charger** like he rented the car and the image that came with it. Dude always looked like **tomorrow didn't exist**. "Man, you look like you **fighting demons** bruh," Tino smirked. DJ didn't respond. Some days **silence protects your dignity** way better than words.

Tino grinned wider. "When life starts jumping you like that, it's usually because **God's about to send a blessing**. Sometimes the struggle means "**you close, feel me?**"

DJ almost laughed. **The streets** had a funny way of making **sinner sound like saints** when they wanted something. "What you on today bruh?" Tino asked. "**You moving or you losing?**" "**Handling something,**" DJ said, keeping his voice steady.

Tino studied him, not concerned, not compassionate, just reading **opportunity** like a **wolf** checking for injury. "You know I got something small going," Tino said casually, like he was offering gum. "**A couple hours. Quick flip. Easy bag.**"

DJ stared at him. **“I’m good.”**

“You sure?” Tino pressed. “You look like somebody who **needs some money**. This one is fast. No drama. I could use a **solid dude** with me, you know I wouldn’t just ask anybody.”

DJ **inhaled**, jaw tight. **“Nah bruh i’m good.”**

Tino tilted his head like DJ just said something **foolish**. “Bro, I’m tryna **put you in position**. Everybody wanna be righteous until the **rent show up**.” DJ’s eye twitched. **That one cut deep**.

Tino shrugged, backed away toward the Charger. “Aight. **Go get it yo way** then. But when you tired of **broke pains**, holler at me. **The streets pay, same day**.” DJ walked off, not giving him the satisfaction of looking back.

His pockets were empty. His pride was dented. His **faith was quiet**, not gone, just tired. **But he still walked away**.

The Lesson

Temptation rarely shows up looking like a bad decision. Most of the time, it shows up looking like a solution.

DJ didn't meet Tino on a good day. He met him when his pride was bruised, his stomach was empty, and his future felt uncertain. That's when temptation is the loudest—not when we're reckless, but when we're tired of holding things together. The offer didn't come with threats or pressure. It came with understanding. With timing. With language that sounded almost spiritual.

That's how temptation usually works. Scripture makes this clear.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Wanting relief doesn't make us weak. It makes us human. The danger isn't that temptation appears, it's that it presents itself as permission. As a shortcut that feels justified because the situation feels unfair.

Science explains why these moments are so hard to navigate. ***Research from Princeton University*** shows that financial stress can significantly reduce cognitive control, making impulsive choices more likely. When survival pressure rises, the brain shifts from long-term thinking to immediate relief. Logic quiets. Patience thins. And anything that promises quick peace starts to sound reasonable.

That's why the offer cut so deep. DJ didn't need money in that moment as much as he needed the pressure to stop. Temptation didn't ask him to abandon his values outright. It simply asked him to pause them—just for a couple hours. Just this once.

Most of us recognize this moment. The one where the line between right and easy gets blurry. Where waiting feels foolish and shortcuts feel smart. Where doing the right thing costs more than we think we can afford. Temptation doesn't rush us because it has to. It waits until exhaustion does the convincing.

And that's what makes this giant dangerous. Not because it looks evil—but because it looks helpful right when we're most vulnerable.

Grind & Breakdown

Let us not grow weary in doing good... — Galatians 6:9

DJ sat behind the wheel, breathing slow, trying to calm the storm in his chest. Turning down Tino **didn't fix anything**, but for a moment he felt... **clean**. "Alright," he muttered, opening the uber app. "**Let's work.**"

Ping. First ride, solid. **Ping**. Second ride, even better.

Two more trips and he was sitting at **almost \$90**. The sun felt brighter. Music hit better. For the first time that morning, he didn't feel like life was **laughing at him**. "This is what **doing right** is supposed to feel like," he said quietly, letting the hope rise.

Then he checked the payout:

Account on delay. No instant withdrawal. Available tomorrow.

He stared at the screen and let out a dry, **tired laugh**.

"Oh, okay. **This must be that 'perfect timing'** Grandma always preached about, **he said in jest.**"

Nothing answered him back. **No sign**, no feeling, no soft voice of **comfort**. Just silence and a dashboard. He exhaled, shook his head. "Right. Keep Cool. Keep pushing." **Ping. Another ride.**

Momentum felt good. Like maybe **discipline and patience** weren't a waste. Then **the car coughed**. Just once, but wrong. **Another sputter**, then the engine choked, **power fading**. "Come on... **not now**, he said."

