

Famous American Abolitionists: Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass

Don't think I need to tell you that slavery in America was a cruel institution. For over 200 years it harmed, degraded, and despoiled the lives of at least two million African Americans. There are recorded stories that reveal the awful details of human bondage, and there are untold stories that lie buried in silent graves. But in between these dismal stories, there are glimpses of the *better* side of the human spirit! In the lives of the abolitionists, those who sought to “abolish” slavery, there can be found something noble, something good, and something brave to inspire us still today.

In the **early to mid-1800s**, many people from all walks of life fought slavery in America in a variety of different ways. A who's-who list of famous abolitionists would include men, women, blacks, whites, authors, lawyers, British activists, Quakers, militants, pacifists, and more. This lesson puts names to a few of these people.

William Lloyd Garrison, a white journalist, published *The Liberator* newspaper for three decades, passionately pleading for the “immediate emancipation” of slaves in America. In the 1840s and 1850s, **Levi and Catharine Coffin**, a sweet Quaker couple, led 3,000 or more slaves to freedom via the **Underground Railroad**. In fact, their home was nicknamed the “Grand Central Station” of the secret underground movement. In 1852, **Harriet Beecher Stowe**, a white female, wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an anti-slavery novel that enlightened white Americans to the dreadful experiences of most slaves.¹

Unfortunately, there were also some who resorted to violence in their efforts to fight slavery. **Nat Turner**, a black slave, believed he saw a vision, which led him to start a slave revolt in 1831 that resulted in a number of killings. He was subsequently captured and executed. **John Brown**, a white military man, led a massacre that killed five pro-slavery southerners in Kansas. He then tried to start an armed slave revolt at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859 by raiding a federal armory and seizing weapons. The unsuccessful raid also resulted in a number of deaths. Brown was captured and executed.

I could go on and on with a long list of Americans who fought against slavery. Many courageous abolitionists risked their lives and their reputations to try to end slavery in America.

But I'm going to narrow our lesson down to three extraordinary black Americans who fought for the cause of freedom. They are **Sojourner** (SEW jir ner) **Truth**, **Harriet Tubman**, and **Frederick Douglass**. Each has a gripping story to tell.

Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth was born about 1797 to a slave couple in a Dutch settlement just north of New York City. (The date is not certain because typically the birth dates of children born into slavery were not recorded at that time.) Her birth name was Isabella Baumfree. Little Isabella was never sure if she was one of 12 from the same family, or one of 13, because most her siblings were sold off before she was born. Isabella was raised speaking Dutch and kept a Dutch accent all her life. She was sold three times in her youth before she was torn away from a slave man she loved and forced to marry another. Isabella had five children, all of whom were born in bondage.

Though she stood nearly 6 feet tall, Isabella Baumfree, later known as Sojourner Truth, suffered grave humiliation and abuse at the hands of her masters. One owner beat her for not learning English quickly enough. Another owner, a female, did things so hideous to her slaves that Isabella would never speak of them. In New York, Isabella's final owner promised her freedom when the state was a year away from outlawing slavery, but he later changed his mind and refused to grant liberty to Isabella!



Isabella Baumfree changed her name to Sojourner Truth in 1843 to testify to the hope she found in Jesus Christ.

That was the last straw for this woman. The taste of freedom was too close and too strong for Isabella to let it slip away. She spun the last wool she believed she "owed" her master and then bravely escaped with her baby daughter! On foot with a baby, Isabella didn't get very far, but she soon found safety with a couple named Isaac and Maria Van Wagenen, who hired her until her freedom was secured with the state of New York in 1827.

While with the Van Wagenens, Isabella had an unusual spiritual awakening. According to Isabella, she was visited by Jesus, an "altogether lovely" being, who cherished her without condition, without labor, and without prejudice. Isabella grew strong in her faith, and in 1843, she changed her name to *Sojourner Truth* to reflect her mission of "testifying of the hope that was in her."² In true

Christian mercy, one of her burdens was to see the salvation of slaveholders, who she feared would suffer eternally for their sins.

One of Sojourner Truth's most remarkable achievements as a former slave was going to court against slaveholders who sold her 5-year-old son illegally. (The boy, whom she had to leave behind when she escaped, had been sold to a slaveholder in Alabama when he should have been freed with other New York slaves.) Caring Quakers helped Sojourner Truth build her courtroom case, which, against all odds, she won! As a result, Sojourner's son was returned to her. He was badly beaten, scarred, and frightened, but he was made free. The experience was difficult, but it fueled Sojourner with an uncanny self-confidence that led her to win two other court cases — one to protect her name from slander and another to convict a white streetcar conductor of assault and battery. (The conductor made the mistake of attacking her when she stood up for her right to ride in his streetcar!)

