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Introduction

I was nine.

From my perspective Captain America was not only the coolest but he was also the most responsible action hero... he incarcerated bad guys *and* he was patriotic. What other hero carried out those twin duties? I had often dreamed of owning a Captain America action figure. Then I found out K-Mart was selling them for five dollars.

But, I had no money... because I was nine.

In a highly covert operation, *and in highly un-Captain American behavior*, I learned of the presence of a five dollar bill in my dad's wallet and lifted it, promptly announcing to my parents that I had money to go to K-Mart. My dad asked me where I got the money, which amazingly was a question I failed to prepare an answer for. The jig was up. What ensued was a long and intense discussion of my motives.

I gave up my mismanaged thievery long ago, but I have continued to battle selfish or evil desires, which is how James labels our motives in his chapter four, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" This kind of writing made an impression on me early in life and fueled a desire to want to be familiar with more of what James has to say.

It should come as no surprise then that James, the venerable writer and half-brother of Jesus, has always been on my short list of favorite authors. I've read everything he has written. I subscribe to his podcast and twitter and at last count I've been to seven concerts he's headlined. So it was with great anticipation that I jumped at the invite to meet him. Following are three separate and never before printed conversations I've been privileged to have with this icon of the movement.

The first conversation occurred backstage at the “Grand Saguaro” in El Paso before his *Rock with Humility* tour kicked off in ‘02. Wedged between an old wheezing window air-conditioning unit and an authentic stone, chimenea oven James shed some light on both desire and humility.

Our second conversation came during his *Tame a Tiger, Tame a Tongue* book-signing in ‘04. His analysis of how we misuse words is without equal. I’m reminded every day because I use the signed jacket cover to that book as a placemat on my kitchen table.

The final interview happened last February over fish and chips at “Solomon’s Veranda” in Tiberius. Talking to James about rejoicing and suffering mingled with the mid-eastern aroma while overlooking the Sea of Galilee is something I won’t soon forget. By the way, if you ever visit “Solomon’s,” make sure you ask for the pecan-crusted, slow-roasted, gefilte fish. More importantly, never sit in the south east corner of the mezzanine during the bald ibis winter migration. Trust me on this one!

There's No Such Thing as Will Power

(Big breath) James, I'm a big fan. Wow. Thanks for taking some time out before your opening night of "Rock with Humility".

No problem, Chief. I'm happy to.

So, the bad news is that I can't seem to control my desires. The good news, as I understand it, is when I humble myself and admit the bad news those desires don't have to control me. But I've been a little fuzzy about both my desires and humility. Let's start with humility. What does humbling myself mean? What are some words I might use in painting a picture of humility?

Ok, how about "submit," "draw near," "wash" and "purify"?

Whoa. Slow down. Uh, thanks but I'd really rather not do any of those. That's pretty demeaning don't you think?

Well, look if you have no trust in the one telling you to pursue these words then yeah, I suppose it could come across as demeaning.

Right. Like my buddy, Robbie, who grew up in a house where his dad was always yelling at him about how he could improve. But Robbie didn't respect him. He knew his dad was hypocritical and unwilling to own his issues before yelling at Robbie.

Good point. (Wiping left over salsa off his lip with one hand while holding a chip.) So, that's why it's so important for you to know whom you are talking to here. I'm James; I was an eyewitness to Jesus. I was his half-brother and I'm telling you, you can trust Him. He's not encouraging anyone to do what He didn't do. I watched him. This isn't demeaning. I mean, it's hard but not demeaning. Demeaning is when someone's telling you to do something just to tear you down. (Pointing) You want that last chip?

No, go for it.

OK, thanks. So, where was I?

Demeaning. You were saying that's the attitude of people who want to tear you down.

Right, right. But that's not the case here. He wants what is best for you, so much so that He humbled Himself in the same way He knows you need to. It's amazing really. Bro, Think about it, He was God, the ruler of the universe and yet He was so good at submitting and humbling Himself. He was like a machine –

A machine?

Yeah... no, not really a machine. That's just a figure of speech and it was poorly chosen because He was the opposite of a machine. He was real, authentic and passionate, full of energy and power... and yet in the middle of all that is this mystery...

Tell me about the mystery.

Yeah, this whole counter-intuitive, mystery thing of "dying to live," "losing to win"... of wanting to be good but needing to admit you're bad before you can be good. This mystery stuff is key to you dealing with your desires. Look, you have to stop trying so hard to fix it all yourself and let God do it. The stuff inside you is way to powerful for you to control. If you don't pursue submitting, washing, purifying, etc... you are in trouble.

