So You Want to Be a Star? (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

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I'm so glad that you have joined me. Last time, we began a message entitled, *So You Want to Be a Star?* I live here in Southern California. This is my main mission field. This is where Cottonwood Church is. Where I live is also known for something else, a place called Hollywood. For many, many decades, thousands of people have come to California wanting to be discovered, wanting to become a star, a movie star, or a television personality. Most of all the people who come for that reason never get discovered. They never become a star. But that same attitude is alive and well. With the advent of social media, I think, if not the number one desired job among young people today, it's certainly one of the top desired jobs to be a social media influencer. People want to be known. They want to be a star on social media, whether it's by doing something dangerous over and over, or doing something stupid over and over. You have videos of guys who dress up like plants and scare people, so they can get so many likes and get known. People want to be a star.

Well, there are stars in God's Kingdom. This is a bit of a different message, but we're just looking at different characteristics of stars in the Kingdom of God. I want to encourage you to go back and listen to the last message. I'll recap very briefly, but there is a lot of material in there that is worth listening to again and again. The number one characteristic of a star in God's Kingdom, we found out last time, is that even though they are part of something greater than themselves, part of a great multitude, stars in the Kingdom of God realize that God knows them personally and intimately by name. My friend, God sees you and knows you. You're not some number on an endless list. You're not just some point of light in the heavens among countless stars. The Bible said that God creates the stars. He knows the number of them, and He knows each one by name. He knows your name. The second thing we found out is that stars in the Kingdom of God know that their highest calling is to worship their Creator.

In Psalm 148, it says that the sun and the stars are to worship God, for He has created them. Our highest calling is to bring praise, glory, and worship to our Creator. The third characteristic we found last time of stars in God's Kingdom is that stars in His Kingdom are servants. We are called to serve. Now, there are a lot of people who want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity. No, my friend. We need to lay down our lives and have the same mindset that Christ had. He emptied Himself and came to this world. He humbled Himself and was found in the fashion of a man. He became obedient even to the point of death so that He could lift us up. The Scripture says that the one who humbles themselves, God will exalt them. But the person who exalts himself, God will humble them. Stars in God's Kingdom know that they are called to be servants.

Then, we come to the fourth characteristic. Here is where we launch into some new territory. Stars in God's Kingdom are fighters. They don't sit idly by the sideline. They're not armchair quarterbacks, as we say here in the United States. They are actively engaged in fighting against God's enemies. They are not passive, and they don't remain neutral. Now, in Judges 5, we read the song of Deborah. Deborah was a judge in Israel. She was a prophetess. She was the highest political and religious figure of the day. Her husband's name was Lapidoth, which has something to do with making candles. He was sort of in the background, and Deborah was the

one in the forefront. God, through her, encouraged one of the leaders in Israel, and he wouldn't go fight against the enemy unless Deborah went with him. They won a great victory against Sisera. He was the commander of the Canaanite armies coming against God's people. I want to read to you from Judges 5:19–20 NKJV. It says,

> 19 "The kings came and fought, then the kings of Canaan fought in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they took no spoils of silver. 20 They fought from the heavens; the stars from their courses fought against Sisera."

Very interesting. The stars and their courses fought against Sisera. Perhaps, referring to a sudden storm that helped defeat Sisera's army, but somehow the very heavens were working together against this general of an opposing army. If you're going to be a star in God's Kingdom, when the time comes, you need to fight. You can't shy away from the fight. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:12 NKJV,

> 12 Fight the good fight of faith.

Now, in this story, Israel was oppressed, and they were ruled by the Canaanites for 20 years. Sisera, the general of this Canaanite army, was a type of the devil. He was keeping God's people contained and denying them from their rightful inheritance. Sisera, once he fled from the battle, went into a woman's tent. She gave him some, I think, goat milk to drink, and he was exhausted. He laid down and fell asleep. She drove a tent peg through his head. Sisera was killed with a spike through his head. My friend, Satan, was defeated because of the spikes in our Savior's hands and feet. It's up to us to stand our ground and resist the devil, relying upon God's promises. I remember the words of an old poem. It said, "Over His Word the Lord is watching, and that Word He will perform. On that Word, my heart is resting while I stand amidst the storm." We need to fight the good fight of faith.

