

Topic: True Success

Speaker: Jerry Dendinger, AIA Executive Vice President

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Transcript:

Hello, my name is Jerry Dendinger, the Executive Vice President for Athletes in Action. It is really a privilege to be here with you today, coaches around the world. I sit here on the campus of Athletes in Action in Xenia, Ohio, which is a former orphanage.

1. Two Stories:

- a. **Olive Smith:** And I want to tell you a couple of stories today. Two stories, in fact, and the first story happened right here on this campus. This campus was founded in 1872. The orphanage had 13,000 orphans graduate from this place. They lived here, they ate here. They were trained here, went to school here and then went out into the world to be successful young men and women. And there was a tremendous event that happened around 1890 here on this campus, there was a diphtheria epidemic that was rolling through Midwest America and certainly here in Ohio, people in surrounding communities we're getting sick and if you know anything about diphtheria, it's a nasty virus. It fills your lungs with fluids and gives you difficulty breathing and you just kind of suffocate to death over time. It's an awful death.

And there were about 40 orphans on this campus, who died from diphtheria in the winter of 1889. In 1890. The special story is this. There was a young lady by the name of Olive Smith, 19 years old. Olive was a volunteer nurse here at the home. That's what the orphans call this place (the orphanages) they refer to it as "The Home". And she volunteered to be here and to work and to serve these kids. So as the orphanage was separating the healthy kids and the sick kids and quarantining everybody, they were also quarantining workers. But Olive Smith made a decision that she wanted to go stay in the infirmary with the kids that were the sickest, and with the kids that were dying, she wanted to be there with them to hold them and love them as they struggled for their last breath. So Olive did that. And her pattern was to stay up all night, sitting in a rocking chair, holding the sickest of children in her arms, and rocking them over the course of the evening. And on a typical day, the morning crew would come in, and they would see Olive sitting in her chair. And she would smile and say good morning, and they would

take the children and Olive would get a little rest. But she never left the infirmary. She stayed there to care for those children. Well, olive unfortunately contracted diphtheria from the kids that she was serving, and she was fighting and struggling for her life as well. And she still stayed up all night rocking kids in the rocking chair.

And on one cold morning in January of 1890. As the workers came in for their morning crew, they saw Olive sitting in her rocking chair, once again, holding two kids in her arms. In both of her arms. And on this morning Olive didn't say hello. And she didn't smile and greet people. And she had passed in the night holding these two children. And as the story has been told to me, the two children that she was holding, also passed in the night from diphtheria.

So in honor of her sacrifice and her commitment to the orphans, and the people at this home, they built a special memorial for her. And there's a cemetery on this campus where there's about 80 or 90 or so tombstones and half of them come from this time in 1890. And in that cemetery is a special memorial for Olive Smith, it's really tall, that kind of tells the story. And on that tombstone is John 15. This is the passage (from the Bible) that says Greater love has no one than this than he who lays down his life for a friend. And that's what Olive did. She realized that life was not about herself. She lived for something bigger than herself. And she ultimately ended up making the ultimate sacrifice and giving her life for these children. And so 130 years later, we still talk about this story of olive Smith. So hold on to that story for just a moment because I want to take you to another story. And then we'll kind of bring the two together.

- b. **The Master and His Servants:** The second story is out of Scripture. It's out of Matthew 25. And if you want to look it up, it's Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30. And it's a story about a master who had three servants. And it's a long passage so I won't read it all to you. I'll just kind of capture the story, grab a few of the passages as we talk through it. So this master was set to go on a long journey and as he left He gave his three servants talents. Now the talents in those days refer to currency. It's money. It's what they refer to as what they used to spend. And so he gave them each a different amount of currency of his possessions that he wanted them to steward over. So if you think of the word steward, it means that you were taking care of something that belongs to someone else. So this master gave the first servant, five talents. And it gave the second servant, two talents. And it gave the third servant, one talent. And then he went away on his journey. And as the storyteller, as Jesus told the story, this parable, the journey, the master came back, after a long time being gone for a while. And this is where I'll kind of pick it up and read a couple of verses. Because what the master came to do, and this is a phrase I want you to grab the day is the master came to inspect what he expects. That's when you can catch he came to inspect what he expects. So let's read about what the master inspected and what he expected.