What do you mean by that?

It could mean a lot of different things, really. You know, I'll never forget a church I was at once that couldn't control how they talked.

Really?

Yeah, You've probably never witnessed that... Gossip here. Misleading there. You talk about trouble. It was bad, man. It was

like this large area covered chiefly by trees just blazing on fire... out of control.

How does that connect the whole humility thing?

Look, I'm just saying it's a great example of how out of control we really are. I mean, here's a church... a church, right? The place where we think we've got it all under control. But, it's not because the people refused to humble themselves. Remember what Jesus said? "Draw close to me and I'll draw close to you." Right? Remember that? These people couldn't do it. Truth is, none of us can without admitting we're not in control.

So, what about positive thinking? What about willpower?

Willpower? Power of your will? No such thing! Will-guidance maybe. Will-help... but you don't have power over your will. It's bigger than you. This word, will, comes from the Greek concepts of pleasure, delight or desire. In other words, to will something is to desire it. Desire is a very powerful and uncontrollable drive.

Uncontrollable...

Yeah, kind of like me throwing down this tortilla here. (Laughing) I'm not in control. I desire to eat this bad boy. So, the word, willpower, is well intentioned but it might be deceiving you into thinking you can gain power over what you desire. That's not going to happen. You can help guide, you can feed properly, and you can influence... but demonstrate power over your desire? Nope. If you could truly control your will why would you be in the messes you've been in? Or the mess you are currently in? Why would mankind experience so many problems? Look, that stuff you've got inside of you is way more dangerous than you can imagine. It will eat you up.

The salsa?

(Laughing) Well, yeah, that too.

All of this reminds me of what you wrote...

Remind me again...

You asked in your chapter 4, "What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?"

(Head nodding) Oh yeah. That's the core of you, man. It's not pretty. We've all fallen short of God's benchmark and we need help.

I see that. So, when I admit my problems, and my dependence then I open the door for God to help me.

Yes, you open the door...

But there's more...

Yeah... I mean, realizing you've got zero power over your will is just the beginning. Don't stop there. The next step is actually making that declaration of dependence.

Declaration of dependence. That's good. I like that.

I know. That's why I use it. You've got to make the declaration of dependence, which is simply a confession. When we confess our sins, guess what?

He forgives.

(Gently banging the salt shaker on the table) Right on! He forgives and then the fun begins. Then the Spirit of God moves into your life and, get this, empowers you... Himself, personally. I've seen it. I've experienced it. You talk about power over the will! (Hand clap) This is it, bro. That's what you're looking for. This is the husband who no longer has the selfish agenda. This is the wife who now delights in what God delights in. This is the boss who no longer equates strength with status, but with serving. These are the people who are not consumed with distorted motives. The Spirit-

filled person is someone who is controlled by the desire... the will... of The Spirit. How cool is that?

Good stuff. Wow, thanks for your time I really appreciate it, Jimmy. I was thinking about calling you that? Can I call you Jimmy? That was just something...

No.

Ok, good. Let's just stick with James. I like James.

(Laughing) *All right, man.*

(Knuckle wrap) Respect the knuckles

I Can't See the Truth Because He's in the Way

Thanks again for the autograph. OK, lets jump into this. On page 182 of "Tame the Tiger" you mention that some people know what to say, but wise people know what not to say. What did you mean by that?

Yeah, I actually learned that principle playing music.

Meaning?

(Settling into his chair) Well, I've had the chance to play with some great players over the years and one of the things I've always said is that good players know what to play, but great players know what not to play. (Strumming some air guitar chords.) The great players know that they could play a cool lick at every opportunity. They know that. But they've disciplined themselves not to, so that when they do play, people listen.

So, good people know all the things to talk about and great people know when to shut up?

Well, something like that. I wouldn't necessarily try to qualify whether someone is good or great, but I do like the analogy. The truth is if you talk too much, if you complain too much, if you give too much direction, you run the risk of watering down your whole point. We use words carelessly. We should be economical so that when people hear us they don't just automatically think, "Blah, blah, blah."

I heard someone talking the other day that I wish had been more economical with his words. He just kept giving me sentence after sentence and most of it centered on how right he was.

I've been there! That's a big problemo with those of us who call ourselves believers. We think we have to know the right thing to say all the time. You know? Convince everyone of our "rightness."

