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Shaking Hands

Sportsmanship Lesson by LeBron James

By Paul Asay

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What Happened:

LeBron James plays small forward for the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers. The league's MVP this year, James led the Cavs to 66 wins and to the cusp of the NBA Finals before Cleveland was defeated by the Orlando Magic.

Nicknamed King James, the superstar is considered one of the NBA's biggest talents—and one of its classiest stars. He signs autographs. He donates money to charity.

However, after Orlando beat the Cavs, James walked off the court without shaking the opposing players' hands. Later, he refused to talk with the media—garnering a \$25,000 fine.

“In most situations, there's a hard road and an easy road. Very often, the hard road is also the right road. LeBron had a chance to take it and he didn't. He let the NBA down, his team down, and his fans down. He's better than that.”

—Kelly Johnson, editor of *A Better Man: True American Heroes Speak to Young men on Love, Power, Pride and What It Really Means to Be a Man*

James later texted his congratulations to many Orlando players and apparently apologized through NBA Commissioner David Stern, but he stopped short of apologizing when asked about it. “I'm a winner,” he later told Cleveland's *Morning Journal*. “It's not being a poor sport or anything like that. If someone beats you up, you're not going to congratulate them for beating you up.”

Talk About It:

Did James display poor sportsmanship when he didn't shake the opposing players' hands? Or, was it an example of his competitive spirit?

Have you ever had to make a choice between doing the “right” thing and the “easy” thing? What choice did you make?

Why is doing the right thing often so difficult to do?

Do you think James effectively has made up for walking off the court? Do you think he has more to do?

What the Bible Says:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3).

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Rom. 12:10).

“... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1 Tim. 4:7-8).