

NOT PEACE BUT GLORY

Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Last Hurrah.

I won't say that it seems like Quest began just yesterday,
but it's hard to believe that it was twenty years ago
when to my surprise

225 guys showed up for our first session of Quest
at 6 am on a Tuesday morning

and we ran out of food because I assured Richard Rowe
we wouldn't have more than 75 in attendance.

Our first topic was Winning at Life.

Why Winners Win.

Winning Attitudes.

Winning Priorities.

And Winning Relationships.

After twenty years,

I'm reducing my schedule over the next twelve months
and this will be the last time I'll lead Quest.

We're working on a plan for next September.

Details to come.

But this is my last hurrah

and I plan on reprising eight of the most impactful messages
I've shared over the past 20 years.

A few will be almost exactly the same as I originally have them.

Others will be a combination of several messages

I have put together just for last this series
so I can highlight some of the themes that have been
especially important for Quest.

You will remember hearing some of this in the past.

But I'm going to give it like it's the first time

I've ever said it.

Like it may be the most important thing in the world
for men to believe and to make a part of their lives.

That's because I believe
much of what I'm going to share over the next eight weeks
is just that.
Also, I want to say that leading Quest
and being with you guys,
has been a true honor and a great joy for me.
Thank you for the ways you have loved and encouraged me.

This lecture is a little long and covers too much ground.
But, let's go.

In 1875 a remarkable woman was born.
Her name was Mary Bethune.

(Picture)

Both her parents had been slaves.

At the age of 5 she began working in the fields.
But she took an interest in her own education.
And she found a way to attend
a small, one room, segregated school in South Carolina.

From there she went to study at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute.
That was a big step, huge,
almost unheard of for a young black woman at that time.
After graduating, she returned to the south and began to teach.
Another big step.
Amazing, really.

But she didn't stop there.

She had a dream.
She felt called to start a college for black students.

She wanted young African Americans to get a quality education.
And she wanted the world to see that
just how brilliant and beautiful young black men and women could be.

She didn't let the cost stop her.
She didn't let what others said stop her.
She didn't let the fact that she was young or black or a woman stop her.

She had a vision.
And she discovered that the spirit within her
was not a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power.
In 1904 in Daytona Beach, Florida,
at the age of 29,
Mary Bethune founded what would become Bethune-Cookman University.

For twenty years as a college president,
Mary Bethune made the most of her remarkable ability
to inspire young people to
dream their own dreams,
overcome their own obstacles, and
win their own battles.

At the graduation exercises each year she would charge her students:
“Faith ought not be a puny thing.
If you believe, have faith like a giant.
And may God grant you not peace, but glory.”

I love that last line.

“May God grant you not peace, but glory.”

It was Bethune’s way of saying
that the battles that matter and the causes that are worthy of our lives
are rarely accomplished without difficulty, courage and sacrifice.

She was telling her students:
You can live a comfortable life
or you can live a great life.
You can live an easy life
or you can live a glorious life.

Now, which do you think you were created for?
Peace – or glory?

And I will ask you the same question:

What do you think God created you for?

Peace and comfort?

Or greatness and glory?

I wonder if you have ever heard of Edmond Locard.

He was a pioneer in the field of forensic science.

In fact, Locard was the director of the world's first crime laboratory
in Lyon.

He is referred to as the Sherlock Holmes of France.

He is most famous for what is known as Locard's theory,
or the Locard exchange principle.

In essence it says, that wherever a human being goes,
he or she will leave a mark.

Walk across a room and you will pick up something –
and you will leave something.

A hair, a fiber, a footprint, a fingerprint, a scratch on the wall –
it may be minute,
but leave that room and you will take something with you,
and you will leave something behind.

And in ways even more profound than Edmond Locard had in mind,
you are leaving your mark.

With every step,
with every decision,
with every action,
there is an exchange that you are making:
you pick up something you carry with you –
and you leave something behind that says, I was here.

It might be knowledge, wisdom, compassion, encouragement
or pain, brokenness, disappointment and devastation.

But you will make your mark,
there's no doubt about that.

The only question is: What kind of mark will you make?

I believe how you answer that question matters.
You possess a human life.

There is nothing on this planet
that is more powerful,
that possesses more potential or
that is more valuable.

And that's what you possess.
That's what God has given you to use and to steward
while you are here.

So, it's imperative that you figure out
what you're going to do with this great gift you've been given
and that you make a mark
that pleases God and that you can be proud of.

I know being a human being is a tough gig sometimes.
We worry about things that don't matter,
we feel guilty about things we should just shrug off,
we care too much about what others think, and
way too often we focus on our failures.