Of course, it's natural to want to be right and to influence people for Jesus, but man, we miss the forest for the trees sometimes...

I never really understood the forest for the trees phrase...

Uh, like you're sitting smack dab in the middle of the forest and you can't see anything because there are trees everywhere... and you say, "Where's the forest?" See? The forest is right there...

Oh! Thank you! Whenever I hear that I'm always stopping, thinking, OK now what does that mean? Got it. There are lots of those phrases I'm always stumbling over... Like the "bird in the bush" or...

I know. (Laughing) How about the one I heard again the other day? "Selling like hotcakes." Someone said the new podcast was "selling like hotcakes" and I'm like, "What does that mean? Selling like hotcakes?" I've never witnessed anyone selling a hotcake. I've never bought a hotcake!

I don't even think I know what a hotcake is.

My point. But I think we're off track here...

Yeah, you were talking about our need to be right when we talk...

Right. That's it exactly. I often say if you win every argument you might be losing more than you're winning.

Hold on, I want to make sure I get that down right. If you win you might be losing... hmm...

Yep. We have this deep need to be right when we talk, to look right, to act right. (Holding up a clenched fist.) To defend ourselves! But, you remember what Jesus did standing before Pilate? Pilate kept grilling him, right? Over and over... "Who are you? Are you the King? Tell me, tell me." And Jesus just stood there. He didn't have to say anything because his life already

demonstrated who He was. So, he stood there right in front of Pilate...

Obviously not using a lot of words. Economical.

Exactly.

Although he did say at one point, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Well, yeah, he said that although that was before this conversation. But, I'm glad you mentioned that because that statement beautifully sets up this encounter with Pilate.

How's that?

OK, so he had already proclaimed to everyone that he was "the way" and now he's before Pilate not saying anything. So, Pilate asks him what's up and he just stands there... in the way. I love this.

(Speaking more slowly) Some, like Pilate, would say, "Jesus, You're in the way. Get out of the way. I can't see or hear because you're right there." Others would see Jesus in the way and get it! Do you see the difference? Some see him in the way others see he is the way.

So, there are two different angles on the word, "way." I've never thought of that before. To some he was in the way. To others he was the way. It's going to take me awhile to sort this all out.

I know. Jesus is a master at not saying anything. He doesn't say anything to Pilate and yet he says everything. Jesus doesn't take a bunch of words and smack you over the head; he just stood there and allowed Pilate to find him. He knew when to speak and more importantly he knew when not to.

Hmmm, so does this mean that we're better off just keeping our mouths shut most of the time?

(Laughing) Well, there are times when we do need to speak. My bud, Paul, is always reminding me, "If something is sweet don't let others talk as if it's sour." So, we do need to stand up, but here's my angle: when we do, we have to be humble. We can say the right things, but have the wrong attitudes, right?

Oh yeah, like my son the other day apologizing to his sister because I asked him to. He said the words but it was pretty obvious he didn't mean them.

(Smiling) That's it. I'll give you another example. I was in Capernaum a few months back with an elder of a church who was reciting scripture right and left. He was all worked up about what his pastor and small group leader was doing or actually not doing. He had obviously memorized a bunch of the scroll and that was impressive, but it didn't take long to see he had an agenda, (raising hands in surrender) so finally I said, "Bro, take a breath. I love the scripture. The way you've worked to memorize it is great but I can't take the attitude anymore. You can either get humble and work within the system here or leave." He had the words part right but the attitude part completely wrong.

How did that go over?

Well, let's just say that I'm not his favorite author anymore!

So, there are times to speak. But when those times come, we need to take our cue from Jesus and be humble?

Right on, be humble, don't use too many words because that will get you into trouble. One of the verses I learned as a boy that has never gotten away from me is from Proverbs, "Where words are many sin is not absent." My parents used that one on me a lot!

Funny you mentioned that. I heard someone a while back talk about this verse and he said you could just graph it. Put a graph up and as your words increase, so does your chance of messing up. He did this whole visual thing. Picture that. The lines were going way up and to the right. It was hilarious.

(laughing) Yeah! I like that. So true. The point is, be quiet, be humble. God will lift you up at the right time and if He wants you to be right in a conversation, as long as you're open to his leading he'll help you be right. Otherwise just be willing to let others think you're a little wrong! That might be better than needing to defend every little thing that you do with all these words, starting a big fiery blaze that you can't control.

Now that takes discipline.

