

YOUR LEGACY OF LEARNING

Adapted from Jeff O'Leary's *Footprints In Time*. Nelson Books 2006, p.p. 93 to 115.

Text: Proverbs 3.13 - 18 (in pew Bible p.627 / in large print Bible p. 976)

Intro:

-**illust.** Genius of C.P.C. = I learned how to learn.

-today's Scripture reading outlines the value of learning and wisdom:

- happiness & understanding (v. 13).
- proceeds are better than gold or silver (v. 14).
- surpasses anything we can desire (v. 15).
- full life, pleasantness, and peace are in her right hand (v. v. 16, 17).
- source of life & happiness for those who retain wisdom (v. 18).

-Chinese Proverb: Learning is like rowing upstream; not to advance is to drop back.

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:

-wisdom is elusive – it's only found by pursuing it with patience, tenacity, & perspiration

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

- Booker T. Washington fits the bill.
- from slavery, Booker rose to establish the Tuskegee Institute (academics & trade).

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S STORY

1. Formation Of Booker T. Washington's Character.

-Booker T. Washington was born a slave in Malden, West Virginia (1856 to 1915).

- raised in a one-room dirt-floor cabin.
- working mother had no time to spend time playing with her kids.

-first awareness of being a slave = mother's prayers for Lincoln's army to succeed.

- very little food for meals – *entire family never ate together*.
- poor clothing: flax shirt & pants (weeks to break in), *wooden soled shoes*.

-infection of slavery debased owners too.

- owners & children failed to master trades or a special line of productive industry.

-slaves had a thirst for two things:

- a new name & liberation from the plantation.

-following the Civil War, Booker's family was freed.

- new house was no larger or better than what they had previously.
- houses were clustered closely with no sanitary regulations.
- he had to start working at 4:00 a.m. each day in a furnace.

-as a young child he had an intense desire to read.

- determined to gain enough education to read common books and newspapers.

2. Overcoming Adversity & Poverty.

-William Feather: success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.

- Whatever you do, do it well with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9.10).
- Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding (Proverbs 4.7).

-limited education:

- teachers paid a small amount each month & boarded with different family each evening:
 - during the day, he packed salt barrels for his uncle.
 - at night he would come home dead tired and apply himself to learning letters and numbers.
 - he learned more at night than other children did during the day.
 - eventually he attended school for a few months by rising before sun-up and working in the furnace until 9:00 a.m. and return immediately after school in the afternoon for at least two more hours of work.
- worked fingers to the bone to stay out of salt mines and to save for Hampton Institute.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S LESSONS

1. Benchmark of Success.

-success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as **by the obstacles which he has overcome** while trying to succeed.

-en route to the Hampton Institute *he ran out of money.*

- worked by day unloading ships and slept under the wooden side walk at night.
- ate very little.

-after many week he arrived with only 50 cents, no proper clothing, and no bath.

- head teacher refused to talk with him so Booker waited patiently.
- after 1 ½ days, she told him to sweep recitation room.
- he swept it three times and dusted every part of the room four times.
 - head teacher ran her handkerchief on woodwork, tables, and benches.
 - unable to find a bit of dirt – “*I guess you will do.*”

-worked his way through Hampton under the tutelage of General Samuel C. Armstrong, a former Union general who had led black soldiers during the Civil War.

- General Armstrong instilled value of academics and trades.
- slept in a tent outside in winters – Armstrong brought extra blankets and food.

2. Benchmark of Wisdom.

-succeeding and helping others to succeed.

- once finished at Hampton, he taught high school for 6 years in his old town of Malden.
 - saved money to free his brother from working in coal mines and to attend Hampton.
 - when his brother graduated, they sponsored a third brother at Hampton.

-Booker returned to teach First nations Americans at Hampton.

- fought against the “savage” stereotyping.
- refused to “dumb down” their curriculum.

3. Benchmark of Productivity.

-in 1881 General Armstrong recommended Booker for the task of opening a school for black students in Tuskegee, Alabama.

- began with 3 dilapidated cabins, 30 students, and no other teachers.
 - after classes, Booker worked alongside students to plant 20 acres of crops.
 - students endured incredible deprivation in early years to get education.
- after two decades, Tuskegee had grown to 1,700 students.
 - Booker was as demanding as loving & caring.
 - **Schedule:** rise @ 5:00 a.m. & retire @ 9:30 p.m. / 4.5 hrs. of classes / 3 hrs. of work / 1.3 hrs. of evening study / 1.3 hrs. of devotions.

- By 1900, school expanded to 2,300 acres – 1,000 of which produced food.
 - 66 buildings – most of which were built by students.
 - students mastered at least one practical trade and academic education.

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).

-scripture reading in Proverbs chapter urges us to leave a legacy of learning and wisdom:

- happiness & understanding (v. 13).
- proceeds are better than gold or silver (v. 14).
- surpasses anything we can desire (v. 15).
- full life, pleasantness, and peace are in her right hand (v. v. 16, 17).
- source of life & happiness for those who retain wisdom (v. 18).

-wisdom is elusive – it’s only found by pursuing it with patience, tenacity, & perspiration

- Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding (Proverbs 4.7).

2. Know How To Do What God wants.

-like Booker T. Washington:

- develop an incredible thirst for learning.
 - Michelangelo: I am still learning.
 - Chinese Proverb: Learning is like rowing upstream; not to advance is to drop back.
 - reading and thinking is diminishing on average in our country.
 - buck the trend.

-set the example:

- read and exercise industry to advance yourself.
- model growth at every stage of your life.
 - church Bible studies, book clubs, community college, volunteerism.
 - creative expression – art, handicrafts, gardening, sewing, music.

-find a way to be together with your family:

- mealtimes = learning can be instilled from parent to child / grandparent to grandchild / aunt to nephews & nieces by having regular times together.
 - discuss problems, issues, upcoming events, biblical concerns.
 - e-mails & phone calls.
- travel time is teaching time:
 - in a car you have a captive audience.
 - take time to listen.

-emulate Booker T. Washington's formula for:

- success = barriers you overcome trying to succeed.
- wisdom = helping others to succeed.
- productivity = intense thirst for learning & wisdom.

-you can still make a big difference in your family, church family, community.

- see what God will do with your zeal for his house and thirst for his wisdom.
- The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chronicles 16.9).

-learn more about Jesus.

- example of Jesus' learning.
 - And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2.52).
- To know Christ & make him known as Saviour & Lord.
 - personal Bible reading / Bible Studies & Prayer Time / Alpha Course / Ash Wednesday & Lent Studies.

3. Know that you will do it.

-Closing Hymn: #389 More About Jesus.