Favorite cartoon I saw years ago: Beat up fella, been through the ringer
and he says, In my next life I want to come back as something easier than
a human being.

I get that – being human is tough
and being a truly good human being is really tough.

But think about it.

We human beings have the gift of imagination and awe;
we can dream of a better life;
we have the capacity to love and be loved;
we have the marvelous ability in our best moments
to live for something greater than ourselves
and to sacrifice our lives
for something we believe is truly important and good;

we have an incredible strength
 to bear terrible burdens and never give up
 and to keep on fighting when the cause seems lost.
 That's who you are.
 You are a grand and glorious being.

And I believe the life you possess is
 too important to waste and
 too valuable to squander.

When we're young,
 and we think about exchanging our lives –
 taking something from life
 and leaving something behind –
 I think the tendency is to focus on what we take.

We want to get all we can out of life.
 We want to make a mark that will
 bring us recognition,
 or create wealth,
 or tell the world and everyone who ever doubted us;
 See, I told you I could do it.
 I told you I had what it takes.

And I don't think there's anything wrong
 with wealth and recognition and proving our critics wrong.
 But if that's all you live for –
 well, I have seen that.

And that does not create a lives that are glorious.
 It creates lives that are
 miserable and ugly and small.

You know that, don't you?
 I don't have to convince you that selfish lives
 are small lives no matter how wealthy or well-known they become,
 do I?

One of my roles as a pastor is to conduct the funerals of our members.
 I've done 265.

650 times, I have sat in a kitchen or a living room with family members,
and I have asked them:

Tell me what was best about your loved one.
What will you remember and cherish forever?

And not once has anyone said,
He made a lot of money.
Not once has anyone said,
he drove the finest cars or
he traveled to the finest of places.
Not once has anyone said,
he was a great success at work.

No, at the end of a life,
when people think about what matters
and what makes a life worth living,
they talk about giving,
they talk about sacrifice,
they talk about putting others first and yourself second.

Rob, tell them that when my father died,
my mother got a job,
she did everything for us,
and went without anything for herself for years,
so we could dress like the other kids at school.
Tell folks that no one ever had a more giving, loving mother.

Tell them that dad worked two jobs so we could go to college.
Tell them that my brother gave up a promotion
because he didn't think it was the right time to move his kids.
Tell them that my wife was the kindest, most encouraging woman any man
could be married to – and that the only reason I did what I did is because
she believed in me.
Tell them that my father's greatest joy was seeing the look on the faces
of the families he built habitat for humanity homes for.
Working at the food bank
is what my sister lived for.
The thought of little children going without
just tore her up.

Those are the things people tell me when they stop
and search their hearts
and come up with an answer to the question:
What was best about your loved one?
What made his or her life matter?

Here's a little dose of reality.

Somebody is going to do your funeral.

He's going to stand over your coffin or over your ashes,
and it's going to be his job to make you look like a good person.
It may be me.
It may be Daniel.
It may be somebody else.

But when that day comes it's going to be our job
to make you look like a good person.
And before that day comes,
it's your job to give us some decent material to work with.

And if I'm doing your funeral,
you had better leave me with more than
you loved golf,
you liked to travel,
you enjoyed nature,
which here in Texas just means that you liked to shoot things,
you were a great chef and
you were a big fan of your college football team.

I don't mind stretching the truth at funerals,
I've done it before and I'll do it again.
And if need be, I'll do it for you.
But it's really distasteful when I have to out and out lie.

Search your heart.
Doesn't it tell you that

a life that is devoted to self
 is a life that is small and squandered.
 Something in your heart tells you that you were made for more.
 Irish playwright, cofounder of the London School of Economics,
 Nobel Prize and Oscar Winner wrote:

George Bernard Shaw: This is the true joy in life ... being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; ... being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. ... Life is no "brief candle" for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

I love that quote for many reasons.

One I'll mention –
 it talks about living for a great purpose.
 Shaw begins: This is the true joy in life ... being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one.

What I'm about to say may be a bit of an overstatement,
 but I hope you won't quibble with the details
 and instead you'll grab onto the point.

Your life will never be greater than the purpose you live for.

If your life purpose is material success,
 you'll never be bigger than money and stuff and things.

If you dedicate your life to being respected and looked up to,
 you'll never be more than a little mound of pride.

If what you seek are the pleasures of this world,
 you'll never be more than a quivering piece of unsatisfied flesh.

But if you want to live a truly great life,
 you must live for a truly great purpose.
 And if you should believe that Mary Bethune was correct
 and that your goal should not be comfort and peace

but making a contribution that is magnificent and glorious,
then you must live for a glorious purpose.

