

When You Want to Give Up on Your Dream

Nursing is one of the most dynamic professions in the world. In this profession, men and women alike can affect so many lives. A nurse is able to help people in the best of times—the birth of a child—and in the worst of times—impending death. We nurses have the unique ability to help someone whose life is hanging by a thread.

Nurses encourage and promote health for the healthy, sick and all in between. In one day a nurse can touch as little as one to as many as 100 lives. This not only includes the patient but also family and friends.

So, why do we care for patients and comfort and encourage their family and friends? I frequently ask students why they want to be a nurse and practicing nurses why they chose this profession. It's not easy to get into nursing school. The criteria for acceptance challenges applicants, and the competition for admission is high. When I teach, I ask this question during the first day of class, and I receive a variety of answers.

First-year students are a bundle of energy and nerves after being accepted into school. Some say they want a better life financially for their family. Others admit they were inspired by the tenderness of a nurse who cared for a family member in their final days before passing away. Still others say they wanted to be a nurse since they were a child. One exasperated new baccalaureate graduate bluntly said, "Money!" After four to five years of being in nursing school, I'm sure she needed money.

Many years ago, on my first day of nursing school, Beverly Essicks, who quickly became my favorite instructor,

energetically said, "Welcome to nursing school. You are the elite."

That's all I can remember of her welcome speech. I got stuck on the words "You are the elite." I had no idea that I could be elite at anything! Being raised in a dysfunctional family, I never learned how precious I was to God. I didn't learn that until years later, when I fully gave my life over to Him.

Those four words carried me through the next two agonizing years of reading, studying, mass paperwork, tests, clinicals and being broke and separated from family and friends.

Though it is common for people to have legitimate reasons for wanting to be a nurse, I must admit I did not. A couple of years after high school, I worked at the sock factory in Mt. Airy. My job was to put socks onto a really hot board (like putting them on feet) to press them for packaging. It was repetitive and boring, and I burned myself a lot. I realized this was not a career for me.

Someone mentioned I could probably get financial help to attend college, so I didn't waste any time starting my search. I soon discovered they were right.

A short time later, I heard someone else say nursing was a career that paid well. Honestly, I had no idea what nurses did. I had never been sick or spent any time in a hospital with a sick family member. Having come from a less-than-fortunate family, the pursuit of a financially lucrative career appealed to me. I couldn't wait to get through school and into the workforce so I could have money.

But first I had to get through all the general education courses. I did well in everything but the anatomy and physiology. This was by far the hardest course I had ever taken, and during it, I had an epiphany.

During the 12-week course, I realized I didn't like learning

about chemistry and the physiology of the human body. I finished the course but knew in my heart that nursing wasn't for me. No amount of money could entice me to change my mind.

It took another two years before I came full circle back to nursing school. I was in my early 20s, and I was working in a factory—again—and I was sure there had to be more to life than putting screws into toasters.

One evening, my husband picked me up from work. As we were approaching a red light, I had a vision. For a moment, the scene opened up before me. I saw six people, including me, standing around a hospital bed. We all wore long white lab coats and were looking down at the person in the bed and discussing something important.

Confused, I thought to myself, "God, are you trying to tell me You want me to be a doctor?" I thought about it and decided that wasn't possible. I didn't want to be a doctor, and I couldn't imagine affording medical school.

I carefully considered the vision and decided I would go to nursing school instead. I enrolled in a local college and applied for entrance into their nursing program. Six months later I received an acceptance letter. The remarkable thing was that only 65 students were accepted among 365 applicants.

Fifteen years later, I found myself walking across the street at a local hospital in a long white lab coat. I was on my way to teach new nursing students the clinical portion of patient care. I stepped onto the pavement as I had done regularly for the previous two years when the Holy Spirit flashed the vision of the lab coats and bed before my eyes and said, "You are here."

This excited me because I had been questioning whether I was following God's will for my life. I felt as though a tremendous weight had been lifted from me. Now I could focus on what God wanted me to do next. I realized I was on track,

but knew I shouldn't stop there. He always has more.

Of course, we shouldn't interpret all dreams and visions as direct messages from God, but we must understand that He does speak to us in this way. We shouldn't discount anything the Holy Spirit says to us. We have such limited time on earth, and every breath counts. Our desire must be to follow as God leads us.

Careers take a lot of work, and many times a person will give up on dreams because the work and commitment are much more than expected. These people abandon the pursuit of the dream when they have to give up too much in the process of preparation. I love what Thomas Edison said: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

You may feel the calling to be an astronaut or a lawyer. You may feel the calling to be a medical missionary or government official. You may feel your family and children are your calling. Whatever it is—your calling—stay true to what God puts in your heart. Nothing is impossible. Whatever you are destined to do, God has equipped you—or will equip you—to do it. Pull up your sleeves, put on your best tennis shoes and take off running. Press and press until you produce results.

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