Then, in connection with that as well, there must be some clearly defined lines of right and wrong in the believer's life. There is good, there is evil, and you need to be willing, as a follower of Christ, to stand up for what is right. If you are so concerned about not ruffling anyone's feathers or rocking anyone's boat to the point that you do nothing, say nothing, or be nothing, what good is your Christianity anyway? Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." The apostle Paul said, "Hey, look, if I preach circumcision, if I went along with what everybody said, 'You got to keep the law,' the cross of Christ would mean nothing. I wouldn't be persecuted. But I am going to preach the truth, and it does bring persecution my way." Some people may accuse you of being narrow-minded and rigid. But listen, my dear friend. There are boundaries, there are absolutes, there is right, and there is wrong.

Jesus said, "Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it." Yeah, I am very narrow-minded. Jesus is it. The Word of God is my final authority on all issues of conscience and living. If you're a follower of Jesus, it needs to be the same for you as well. The truth is, some people are so fearful of being politically incorrect that they're more like a human chameleon than a literal follower of Jesus. There is no real substance or character or fiber to their being because they just change to be with whatever group they're in so that they don't offend anyone. But to be a star for God, you can't be afraid to be in the right and to make a stand for what is right, even if it makes you unpopular, even if men exclude you, even if people try to cancel you. Here's the fact, even if it may cost you your life. It says they overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. In other words, they thought the gospel was worth dying for. My friend, when we die,

we gain. The apostle Paul said, “To live is Christ, to die is gain, to depart and be with Christ is far better.”

Better to be a martyr for Christ, to be rewarded in heaven, then to be a coward on this earth and refuse to stand for what's right and refuse to stand for what is Christ. True stars in God's Kingdom are willing to be unpopular, willing to be excluded, and willing to be persecuted for the sake of the truth. Now, we have people certainly here, and I realize this broadcast goes all around the world, and I would assume that politics can be pretty much the same wherever you go. You get a lot of politicians, and people will run and say, “Well, I'm going to do this. I stand for that. I stand for this.” But the moment they get in office, they flip-flop on all of those things. There have been people whom I voted for, who friends of mine have voted for, and they would make statements, “Yes, a marriage is between one man and one woman, and I believe in the biblical principles of this and that.” But the moment they got elected, they flip-flopped and began to enact policies and legislation exactly opposite of what they campaigned on.

Now, they may be stars in the eyes of some people, but they are not stars in the Kingdom of God. It takes courage to stand up for what's right and to stand against what is wrong. But when we do, there is always one who will stand with us, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said, “At my first defense, no one stood with me, may it not be charged against them. However, the Lord stood with me.” Friend, if no one else stands with you, Jesus will stand with you, and He is enough. I remember reading the account of Hugh Latimer, how he actually was a papist and was against the Reformation. God got a hold of him, and he realized the truth of salvation, by grace, through faith alone, without the works of the law. He became a great, great preacher of salvation. He was called upon to preach before King Henry VIII, and he preached a bold message about salvation and repentance before the king. He was informed afterwards that the king was highly offended and that he better change his tune.

Anyway, Latimer was called, I think, within a couple of weeks to come back and preach again. He was warned, “You better make things right because you offended the king.” Latimer started the message with, “I realize I'm standing in the presence of a king who can take away my life, but I also realize I'm standing in the presence of one greater than this earthly king, one who can cast my soul into hell.” He proceeded to preach the identical message he had preached previously before the king, only this time he preached it with more boldness. My friend, the world is not worthy of men like that. We need to be willing to stand for what's right and to fight for righteousness, to make a stand, to fight the good fight of faith, and to have clearly defined lines of good and evil, right and wrong. I have to move on. My time is limited. Number five, the fifth characteristic of a star in God's Kingdom is that stars in His Kingdom communicate His message. Let me read to you from Revelation 1:16 NKJV, and then verse 20. Speaking about Jesus here. It says,

> [16] He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Verse 20,

> [20] The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

So, here we have seven stars in the Lord's right hand. He says, “Here is the mystery. I'm going to unveil it to you. The seven stars are the angels of these churches.” Now, the word angel is

simply the Greek word for “messenger,” and most of the time when you see that Greek word, it is referring to angels, but not exclusively. It's used in the Gospels to refer to John the Baptist in Mark 1:2 NKJV, where it says,

> 2 “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.”