“But I don’t know what to live for.
What should I do with my life?”

You should change the world –
that’s what you should do.

A billion people on this planet live on two dollars a day or less.
Another 3 billion more live on 8 dollars a day or less.
Worldwide, half of the deaths of children under five
are because they don’t have enough to eat.
Over 2 billion people don’t have clean drinking water.

Foster children here in Montgomery County are aging out of the system
with no one to tell them who they can become,
that they can go to college,
that they can break the pattern of family dysfunction that has created so
much pain in their lives.
No one to mentor them into adulthood.

Human trafficking is rampant – right here in Houston.
Men and women live under the overpasses on 45.
Society tells people they are of value because of how they look or what they
possess.
We live in a culture that
tells women that its empowering to be as crass and as selfish as men
and that tells the world
we don’t need men who are strong and courageous and powerful.

And two billion people are speeding towards eternity
never having heard enough of the Gospel to accept Jesus.

This world is messed up in a thousand different ways.

What should you do with your life?
Pick one.
Pick any one of the things I just mentioned,
or one that you care about,

and do something that will change this messed up world
into more of what Jesus wants it to be.

Now I have told you
that you are an amazing creature
that you possess incredible potential and
you need a great purpose,
I must tell you something else.

To make my point, I'm going to quote Clint Eastwood.
Clint was a big part of Quest in the early days.

In one of his movies he says, "A man's got to know his limitations."

(Magnum Force.)

You are an amazing creature with incredible potential.
You can do more than you believe you can
and you can in some real way change the world.

But you are limited.
The energy in your body,
the hours in your day,
the days in your life –
they are all limited.

That means you can do just about anything
but you cannot do everything.
That means you need to determine what you think is truly important to
accomplish with your life,
and be intentional and focused in setting your priorities and
making it happen.

I believe there is some passion in you.
It's in the fiber of your being.
It's in the depths of your heart.

It's a huge part of what makes you – you.
And sadly, it's possible that you don't know what it is.
And if you don't discover it and live it out,

your life will never be what it could be
and you'll never know the joy you were meant to experience.

Ed Sissman wrote:

Men past forty
get up nights,
look out at city lights
and wonder
where they made the wrong turn
and why life is so long.

He's describing you,
if you live disconnected from their heart.
He's describing you,
if you live without a sense of passion.

You'll find things to keep yourself busy
and distract you from that gnawing question.
But it will be there.

Where did I make the wrong turn?
Why is life so long?
And why do I feel that there must be something more?

I won't lie to you.
Living with a sense of passion will not make your life easy –
because you will come to believe that someone or some cause
is more important than yourself.

And when others see a need and think
someone should do something about that and walk away
you'll think I must do something about that and you'll walk into it.

You know the story of Pat Tillman who
left his professional football career with the Arizona Cardinals
to enlist in the United States Army in June, 2002,
in the aftermath of 9.11.

(Picture)

Tillman became an Army Ranger
 and served several tours in combat
 before he died in the mountains of Afghanistan.
 Sadly, his death was the result of friendly fire.

Pat Tillman: Sometimes my need to love hurts ... Is there a cure? Of course. But I refuse. Refuse to stop loving, to stop caring. To avoid those tears, that pain... To err on the side of passion is human and right and the only way I'll live.

Living without passion,
 not giving our lives to something important,

None of us ever looked forward to living this kind of life.
 None of us ever dreamed of a day when we were all grown up
 and didn't feel anything inside or care about anything deeply.
 But that's where many of us end up.

I get it.
 It's painful to care.
 It's hurts to love people who are needy and broken.

Life gets hard when you become passionate about some part of the world
 that needs to change.
 There's only one thing harder.
 Living a life where you have no passion that you believe is worth
 giving your life to.

How can you discover your passion –
 that's a whole other talk.
 But ask yourself,
 if I could change the world in just one way, what would it be?
 If I knew I could not fail,
 what would I attempt to do that would make things better for others?
 When do I find myself shaking my head,
 maybe with tears in my eyes,
 saying to myself – Someone should do something about that?

Answer any of those questions and you'll start to get your answer.

There is a passion, a dream, a purpose
that is within you and
that the world needs you to bring into being.

T. E. Lawrence was the British officer
the world came to know as Lawrence of Arabia.

During World War I he helped lead the Arab revolt against the Turks,
and lived the life that legends and movies are made of.

In the introduction to his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Lawrence wrote:

T. E. Lawrence: All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did.

That's who I want to be.
Isn't that who you want to be?