Sojourner Truth accomplished many amazing things with her newfound freedom. She preached Christ to hundreds, lectured at rallies, bought and sold property, published her narrative, campaigned for the government, gave aid to black soldiers in the Civil War, and sold her photograph (which she called her "shadow") for revenue. Sojourner Truth personally met with Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and many other notable Americans. If not fighting for the emancipation of slaves, she was speaking for the rights of women, who at that time were not allowed to vote.

One of the most famous speeches given by Truth was later titled "Ain't I a Woman?" Though, over time, the speech has been modified, Truth supposedly wowed a crowd in 1851 with the repeated question "Ain't I a Woman?" to make a profound point for women's suffrage. Sojourner Truth was always outspoken, with a marvelous wittiness, to capture the hearts of her listeners. It's no wonder that she has been well remembered and that her name has been attached to numerous causes and institutions.

On a more personal note, Sojourner would say that one of her greatest moments was hearing her old master confess that he had been wrong to keep slaves. He claimed that he came to his senses under the influence of none other than the "abolitionists" of his day. (They did make a difference!) Sojourner's warm response was this: "A slaveholding master turned to a brother! Poor old man, may the Lord bless him, and all slaveholders partake of his spirit!"³

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was born a slave in the state of Maryland about 1820. As a child, she worked indoors as a housekeeper; as a teen, she labored outdoors in the fields. Harriet had been married to a free black American for about five years when she learned that she might be sold. With that fear, she planned a daring escape to follow the North Star at night until she reached her freedom in Pennsylvania. It must have been terrifying to travel in unknown territory in the darkness and dead of night, but Harriet did it to buy her personal freedom. Upon reaching Philadelphia, she found honest work, but shortly thereafter, she returned to Maryland — to free her loved ones! Her mission was dangerous.



Nicknamed the “Moses” of her people, Harriet Tubman (far left) is pictured here in about 1885 with family members she helped rescue from slavery through the Underground Railroad.

Starting with the escape of her sister and her sister’s two children, Harriet then smuggled to freedom her brother, his friends, and much later, her 70-year-old grandparents. Using safe houses along the way, Harriet became one of many “conductors” on the Underground Railroad. Now, the Underground Railroad was not a train in the literal sense, but figuratively, as a series of safe houses and hiding places, it acted like a secret vehicle to move slaves from one location to the next en route to freedom. In keeping with the theme of a railroad, barns and attics and wagons along the way were nicknamed “stations” and “depots.” The escapees were called “passengers.”

How many escaped through the Underground Railroad? We’ll never know for sure because of the great secrecy behind these acts of courage, but the figure is probably in the thousands. Keep in mind that if a slave lived in the Deep South of the United States, he or she hardly had a chance to “catch the railroad.” This system was feasible only between slave states in the mid-South and free states in the North.

Getting back to Harriet Tubman, she made a 10-year career of smuggling slaves into the northern United States or as far away as Canada. Successfully moving at least 300 slaves, her efforts were brave and creative. Risking her own life, Harriet devised scheme after scheme to set her people free and so has been nicknamed the “Moses” of her people. Because of the threat she posed to the South, there was at one time a \$40,000 bounty on her head!



Union Street in Mount Pleasant, Ohio, was one of many ordinary-looking places that secretly offered refuge to weary travelers along the Underground Railroad.

During the American Civil War, which started in 1861, Harriet Tubman served Union troops as a nurse, a cook, and a spy. Imagine that! Having gone undetected on the Underground Railroad for about 10 years, I suppose Harriet had *excellent* credentials for espionage.

In the course of her life, Harriet Tubman met and spoke with many famous

abolitionists of her day. John Brown, who led the raid at the Harpers Ferry, said of her before his death that she was “one of the bravest persons on this continent.”⁴ Her only claim to fame was that she never lost a single passenger on her line of the Underground Railroad. As a great reward for her efforts, Harriet Tubman lived long enough to see the end of slavery in the United States. In 1913, she died peacefully, and free. I think she will always be one of America’s favorite heroes.

Frederick Douglass

Like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass was born into slavery. Though his father was a white man, Frederick wasn’t recognized as having any rights. His mother was an African-American slave, and so he was deemed at birth the “property” of his mother’s owner — nothing more than “chattel” to be bought and sold at the whim of others, along with sheep, goats, and pigs. Frederick was born in 1818 in Maryland.

Frederick would say that in his early childhood, he suffered less than other slave boys did when it came to getting whipped. His greater complaint was the cold and hunger he was forced to endure because his selfish masters kept him underfed and half naked, even in the winter. Without a blanket, little Frederick slept with a cornmeal bag for a cover on the cold floor of a pantry. Conditions improved for him when at the age of 8 he was sold to a tender-hearted woman in Baltimore.

It was the kind woman in Baltimore who taught Frederick how to read. This woman, who was nice enough to tend Frederick’s wounds and feed him well, came to love Frederick like a son. Sadly, her maternal affections grew cold when her husband scolded her for teaching Frederick to read and forbade her to continue. In time, this woman came to believe she *was* doing Frederick more harm than good in giving him an education, and so she tried to pretend she had never unlocked his intelligence. But she had, and the genius in Frederick grew mightily. In secret, Frederick learned to write from friendly white children in his neighborhood who paid no attention to his mulatto (mixed white and black ancestry) skin. He exchanged bread and biscuits for their spelling books.

According to Frederick, his newfound intelligence was at times a blessing and a curse. In learning to read items like the Bible, lectures, and abolitionist papers, young Frederick felt blessed. The curse of learning came only from the fact that knowledge and reading alone couldn't set him free. Educated or not, Frederick was still in bondage — he was still a “slave for life.” Looking back, Frederick would later write:

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest slavery, and my enslavers. . . . Knowledge had come; light had penetrated the moral dungeon where I dwelt.⁵

Frederick would suffer under the yoke of slavery for many years to come. He found some relief at 13 when he came to know Jesus Christ personally and was “saved” from his own wretchedness. With a burst of hope for a better life, Frederick wrote:

I loved all mankind — slaveholders not excepted; though I abhorred slavery more than ever. My great concern was, now, to have the world converted.⁶

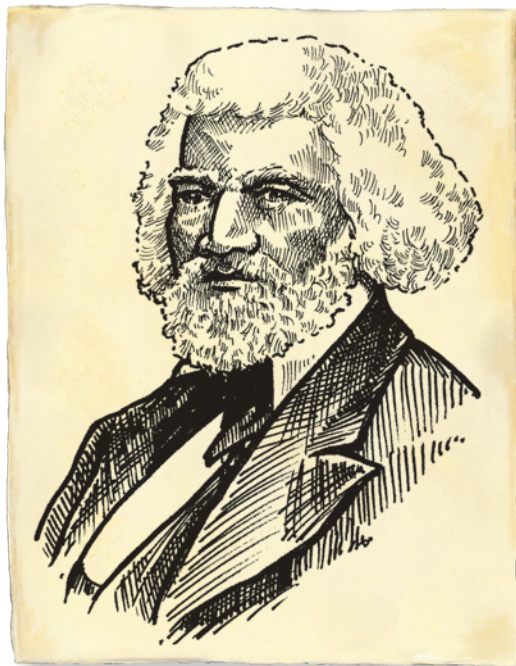
But religion would be greatly tainted for Frederick when he was later sold to a cruel man who professed to be a Christian. Frederick was whipped almost daily by this professing Christian, who sang hymns at night and beat his slaves by day. This man had no regard for his slaves except to suppress them with humiliation and steal their dignity with floggings. Frederick's aspirations were buried. His only thoughts were those of survival. For months on end, his existence was foggy and loathsome.

The tide would turn in Frederick's favor when several times he was traded from one relative to another in the same slaveholding family. Oddly enough, it was under the “nice” masters that Frederick most burned with the desire for freedom. You see, when the beatings subsided and Frederick was taught a skill, he began to realize his worth. In seeing his value in society, he yearned more and more for equal footing to make his own wages. And so, it was when Frederick was in his “happiest” slave conditions that he planned his escape. His first attempt failed when he was betrayed by another slave. Two years later, he planned a second escape, which proved successful!

Frederick Douglass would never reveal the details of his final escape because he feared it would endanger those who had helped him and those who might follow in his footsteps. What he would say is this: It was not his own life that he hated and ran from, it was the institution of slavery. Slavery is what he identified as the demon that caused his suffering. He believed it the most unnatural arrangement between owner and slave, and it was evil.

Do you wonder what Frederick Douglass felt when first tasting freedom? Fortunately, he wrote it down for us. He said:

The dreams of my childhood and the purposes of my manhood were now fulfilled. A free state around me, and a free earth under my feet! What a moment was this to me! A whole year was pressed into a single day. . . . I felt as one might be supposed to feel, on escaping from a den of hungry lions. But, in a moment like that, sensations are too intense and too rapid for words. Anguish and grief, like darkness and rain, may be described, but joy and gladness, like the rainbow of promise, defy alike the pen and pencil.⁷



Escaping the shackles of slavery, Frederick Douglass became an eloquent speaker and writer for social reform. In addition, he succeeded as a businessman, a statesman, and the president of a bank.

This story is growing long because, personally, I am quite caught up in it. I hope that one day you will read for yourself the story of Frederick Douglass in his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, published in 1845. He wrote two books after that, which further detail his story. For now, let's move on to the accomplishments of Frederick as a free man. They were many. When starting life afresh in the town of New Bedford, Massachusetts, Frederick secured a job, got married, and started a family. Within just three years of escaping slavery, he met William Lloyd Garrison, the outspoken abolitionist and publisher of *The Liberator*.

Garrison grew fond of Frederick very quickly and invited him to travel and speak at anti-slavery rallies. By sharing his personal story of bondage, Frederick made a strong impression on his audiences. He was introduced to crowds as a "graduate from the peculiar institution" who carried the diploma of suffering through the scars on his back.⁸ It was all too true that Frederick had suffered, but believe it or not, he was so eloquent a speaker that some accused him of being a fraud! Crowds demanded that Frederick give more details about his enslavers to prove his story. This was fine with Frederick, but by revealing his true identity and background, he was forced to flee to Great Britain. You see, if he stayed in the United States, there was always fear that his former slaveholders would hunt him down.

Frederick traveled around England and Ireland, where he continued to wow audiences with his fine speaking abilities. Friends in Great Britain who loved him raised enough money to officially "buy" his freedom in the United States so that Frederick might return home a crusader, free of the fear of being captured.

Frederick Douglass carved out an amazing career back in the United States. He started his own newspaper, ran slaves through the Underground Railroad, spoke at rallies for women's rights, wrote his autobiography, recruited soldiers in the Civil War, gave counsel to Abraham Lincoln, became president of a bank, and held several government positions. (That's a lot for any man to achieve!)

In humility, Frederick Douglass would say that "greatness" was forced upon him. According to Douglass, had it not been for the abolitionists in the United States and Great Britain, he might not have risen to fame and his story might not have been told. I think Frederick Douglass, if he were alive today, would be greatly encouraged to know that his story is *still* being told and speaks powerfully to new generations of Americans.

Hudson Taylor and the Taiping Rebellion

Without dispute, **Hudson Taylor** was a man of bold faith who loved Jesus Christ and loved the people of China. Hudson Taylor made it his lifelong mission to share the Gospel with the Chinese during what was quite possibly the *largest* civil war in history, the **Taiping (Tie PING) Rebellion**. Many would agree that by learning to understand a culture, especially one in war and despair, Hudson Taylor positively influenced foreign missions for a century beyond his lifetime.

Hudson Taylor was born in England in 1832. He came from a long line of devoted Christians. Hudson's mother and sister were of strong faith. His father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather were all Methodist preachers. But in his youth, Hudson had reservations about the Christian life. He thought it was boring — almost as boring as working in a pharmacy with his dad, which he did for two years. (His father was both a preacher and a pharmacist.) Hudson Taylor's sister, concerned for her older brother, prayed three times a day for a month that he would know Christ and be saved. His mother prayed for years.

In 1849, when Hudson Taylor was 17, his eyes fell upon a Christian tract. He read it, thinking he might enjoy the opening story. But, further into the tract, he felt conviction over his need of a Savior and gave his life to Christ. As you can imagine, his mother and sister were delighted at the news. On the very day Hudson read the tract, his mother had been praying for his salvation! Hudson was overwhelmed to learn how specifically God had answered the prayers of his mother and sister. He hoped to see more answered prayer in his life. (Believe me, he did!)



*Yours faithfully in Christ,
Hudson Taylor*

Just months after his conversion to Christianity, Hudson Taylor believed he heard this six-word calling from the Lord, "Then go for Me to China."

Now, considering the godly influences surrounding Hudson Taylor, it may come as no surprise that he grew interested in mission work. Many Christians do. But Hudson Taylor was not a typical new Christian because just months after his conversion he felt a clear call to China. While in earnest prayer, he believed he heard the Lord speak these six words, “Then go for Me to China.”⁹

Two things make this calling rather special. First, before Hudson Taylor was born, his father prayed, “Dear God, if you should give us a son, grant that he may work for you in China.”¹⁰ So Hudson’s calling was an answer to his father’s prayer! But, second, unknown to both Hudson Taylor and his father, China was going to fall into a horrific civil war in 1850, just one year after Hudson’s conversion and calling! I don’t believe the timing to be coincidental. In my opinion, the people of China were desperate for the good news of the “genuine” Gospel that the Lord placed in Hudson Taylor’s heart. I’ll explain more about that later.

I would also say that Hudson Taylor was not a typical new Christian in how *seriously* he took his preparation for mission work. For three to four years, he immersed himself in the Chinese language, distributed Gospel tracts, gave aid to the poor, and studied as a medical assistant. Assuming he would one day serve among the poor in China, in 1851 he moved from a comfortable location in London to a row of pitifully kept cottages in the town of **Hull**. His cottage was extremely small and the neighborhood where he lived was called “Drainside” because people there relied on high tides to wash away trash thrown in the canal next to the houses. While continuing to study medicine, Hudson rationed his diet and ate only rice, oatmeal, and brown bread. He wanted to feel the hunger of a Chinese peasant before ever setting foot on Chinese soil.

With an urgency to reach China, Hudson Taylor abandoned his medical studies in 1853 to make his first voyage to Asia. It was a rough one. Barely surviving five months on the sea, Hudson Taylor landed in the war-torn city of **Shanghai** on **March 1, 1854**. Do you wonder how he felt after all his preparations? He wrote in his journal:

My feelings on stepping ashore I cannot describe. My heart felt as though it had not room and must burst its bonds, while tears of gratitude and thankfulness fell from my eyes.¹¹

Now, before I go further with our story, let’s look more closely at China and the problems that country was facing in the nineteenth century.

Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion

First of all, war raged in the 1800s between China and the British Empire over **opium**, which is a highly addictive drug made from poppies. After centuries of using it, both medicinally and recreationally, the Chinese began to understand the negative sides of drug addiction, and in 1800, made it illegal to trade opium. But the British weren’t so far along in *their* understanding of this harmful drug, or they were too greedy to care. They wished to sell opium in China for profit and were willing to go to war for it. The result was the outbreak of two **Opium Wars** fought in the middle of the 1800s. China lost both of these wars and was forced to open new ports for opium trade and turn the city of Hong Kong over to Great Britain.



The Opium Wars led the Chinese to deeply despise and distrust the British. Shown here are Chinese officers tearing down a British flag from a ship of the Royal Navy.

So, if you can imagine, relations between the Chinese and the British were *not* good in 1854 upon the arrival of Hudson Taylor, who was, in fact, British! The Opium Wars created a lot of distrust toward foreigners, who appeared to care more about trade than the welfare of the Chinese.

The Opium Wars were indeed an awful scene, but there was a second problem brewing for the Chinese. That was the **Taiping Rebellion**, the civil war I

mentioned in the first paragraph. The Taiping Rebellion started in 1850, just four years before Hudson Taylor arrived. It lasted 15 years. With a death toll of 20 million, it may rank as the worst civil war in history.¹² The Taiping Rebellion arose partly because the Chinese were tired of Manchu rule under the **Ch'ing dynasty**. (The Ch'ing dynasty was a foreign dynasty from Manchuria.) But there was much more to the rebellion than fighting the Manchu.

At the head of the revolt was a confused rebel named **Hong Xiuquan** (Hong Shee-u ch-wahn). I say "confused" because Hong, who was exposed to Christian teachings, believed himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ and God's "second son." Does that sound odd to you? It should. The idea of God having another son on earth represents a skewed understanding of the Trinity and is completely unorthodox. But this is what Hong believed. Branding his *own* form of Christianity, Hong further believed it was his responsibility as God's son to rally an army, drive demons out of China, and overthrow the Ch'ing dynasty! Hong established a theocracy known as the **Taiping Heavenly Kingdom**. (*Taiping* means "Great Peace," so this name essentially meant "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace.") Like other mystics in history, Hong mistakenly believed that he could make a peaceful heaven on earth.

Now, when I say that Hong chose to rally an army, I mean that quite literally. He recruited thousands of church members to serve him and his cause as corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and



During the Taiping Rebellion, Hong Xiuquan established a theocracy, which made him a "king" as well as a spiritual leader. Pictured here is his extravagant throne.

colonels. Because the average Chinese citizen was fed up with Manchu rule, Hong found it easy to fill his church army with poor, impoverished workers and peasants. Do you remember who wrote a war cry for poor workers? It was Karl Marx. Hong was greatly influenced by the teachings of Marx and tried to blend Communism with his warped brand of Christianity. Adding to the confusion of ideologies, Hong promoted purity as well as abstinence from alcohol and opium, but he himself kept a harem of women and was intoxicated most of the time!

I hope by now you have a picture of the confusion. The masses of China were being led by a crazed man to destroy Manchu rule. Hong didn't make for a brilliant military leader, nor did his followers who took over after him. This left China in an awful mess. Over the course of several years, cities were conquered by the Taiping — and recaptured by the Manchu. Foreign powers that got involved chose to support the Manchu. (It was better for trade.) Chaos grew and millions were caught up in the fighting. Thousands at a time suffered from war-related maladies like famine and disease. Remember, although Hong used the name of Christianity to start his campaign, he was not promoting the genuine Gospel. That brings us back now to Hudson Taylor, who *was* preaching the authentic message of Christ during a time of great need.

Hudson Taylor's Mission Work

The last we looked at Hudson Taylor was 1854, when he took his first steps in China. He had much to learn. Because of the Taiping Rebellion, Shanghai was in shambles. Due to the Opium Wars, foreigners weren't allowed outside the port cities. Hudson Taylor was blocked from going inland (where 80 percent of the population lived), couldn't find lodging, and found it difficult to connect with the Chinese. After some time, and much prayer, Hudson came to a conclusion: One way to bridge the gulf between him and the Chinese, and to get inland, was to strip away his British dress and British customs.

