

Our Place at His Place

Action or Distraction

July 26, 2020

Welcome to where we're learning to *take action ... and direction!*



Ever feel left out of the action? Relegated to an irrelevant role, a bit part, living life as just an extra? Or just **watching alone from the outside?** Left sitting and staring at the more glamorous, more heroic, athletic, successful, and award-winning stars? **You're not alone.** Well, actually you *are* alone ... completely and utterly ... *but*, we *all* are ... and, *that's* why you're not alone. You see, **we're all alone in this together.** It's easy to think you're just sitting in the audience; when the truth is, you're on the stage. Not only are you *not irrelevant*, for heaven's sake, **you're the center of attention.**

Therefore, since **we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and ... Let us fix our eyes on **Jesus**, the **author** and **perfecter** of our faith ... – Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV

And, He's not *only* the Author; He's the *Director* too!

Man's heart *plans* his way, but **the Lord directs** his steps. – Proverbs 16:9 NKJ



So, **get your eyes off everyone else's story!** Stop *staring* and start *starring!* **Focus on the Writer-Director and Perfecter of yours.** And ...

Those who are wise [the Angel of the Lord tells Daniel] will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who **lead** many to righteousness, like the **stars** for ever and ever. – Daniel 12:3 NIV



You were created to be one of the "lead" "stars" of the *ultimate* reality show! And, when you shine the light of Christ, your viewing audience throws a watch party!

I tell you, [Jesus said] there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner who *repents*. – Luke 15:10 NIV

That is the role of a lifetime! *Literally.* You're creating and building your character. So, **what character are you and the Author developing?** That'll greatly depend on the genre we choose for ourselves. **What's your genre: Soap Opera, Disaster, Romantic Comedy, Horror, or Action!** Take *Action!* He knows the trials that build our character; and *directs* our steps through them. But, **you alone decide what direction and action you'll take.** You often know His direction; but, do you act? You get to decide *how* your character will face challenges, *who* your character will try to save, *what* your character will seek to discover, and in what *way* your character will overcome and grow.



The last line of John's Script, says:

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. – John 21:25 NIV

You do realize, I hope, that **yours is being authored even as you live it out!** Every moment of every day **our Writer-Director-Perfecter calls: "Action!"**; and, **the world simultaneously calls: "Distraction!"** And you have to choose. Action or distraction? Last Sunday, Jesus said:

Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. – John 15:5 NAB

Well, let me elaborate on what it means to remain in our Writer-Director-Perfecter.

Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have come to **know** and to **believe in the love** God has for us. **God is love**, and **whoever remains in love** remains in God and God in him. – 1 John 4:15-16 NAB



Isn't it just the best when there's a great love story in a good action movie?! So, how do we remain "in love" so we can remain "in God"? By learning *our* part as written in the Script ... *ures*. Remember what the "True Vine" told us last Sunday:



If you remain in my word, you will **truly** be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:31-32 NAB

Because, **you'll take on the character He's created just for you.**

When we dig and seek and search God's Word, we're looking for who the Head Writer, our Creator, really is. And in so doing, we realize who we were really created to be, and how incredibly loved we really are. But, here's the thing about us humans: **we won't try what we don't trust**; and **we won't trust what we can't grasp**. And, that includes God's perfect love.

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:31-32 NIV

"What is truth?" [Pontius] Pilate asked [Jesus, just before His crucifixion]. – John 18:38 NIV

What's your answer? Or, should I say, "Who"? And, more importantly, **do you act like it?!**

Jesus answered [Thomas], "I am ... the truth *and* the life. – John 14:6 NIV

Want to jump to the end and see the big reveal, and finally know your true significance? God sent His Son because **He'd rather die for you than live in heaven without you!**

You see, there's a shame that comes from feeling *worthless*, that can only be beaten by knowing your *significance*, that can only be found in the Father's infinite love, that we can only

come to understand through His Son, who we fully come to know through His Scripts. And, knowing the truth keeps us attached to the Vine that produces the fruit that makes us shine and frees us from a sense of insignificance.