So we approach the first servant, who had the five talents. And the servants said to him, Master, you delivered to me five talents. Here, I have made five talents more, his master

said to him, “well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much enter into the joy of your master”. And he also who had the two talents came forward and saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents. Here I've made two talents more, his master also said to him, “well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much enter into the joy of your master”. And then the third servant, he would receive the one talent came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, at gathering where you scattered, no seed. So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. But the master answered, “You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather, where I scattered no seed, that you ought to have invested by money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the 10 talents”.

For there's so much in there to unpack, but I'll just hit a few highlights.

The master expected the servants to invest what he had given them to steward over. He expected them to do something with it. And the first two servants did exactly that. They took what they were stewarding over, they took their currency. And they exchanged it, they bartered with it. And they doubled the investment that the master had asked him to take care of. They knew that the master was a man who loved them, was a man who cared for them, a man who had their best interest in mind, and they wanted to invest what they were responsible for. for him. Well, the third servant has an entirely different story, right? As we look at what he said that the first two he said, “Well done, you have been faithful over a little, I'm going to make you faithful over much”.

The third servant, a really different story. He was afraid of the master. He believed that the master was a hard man, he didn't know the Master's heart. He didn't know that the master really loved him, that the master really cared for him and had his best interest in mind. And so because he was afraid he didn't do anything with what he was asked to take care of. And he took it, he hid it in the ground. And one of the master call him? Master said he was wicked. That is a strong word that I don't use very often in my life to say somebody is wicked. But because the third servant did not invest what the master gave him, he called him wicked, and he called him slothful, which would mean lazy. He just didn't want to do any work and then he also said to him, “I'm going to cast you out in my presence”. And then here's the best part. Well, maybe it's not the best part, one of the most interesting parts. He says, “Take away from him take the one talent that the third servant got and give it to the one who had the 10 just like he said to the first servant, you've been faithful over a little I will make you faithful over much he was taking away from the third serving and giving it to the first guy”.

So as you think about these two types of servants, the first two had a relationship with the master. The third one really didn't. The first two had a correct understanding of the Master's heart and who he was. The third one did. And so therefore he was afraid and didn't really take care of what the master had asked him to take care of.

2. SHAPE

There's an acronym that I want you guys to think about, kind of in place of the word talent in this passage. And the acronym is SHAPE, s, h, a PE shape. So we'll unpack it a little bit here.

a. Spiritual Gifts

The essence of SHAPE is spiritual gifts. So scripture and other passages talk about we all have been specifically given gifts through the Holy Spirit. For you and me, they may be administration or leadership or service or hospitality, there's dozens of gifts, you can talk to some of the athletes in action staff here about how to figure out what your spiritual gifts might be. There's some great assessments to help with that. But the first part of your shape is a spiritual gift that the Lord has specifically given to you. And to me,

b. Heart

The second part of the SHAPE is H, heart, or another word that might help better is passion. And I think of this this way, when you lay down at night, and your mind starts to wander about what you get excited about doing, or if you're waking up early in the morning, before the sun comes up, what is it that drives you out of bed in the morning, but you want to go do that is a passion that the Lord is specifically placed on your heart that he wants you to pursue and invest in

c. Abilities

The A in SHAPE, his abilities, all kinds of abilities, all sorts of skills and training that we may have received over time, maybe we've learned how to be leaders and how to delegate or we've got organizational skills, or we've got medical skills, all sorts of things, maybe we could cook a lots of abilities that the Lord has blessed us with or allowed us to be trained in that or a specific part of our shape,

