

YOUR LEGACY OF FOCUSED ENERGY

Text: Hebrews 12.1 – 3 (in pew Bible p.1193 / in large print Bible p. 1855)

Intro:

-massive distractions seem to shape our existence.

- making one step forward demands that we must overcome huge hurdles.
 - challenge from life's busyness and stress.
- “multitasking” is so common that the word is now found in dictionaries.

-yet there is enormous power in focused energy.

- science of laser light = focusing energy to cut metal or perform delicate surgeries.

-“Pathways clear before those who know where they're going and are determined to get there” (Anonymous).

Jeff O'Leary: Time is a path the living must tread. Millions walk on it, though few ever leave an impression on its stony soil. Yet a small number fulfill destinies so significant that their footprints are visible even hundreds of years later.

When asked if they have ever hoped that at least one thing they've done will live on long after they die, more than 75% say yes, but very few can specifically name what it might be. About 25% believe they will leave their marks by the money they leave behind.

Most people are happy to pay their bills, save a little money for retirement, own a house, drive a couple of cars, and have a reasonably harmonious family life. What's wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with it – except that we've been created for so much more! So many are like a wealthy prince seated beneath a great table, eating the crumbs that fall from it rather than the sumptuous fare to which we are entitled. It's madness. Yet millions accept crumbs when God has planned an incomparable feast at the heavenly table.

There is a world of difference between “getting by” and living a life so significant that you leave behind a legacy. Like everything else around us, our bodies are destined for the grave, but our “real” selves are destined for eternity. You were intended to leave footprints in time (*Footprints In Time*, Nelson, 2006. p.p. ix – xv).

We must each seek, find, and fulfill the good works “Which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2.10).

Take Home Point:

-when I stay focused on the finishing line *I won't ever look back in disappointment*.

-we all love impossible examples of people who have overcome life's great challenges.

- Florence Nightingale fits the bill.
- if barriers to significance seem too great, *take heart from Florence Nightingale*.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S STORY

1. **Opposition At Home & Society.**

-English culture was rigid from the 1800's to WW I.

- status and rank was firmly fixed at birth.
- impossible to change the order.
 - there was no hope of a woman taking up a real career.
 - women were expected to be busy with small concerns and in being fragile.

-Florence Nightingale was born into a wealthy family in 1820.

- travelled Europe 7 months of each year in their own carriage with six servants.
- family home in Derbyshire had fifteen bedrooms.
- Florence had her own servants and was educated in 5 languages.

-in spite of advantages, Florence was ill suited for the well-ordered life of nobility.

- inside, Florence dreamed of something more than politeness and triteness.

-she wrote in her journal:

“On February 7, 1837, God spoke to me and called me to His service. It was not an inward revelation.” She heard ... a voice outside herself, speaking to her in human words ... Some forty years later, in a private note she wrote that during her life the “voices” had spoken to her four times. Her path was not made clear ... God had called Florence into His service, but what form that service was to take she did not know. The idea of nursing didn't enter her mind.

-the industrial revolution and urbanization took a costly toll on England's population.

- meager **wages**, dreadful **working conditions**, substandard **living conditions** and **long hours** resulted in early mortality and multiplied diseases.
- many children became destitute and homeless – as noted in the writings of Charles Dickens.
- the rich were hard-hearted and viewed their life of advantage as a kind of karma.
- in 1848 Cecil Frances Alexander wrote:

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high and lowly,
And order'd their estate.

-Florence plummeted into sixteen wilderness years which ended in a nervous breakdown.

- at odds with her parents plans to have her safely married and overtaxed with caring for her very ill sister.
- while recovering from mental collapse in 1843, her aunt encouraged Florence to see all of her road-blocks and dead-ends as “preparation for action.”

-Florence noticed that England's hospitals were not for the wealthy but the poor.

- poor went to die and nurses were often mistresses of a doctor, women of ill repute, or drunkards.
 - no formal training – primary role = bring coal to the fire & provide company for the dying.
- for 7 years she studied reports about unsanitary conditions in hospitals.

She worked in secret, getting up before dawn, she wrote by candlelight wrapped in a shawl. Notebook after notebook was filled with a mass of facts, compared, indexed, and tabulated. She procured information on hospitals from as far away as Berlin. In the cold dark mornings she laid the foundation of the vast and detailed knowledge of sanitary conditions which was to make her the first expert in Europe.

By 1851, Florence was recognized authority on hospital conditions and her studies and single-minded devotion to improving the lot of the hospitalized caught the eye of the head of London's Hospital for Gentlewomen. A committee which oversaw the hospital in 1853, requested that she take the post of superintendent and use her skill to improve conditions there.

Predicable, her family was aghast but they eventually agreed to allow her to accept the post. She received no remuneration and had to care for all the expenses of the Matron. As she excelled, her father seems to have been won over, for he gave her an allowance of 500 pounds per years and his blessing.

2. Opportunities Around The World.

-Florence amazed the hiring committee and completely transformed the hospital.

- meticulous recording of instructions and methods for all tasks.
- installed a system of bells so patients could call for assistance.
- added labour saving devices.
- insisted that hospital was scrubbed from floor to ceiling and every piece of equipment cleaned.
- linens were changed regularly and patients bandages changed at regular intervals.
- reviewed staff contracts and renegotiated those that had been poorly executed.
- examined and screened all medicines to make sure that they were safe.
- used her own personal resources to aid discharged patients get resettled at home.

