

SALT CO on “Cultivating an Athletic Spirit”

11/23/25

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”.

Hebrews 12:1

Table Talk I

Share your name and something you are good at doing for which you are thankful?

SALT TALK

This morning we’re taking a break from our main theme this season of “Growing a Conversational Relationship with God” to explore what we call a Fourth Tire theme.

Explain that Seasoned Adults Ministry has a whole new take on “retirement”. For us “re-tirement” means putting four new tires on your car. *Because we roll on four tires:*

FOUR TIRES

First Tire- Cultivate the life of the mind

Second Tire- Cultivate life together (family and community)

Third Tire- Cultivate life for others (giving ourselves away)

Fourth Tire- Cultivate your own life

+Taking care of ourselves=diet, exercise, sleep, finances, stewarding our gifts, talents, capacities, our health!

The themes we have explored so far here at SALT CO have had to do with one of the first three tires.

This is the first time in four years of SALT CO that we are doing a Fourth Tire theme, and I am so glad and thankful that we have here to help us our own Jimmy Pena. We began talking about doing this together after he shared his latest (?) book with me
book FINDING RE2PITE

[FINDING RE2PITE Jimmy Pena](#)

The subtitle says, “When Faith & Fitness Meet Grace in Suffering”.

In the notes Mario Lopez, Actor and Host of Access Hollywood writes,

“Peña gets it. As important as my health has been to my life and career, I’m also realizing how fragile we are. Sometimes I feel like my body is betraying me, but FINDING RE2PITE helps me see God’s plan in it all and helps me want to serve others with my body (and my breakdowns) more than ever.”

Mario Lopez, Actor and Host of Access Hollywood.

As I read, and it’s a page turner (!), I found myself thinking, “Seasoned Adults need to hear this!” Because Jim’s story is highly relevant to our stories as we experience changes, reversals, crises, falling off cliffs (!) in our bodies. How does our faith help us navigate (is that the right word?) what is happening to us as we get older? Jim and I both fully acknowledge that this is just a beginning of a very important conversation.

So let’s get started. Join me in welcoming our friend Jimmy Pena. Meet Jim-

-Your story. Your sense of His calling now. What you are learning, what prompted you to write Finding RE2PITE?

Jim’s three “moves” he describes in his book.

Suffering Breaks Us

Other slides here?

Suffering Shapes Us

Other slides here?

Suffering Sends Us

Other slides here?

Some possible subjects for conversation:

-Jim, what do you think about drawing a distinction between “pain” as what happens to us, and “suffering” as our choice/decision in our response to pain, as in I choose to “endure” (suffer)?

-God weakened Jacob physically to strengthen him spiritually. Does this mean as we get older, losing “strengths”, that somehow, we can strengthen spiritually? *“We have this treasure in clay jars...”* (II Cor. 4:7). The more cracks and holes, the more the treasure becomes evident.

Jim quotes Joni Eareckson Tada, *“Suffering will teach you who you are. It’s a textbook that will show you the stuff of which you are made. And sometimes it’s not very pretty. Suffering will squeeze that out of you.”* (p. 33)

Is it possible that we, with God’s grace, can become more “human”= our true selves? We become even more useful to His purposes. (Jim’s last move, Suffering Sends Us)

“So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure...” II Cor. 4:16-17

-We D.R.I.V.E. (the Motivators of Seasoned Adults Ministry) on four tires, where “R”=robust vision of the future (including our own, your own, my own, future based on the resurrection of Jesus).

-“D” Introduces “cultivating an athletic spirit” in response to physical (which is never only physical) reversal. “I” is for Intergenerational friendships, “V” for vocational clarity (the “sending” in Jim’s book), and “E” for enjoying God’s action in our everyday lives.

- What are some practices, factors, influences, assists that help make these moves? Could we talk about these moves as “athletic”? How What are some so?

-So the theme verse from Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so

closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...

Hebrews 12:1-2

Notes on text:

“THEREFORE since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses”- note how many in Hebrews 11 are seasoned adults (Abraham, Sarah Jacob, Moses was 80 when he stepped into his calling, Samuel, many others not mentioned by name).