The car coasted forward, **losing life** second by second. DJ steered it to the shoulder as far as **momentum would carry him**.

The engine died completely the moment the wheels hit gravel. Silence. **The fuel gauge below E.** DJ stared at it.

“Man... come on...” He turned the key. Click. **Nothing.** Tried again. Click. **Dead.** He rested his forehead on the wheel. Not dramatic, just tired in a way **sleep doesn’t cure.** Life wasn’t punching him. **Life was body-slamming** him over and over. He reached and grabbed the **empty gallon water jug,** the one he had just finished off.

“Alright,” he whispered. **“We walking.”** Door shut. **Sun hit hard.** Just a man with an empty jug and a long sidewalk ahead. He started walking, jaw clenched. **Jug swinging.** Heat rising. Eviction **clock ticking.** He wasn’t quitting. Not because he felt strong, because **quitting wasn’t an option for him.** “I’m still coming home with that money,” he muttered. **“I don’t care how.”** And he walked, not knowing how... **But refusing to give up.**

The Lesson

Weariness doesn't usually come from doing the wrong thing. It comes from doing the right thing and not seeing results.

DJ turned down the shortcut. He chose patience. He chose honest work. For a moment, it even felt like it was paying off. The rides came in. The money climbed. Hope showed up quietly, the way it usually does, just enough to make us believe things are turning around.

And then it stalled.

Nothing dramatic happened. No big failure. Just delay. Silence. A dashboard that didn't care how hard he was trying. And then the car died. Not because he did something wrong, but because life kept asking for more when he was already empty.

Scripture doesn't pretend this part of the journey isn't exhausting.

Let us not grow weary in doing good,

Galatians 6:9 says, not because weariness won't come, but because it will. The verse doesn't deny the fatigue. It speaks directly to it. Even people of faith get tired. Even obedience has weight. Silence doesn't mean God has left. Sometimes it means the work has reached a deeper level.

Science explains why this kind of moment is so dangerous. Under prolonged stress, the brain begins to lose sensitivity to dopamine, the chemical tied to motivation and reward. When effort isn't followed by visible progress, the mind starts to register it as failure, even when it isn't. That's why burnout feels so personal. It convinces us that stopping makes sense.

This is the giant that breaks many people—not temptation, not fear, but fatigue. The slow drain of doing everything you know is right and still feeling stuck. Weariness doesn't shout. It whispers. It tells us that rest would feel better than faith, and quitting would feel smarter than continuing.

But this chapter isn't about winning. It's about not stopping. DJ didn't walk because he felt hopeful. He walked because quitting wasn't an option yet. And sometimes endurance doesn't look like confidence—it looks like one more step taken without certainty.

The Trap

Watch and pray so you will not fall into temptation...

— Matthew 26:41

DJ walked toward the gas station, **empty jug in hand**, sweat running into his eye. The kind of tired that isn't about muscles, it's about life. Halfway there, **someone called out**.

"You good?" He turned.

She was leaning against the brick wall, hoodie, leggings, messy bun, **cute in the real-life way**, not Instagram perfect. **Hood pretty**. Soft eyes but a tired spirit, like life had been **swinging at her too**.

"You look stressed," she said, smirking. "Like you just fought somebody daddy." What's your name she said? **"DJ"**, and yours he replied? **"Raya"**. **"He cracked a smile** without meaning to." She looked at the empty jug. **"No gas?"** "I Just ran out down the street," he said.

"Damn... you walking in this heat? **You're wild for that.**" She stood up, wiping her hands on her hoodie.

"You smoke?" "Sometimes he replied" "I got a blunt rolled already," she said casually. **"You can hit it with me.** Chill for a minute. You cute, you look like **you need a break.**"

She didn't whisper it, she just said it like it was normal life. Her eyes stayed on him **a little too long**. Lower lip caught between her teeth. That's what did it. Not the weed. Not the break. **Being seen**.

He had **been broken, ignored, insulted, judged, doubted**, and blocked all morning. And suddenly someone looked at him like he

mattered. He nodded before thinking. “Yeah... **a minute won’t hurt.**”

“That’s what I thought,” she teased, walking slow, hips swaying just enough to notice. “**Come on.** My cousin stay right by the corner. **We coolin’.**” As they walked, she bumped his arm lightly, playfully. “**You got real good energy,**” she said. “Most dudes out here ain’t got that. **They lame. You’re different.**”

Attention is a drug. And the devil rarely uses what you hate, he uses what **you miss.** Her voice dropped low. “You single or just **mad at whoever messed up?**” “**Mad,**” he grinned back.

“**So you free then,**” she smiled, licking her lips. “**Good.**”

He felt something pull him. Not love. Not lust. Just escape. They turned the corner. Two dudes by a fence. Hoodies up. Eyes sharp. **Not staring, watching.**

She didn’t slow down. DJ’s stomach **tightened instantly.** Shoulders got tense. Instinct now louder than desire. His heart tapped his ribs hard. She turned to him. “**You good? Come on.**” **He didn’t move.**

One dude shifted, **hand near his waistband.**

That was it. DJ backed up slowly, then turned and **walked fast, then faster, then ran.** His uncle’s words flashed through his mind: “**Ain’t no reason to wear a hood if it ain’t raining.**” Voices behind him. A shout. A metal clink. **He didn’t turn around,** turning around is **how people get shot.**

He sprinted two blocks, chest heaving, jug banging against his knee. He leaned against the wall, sweating, shaking, **whispering to himself:**

“Bro... what was you doing?” **You’re about to be homeless** and you're out here risking your life **chasing some girl**.
He didn’t blame her. He blamed **the weakness that wanted to feel good for five minutes**.

He caught his breath, whispered: **“Not today bro stay focused...”**

Then picked up the jug and walked back toward the gas station **embarrassed, humbled, but alive**.

Survival is a **victory** too.

The Lesson

This moment wasn't about lust. It was about escape.

DJ didn't stop because he wanted trouble. He stopped because he was tired. Tired in the way that makes a pause feel necessary and attention feel healing. All morning he had been ignored, pressured, talked down to, and reminded of what he didn't have. Then suddenly, someone saw him. That's what pulled him in—not desire, but relief.

Temptation often works like that.

Scripture says:

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

The warning isn't about being evil. It's about being tired. Jesus didn't tell people to stop wanting things. He told them to stay aware. When awareness fades, even good instincts get quiet.

Science explains why this kind of moment is so powerful. **Neuroscience** shows that unexpected attention and flattery can cause sharp spikes in dopamine, the same chemical response linked to gambling and risk-taking. When we feel unseen or lonely, the brain treats attention like relief. Judgment softens. Caution slows. What feels like connection can quickly turn into danger.

That's why this trap was subtle. It didn't look threatening. It looked kind. Familiar. Easy. DJ didn't follow because he trusted her. He followed because, for a brief moment, life stopped hurting. But when instinct finally cut through desire, it wasn't fear that saved him—it was awareness returning just in time.

Most of us recognize this pattern. The moments when exhaustion lowers our guard. When comfort feels more urgent than direction. When the thing pulling us isn't what we want, but what we're missing. Temptation doesn't always push us toward something bad. Sometimes it simply offers a break at the worst possible time.

Walking away didn't make DJ proud. It made him alive. And sometimes survival isn't a victory that feels good—it's just the quiet relief of making it through a moment that could've ended everything.

The Humble Ask

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may lift you up in due time. — **1 Peter 5:6**

DJ stood outside the **gas station** holding an empty gallon jug and the **kind of pride** that weighs more than a **filled** one ever could. Sweat on his forehead, stomach tight, mouth dry. He hated this. He didn't feel **like a man** right now, he felt **less than human**.

Nobody knew what he had been through already **today**. They didn't see the **eviction notice, the empty shoebox, the betrayal**, the grind, the running, the **fear**, the desperation. They just saw a dude holding an empty jug, **looking like a request**.

He took a **breath** like it cost money. Then he approached a man pumping gas. “**Excuse me Sir**, my car ran out down the street. Just need enough to get back to it. **Anything helps**.” The man **didn't even look at him**. Just shook his head and pretended the pump screen suddenly **became fascinating**.

Another man waved him off. One lady **pulled her purse closer**. One didn't even let him **finish** the sentence. Someone tossed him **a single crumpled dollar** without making eye contact, like he was feeding **pigeons**.

