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AIM TO PLEASE

In your words, what is the difference between trying to be human and being human?

What is an example of a time when you overthought the situation and flubbed your role instead of being truly human?

How would you function differently today if you accept that you are simply human?

2 Corinthians 5:10 – For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

1) **It's Press Night...**

The single most important night in theatre is press night. It's the night the critics attend to judge the performance. They study the actors, set, music—everything. They see the details the general audience overlooks and recognize the difference between mediocrity and greatness. They know the standard of excellence. After press night, they memorialize that one performance in a review. Our lives happen before a live studio audience. They are not performances, but they are observed and measured against a standard. Some live thinking the only standard is their own, or that of the general audience. The wise realize life is press night, and the critic is writing His review.

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♦**The show must go on:** Some try to act. It's a choice, one they can reverse. Others are actors. For them, the show must go on. The same is true of life. Thrust into the world by birth, "all of us must appear (2 Corinthians 5:10)," whether we want to or not. The critic knows the cast. Skip the performance and that is the review. Critics seek to know if the cast are true actors, destined to embody a character. Life's critic wants to know if we are truly human, embodying Jesus.

♦**Former actor:** There are two kinds of critics. Those who know from experience and outsiders. Most performers take criticism from a former actor more seriously. They understand the work, the limitations, the essence of acting. They judge a performance against the ideal, not other comparable works. When we appear "before the judgment seat of Christ (v10)," He is this kind of critic. He set the standard by His own performance with the same circumstances and constraints as we face. His judgment is grounded on reality.

II) Every Move Matters...

Casual observers notice highlights. Few recall precise details as to why a performance was good or great. They believed the character or not. To the critic, every move matters. Body positioning opens or closes an actor to the audience. Timing and tone indicate rote memory or a moment lived for the first time. These are the details that separate the critic's review from the casual fan's opinion. Which one you aim to please will determine whether you have fifteen minutes of fame or a legendary career.

♦**Reputations are made:** Fans boost the immediate popularity of a performance. Critical reviews are how reputations are made. Great actors are recognized in otherwise unremarkable productions. They get better opportunities that showcase their full potential. True actors embrace press night "so that each may receive recompense (v10)," the recognition that they are indeed actors worthy of great roles. They use their full ability in everything they do, knowing that is how to build a career. They do not lower their performance to the talent around them.

♦**This night:** You might not love the role. Your counterpart is not the actor you preferred. The audience is thin tonight. You slept poorly. None of it matters. This night is the performance that will make or break this show's reputation—your reputation. Will you be satisfied wondering what might have been while clinging to your list of excuses? Or are you determined to earn your place among the greats? This life, the one you inhabit this moment, is the one that will be judged "for what has been done in the body (v10)." This moment is your shot at immortality.

III) Break A Leg...

Those who try to act, or don't understand yet that they are actors, know that any performance can be poor or brilliant. There doesn't seem to be a rhyme or reason. Some nights they are on, some nights it's all wrong. The mystery begat a superstition calling for the reverse jinx, break a leg. This has nothing to do with true acting. True actors deliver under all circumstances. Not because they try harder. Because they were made to inhabit characters. It is who they are, jinxed or not.

♦**A star is born:** This is the liberating message Jesus has for each of us. For me. For you. Stop trying to be human, suffering from the circumstances that cause you to forget lines and enter at the wrong time. We are trying to act and direct at the same time. In this confused state our acting is sloppy. When we are simply human life is simple. We obey God and live like Jesus. The production of our life's circumstances may be terrible, but our performance shines. Our critic remarks that we get it "right (v10)." A star is born.

♦**Not to be:** Those who never give up trying to both act and direct will never get the part. It is not to be. Try as they might to be humble in the face of the arrogant, patient under the pressure of the demanding, gentle to the violent, they break down and fight back. As directors, we lose control of ourselves when we cannot control the world around us. The critic will note our rebellion against the actual director and write us off as recompense for our "evil (v10)." Let go of the director's seat, you were meant to be a star.