“Let us also lay aside every weight”, Greek here is ONGKON= what makes life hard, what gets in the way= this can be anything, including getting older (!). Getting older is a kind of “weight” isn’t it? The older I get the more I feel like I’m in training! With James in mind, its facing “trials” of many kinds, so opportunities to count it all “joy”!! (James 1:2).

“And the sin that clings so closely” (how we are tried and tempted to distraction, to numbing out, giving in and up), He is working on this our whole lives. He is the “perfecter” [TELEIOTEN=completer, bringing to maturity, rounding out, making whole] of our faith.

“Let us run with perseverance (HUPOMONEIS=lit. “extra strong remaining- steadiness)= disciplined, think about how athletic disciplines work, what they do. Willard would talk about practicing, training “off the spot” (every day, in our routines) to be ready when we are “on the spot”, when the crisis happens. We don’t practice only when we are in crisis. What helps you stay steady?

“the race that is set before us” what is this race? It is the one Jesus ran, and He ran for joy, right into the presence and reign of God. Here’s where all of this is heading- Revelation 21-22. Do we see ourselves in this race? In some other race? No race at all? The biblical, God revealing vision for our lives is that we are “training for reigning”.

“looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...”
Pioneer means the fore runner, who goes first, shows us what it’ll be like to have new, recognizable, bodies.

-Jim, what would you say goes into cultivating an athletic spirit? Do you have to have an intact body to have an athletic spirit?

-Flip this question around: how do our bodies play into our spiritual formation (this was a Dallas Willard question). Because "Our body is not just a physical system but is inhabited by the real presence of Christ." (Willard, Renovation of the Heart p. 163)

What are some qualities of an athletic spirit?

- Here is a "secular" take on what makes an athlete an athlete from sports coach Dr. Rosie Mead (March 18, 2022 on LinkedIn: *"Let's break it down into components of being an athlete:*

1. Physical movement - *an athlete is physically active, not necessarily competitive, but is physically active.*
2. Vision - *athletes have a mindset that drives them to take action. It starts with a vision, that they want to strive for something greater than where they are now, whatever that looks like. They are clear on their vision, and they hold themselves accountable to it.*
3. Determination - *they are determined to improve, the speed at which they improve is irrelevant, they know they are running their own race. They know that with each step they take (literally and metaphorically), they are making progress, and they're determined to get to where they want to go.*
4. Perseverance - *they continue their effort to achieve their goals despite obstacles, or people telling them they can't (for some this spurs them on more).*
5. Self-belief - *an athlete has confidence and self-belief in their abilities. They amplify their strengths and acknowledge their weaknesses."*

On all of these, especially this last one "self-belief", compare with the "athletic spirit" exhibited in Philippians 3:10-14; 17:

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing in his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have

already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus... Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me and observe those who live according to the example you have in us."

Philippians 3:10-14; 17:

If I can, if I should (!) see myself as an "athlete" in the biblically informed sense, then what kind of training do I need? Who will I train with? How will I know I am making progress?

Table Talk II

1. Describe the race you are running. How is your heart doing?
2. How can suffering be a gift of grace?
3. Which is more powerful Your strength or your weakness? Which one will never fail you?
4. What are your thoughts about having an "athletic spirit"?
5. What kind of training do you think you might need?
6. What question would you like to ask Jimmy and/or Dick?

Wrap Up

Use questions from Table Talk II.

Final thoughts (charge) from Jim for Seasoned Adults.

Thanksgiving Blessing

SLIDE

Psalm 100

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

Worship the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing with joy.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

***Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.***

***For the Lord is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.***

NOTES

- Note from Dallas Willard's Renovation of the Heart: We receive the gift of this life with thanksgiving and respect. We grow to understand more completely how we are heart, soul, mind, and body beings that cannot be separated (Gnosticism). How I treat my mind affects the condition of my body. How I train my heart gets worked out in my body. How I use my body directly influences the use of my mind and heart.

-We "roll" on four tires.