Every “**no**,” every flinch, every dismissive glance scraped something inside him raw. **He wasn't lazy**. Wasn't a beggar. Wasn't a bum. He was a father fighting for a roof and his identity at the same time.

But nobody out here knew his story. Nobody asked. Nobody cared. They just saw **“need”** and got **nervous**. Just then he heard laughter, familiar voices. He looked up

“Boy, you run fast.”

It was her. Same messy bun, same face, but now the smile was different. **Less flirty. More amused**. Her cousin was with her, same **hoodie**, same shoes, except now the **hood was down**, and he had chips in his hand like **nothing dangerous existed** in the world.

“You dipped like we had a whole **SWAT team** behind you,” the cousin said. “I ain’t never seen somebody clutch a water jug like that in my life.” **They laughed**. It stung.

“I thought,” DJ started.

“Thought we was gon’ rob you?” she interrupted, raising an eyebrow. “Dang, that’s crazy. **“Who hurt you?”** she giggled.

Her cousin shook his head, laughing: “Nah bruh, we don’t rob people with **empty jugs**. **We rob people with gas.**”

They’re dying laughing at this point. DJ forced a tight **smile**, the kind you make when your **pride is already hurt**.

“I ain’t know,” he muttered. **“My fault.”** She shrugged. **“Trauma is a real thing.** “But next time, maybe don’t **sprint** like you stole the **Holy Grail.**” The cousin added, “For real. You took off like the devil was **chasing you** in person.”

They laughed again. DJ **tried** to laugh too, but his chest still hurt from running, and **from feeling stupid**. She pulled **\$5** from her pocket and held it out.

“Here. **For the gas** you almost **died** trying to get.”

DJ hesitated. Pride twitched. But pride doesn’t **move cars**. He took it. **“I appreciate you, he said.”**

“Don’t thank me,” she said. **“Thank God.”** Cousin shook his head: **“Bro ran like the rent police** was on him.”

DJ couldn’t argue. **They weren’t wrong.**

She nodded toward the jug. **“Go get your gas.** And don’t be **chasing dreams or demons today.** Just breathe, **it gets better.”**

They walked off laughing, still talking about how he ran like **someone yelled “fire.”**

DJ stood there for a moment **holding the money**, heat burning his face from the sun.

No excitement. No temptation. No ego boost. **Just reality.** He walked back toward the station, and the **silence hit harder** than the teasing.

Each step felt slower. He whispered to himself: “Man... that was dumb.” **Not self-hate. Self-honesty.**

Sometimes humility doesn’t come in churches, it comes in parking **lots with strangers** laughing because you tried to **run from yourself.**

He filled the jug. Started the walk back to his car. Just the sound of his shoes and a mind **weighing out mistakes.** And somewhere between **steps**, the thought came:

“I tried to escape for five minutes and almost died.”

He shook his head and kept walking, tired, humbled, and still determined.

The Lesson

This moment wasn't about gas. It was about pride finally running out.

DJ wasn't ashamed because he needed help. He was ashamed because needing help stripped away the image he had been trying to hold together all day. To the people passing by, he wasn't a father or a man fighting to survive—he was just need. And need makes people uncomfortable.

That's what hurt the most.

Scripture speaks directly to this kind of moment.

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may lift you up in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

It doesn't say humiliation will lift us. It says humility will. Not being embarrassed, but choosing honesty. Humility isn't thinking less of ourselves—it's seeing ourselves clearly, without pretending we're stronger than we are.

Science shows why this feels so intense. Studies published in the ***Journal of Positive Psychology*** have found that people who practice humility after failure experience lower stress and shame than those who focus on protecting their image. When we stop defending who we think we should be, the nervous system settles. The body relaxes. Reality becomes easier to face.

That's why the laughter stung more than the rejection. DJ wasn't just exposed—he was seen. Not as dangerous. Not as impressive. Just human. And strangely, that moment carried more truth than the escape he almost chased earlier.

Most of us fear asking for help not because we're weak, but because it forces us to admit we don't have everything under control. Pride tells us to hold it together a little longer. Humility tells us it's okay to stop pretending. And sometimes humility doesn't come through prayer or a quiet moment—it comes in public, awkward places where dignity has to loosen its grip.