A dreamer of the day.
A dreamer who can see a better day for the last and the least and the looked-over?

And dangerous.
Not dangerous in the sense of being brutal or violent.
But dangerous to a world that is unjust.
Dangerous to a world that degrades people.
Dangerous to a world that is crass and callous.
Dangerous to a world appeals to what's worst in us
and ridicules virtue and nobility.
Dangerous to the world the way it is
because our hearts tell us it should and can be better.

I'm going to quote Ted Kennedy.

Now, I grew up in Texas.

As a matter of fact, Texas City, Texas.

I went to seminary outside of Boston, Massachusetts.

And I am aware that the feelings regarding the Kennedy family here in

Texas are – to put it mildly –

a little different than those I encountered when I was in seminary in

Boston, Massachusetts.

But Ted Kennedy's eulogy of his brother Bobby

in St Patrick's Cathedral after his assassination,

describes very well what I'm trying to tell you.

RFK was assassinated on June 5, 1968,

just after winning the Democratic California presidential primary.

And just two months after Martin Luther King had been killed.

It was a dark and difficult time for our country.

Here's part of Ted's remarks about his brother.

"My brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life; to be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it. Those of us who loved him and who take him to his rest today, pray that what he was to us and what he wished for others will someday come to pass for all the world. As he said many times, in many parts of this nation, to those he touched and who sought to touch him: "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not."

This world needs dreamers.

This world needs men and women of passion

who believe that the future is not set,

tomorrow does not have to be like yesterday, and

I can make a difference and in some real way –

change the world.

Dreaming is essential,
but not sufficient.

To change the world,
you must do more than dream,
you must act on that dream.

You must become that dream's defender and promoter.
You must become its shepherd.

John 10.11-13: The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

Here Jesus says there's a difference between the shepherd and the hireling.

The hireling has a job.
The shepherd has a calling.

The hireling cares about himself.
The shepherd cares about the sheep.

When being faithful becomes dangerous and difficult,
the hireling runs away.
When being faithful becomes dangerous and difficult,
the shepherd is willing to sacrifice himself.

The hireling does the least he has to in order to fulfill his task.
The shepherd does all he can to fulfill his trust.

The difference?
The hireling does not own the sheep.
The shepherd possesses a sense of ownership
and so he invests himself fully in the trust he has been given.

Let me finish with this story.

January 13, 2012.

Captain Francesco Schettino deliberately took his ship,
The Costa Concordia off its course,
dangerously close to the Tuscan coastline
so a crew member could greet his family.

During the maneuver the ship hit a submerged outcropping of rock
and a massive hole was torn into its hull.
The ship's quickly began to fill with cold, dark water.
In all thirty-two people would die because of the captain's disregard for their
safety.

Even more amazing, the captain was one of the first to abandon ship.

While Schettino was safely seated in a rescue boat,
Captain Gregorio De Falco of the Italian Coast Guard,
discovered Schettino's whereabouts,
and ordered him not once but several times
to get back on his ship,
determine how many people were on board, and
coordinate the rescue.

Schettino refused.

Even though the Merchant Marine Officers' handbook states that the captain
is to

be the last man to leave the vessel.

Even when the Coast Guard Captain told him that the conversation was
being

recorded and finally said,

“Listen, Schettino, you saved yourself from the sea,

but I am going to make you pay for this.

Get on board.”

He refused to go back to his ship

and work to save the people who had been entrusted to him.

Commander William Herndon was a different kind of man.

In 1857, the commercial vessel *Central America* was under his command when it ran into hurricane force winds.

Commander Herndon did all that he could to save those in his care.

All of the women and children and many of the men were rescued before the ship sank off Cape Hatteras.

Herndon gave his watch to one of the women and asked her to give it to his wife, knowing that he might not be able to get all the men off the ship and committed to staying on board until all his passengers and crew were safe.

Survivors reported last seeing him,
cigar chomped in his teeth, his head bowed in prayer.

Two men.

One a hireling.

One a shepherd.

One worked for a paycheck and saved himself.

Another had a sense of ownership and responsibility.

One failed his trust.

The other: faithful to the end.

The question is: Which man are we going to be like?

The hireling or the shepherd.

Once you discover your passion and your purpose,
you must own it.

The dream that's in your heart – own it.

Your desire to make a difference — own it.

Your potential to change the world – own it.

Act on it.

Invest yourself in it.

It will make your life challenging and difficult and hard.
It will make you care until you hurt
and give until it's costly.
It will take you from a life of ease
and out of your comfort zone.

But that's ok.
Because remember,
you were not created for peace;
you were created for glory.