Though it might not sound unusual to us now, that kind of cultural sensitivity was a new concept back then. In fact, it was frowned upon by the mission board that sent Hudson Taylor to China. But to Hudson, it only made sense that he would adopt full Chinese dress and hairstyle, which included a partially shaved head and a long braided ponytail called a *queue*. The more Hudson Taylor opened himself to Chinese culture, the more open he found the hearts of his audiences. Taylor learned and modeled the fact that the Chinese didn't need "westernization." They needed Christ! There is a big difference between the two.

By 1857, Hudson Taylor resigned from his mission board, finding it poorly organized and lacking in funds. He left the board with the encouragement of George Müller. Remember him? The two were good friends and found inspiration in each other. Hudson Taylor was also encouraged by **Maria Jane Dyer**, the daughter of a missionary in China, who shared his love for Christ and for the Chinese. The two married in 1858 and started their family a year later with the arrival of their first child.

As independent missionaries, Hudson Taylor and his family lived in the city of **Ningbo** (NEENG baw), providing medical care and preaching. By 1860, foreigners were



Dressed in Chinese attire, Hudson Taylor traveled the scenic waterways and canals of inland China to share the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

given permission to move freely about China. So, when possible, Hudson Taylor traveled the waterways and canals, always in Chinese attire, to visit those completely unexposed to Christianity. Chinese peasants, disheartened by Manchu rule and the bloodshed of the Taiping Rebellion, were open to the good news of Christ and many placed their faith in Him.

After six years in China, Hudson Taylor went back to England to care for his health. While recovering on furlough, Hudson Taylor accomplished many things on behalf of the Chinese that he loved. He oversaw a New Testament translation in the Ningbo dialect; he took more medical courses; he wrote a book with Maria titled *China's Spiritual Need and Claims*; and he spoke all over the British Isles to promote a concern for China. But all the while, something stirred within Taylor — it was his burden and concern for those living deep within the interior of China.¹³ So, in 1865, together with **William Thomas Berger**, Hudson Taylor formed a new mission agency titled the **China Inland Mission** (now the **Overseas Missionary Fellowship International**). It had the following distinctions:

First, the China Inland Missions (CIM for short) went against traditional protocol and opened itself to all denominations. Second, CIM chose not to “pay” its missionaries. Hudson Taylor believed his workers needed to live by faith and to trust God, not the check-books of the English, for provision. (CIM would provide funds as they were donated but would not promise salaries.) Third, Taylor allowed single women to join his agency, something

unheard of at the time. And fourth, all CIM missionaries were to adopt Chinese dress. Though changing clothes, shoes, and hairstyles was really a minor issue, it demonstrated a major understanding of human nature.

Return to China and the Boxer Rebellion

Sailing through two typhoons, Hudson Taylor returned to China in 1866. This time he was accompanied by 16 other missionaries and a larger family. Like his voyage across the sea, the work ahead was not easy. Despite how culturally sensitive Hudson Taylor tried to be, there were misunderstandings between him and the people he loved. Because numerous babies died at a Christian orphanage in **Yangzhou** (Yong JOE), superstitious Chinese believed that the missionaries were stealing Chinese babies and using them to make medicine!

This distrust led to a riot so intense that the Taylor family was forced to flee to safety. With government intervention, they later returned to the same town and orphanage, hoping to prove their loyalty to the people there and convince the Chinese they weren't stealing children. The Taylors' devotion to the Chinese spoke loudly and many in that town came to faith in Christ. Unfortunately though, unusual tragedy would follow the Taylors. Three of their children died at

different times and for different reasons. Adding to Hudson's compounded grief, Maria Taylor died from cholera in 1870. She was only 33.

These personal losses were devastating to Hudson Taylor. But the Lord had gently prepared him. Before Maria died, Hudson Taylor concluded after much agony that the secret to sustaining the spiritual life was in living "the exchanged life." The exchange was allowing Christ to live in him the life he couldn't! He wrote to his sister:

I am dead and buried with
Christ — aye, and risen too!
And now Christ lives in me,
and "the life that I now live in
the flesh, I live by the faith of
the Son of God, who loved me
and gave himself for me."¹⁴

Taylor would claim that in understanding the exchanged life, he was never anxious again.

Hudson Taylor remained a faithful servant to Christ the rest of his life. He remarried, had more children, and made nine more trips to China. Before his death in the city of **Changsha**



Because of the atrocities of the Boxer Rebellion, many would view the secret boxer soldiers as rebels. However, some historians see the boxers as "patriots" for seeking to oust foreigners from their homeland.