Florence began to receive invitations from other hospitals to visit and provide recommendations. There was a growing sense that reform was required in the quality of nursing and the conditions of London's hospitals. A member of parliament, Lord Sidney Herbert, enlisted Florence to head a review in May 1854. Most revealing in the report were not the filthy conditions and high mortality rate, but the fact that without establishing formal training and requirements for nursing, the conditions would not improve. Even a hospital administrator in Paris wrote her, requesting that she supply two names of reliable and skilled nurses. Florence replied, "Alas, I have none."

King's College, invited Florence to oversee and administer a formal training program for nurses. But in the interim a cholera epidemic spread through London, and many nurses died, while others refused to go into the hospitals. In August 1854, Miss Nightingale went as a volunteer to Middlesex Hospital to superintend the nursing of cholera patients. Prostitutes flooded in, worse hit than any others. Florence was up day and night, undressing them ... and helping as many as she could manage. The women were filthy and drunken, crazed with terror and pain ... and at one point she was never off her feet for three days.

Many who had previously dismissed her contemptuously, now recognized a spirit and zeal which enabled her to focus on the important issues when the urgent was screaming in everyone's ears. Criticisms switched from her being "out of place" to "caring, capable, but too focused – with a hardness of steel."

One wrote: She has no friend, and she wants none. She stands perfectly alone, half-way between God and his creatures. She used to go a great deal among the villagers here, who dote upon her. One poor woman lost a boy seven years ago ... and the mother speaks of Miss Nightingale who treated him as if she were a heavenly angel ... But now she will not go out in the villages because her heart and soul are absorbed by her hospital plans, and, as she says, she can only attend to one thing at a time.

Florence went to attend the dying British soldiers in northern Turkey during the Crimean War. They suffered for neglect, filthy conditions and a shortage of skilled nursing care. Of the 43,000 soldiers who died, only seven thousand had been wounded by the enemy. Florence arrived with 38 nurses whom she had trained and she implemented her system-wide change. The wounded soldiers christened her with the name "the lady with the lamp" because even in the night, she found time and energy to minister mercy to them. Her intervention won her national fame in England and opened the doors she sought.

In 1860, the Nightingale School for Nurses opened with a little more than 12 students. It was a small start but it was a watershed moment that resulted in plummeting hospital mortality rates in the decades ahead. She never married but lived for 90 years. During her time among the soldiers in Turkey, she was infected by a fever from which she never fully regained her strength. For many of her last 20 years, she was confined to a bed. Even so, her advice was highly sought by leading doctors and hospital administrators in Europe and the United States. She devoted all of her energies to writing letters and proposing legislation for better hospital conditions. So focused upon her goal, she would not see anyone without an appointment, and then only if it served the cause of raising hospital health-care conditions. By the time she died, more than 1,000 training schools in the United States had been established using her guidelines and notes on nursing. She was buried in her family's plot in East Wellow, England, and, according to her instruction, her headstone was marked simply, "F.N. Born 1820. Died 1910."

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S LESSONS

1. Guard Your Treasures Of Time & Life.

-we are cursed to live in a cultural and business environment of short attention spans.

- this is a “now” society and everything else is “so five minutes ago.”
- we’ve lost our ability to remember & appreciate our historical roots.
 - ignorant of lasting priorities.
 - daily workloads and energies are scattered.

-there is enormous power in focused energy.

- science of laser light = focusing energy to cut metal or perform delicate surgeries.

-tyranny of the urgent and multitasking robs us of important priorities and focus.

- if you want to leave a legacy, you must find a way to deal with distracters.
 - plan to focus on something larger than what now fills your waking hours.
 - strive to go beyond acceptable / survival mode to excellence.

-we create our own history, day by day, decision by decision, habit by habit, decade by decade, until our last chapter is written.

- develop a daily sense that you are writing the story of life.
- it will help you overcome the traps, pits, and temptations.

-pay the price of:

- abandoning what occupies the world’s energy and time.
- standing out from the safety of the masses.

2. Guard Your Vision Of Jesus.

-you don’t have to be a nurse or career person to leave a remarkable legacy.

- Mother Teresa & God’s voice / black night of the soul / Missionaries Of Charity.
- Susana Wesley / 19 children – 9 died / one hour per week per child.

-Bible teaches us to approach life as a race – one we dare not lose.

- only victory or death.

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 run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 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 run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12.1).

-focus on Jesus - we’re called to put aside the things that dissipate our energy for completing this race.

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-we must each seek, find, and *fulfill the good works* “Which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2.10).

-when I stay focused on the finishing line *I won't ever look back in disappointment*

- keep your eyes focused on Jesus in life's race.
- seek God's dreams & plans for your life.
- plan to focus on something larger than what now fills your waking hours.
- strive to go beyond acceptable / survival mode to excellence.

2. Know How To Do What God wants.

-Focus.

- follow Jesus' *example of focused energy as he faced the cross (v. 2) and remained undeterred by opposition (v. 3)*.
- lay aside pressing demands & life's pleasures.
- become a full-time disciple.
- enter into God's dreams and plans for your life while you still have life.

-Remember.

- as with Florence Nightingale, never forget God's voice and call in your life.
- Florence Nightingale's steel backbone in facing down stifling opposition and oppression.
 - answer may take many years and require all that you have and are.

-Explore.

- what destinations are waiting for you?
 - put aside the things that aren't going to get you there.
 - you can complete more than you imagine with the time you have left if you focus your energy on the calling God has for you.
- decide what significant goal you wish to accomplish in your life.
 - **illust.** deciding to stay @ L.A.C.C.
- look to God every step of the way for direction and courage.
 - **illust.** deciding to go to university after Africa.

3. Know that you will do it.

-Transitional Song Into Communion: Here I Am To Worship.