

Not a Swan but an Eagle

In his book, *Tough Times Never Last, Tough People Do!*, the late Robert Schuller, Christian televangelist, author and founder of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, tells the story of Florence Nightingale.

It is a little-known fact that Nightingale was born to wealth and social prominence. She lived in London. In 1851, at the age of 31, this brilliant woman wrote in her journal: "I see nothing that I desire today, other than death." She was burned out and ready to give up.

But she renewed herself. She reviewed her life and realized that money and social position didn't matter to her. Then she looked at the possibilities and decided she wanted to help people. She wanted to become a nurse. Her mother and father said this was beneath their dignity, but she was willing to be ostracized by both her parents and society to follow her conviction.

And so, she became a nurse. At one point, her mother wrote, "We are two ducks, my husband and I, and we've given birth to a wild swan." But Florence Nightingale's biographer thought differently. She wrote, "The mother was wrong, for Florence was not a wild swan but an eagle."



Then the Crimean War (1853-1856) broke out, and Florence decided to go and see if she could help. Her family said that she was either possessed by demons or had suffered a nervous breakdown. She was criticized and considered insane. But for three years, she worked among the dying men.

She wiped away their blood and bandaged their amputated legs. But she didn't stop there. When she came home in 1859, she began to write and publish her notes on how hospitals should be operated. Today, more than a century and a half later, you and I still benefit from her works.

Florence Nightingale learned what it was to live in the kingdom of God. That kingdom is not something we build. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told to build the kingdom of God. We are told to "see" the kingdom, to "enter" the kingdom, to "receive" the kingdom and to "proclaim" the kingdom, but never to build it. It is God who builds the kingdom. It is we who see it, enter it, receive and proclaim it.

We live the kingdom life today – not by wisdom, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:31-33 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter