

Courage – Florence Nightingale

Explain that today, we are going to listen to the story of a young woman who experienced strong opposition. She wasn't an arm-wrestler, but she did have to stand against people who wanted her to go in a different direction. The lady's name was Florence. She was an extremely clever young woman. In her time, there were no A level exams or Highers, but if there had been, she would have got A grades in Maths, English, Latin, Greek, German, French, Italian and History. That is clever!

The Story of Florence Nightingale

Florence was from a wealthy family. They owned two enormous homes, had servants and went on exotic holidays overseas, so money was never a problem for her. However, Florence knew that most people didn't live like her. Many people were extremely poor. At the age of 24, Florence finally knew what she wanted to do with her life. She wanted to become a nurse and care for the sick. Nursing is a very worthwhile career.

Ask the children whether any of them want to be a nurse or doctor when they grow up.

Ask if any of them have family members who work in hospitals.

However, there was a problem with Florence's plan. Her parents were horrified. In fact, her mother was ashamed of her wanting to do something that she thought was so dirty and below her status in society. It was hard for Florence to stick to her plan, but she felt that God wanted her to be a nurse and care for the sick.

Florence's mother put a lot of pressure on her to get married instead of becoming a nurse. In fact, Florence's mother and sister were so angry that they stopped speaking to her.

Ask the children, 'How do you think Florence would have felt?'

Point out that as children, it is right to honour and respect our parents, but when we grow up, we may have to face difficult choices that call for courage. People may not agree with us and we may have to face opposition.

Identify how fortunate we are to have the NHS, with clean hospitals and free treatment from highly qualified doctors and nurses. In 1844, when Florence decided to become a nurse, hospitals were

dark, dirty, smelly and poorly run. Perhaps we can understand Florence's mother's point of view a bit better now!

Florence pursued her dream and became a nurse and then a matron in a London hospital. She was very good at her job.

When the Crimean War broke out in Turkey, there were thousands of wounded soldiers dying in terrible conditions far from home. Florence wanted to help. Again, she faced opposition. Women were definitely not accepted as nurses in war zones! She had to fight long and hard to have this rule changed before she was finally allowed to go and take other nurses with her. She became known as the 'lady with the lamp'.

Encourage the children to find out how Florence got this nickname.

After the end of the Crimean War, Florence became an advocate for improved sanitation in British military hospitals and she also established nursing colleges to train professional nurses.

We have Florence Nightingale to thank for all the trained nurses who care for us today.

Show the image of Florence Nightingale.

Explain that the image shows Florence nursing in Turkey.

Time for reflection

It was not easy for Florence to do what she felt was right. People were against her.

Sometimes, it won't be easy for us to do what we know is right. People will be against us.

Florence found that God gave her courage. People find courage in different places. Some turn to family and friends. Some search within themselves. Some people turn to God. Christians believe that God can always give them courage, whether for big or small things.