(Chong SHAW) in 1905, Hudson Taylor had recruited 600 to 800 missionaries to China, with over 400 Chinese helpers. CIM grew to be the world's largest Protestant mission agency. It's believed that 125,000 Chinese professed to know Christ as a direct influence of Hudson Taylor's mission work, and the work continues to this day.¹⁵

As for the civil war in China, it left a horrible scar on the nation. The Manchu, who ultimately defeated the Taiping, had a vengeance against anyone and anything that resembled Christianity. Most could not differentiate between the tainted teachings of Hong and the pure message of the Cross. As a result, an atrocity nicknamed the **Boxer Rebellion** escalated in 1900. In this uprising, a secret society of "boxers" (Chinese men trained in martial arts and boxing) rose up against Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries, slaughtering them by the hundreds. More than 50 missionaries with the China Inland Mission lost their lives in the revolt. China slammed her doors to all outsiders and boarded herself up against foreign relations for years to come. Did it stop Christianity from growing? Not entirely. We will pick up on the Chinese another time.

Lesson 30

October 1854

Florence Nightingale: "Lady with the Lamp"

he's no Florence Nightingale!" Have you ever heard that expression? It's used to refer to a woman who is *not* exactly kind and compassionate. While this isn't a very nice description of a woman, it is an enduring compliment to **Florence Nightingale**. You see, Florence Nightingale was such a devoted caregiver and good administrator that her name alone is used as a high standard. Let's look at how Florence Nightingale earned her famous reputation as well as her nickname as the "**Lady with the Lamp**."

Florence Nightingale was born of wealthy British parents in 1820 in Florence, Italy, the city for which she was named. (Her parents were visiting there at the time of her birth.) During her childhood in England, Florence cared for injured animals and pretended to be a nurse to her dolls. As a young girl, Florence enjoyed babysitting and tending to the needs of sick neighbors. Florence was taught at home by her father, who was a very strict teacher. She learned the ins and outs of Victorian society from her mother, who ran two large family estates.

When 16 and of age to step into society, Florence was "presented" to Queen Victoria of England as an up-and-coming socialite. But this was only a gesture. Florence did not embrace the values of her well-to-do parents but would claim that she felt a "divine call" toward



As a teenager, Florence Nightingale felt a "divine call" toward the care of the sick and the indigent. At age 33, in fulfillment of her dreams, she became the superintendent of a women's hospital in England.

the poor and the infirm. Florence was drawn toward caring for the indigent, a task commonly reserved for the lower class of that era and not touched by girls of her upbringing! Though the greatest desire of Florence Nightingale was to work in a hospital, her parents forbade her to do so.

Headstrong and determined, Florence studied health and welfare on her own and involved herself in the reform of England's Poor Laws. She dodged the social scene of the British and turned down a marriage proposal so she could travel to Greece and Egypt. From Egypt, Florence would write in her diary that she felt inspired by God to serve others. She moved to Paris to observe hospital care and later enrolled in a nursing program in Germany. At 33, Florence Nightingale returned to England to fulfill her calling and become the superintendent of a women's hospital.

The Crimean War

Now, at this time in history, war had broken out between Russia and the Turkish Ottoman Empire over control of the Holy Land and trading routes in the Black Sea. This conflict (lasting from 1853 to 1856) was called the **Crimean** (Cry MEE un) **War** because most of the fighting took place on the small peninsula of Crimea (Cry MEE uh), which juts into the Black Sea. To protect trading routes, Great Britain and France joined forces with Turkey in 1854. The Kingdom of Sardinia also joined with these allies.

Though ultimately the allies won the Crimean War, it was *not* going well for the British, who were poorly clothed for a cold winter on the edge of the Black Sea. They were losing soldiers in Crimea faster than they could be supplied. In the famous **Battle of Balaklava**, mixed signals on the battlefield resulted in the tragic defeat of the **Light Brigade**, a cavalry of 600. These men were memorialized by the poet **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**, who wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade." The poem describes the dedicated British soldiers who followed poorly given orders to march into a death trap. Only a third of the brigade survived.



So what does this have to do with Florence Nightingale? Well, in **October 1854**, the Secretary of War in England, a personal friend of Florence Nightingale's, asked *her* to take over the nursing care of England's wounded soldiers in the Crimean War! Florence must have sensed her destiny because on the same day of the request, she had written authorities to offer her services in Crimea. In less than a week, she and a team of 38 nurses bravely set sail for Turkey. By early November, they arrived in Scutari (also known as Üsküdar), Turkey, on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus Strait, and soon learned they had volunteered for something nearly impossible!

The squalid, filthy conditions the nurses found in the makeshift Turkish Barrack Hospital were completely inadequate. It had no medical supplies, no beds, no ventilation, and no place to prepare food. Patients lined the floors in puddles of their own blood and waste while more and more wounded poured in from the fallen line of the Light Brigade. Without a proper sewage system, and with the horrible overcrowding, only so much could be done for these soldiers who were dying of disease faster than they were dying of battle wounds.

