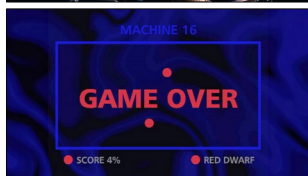


# Get Real

## Activating Our Potential

August 04, 2024

Today we're investigating our *identity* to make sure we're living the *right* life! Cuz trying to be anybody *other* than the *true* you is a recipe for a life of unfulfilled *frustration*! So, to *avoid* living out that *terrible* tragedy, it's essential to *wrestle* with *this* question: **are you the real you?**



I remember when I started worrying about this terrifying question cuz I was 11 years old, watching a PBS pledge-drive marathon of one of my favorite shows, a British sci-fi *comedy*, called **Red Dwarf**. And *in* it, a *small* motley spaceship crew *constantly* dodges crazy close calls – until the last episode of season 5 *starts* and *shockingly*, the *whole* crew is *killed* in a crash! And as I sat there in *disbelief*, the scene faded *out* as the words **“Game Over”** faded *in*. And then, the characters all slowly *wake up* to learn – for the last *four* years, they’ve just been *playing* a virtual reality *game* called Red Dwarf. And as they each *struggle* to accept reality, the most *compelling* revelation is had by the character Rimmer: because throughout the *whole* show, he’s played a *lowly*, *bumbling* coward – but as the guy *working* the game *explains*, *he* was *supposed* to be the hero:

**“[Your character] Rimmer was a hand-picked special agent for the Space Corps. He had his memory *erased* and was *programmed* to behave like a complete *twonk* so no one would *suspect* he was on a mission to *destroy* Red Dwarf to guide [the character] Lister to his destiny as the creator of the *second* universe! ... *Hang on a minute!* Are you seriously telling *me* you were playing the [*idiot*] version of Rimmer for *all* that time? For *four* years?! Wow, that’s a classic that is!”**

And at 11-years-old, a brand-new fear was born, **“What if I’m playing the complete twonk Noah – when I’m supposed to be the hero?!”** And over the last two Sundays, that *same* haunting question resurfaced; cuz as Bruce reminded us, **the role we play is up to us!** We’re free to *choose* anyone – from lowly *deckhand* to courageous *captain* – even though the *Author* specifically wrote the most *powerful* parts to be played by *us!* And it *doesn’t* matter what *you* think of yourself, **our job is to just trust God is a good enough writer and director to empower our performance:**

**[Like Paul says:]** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be *enlightened* in order that *you* may know the *hope* to which He has called *you*, the *riches* of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and *His* incomparably great power for *us* who believe. – Ephesians 1:18-19 NIV

In other words, **Paul’s praying for believers to see their potential!** So he reminds us that **our abilities don’t depend on effort, they depend on obedience.** Cuz when *God* gets complete *control* to direct *our* actions, *no* role is out of our reach; even the ones that seem *intimidating* or *impossible*. The only problem *is*, **something has to teach us that truth or we’ll stay settling for less.**



And *that's* what life is about! **Life is just a series of actual events that point to true potential.** Like we've discussed over the last few weeks; sometimes a moment of *crisis* reveals our *capacity* for *courage* and other times, just a piece of moving *music* exposes our *empathy*. But *here's* what I want you to hear *today*, it doesn't stop *there*; **every experience is an opportunity to uncover the true potential of our character.**



And *that* makes every inch of life more *engaging* and *exciting* because there's no such thing as simply getting *groceries*, shopping for *shoes*, or calling tech *support*; **there's only a set of showtimes where we get to practice playing our character** until we fit *perfectly* in *God's* production. And that makes *His* input of the *utmost* importance, because:



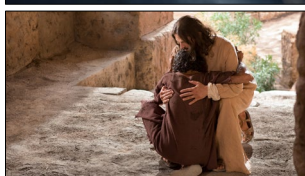
As many as *received* Him **[and His direction through His Word]**, to *them* He gave the right to become *children* of God – John 1:12-13 NKJ



Cuz **He wrote our role as supernatural royalty!** So *that's* the *version* of you that He'll direct you *to*. Which *also* means, if you try to live *without* His help, you *risk* playing the *twonk*. Cuz *accepting* His *casting* is the *first* step to *playing* our *part*; but following His *direction* is what fleshes it out.



