



## AAC Publications

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### **The Next Everest**

By Jim Davidson

**THE NEXT EVEREST: SURVIVING THE MOUNTAIN'S DEADLIEST DAY AND FINDING THE RESILIENCE TO CLIMB AGAIN. Jim Davidson. St. Martins' Press, 2021. Hardcover, 409 pages, \$29.99.**

Imagine yourself nine hours into your first acclimatization rotation on Everest, a mountain you had dreamed of climbing your whole adult life, when disaster strikes. A large, deadly earthquake causes massive damage and chaos. By sheer luck, you survive. Others are not so lucky. Nineteen people lose their lives in and around Everest Base Camp. Your expedition is canceled and you walk back down the Khumbu valley, view the devastation of Kathmandu, and eventually arrive home.

Such is the backdrop of Jim Davidson's book *The Next Everest*. Davidson is the best-selling author of *The Ledge* (2011), the courageous story of a difficult self-rescue from a crevasse on Mt. Rainier, the same crevasse that had killed his climbing partner. Obviously, adventure and danger are in his blood. So, when you pick up this book, be ready for a fast-paced, detailed account of one man's experience with the Everest earthquake

disaster. Davidson deftly examines multiple viewpoints, using conversations with expedition leaders, medical personnel, and rescue workers to augment his story. He uses his trained geologist's eye to provide details of why Everest Base Camp was so ripe for impact. Intermixed are personal stories of his upbringing, giving the reader context for his climbing motivations. The story flows smoothly.

At first, the book seemed to me to be missing some important context. Right after the 2015 earthquake, when the insatiable attention of the media was focused on Everest, Davidson became a center of attention. He gave live interviews to American news outlets. He was contacted by CNN and Anderson Cooper. What? How did that happen? He was a guided client who hadn't gotten high on the mountain, so why was Davidson a voice for Himalayan climbing? It's only later in the book that the reader begins to understand that Davidson was already a published writer and lecturer, and the picture becomes clearer. Perhaps he is being humble, but a little earlier context would have gone a long way toward heading off the reader's feeling of disorientation.

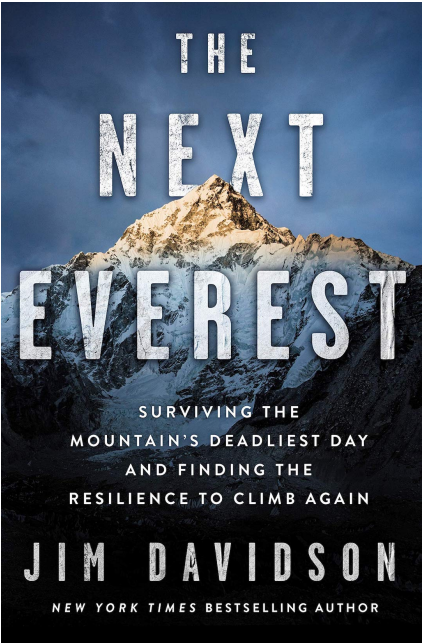
In the second half of the book, Davidson recounts his return in 2017 for a second attempt on Everest. His journey, as an IMG client supported by a summit Sherpa called PK, is pretty routine, though he provides significant detail, and any aspiring Everest climber, especially one who chooses to use a commercial outfit for support, can learn quite a bit from it. One interesting aspect is his relationship with PK. On summit day, at almost any opportunity—a cold foot, a log jam of climbers—PK wants him to turn back, bringing up the fundamental tug of war between any aspiring Everest summiter and their Sherpa summit guide. There are many reasons a Sherpa guide might advise his client to turn around if things are not going as planned: the guide's desire to return home safely to his family, or perhaps his perception that his client may not be up to the task. Or some other reason. Although Davidson handles this part of the story with dignity and respect, it deserves a more nuanced look.

*The Next Everest* closes with familiar notions about motivation and overcoming adversity. Many AAJ readers might prefer to get their personal growth insights from self-help seminars or other avenues, rather than from their alpinism. So, when it comes to applying the concept of "The Next Everest" to your life, remember this tale has been told many times before, by many different people, and in many

different venues. Not a lot of new ground is covered, and your mileage may vary depending upon your level of experience. If you're looking for a base camp read before an alpine-style ascent on Nanga Parbat, you might want to reconsider. But if you're trying to learn what it's like to summit Everest in the era of modern commercial expeditions, this is a solid read.

— **Doug Brockmeyer**

Images



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