DJ didn't walk away feeling proud. He walked away clearer. Still tired. Still rebuilding. But no longer running from himself. And sometimes surrender doesn't feel like relief—it feels like finally standing still long enough to be honest.

Borrowed Hope

Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it. — **Proverbs 13:11**

DJ pulled into the plaza where **Marcus** ran his business. Clean windows. Clean clothes. Clean life, the kind DJ used to **imagine for himself**. Marcus came out smiling like he'd just cracked the **code** to adulthood. "**You look like life chewed you and forgot to swallow.**" DJ smirked weakly. "You wasn't saying that when I fought **Ray Ray and his cousins for you.**" Marcus laughed. "**Facts.** You saved my face, literally."

He reached into his pocket and handed DJ **a folded stack**, crisp, warm, **lifeline money**.

"I couldn't do **\$700**," Marcus said, voice softening. "But here's **\$500**. I need it back **next week**. Payroll is tight." DJ nodded. "You'll get it. For real. **I appreciate you.**" "Always," Marcus replied. "**We family, even when you irritating.**"

They hugged quick, **respect in the silence**. DJ stepped outside, money heavy in his pocket. Relief flooded through him. "**Thank You**," he whispered, eyes closing. "**I see you.**"

He started toward his car, **but then heard laughter** across the lot.

Dice slapped concrete. **Cash flashed**. A small crowd circled up near the curb. DJ slowed. He told himself **he was just looking. Just watching**. Just a minute. But silence and money don't mix well for men who've been **drowning**.

"**Twenty**," he muttered, tossing a bill in. **Win**. The warmth hit his chest. **Another twenty. Win again**. Somebody clapped him on the shoulder. "**Aye, big dog! I see you!**" Confidence came alive like something hungry. **A hundred. Win. \$300. \$500. \$700.**

The rush drowned out logic. **Another roll, \$900. Then \$1,200.**

That was rent. **Every dollar. Plus a little extra.** He could walk away right now, pay up, breathe easy, rebuild. His better judgment whispered: *Leave. This is grace.*

But pride answered louder: *Nah. Pay Marcus back too. Come home up, not even.*

He nodded to himself. “**Just one more move.**” He pushed **\$800. Loss.** Chest tightened. Still up. Still okay. “Run it back.” **\$400** down. **Win. \$800** again. He grinned. “See? **Still blessed.**” He shoved the rest forward. Dice hit the pavement. **Loss.**

Silence. The crowd **shifted** without sympathy. DJ searched his pockets, **empty** except for the **single wrinkled dollar** from the gas station. That dollar felt **heavier** than twelve hundred ever did.

“Lemme get back in,” he said quietly. A guy shook his head. “A dollar? **Nah, fam. Game over.**”

They laughed, already moving on. DJ slipped the bill into his pocket, not saving it, just **hiding the shame.** He walked back to the car, heart pounding, heat stinging his face. “I had it,” he whispered. “**I really had it.**” He sat behind the wheel, phone in hand, thumb hovering over one name.

Tino.

He pressed call. “I’m **sliding** bruh,”

The Lesson

Greed rarely feels like greed. Most of the time, it feels like relief trying to hurry things along.

When DJ got the money from Marcus, it felt like oxygen. Not excess. Not luxury. Just enough to breathe again. That's why the temptation that followed didn't feel dangerous. It felt practical. If things had finally started turning around, why not finish the job? Why not speed the process up just a little?

That's how impatience disguises itself.

Scripture warns about this quietly and clearly.

Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it (Proverbs 13:11).

The verse doesn't condemn money, it explains timing. Some things grow only when they're allowed to. When we rush what's meant to be built slowly, we don't just risk losing the reward, we lose the lesson that was supposed to come with it.

Science explains why this pull is so strong. Neuroscience shows that near-wins trigger powerful dopamine spikes in the brain, especially under stress. Each small success convinces us that the next move will fix everything. Logic fades. Caution feels unnecessary. What started as gratitude quietly turns into pressure to finish the story ourselves.

That's what made this moment dangerous. DJ didn't chase the dice because he loved gambling. He chased because waiting felt unbearable. He wasn't trying to get rich. He was trying to feel secure again. And when hope feels borrowed, we're more likely to gamble it away than protect it.