Dear friends, *now* we *are* children of God, and *what* we *will be* has not yet been *made known*. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He *is*. – 1 John 3:2 NIV



Once we accept God's *authority* over our *identity*, **our present position is made plain, but our full potential remains foggy.** We may be His kids, but the whole role is only revealed when we fully see Christ. And there's *three* big ways for Christ to appear: **down here, up there, and in us.**

So, until we get the face to face *down here* or *up there*, **our best character reference for our performance comes from what we can learn from observing Christ in us.** Because,

No one has ever seen God; but **if we love one another, God lives in us** and *His love* is made complete *in us* ... so we know and rely on the love God has *for us* **[as Christ in us]**. **[Cuz Christ is the image of God 2 COR 4:4 and] God is love. [In other words] Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them... [So when we love] In this world we are like Jesus.** – 1 John 4:12, 16-17 NIV

For where two or three gather in My name, **there am I with them.** – Matthew 18:20 NIV

**We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, [making Him appear through love]** as though God were making *His appeal* through *us*. – 2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV

**Every act of love reveals another aspect of Christ's character that directs us toward our Christ-like potential.** And everyday we wake up to *another* opportunity to play our *part* so we can follow God's direction and *discover* our *identity*. Cuz **our potential may be a mystery, but love leads us to learn.** Love the only *prompt* we need to *refine* our *role* cuz *that's* all we need to **improvise and analyze.** So, you're *getting groceries*, shopping for *shoes*, or calling *tech support* – just *try* to let love lead *all* your actions, note what you learned about your character, and adjust a bit before your *next show*.



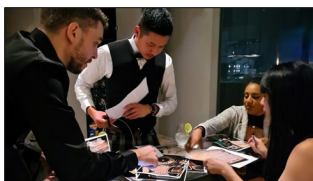
**It's like becoming a parent.** We're *cast* in the role the second someone's *born*, but it takes a *lifetime* of improvising and analyzing to really *hone in* on the *character*. Cuz as all parents *know*, you *don't* know what you're made of *until* you *start* playing the part. Personally, I was a little worried I didn't have that *selfless love* you hear good fathers are *supposed* to have. But one day, our second-born was riding his trike down a trail and our dog pulled him head-long into a big ditch full of thorns and thistles – and without thinking, I jumped in and pulled him out *like a hero!* And I was like, **“Okay, maybe I am a good dad!”**



But as proud as I was of reaching *that* potential, just a short while later I learned how little I knew about my *true* potential. Cuz we went camping. And **I hate bees;** like really hate bees. So when our 5-year-old first-born walked to the *bushes* to go to the *bathroom* and started screaming, I was horrified to find him with *pants* around the *ankles* and *legs* covered in bees. Apparently, he had stepped on a nest. And although every *earthly* instinct *told* me to freeze, *something* else in me *pushed* me to pick him up and start swatting bees away! And afterward, all I could think was, **“Who am I?! Maybe I'm the best dad!”**



Cuz I *firmly* believed even my *highest* potential would stop *short* of *bees!* But as C. S. Lewis said, **“You never know what you can do until you try, and very few try unless they have to.”** Every one of us in this room has *potential power* beyond our wildest dreams – but **we only get to taste it when we test it.** So, like we said before, **do hard things** and don't you dare sell yourself short! Because C.S. Lewis *also* pointed out, **“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. ... But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit ... [but] This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play.”**



Even if it's *frightening* or *frustrating*, for us *immortals* to discover our true identity, **we have to be willing to play our part to its full potential.**