So, John was a messenger who came with a message. Same word as angel. Well, he wasn't a literal angel from heaven. He was a human being, but that word is used to describe John. It's also used of the disciples that Jesus sent before Him to prepare and make things ready. That's in Luke 9:52. So, the messengers here in Revelation 1:16, 20, very likely refer to the pastors of those churches and not to angels in the sense that we understand them. Again, the Greek word is messenger, and it can refer to an earthly messenger or to an angelic messenger. Now, in a general sense, a messenger is anyone who carries a message. Stars in God's Kingdom carry the message of redemption to the world, and they carry the message of hope and comfort to God's people, and they can expect to be guided by His hand. Notice where the seven stars are. Jesus said, “They are in My hand.” If you've committed yourself to be a messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ, well, the Lord Jesus will guide you, my friend, whether it's at the market, at church, at school, out on the sports field, out on the pitch where you play, wherever it might be. God will guide you to share the message of redemption, the message of His love.

Many times, I've sat next to a stranger on a plane, and I felt prompted like I was to talk to them. There have been times where, for hours, I literally engaged someone in conversation. They were genuinely hungry. I've led people to Christ, a stranger led them to Christ sitting on an airplane. I've talked to people in the market. I’ve gone up to them. I preach from the pulpit God's message, but it's for all of His servants. It's for all of His children. We're all called to share the good news. We're all called to bring comfort. We just need to be sensitive to God's hand and His Spirit, because God does want to guide us. The truth is, if you're a star in His Kingdom, you carry His message. The main place we need to take it is just out into the world, where lost people are. Jesus wasn't crucified between two candles on some church altar. He was crucified out in the byways and highways of humanity. We're called to go into all the world and to preach, to share the gospel with all of creation.

Jesus said, “After the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you’ll be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.” Now, Jesus didn't say Jerusalem, and then Judea, and then Samaria, and then when you finish there, you can go to the rest of the world. As the church, we're to work all of those harvest fields simultaneously, but your mission field is where you are right now. It's the apartment complex that you live in. It's the other people who live in the flats next to you. It's at the beauty college that you're going to, learning to take care of people's nails and cut their hair. It's at the university where you attend. It's among your colleagues, your co-workers, and your neighbors. If you're going to be a star in God's Kingdom, you carry His message, and God will use you just like you are. Just open up your mouth. God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. You don't have to be eloquent. You don't have to be able to quote whole chapters of the Bible.

Just tell someone what Jesus has done for you, which brings us to the next characteristic of a star in the Kingdom. Stars lead men to Christ; that's the sixth characteristic. The wise men from the east followed the star, and eventually it took them, and stood right over where the young child was. It brought them to Jesus. We need to be signposts pointing the way to Christ. A sign doesn't say, “Look at me.” It says, “Look at this.” Well, our lives need to be signposts that point to Christ. Do you want to live a significant life? Well, in English, the word significance or

significant is actually a bit of a couple of things put together. The first part of that word, significant, is sign, S-I-G-N. A significant life is one that is a sign pointing people to Christ. A significant—regardless of whatever you're called to do. You may be called in business, and God may have made you the steward over millions of dollars. You may have hundreds, even thousands of employees, and millions of dollars at your disposal. That is a wonderful thing, but your work and your wealth need to be used as a sign if your life is truly going to be significant.

Your wealth does not make you significant. Your achievements do not make you significant. They may in the eyes of people, but not in the eyes of heaven. What makes you significant in the eyes of people is if you use your gifts, if you use your resources, if you use your voice, if you use your personality, if you use who you are and what you have as a signpost to point people to God. That is a significant life. Again, stars in God's Kingdom don't say, “Look at me.” They say, “Look at Jesus.” Daniel 12:3 NKJV says,

> [3] Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Through our words, our lifestyles, and our attitudes, we should help people who are adrift on the sea of life to set their course for God. I want to read you something from the book of Jude. There's just one chapter there. It's talking about deceivers who had entered the church. Jude 1:12 NKJV says,

> [12] These are spots in your love feasts . . .

The word spots is the Greek word spilos. It literally means “underground reefs that can't be seen,” underground reefs that ships would run aground on. So, these people who have infiltrated the church are underground reefs in your love feast. They get together when you fellowship and when you have meals together. Jude 1:12 NKJV says,

> [12] . . . while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds.