Most of us recognize this pattern. The moment when progress finally shows up and we rush to complete it instead of letting it settle. When we mistake momentum for permission. Greed doesn't always ask for more, it asks for *now*.

DJ didn't lose the money because he was careless. He lost it because impatience convinced him that finishing strong mattered more than finishing safely. And sometimes the hardest lesson isn't learning how to get ahead, it's learning how to stop when enough is enough.

When the Giant Swings Back

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. — **Proverbs 14:12**

Tino's block **looked harmless** at first glance, quiet, still, kids' bikes leaned against fences like **nothing bad** ever happened on this street. But some places don't need noise to feel **dangerous**. The air alone can **warn you**.

DJ sat in the passenger seat, thumb tapping his knee, that nervous rhythm **pride pretends is confidence**. He told himself this wasn't a relapse. It wasn't him "**falling off**." It was **survival**.

"**One move**," he muttered. "Then **I'm done**."

That lie tasted familiar. **Grandma's voice** floated in his mind, soft as a whisper, heavy with truth:

"Keep dancing with the devil long enough, and he'll walk you home himself."

DJ swallowed and **ignored it**. Tino parked behind a quiet apartment building. Gravel crunched. **Night held its breath**.

Two hooded figures slipped out of the **shadows** like they lived there. No rush, no yelling, **just calm purpose**. That's when DJ felt it: that tight, **Holy-Spirit-pull-your-shirt feeling**. The one you only notice when you've **already gone too far**.

"**Stay in the car**," Tino said, stepping out. DJ didn't move. His breath turned shallow. Something in him **screamed that this wasn't a hustle, it was a setup**.

One of the **hoodies** approached Tino. No conversation. No warning. **Just a flash.**

Pop. Pop.

No scream. No dramatic fall. Just **Tino** collapsing like the world **unplugged him**. Silence, the kind that **freezes the soul**.

DJ's body moved before his mind did. **Door opened**. Feet pounding pavement. **That instinct wasn't street smarts**, it was **mercy pulling him** by the collar.

Behind him, **shots exploded**.

He didn't look back. He didn't turn his head. **Looking back gets you dead.**

He ran until his lungs burned and his legs shook. He ducked **behind a dumpster**, chest heaving, hands shaking like electricity ran through his veins.

"God... God..." Not an elegant prayer, **A terrified to death prayer.**

He pressed his forehead to the brick wall. Sweat stung his eyes, **fear tasted like metal** in his mouth. **"I knew better... I knew better..."**

A quiet **sound** made him freeze. **He looked down.**

A shoe. That **same** scuffed sneaker he'd seen at the gas station. **Raya's cousin**. DJ's breath hitched. Panic clawed up his throat. His hands shot up weakly, **not to fight**, just to show empty palms.

"Please... please don't kill me." His voice cracked, not tough, not stoic. **Human. Terrified.**

“I got kids,” he stammered. **“I swear, I ain’t seen nothing.** I ain’t say nothing. I’m just, **I just want to live.”** He **wasn’t** bargaining like a hustler. He was pleading like a man who finally **understood every wrong turn** that brought him to **this moment**. The cousin stared, eyes hard, **unreadable**.

Then, a tiny smirk. **Not friendly.** Not cruel. He raised the gun. **Pressed it to DJ’s forehead.**

Click.

Silence. The cousin frowned. Pulled back. **He tried again.**

Click. Nothing.

DJ’s whole body **trembled**, tears breaking loose before he could stop them. **The cousin stared at the gun**, then at DJ, something shifting in his face that wasn’t **anger**.

He stepped closer, voice low, steady, almost... tired. **“God spared you today,”** he said.

“You better find somethin’ else to do with your life... before He changes his mind.”

He looked DJ in the eye and walked off. No threats. No warning. Just absence, **holy and haunting**.

DJ collapsed against the wall, breath shaking, hands over his face. **That wasn’t luck.** That wasn’t mercy. **That was intervention.** He cried uncontrollably, not grieving Tino, but the version of himself that almost **died with him**.

“Lord...” he whispered, voice shredded. **“...Thank You.** I don’t deserve it. **I don’t deserve any of it.”**

It wasn’t **strength** that saved him. It wasn’t **street smarts**. It was **grace, unearned, undeniable**, and aimed directly at him. That was the moment the giant didn’t fall, **he did**.