And, **the more we remain in it, the more it remains in us.** We must remain true to the One who *is* Truth, so His Spirit can remain in us, convict us, empower us, and transform us. **If we remain in it, we'll believe in it.** And, **if we believe in it, we'll submit to it.** And, **if we submit to it, we'll act on it.** And, **if we act on it we'll see the fruit of it.**



He's the Writer/Director. You're the actor who takes action by taking direction by making the effort to learn the Scripts. Remember, a great actor is never a pretender. They believe in and embody the work that they do. Wish you had a closer working relationship with our Writer-Director?



We'll, **don't confuse wishing with wanting.** I *wish* I played the piano. But I have no intention – let alone plan – to practice. That takes effort. And, **I want to take action without effort.** But, if we *really* want to get closer, we have to take direction and remain in the Scripts, and learn our lines and our role. **If we only wish to get closer, we won't.**



Anytime conviction comes calling, and we ignore it, reject it, or wish it away, another layer of callous builds up on our heart. **The more we ignore, the more calloused our heart.**



So, how do we make ourselves *want* to do what we don't *want* to do? **Admit it. Confess it. Surrender it.** "But, I know I'll just do it again." Then **admit it again, confess it again, and surrender it again. It often requires several takes** to really nail our character. That's normal.



Just don't sit in your sin and try to wish it away; because, **an actor not taking action can't be directed.** This isn't a sit-in; and you're not a stand-in; you've been offered the role of one of the "lead ... stars"!



Know by how far most believers miss living in the power of God's Kingdom? One foot. The foot they keep in the world. **We're drawn into the Word to be drawn out of the world.** And yet, the truth frees us so that we can engage this very world. **Alone. Together.**

I was on my own, on the backlot of 20th Century Fox, back in my college days, and decided to check out the Love Boat set while they were on break. It was so unimpressive up close. So dirty. So fake. So depressing. The world is like that. A giant love-boat illusion, cruising the vacuous outer darkness of space. Oddly, **instead of accepting the starring role** written for us – which is the captain – **most, heavily distracted, humans choose a much lesser role**, like "Engine room worker #3" or "Strolling passenger #16". But just know that our (often unconscious) choice determines how we relate to this world and the passengers briefly sailing on it.

Do you think Jesus acted like an entitled passenger, amiable crew member, or confident, compassionate, courageous Captain of our salvation? **Be the captain! Stride the deck. Greet your passengers. Inspire your crew. Strengthen. Encourage. And comfort.** Be the captain! Take action. Be the shining star. That's your part. That's your role. That's your created purpose.

Be the kind of captain that only the joy of the truth of the Lord could produce.

Years ago I was making an effort to see the world and *myself* this way. And, I was at this pharmacy, in a grocery store, watching a young mother, holding a sick baby, while being mistreated by a stressed cashier and an angry pharmacist over a prescription mix-up with the mom for the baby. Through it all, the mother kept her calm while holding this crying baby. Even said thank-you, afterwards, which was met with a cold, "Yeah."

I took care of my things and was leaving and all that kept going through my mind was, "Who's the captain?" "What. What am I supposed to do?" "Who's the captain?" "She's long gone." "Who's the captain?" "It's a *big store*." I found her (and her sick baby, now sleeping) shopping in an aisle. "Uh ... now what?" "Who's the captain?"

This is what came out: "Excuse me, I saw what happened back there, and I just wanted to tell you how proud I am of you." She just started crying. *Sobbing!* Said something about her sick baby and her failure as a mom. Then I'm crying. Said something about God's strength and praying for her. And I left. All the way to my car I'm thinking: "Who's the captain?" "I'm the captain! "Who's the captain?" "I'm the captain! And, I genuinely care for my passengers, and encourage my crew!"

Now, you be the captain!

Be like Jesus.

For it was fitting for Him, *for* whom are all things and *by* whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make **the Captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of *one*, - Hebrews 2:10-11 NKJ

So, be like Captain Jesus!

Put on the uniform of compassion, kindness, humility, and love.

Put off the distractions that keep you from shining.

It's high time to encourage, strengthen, and comfort.

There are no extras on this crew.

It's all hands on deck ... *and* ... "Action!"