That's right and if you can control your tongue, Dude, you can control just about anything in life. It's small, but powerful.

Well, thanks for the segue. You wrote about that, right... the tongue being so small, but so powerful?

Oh yeah! Thank you for remembering. (Settling into his chair a little bit.) You know, I was in San Diego recently with my family and we toured one of the decommissioned air-craft carriers. Now, look, I'm a pacifist, but for the sake of the point I'm gonna lay that aside for a second. So, work with me.

OK, go for it.

Truth is, I couldn't help but be impressed with the enormity of that ship... the size of the flight deck, the galley, the amount of machinery... something like 4 or 5 thousand men and women will live on that thing for weeks on end. (Stretching his hands out.) It's just this massive operation. So, we're touring this whole giant city on a boat from below deck all the way up to the top. About 2 or 3 hours into the tour we get to the primary flight control room. The "pri-fli" area as they call it. In the middle of the room, in front of a big window facing out to sea, they have this steering wheel. I'm lookin' at it thinking, "That can't be a steering wheel. Don't they use something bigger or more sophisticated?" But that's what it is. It turns the ship. They even let my kids steer it for a minute. This is amazing when you think about it, not my kids steering the ship, but the fact that this little steering wheel controls a rudder that

directs a 90,000-ton boat! (Using his hands to steer.) It's awesome. You turn the wheel and the whole thing responds. So, check this out, our mouth is the pri-fli area of our lives. It directs everything else. A word here, a phrase there, guiding us along... it's small but powerful. The psalmist said, "Keep watch over the door of my lips." Maybe if he would have been an admiral in the Navy he would have said, "Keep watch over my pri-fli.

Preach it, man.

I know! (Passing an imaginary basket.) I feel like we should take an offering or something. To continue the point, I was with a guy the other day that was bad-mouthing his wife and talking about how terrible his marriage was. After a minute or two of this I'm like, "Chief, have you read anything I've written? You're not picking up what I'm laying down. Bottom line - your marriage is only as good as the words you use to describe it. All this negativity and bad-mouthing is only bringing you down. And by the way it's bringing me down to!" (Laughing)

It's like we don't realize how much influence we have over our own lives.

Bro, your life is only as good as the words you use to describe it. You've got to speak life. Think about the creation story. The world was formless and dark... nothing happening, right? Just this big listless void-

Man, I've been in some churches services like that.

(Laughing) Well, yeah but we're not here to discuss that.

Right. Ignore me. Carry on.

Anyhow, the world is meaningless, nothing is going on and then God speaks life into it. Check that, he speaks Life. Now I'm not saying we can create literal worlds with our word. I'm not saying we can start capital "L", Life. But we absolutely can create lower-case "l", life. Look, we've been made in God's image. We've been made

with an ability to speak life into any situation. So we've got to speak it!

So, our words create or destroy life?

Yes. So, you have a bad marriage or a bad job or a bad day or you had a difficult potty training growing up... are you just going to get caught in the endless decline of grumbling, complaining and turn all the harmony into chaos or are you going to take responsibility and speak some life into the situation? You're the only one able to control that.

James, I know you need to get going, but before you take off how does that happen? How do I get in control of the pri-fli?

I'm glad you've been listening. Well, that's a great question. That's the crux of the whole matter right there. The truth is, you really can't control anything, Chief. You can try for a while but after a season you realize it's not a part of your natural inclination unless...

Unless...

Unless you subject every word, thought and deed to the cross.

That doesn't sound like fun.

No, fun is not necessarily the word I would use. This is life and death stuff here. The cross is not an enjoyable experience. The reality of our lack of control should make us sad, tearful and sorrowful. But, unless you're willing to deal with this reality you're powerless to resist the enemy.

True. But is that it? Does that mean I'm just sad all the time?

No, here's how it plays out. You take your polluted, desires-reality... your jealous-reality... your self-seeking, pri-fli reality and you let Jesus take them to the cross for you. Go ahead, picture Jesus hanging on the cross holding all your issues because that's

what happened. Don't miss this; He died in your place, because of your sin. He died for you.

I got that. I mean I don't really understand why but I believe on faith that that's what happened. He died for my issues.

Yeah, He died for you but, he also died to do something in you. A lot of us accept the "He did something for us" part but never really get to the "He wants to do something in us" part. He saved you but also, he longs to do a work in you. As you get on your knees and admit dependence he empowers you to stand up and live freely! He honors you by allowing you to walk in freedom in spite of your issues. As this happens your natural inclination will change from self-centered to God-centered. Are you getting this?