For months, Florence and her nurses watched the death toll rise. Few would voluntarily care for the dying, but Florence and her nurses did. While others gave up, Florence didn't. Taking over the facility, Florence directed her nurses and any spare hands she could find to clean, feed, and bandage the wounded. According to a letter she wrote, Florence Nightingale found inspiration even in the stench of death. She wrote:

In the midst of this appalling horror (we are steeped up to our necks in blood) — there is good. As I went my night rounds among the newly wounded that first night, there was not one murmur, not one groan. . . . The poor fellows bear pain and mutilation with unshrinking heroism, and die or are cut up without complaint.¹⁶

Florence, known for her night watch that extended into the early hours of the morning, regularly walked four miles of corridors by the light of her lamp. Soldiers nicknamed her the "Lady with the Lamp" for making these rounds in the dark of the night. For her soothing



In the Battle of Balaclava, one of many battles in the Crimean War, confusion on the battlefield led to the defeat of the British Light Brigade, a cavalry unit of 600 men.

conversation, others called her the “Soldier’s Friend” and her staff, the “Angels of the Crimea.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow commemorated the late-night rounds of Florence, with her lamp in hand, in his poem “Santa Filomena.”

As the war raged on, the allies suffered a high number of casualties for their ultimate victory. Florence Nightingale wrote letters petitioning the British government for help in the desperate situation of the Crimea. Six months after Florence arrived, the

Sanitary Commission stepped in to restore the sewage system and provide ventilation to the hospital. The death rate finally came under control, dropping from 42 percent to 2 percent!

Critics of Florence Nightingale, who found her bossy and tough to work with, would be quick to point out that *without* the Sanitary Commission, Florence and her staff weren’t making much progress. It is true that during the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale didn’t properly understand the value of hygiene. She believed the soldiers under her care were primarily dying from malnourishment and their wounds, not from poor sanitation. But she learned a great deal from her frontline experiences, and when she returned to England, she applied her deeper understanding of health care to the nursing industry. Her influence was tremendous.

Later Career

Florence Nightingale received a great amount of attention back in England for her devotion to British soldiers. She didn’t care for the limelight but used her fame to raise money for hospital projects and nursing schools. In 1860, she opened the Nightingale Training School, which is still today part of **King’s College** in London. The main curriculum for the school was written by Florence Nightingale herself and titled *Notes on Nursing*. This book was the first of its kind.

Contained in *Notes on Nursing* were the fundamentals of nursing care that make it a significant profession, different from doctor care. Included in the book are the ideas of using beauty, sunlight, quietness, ventilation, nutrition, cleanliness, uplifting conversation, and much more to improve the care of the sick. In her own words, Florence would write this of a nurse:

She must be no gossip, no vain talker; . . . she must, I need not say, be strictly sober and honest; but more than this, she must be a religious and devoted woman; she must have a respect for her own calling, because God's precious gift of life is often literally placed in her hands; she must be a sound, and close, and quick observer; and she must be a woman of delicate and decent feeling.¹⁷

Unknown to most, Florence also used her brilliant understanding of statistics to improve hospital care. Why statistics? Well, numbers speak and help to reveal which medical procedures are working and which are not. Nightingale, a strong mathematician, developed special diagrams and methods to keep statistics that proved very helpful to the medical world. Her influence wasn't limited to Great Britain. Nurses of the American Civil War, in their care of wounded soldiers, consulted Miss Nightingale and benefited greatly from her pioneer work. Patients in India benefited too because Florence spent years studying ways to improve health-related problems unique to that poverty-stricken nation.

For elevating the role of nurses to a whole new level, Florence Nightingale would be called by many the founder of modern nursing. Her birthday, May 12, is celebrated as International Nurses' Day. In her lifetime, she received the Royal Red Cross from Queen Victoria and was the first female enrolled in the Royal Statistical Society. More prestigious than that, in 1907, Florence Nightingale was the first woman to be awarded the **Order of Merit**, one of the highest honors ever created by the British for excellence in service. An endearing portrait of Florence, holding a lamp, appears on the back of a British banknote. In our day and age, hospitals and organizations all over the world honor the name of Florence Nightingale.

As an ironic end to this story, Florence Nightingale's last years were difficult ones due to illness. Yes, the woman who is most responsible for improving the status of nursing would find herself, in later years, a patient, bedridden and in need of much care. It seems that Florence Nightingale's health was first compromised during the Crimean War when she caught "Crimean fever" from the soldiers she served. She overcame the fever and lived to be 90 years old, but after the Crimean War, her health was never the same. Nearly an invalid, she worked years from the confines of her room and her bed until she died peacefully in her sleep in 1910. By prior request, she had humbly refused a highly esteemed burial at Westminster Abbey and asked that only her initials be used on her tombstone. Indeed, there are few who can compare to Florence Nightingale!



While in service to the soldiers of the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale contracted "Crimean fever." She recovered and lived to be 90, but her health was permanently affected.