The Lesson

This wasn't a bad decision gone wrong. It was a pattern finally reaching its end.

DJ didn't come back because he wanted trouble. He came back because desperation convinced him it was the only option left. That's how deception works. It doesn't tell us to choose evil—it tells us we're out of choices. It reframes danger as necessity and calls it survival.

Scripture warns about this clearly:

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12).

The danger isn't rebellion, it's confidence in our own reasoning when fear is doing the thinking. Under pressure, bad paths don't look bad. They look practical. Logical. Necessary.

Science helps explain why this happens. Under extreme stress, the brain narrows its focus. Long-term consequences fade, and the nervous system prioritizes escape over wisdom. That's why DJ ignored every warning he felt in his body. It wasn't courage, it was tunnel vision.

The moment the gun jammed didn't feel spiritual. It felt terrifying. Sudden. Final. That's often how mercy shows up, not as comfort, but as interruption. Something stopping us where we should've ended. Something breaking the momentum just long enough for awareness to return.

Psychologists call what follows moments like this a reset. Near-death experiences often strip away illusion instantly. What mattered minutes ago loses its grip. What remains is clarity, shock, and the quiet realization of how close everything came to being over.

That night didn't make DJ brave. It made him honest.

He didn't survive because he was smart. He survived because something stepped in when he couldn't save himself.

And sometimes the giant doesn't fall quietly.
Sometimes it swings back hard enough to wake us up.

When Strength Runs Out

Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.

— 1 Peter 5:7

DJ didn't run anymore. **He walked.** Slow. Heavy. Like every step cost something real.

The night was quiet, but his mind wasn't. Cars passed in the distance, a world moving without him. His shirt clung to his back. **His hands shook.** Not from adrenaline, that was gone. This was the tremble of **a soul cracked open.**

His grandma's voice rose in the silence like **memory and mercy** braided together:

"Baby, cast your cares on Jesus. You ain't built to carry 'em alone."

He never wanted to hear that growing up. Not when **bills piled.** **Not when life hit.** But tonight, it didn't sound like religion, it sounded like **rescue.** He exhaled, long, shaky, **almost broken.**

"God... I can't do this," he whispered, voice **realer** than any prayer he'd ever prayed.

"I tried my way. I tried being strong. I ain't got nothing left."

A **breeze** brushed his cheek, maybe wind, maybe grace. Didn't matter. **Something shifted inside.** For the first time all day, he didn't feel like he had to **win.** He just had to **let go.**

By the time he reached his apartment, **nothing outside changed.** Car still quiet. **Eviction notice still taped.** Fridge still empty.

Life still messy. But the **fight** inside him? **Gone.** Not quitting, **surrender.**

He shut the door, slid down the wall, and sat on the floor. No tears. No speeches. No promises. **Just the truth.**

“Lord... I give it up. All of it. If You don’t carry me, I fall.”

He didn’t pray for rent. He didn’t pray for revenge. He didn’t pray for strength. **He prayed for rest.**

Then he laid down. Not in hope, in **surrender.** And like **Jesus** asleep in a **storm** while the world shook around Him... **DJ slept.**

The Lesson

This wasn't the moment DJ got strong. It was the moment he stopped trying to be.

He didn't collapse because he was weak. He collapsed because he had carried everything as far as he could. Fear, responsibility, pride, regret and none of it had anywhere else to go. When strength finally ran out, it didn't create panic. It created honesty.

Scripture speaks to moments like this plainly:

Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you
(1 Peter 5:7).

That isn't an invitation to give up, it's permission to stop pretending. Some burdens don't get lighter with effort. They get lighter when they're released.

Science helps explain why this kind of surrender feels different. Research shows that when people stop trying to control outcomes and instead release stress through trust or prayer, the brain's fear response begins to settle. Cortisol drops. The body slows. What feels like collapse is often regulation finally returning.

Nothing around DJ changed that night. The notice was still on the door. The fridge was still empty. The future was still uncertain. But the fight inside him was gone. Not because the problem was solved, but because he stopped carrying it alone.

Most of us are taught to push through exhaustion. To stay strong. To hold it together a little longer. But there's a point where strength doesn't save us anymore, it only keeps us from resting.

And rest isn't quitting. It's recognizing that we were never meant to be the ones holding everything up.

DJ didn't fall asleep in victory. He fell asleep in surrender.