Yeah, I think so. If this is true, it's awesome... God changes my inclination.

(Sitting straight up.) I know! Now all of a sudden, you're not bickering with people, endlessly judging them, dishonoring them, and continually scribbling graffiti all over their beautiful life. These things aren't happening because your motive has changed! Thank God!

(Long Pause) Wow, this has been great. I always love getting together with you, Man. It's one thing to hear the podcast but it's another to sit with you in person. Well, I've got to let you go. Good luck.

Luck has got nothing to do with it, Bro. It's all about His blessing. So, be patient, live right, be self-controlled. Do what you know you should be doing. If you don't, you're sinning. Peace out.

(Knuckle wrap) Respect the knuckles.

Yes, respect the knuckles.

I Just Hit my Thumb with a Hammer and now I'll Rejoice

James, OK, let me just read back to you what you wrote here in your first chapter. I just want to get your thoughts on this, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." James, so, what you're asking of people here is a pretty big deal... rejoicing in trials...

(In between bites of gefilte fish.) Is that a question or a comment?

Ok, good point. Let's make it a question. Let's just start with the obvious, how can I be joyful if I just hit my thumb with a hammer?

(Laughing) Trust me, I'm not going to be happy if I hit myself with a hammer. If you can be happy, go for it, but I won't be. I'm not necessarily talking about physical pain here. I'm talking about...

Emotional pain...

Sure. Trials, suffering, difficulties...

So, how do I rejoice if I'm suffering?

(Taking a drink.) Couple things, A) I didn't say "if". I said, "when". The point here is it's only a matter of time before you face some troubles. When it happens, you've got a choice. I'd say you might as well choose joy, right? I mean there's no guarantee that because you don't choose joy that you're going to have less problems. So, you might as well learn to be happy! What did Josh say? "Choose this day who you're going to serve." Right? Choose joy! And then B) we can choose the joy because we know what's really going on here...

What's really going on?

What's really going on is that this trial, this test is literally making you a better person. It's building your faith. Remember what Pete said, "You are being built into a holy priesthood." How does that happen? It happens through testing. Chief, you've got to see the big picture.

Yeah, well that's easier said than done, right?

No doubt, but when you see the big picture you realize it's not some random evil pain you're experiencing. Its testing and God reserves testing for those He loves. (High-Five)

(Reluctant High-Five) See, I've heard that before but I don't really get it. Why test someone you love? Why give them the heartache?

(Pausing) You have children?

Yeah, three of them.

Ok, do you want what's best for your kids?

Absolutely. I love them.

Do you want stuff to just be handed to them? I mean, is that really the best for them?

No, not really. To be honest I know a lot of people that give their kids everything they want but I'm not sure the kids are better off for it because...

Because they haven't worked for it.

Exactly, like my neighbor kids who whine and complain to their parents about everything. Lately it's been about putting up decorations in the yard for Halloween! I mean, Christmas I get... maybe a little Memorial Day and 4th of July but Halloween decorations? Do people really have that much time? So, now my kids see all these other houses and they're bugging me about putting up decorations in my yard. You've got to be kidding me.

What did you do?

I said, no, I'm not buying any goofy scary cutoff at the elbow arm hand light things and then spending an entire Saturday scattering them evenly around the front yard in order to spread the Halloween cheer. Good Lord. How much Halloween cheer do we need?

(Laughing) Right... So, the idea here is, if I could just get you off the whole Halloween rant thing you got going on right now... It's all right, let it go, man, let it go. OK, so you love your kids so much that you're not going to spoil them. I'm trying to get you to connect the dots here, that's the way God loves us. He wants the best for us and He knows that the best for us isn't us giving us every little thing that we want. In fact, just the opposite. Sometimes it's best for us to face some testing. That's why I said, "Consider it a joy!"

Cool, I think I can get that, that's so true. Ok, but what if I fail the test?

Bro, as long as you're humble and have faith, not being double-minded you're not going to fail. That's the whole point of a test from God... to keep you from not failing!

Hmmm, I'm trying to wrap my mind around that...

(Looking out at the sea, taking a big breath.) You know the difference between a test and a temptation, right?

I feel like you're going to tell me.