**[So, like Solomon advises:]** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, – Ecclesiastes 9:10 NIV



**Cuz the more you play, the more you learn about yourself.** You ever do a murder mystery dinner? It's like *that*; everybody just gets *essential* information about their character and starts off as a *potential* suspect – but as the conversations *continue*, it *becomes* clear who's who; because **our stories reveal our true identities.** That's why we see it in so many *movies*; some *experience* usually leads somebody to discover some *hidden potential*. It takes the immersive *adventure* of the NeverEnding Story to *convince* Bastian of *his* *impossibly* important role. And Aragorn spends years in the shadows before *his* *epic quest* *proves* his *destiny* to be *king* in The Lord of the Rings. And even *Po* learned to *let go* of all *his* pre-conceived notions as *his* *journey* revealed that a *clumsy panda* had the *potential* to be the Dragon Warrior in Kung Fu Panda. And the reason such stories have *all* had *success* is because they *all* resonate with our *reality*; cuz **we're all living a story written to reveal our potential.**



For we *are* God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. – Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Cuz only *one* story can lead *our* character to discover *our* identity, so God wrote *it* to guide *us* there:

Humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps. – Proverbs 16:9 NIV

So it's *necessary* to let *Him* direct all our actions if we want *our revelation* from *His story* because:

He guides the *humble* in what is right and teaches *them* His way. – Psalms 25:9 NIV

And when *our* character is played *His way*, we start to see the power of *Jesus* in *our identity*. Cuz **when *our influence is at its lowest, our potential is at its highest*** because *that's* when *God* has total control and *we're* no longer *limiting our potential* with *our ignorant perspective*.

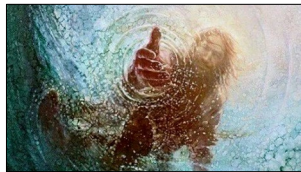
[So,] to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all *we ask* or *imagine*, according to His power that is at work within *us*, to Him be the glory. – Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV



Because the real you is only known by your real Creator. And since nobody here is *self-made*, nobody here should *tell* you who you are. So *contrary* to what our self-centered *society* says, **self-discovery doesn't come from self-indulgence**; following the feelings of our *flesh* and relying on its *partial* perspective can only limit our potential. Rather, **self-discovery comes from obedience to our Author**. Cuz only *He* sees the potential that *we* think is *impossible* – so only *He* can direct us to live the lives of our character us to the fullest. We just have to seek it out!



Remember what happened when Jesus proved our hidden potential by walking on water to disciples stuck in a stormy sea? What did Peter say?



Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. [Way to go Peter, you're getting there!] – Matthew 14:28 NKJ



The truth is, **from our perspective, we need the boat to live**, but **from God's perspective, we need to leave the boat to live**. Because that's the sign that *we're letting go* of who *we* thought *we were* and grabbing hold of who *God* says *we are*. *That's* playing our part as the Author intended.

I mean, who do you think knew Harry Potter's potential better, *Harry*, or *J.K. Rowling*? Well, if it's *ridiculous* to think of *Harry* as more aware, **why trust anything in creation more than its Creator?** Listen, *this world* wants *you* to believe you're *weak*, cuz your *true* strength *overcomes* the world. Every day we hear more *promises* from *earthly* authorities pledging to make life *easier* – but all that does is subvert and suppress the adventure that is meant to reveal the *extraordinary* potential of *your* seemingly *ordinary* character! Just remember, **you're stronger than you can possibly imagine**, so you *need* direction from someone who can see *beyond* your imagination. And *God* proved what *He* could see by giving us *Jesus* as an example of who *we* are when *He* commands our character. We don't just *defy* physics by walking on *water*, we *defy* *death* by becoming *immortal*. Because,

You, dear children, are from God and ... the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. [Cuz get real; only a twonk would settle for this world!] – 1 John 4:4 NIV