And sometimes that's the first real peace we've felt in a long time.

When Grace Knocks

The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.

— Exodus 14:14

A knock woke him. Soft. Not demanding. Just... there. DJ blinked in the faint morning light, feeling something he hadn't felt in a long time, not relief, not joy... **stillness.**

He opened the door.

She stood there: baby on her hip, toddler clinging to her leg, hair pulled back, eyes swollen like she had **been crying** before walking there.

In her hand, **an envelope.**

His envelope. Edges wrinkled like it had been held, opened, closed, **prayed over.**

Her voice cracked, small but honest: **"I didn't spend it.** I wanted to. **I was mad.** But I couldn't do it." A tear built in her eye, fighting for space with **guilt and hope.**

"I don't know what we're doing anymore... but **the kids need you.** And... **I need you too.**"

The kids reached for him. DJ dropped to his **knees**, arms around them, forehead pressed into their hair like **peace** was hiding there **waiting for him.**

A single tear fell, not broken tears like yesterday... **A surrender tear.** She whispered, almost embarrassed by the truth:

"I felt God pushing me to come home." No church choir. No sermon. No Instagram testimony.

Just a **doorway**. Just tired souls and a **God** who doesn't need dramatic entrances to **change everything**. They stood there unsure what to say, so instead, **they prayed**.

Messy. **Unrehearsed**. Real.

“God... fix us... Show us how to do life your way. Amen.”

Heaven didn't shout back. **It rested on them**, quiet, weighty, warm like mercy sitting on tired shoulders.

Because the victory wasn't rent **money**. The victory was **surrender**. Silence settled like peace finally had **permission to breathe in the room**.

Morning light slid across DJ's face, gentle, almost like a hand **wiping the night off him**. And in that quiet moment, he understood what grown men rarely admit out loud: You don't slay giants by **muscling through them**. You slay them when you stop trying to fight in human strength and **let God take the swing**.

David didn't win because he was brave. He won because he wasn't **fighting alone**. DJ whispered into the stillness:

“Giants don't fall when I swing harder. They fall when I stop swinging alone.”

He looked at his **family**. Still broke. Still rebuilding. Still learning.

But held. Not fixed, held. And sometimes? **That's the miracle.**

The Lesson

Grace doesn't usually show up when life is fixed.
It shows up when the fighting stops.

DJ didn't wake up to answers or solutions. He woke up to stillness. For the first time in days, nothing inside him was scrambling. No plans. No defenses. No energy left to prove anything. That's when the knock came—not loud, not demanding, just present. Scripture says:

The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still
(Exodus 14:14).

Stillness isn't passivity. It's trust replacing effort. It's the moment we stop trying to win and allow ourselves to be met where we are.

The doorway mattered. Not because rent was solved or the past was erased, but because something returned that had been missing, connection. Grace didn't arrive as a miracle from the sky. It arrived as a person choosing to come back, an envelope returned, children reaching out, and a prayer spoken without performance. No speeches. No promises. Just honesty.

Science helps explain why this moment felt different. Studies on reconciliation and emotional safety show that shared vulnerability lowers stress responses faster than isolation ever could. When people feel safe enough to stop guarding themselves, the nervous system settles. Healing begins not when problems disappear, but when we're no longer facing them alone.

That's why this moment mattered more than money. DJ didn't "win" anything. He was received. Held. And for the first time, he wasn't swinging at life by himself.

The final giant wasn't poverty or fear.

It was the belief that he had to do everything in his own strength.

Grace didn't knock because DJ was ready.

Grace knocked because he was finally still enough to hear it.

And sometimes that's how giants fall—not with force, but with
surrender.

Continue the Journey

Thank you for reading *How to Slay Giants*.

I hope this story reminded you that some giants aren't defeated by fighting harder. Sometimes victory begins when we stop trying to carry everything in our own strength and trust God with what we cannot handle alone.

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A Prayer for You

Father, thank You for the person reading these words. Protect them and the people they love. Bless their home, their family, their health, and the work of their hands. Provide what they need. Open the right doors, close the wrong ones. When they are tired, renew their strength. When they are afraid, remind them that You are with them. When they feel lost, direct their steps. And in every season, help them remember that every blessing comes from You.

In the Mighty name of Jesus, amen.