They are clouds. They promise refreshing, but they bring none. “Carried about by the winds.” The New Testament talks about every wind of doctrine, literally doctrines of demons. They are moved along by evil spirits. They are influenced by evil spirits, which is what the metaphor is here. Jude 1:12 NKJV says they are,

> [12] . . . late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.

Just a little thought here. “They are raging waves of the sea,” that's verse 13. Verse 12 says, “They are late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.” In the King James Version, it says, “They are trees whose fruit withers.” They are without fruit. They are twice dead, pulled up by the roots. There is a progression there. They had fruit at one time. The fruit withered. Then, they are without fruit. Then, they are twice dead. Now, you can't be twice dead unless you are twice alive. Dead in trespasses and sins, came to Christ, born again, made alive. But for whatever reason, and it's always a process. The Scripture talks about those whose conscience becomes hard and calloused. Sin, my friend, always promises to serve and to please. But in the end, it always enslaves and dominates. People who begin to go down that road will find that they are farther and farther and farther away from God. Then, they may get to the point where they just don't want it anymore.

They don't want to be a part of the church. They don't want to be part of God's family anymore. It wasn't any good work that got you in. It's not going to be a bad work that gets you out. It took a decision based on faith that got you in. It'll take a decision to get you out. Now, I don't know when that point comes in a person's life. I think it's very, very, very, very, very difficult to ever get to such a point. But here we have people, and these are the ones who infiltrated the church. Now, they're trying to lead people astray. They had fruit, but the fruit withered. Without fruit, twice dead—dead in trespasses and sin, made alive—and then they decided, “Hey, I want out.” And then it says “plucked up by the roots.” Now, “twice dead,” in the Greek language, it's something they do to themselves. “Plucked up by the roots” is something that's done to them. That's what God does to them. If a person gets to the point, even of having tasted the powers of the world to come and having tasted the grace of God, if somebody gets to the point through choices they've made and the hardening of their own conscience, and they say, “I want out,” God is not going to force someone to spend eternity with Him. But let me read on. It goes on talking about them in Jude 1:13 NKJV,

> 13 . . . raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

He said they are wandering stars. Now, ancient travelers found their way by the stars. They plotted their course across sea and land by the stars. But here, he speaks of wandering stars that will lead people astray, eventually ending up in utter darkness. That's what they're trying to do. They are in the darkness themselves. They want to lead others into the darkness. Now, as followers of Christ, as stars in His Kingdom, our lives should be stable. They should be a constant witness for the Savior. I'm not talking about sinless perfection, but whether we are in a good season or going through a time of trial in a hard season in our lives, our lives should always point the way to Jesus. Even if it's like, “Hey, He is the truth. I messed up, and I'm going to humble myself. I'm not afraid of letting people know that I messed up, and I need God's mercy.” That can point people to Jesus. But like it or not, in their search for God, some people are going to get their bearings from you. Be a stable star.

I remember hiking with some friends back in the mountains once, and they hadn't done it. We were actually in the backcountry for about a week, and we decided to go off to try to find this creek. We went like a couple of miles off trail and found the creek. We're fly fishing. We caught some trout out of the creek, and then we're going to go back to the main trail. We've been walking a lot, like an hour, and one of the guys got really nervous. He says, “Bayless, are you sure we're going the right way? I'm confused. Are you sure?” He wasn't panicking, but he was close. I said, “Okay, look, do you see that mountain right there?” He goes, “Yeah, yeah.” I said, “Unless that mountain has moved, we're going the right direction. Just trust me.” Sure enough, about a half hour later, we hit the main trail again. Well, I had taken my bearings before we started, something that was immovable. May your life be that way. May it just be solid, and people can get their bearings, and your life is a constant sign to God. One final thing that I want to share with you. Stars in God's Kingdom realize that there is only one superstar, and His name is Jesus. Revelation 22:16 NKJV says this,

> 16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Friend, there is only one superstar who outshines us all, and His name is Jesus. Revelation 22:17 NKJV says,

> [17] And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!”
> And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

My friend, if you're thirsty spiritually, Jesus is saying, “Come.” If you're looking for answers, Jesus says, “Come.” He's the only one who can satisfy that hunger and that thirst in your soul. He loves you, my friend. He is the Savior of the whole world, but it'll do you no good unless you receive Him. God bless you.

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