They often look the same but the motive is different. A temptation is from our enemy and it's there to bring us down. A test is from Father-God and it's there to build us up. No one should say God is tempting me. He doesn't do that. Don't blame him for your own desires dragging you down. I've seen plenty of people do that. He doesn't tempt. But he does test! Abe got one, Mo got one,

Jeremiah, all my NT bro's, on and on, every great spiritual man or woman you can name has been tested.

Yeah, I get what you're saying but truly, in the heat of the struggle it's just tough to separate the two... tempting and testing... they often feel the same.

Yeah, often they do, but having gone through this now a few times myself I'd say the real value comes afterward, looking back. (Pointing backwards.) We all know life is best understood looking backwards... so when you're looking back and you can see God is working here and here and bringing about stuff for your good all of a sudden it gives you confidence that He is in control and that the next time around He's going to help you again. It builds your faith when you realize the pain isn't bad, it's good and it has meaning.

Hmmm, that's fascinating. Can you unpack that some more?

Let me give you a couple different scenarios... both true... A couple years ago I was doing a series of seminars with John about our words and how we use them. We were leaving the temple over in Damascus one day slamming some churros and a Red Bull when...

Wait a minute. Did you say churros and a Red Bull?

Yeah, I don't know. We were late for a meeting or something and didn't have time to consume something appropriate. Glad the whole unclean food thing has been done away with, huh? (Laughing) Anyhow, we were leaving the temple and some zealot, masked punk came out of nowhere, pulled a knife and demanded our money. I had like a ½ a denarius or something. I said, "Dude, if you would have just asked me I'd have been happy to give it to you." Anyhow, he takes the money, starts to run away and as he's leaving he reaches out and just slices my arm a little bit. Crazy, right? I'm like, Chief, you got the money. Why do you gotta slice me too? You know? (Laughing)

Unbelievable. For no reason.

Yeah, for no reason. OK, so fast forward to three months ago. In an unrelated incident, I wake up with a pain in my side. It's killing me, I go to the hospital, long story short, they tell me I need to have an emergency appendectomy. So I'm lying there in the operating room, you know with the stupid gown thing on and the surgeon walks in, heads over to his little collection of knives while someone I can't even see starts giving me the sleeping juice... the only thing I remember was as I was nodding off... and here's my point... the thought occurred to me that this isn't so different from the robbery... both guys got masks on, they're both going to stab me with a sharp knife and they're both going to take my money!

(Laughing) That's good. Sorry for laughing.

That's all right. So, with all the similarities there was a difference... what was it?

Sleeping juice?

(Laughing) Well, yeah, kinda. You should always take advantage of sleeping juice anytime you get it. No, strike that (Laughing). Here's the point. I was in pain both times but the difference was, the first pain was bad, pointless and stupid. The second situation brought pain for my good. It was still painful but it was there to help me. Bingo! Don't you see that? That's it. (Holding one hand up and then the other) There's good pain...

And there's bad pain...

And bad pain. One exists to tear you down, one to build you up. Hey, write that down. There's a sermon in there somewhere.

(Laughing) I am, I am. James, I think I see what you're saying. The reason we should choose to rejoice is because He allows the good pain in order to build us up. The testing, the suffering, it's all for our good. He loves us!

Right! Now you're going in the right direction. So, when you're faced with an issue don't waste your time whining and complaining about temptation. God doesn't tempt us. Don't let anyone pin that on God. It's not true, so it's not going to do anything for you. Discipline yourself. Stop, thank Him that He loves you enough to test you and move forward, man! Persevere under the trial. If you can do that, I'm telling you, you're going to receive the crown of life.

You see? There you go. That's what I'm looking for: The crown. (High five) Well, I'd like to ask more about that but I know you've got to go. You're a busy man and I've eaten more fish than I needed to.

Right on. It's been great. Thanks.

No, thank you. (Knuckle wrap) Respect the knuckles, man.

Respect the knuckles. Why do we always say that?

Influences

Not unlike anything that I write, “James: most popular downloaded interview of a bible author on the web” is a combination of original and borrowed thoughts. Speaking of borrowed thoughts, I like what Rick Warren says about using his material. He says the first time you use it say, “Warren says.” The second time you use it say, “Someone says.” And the third time you use it say, “I’ve been thinking...” So, probably all this could have been preceded with me saying, “I’ve been thinking...”

While putting this together here are a few authors that made me think a lot: Henry Cloud, Eugene Peterson, N.T. Wright, Rob Bell, Ann LaMott, Barbara Brown Taylor, C.S. Lewis, John Ortberg and of course, James