d. Personality

The P in SHAPE is personality, a lot of different personalities on the planet, right? We have introverts, we have extroverts. We have people who are naturally loud, naturally quiet, people who are humorous people who are very somber, very serious. Whatever your personality is, it was intentionally and specifically given to you as a specific part of your shape that the Lord would want you to leverage that

e. Experiences

The E in SHAPE is experiences. And once again, we all come from radically different experiences. countries, we grew up in countries all over the world, we grow up with very different economic backgrounds, very different houses, where some pursued things spiritually, some houses didn't. Some of the families that we grew up in were actually really hard families where some really difficult things may have happened to us in our life. Other people grew up in families where it was a very happy home mom and dad fully present. Everyone got along, it was

a very nourishing environment, whatever that experience is, the Lord wants to use that experience as a specific part of your SHAPE.

So going back to SHAPE and going back to the passage, the master, Jesus tells a story tells a parable because it's an illustration of what life is like for you and me. So the master in the parable is actually God. And the servants are you and I. And so what the Lord is saying to us is that he has given us things that he wants us to steward over. He's given to you in May a specific shape that he wants us to steward over. He wants us to leverage that shape, and maximize it in the lives of other people around us. And he is going to one day, inspect what he expects. That's that word again. One day, when we finish our time here on Earth, and we stand up and further gates of heaven, our efforts are going to be tested and the Lord is going to inspect what he expects and what did he expect. He expects us to take our SHAPE, and to minister and leave a legacy in the lives of others. So my challenge for you today, as you think about shape, and I would encourage you this, if you've never thought about your SHAPE, take some time in the coming days and spend some time reflecting on what might be my passion.

- What are some abilities The Lord has really given me?
- How would I describe my personality? What are experiences that are unique to who I am?
- What might be some spiritual gifts that I could understand through an assessment and capture on a page, what your shape is, and then sit back and ponder
- How am I specifically maximizing that shape?

Leveraging who God has made me to be to make an impact in the lives of other people. Because that shape ultimately doesn't belong to us. We're stewards of that shape. And just like in the parable of the talents, if we are like that third servant who doesn't seek to invest that shape, I believe scripture is clear that he will take that shape or that specific ability away from us and give it to someone else. I want to hear "well done good and faithful servant" with the SHAPE that I've been given.

When I think of Olive Smith going back to the story from the beginning, I think of her SHAPE, and I pondered what might her shape have been that she chose to maximize and leverage right here on this property in Xenia, Ohio. As we ponder that her spiritual gifts might have been something like hospitality or service, someone who just love to care for people around her, her passion would have likely have been serving kids serving people who were hurting and in pain, and he just needed to be loved and cared for abilities. It was obvious she was trained as a nurse, she knew how to care for people. Her personality, I would not be surprised if olives, personality was very patient, very gracious, very soft spoken. And she ministered to some of the most hurting kids here in the Midwest, for sure. And who knows what her experiences growing up as a young child might have been that would have shaped her maybe she came from a large family where she had to care for other kids or extended family, or maybe she was sick herself as a kid. But what Olive recognized is that life was not about her. It was about what God wanted to do in her and what God wanted to do through her. That's another great phrase I'd love for you to have in your mind today is that whatever is happening in your life today, it is not about you. It's about what God wants to do in you and through you.

So my challenge today is not to necessarily go find someplace and to sacrifice our life and to ultimately die maximizing our SHAPE, although that is Olive's story. And it's really inspirational to me, and to those who have heard in the past.

My challenge to you is, where would God have you and me leverage our SHAPE? Where would he want us to maximize how he's specifically created us and the experiences and the passion that he's given us? Who are the relationships, because ultimately, whatever we're going through, is not about us. It's about how God wants to use us in the lives of other people.

Let me pray to close our time.

Father, I love the story of olive. I love what it models for us. And I pray that this Olive Smith story would just find itself taking a seed in our hearts today, and that she would be an inspiration to us to consider how we can leverage and maximize the specific shape that you've given each of us. Lord, thank you for your word in this parable that's captured this great story about this master and these three servants. Lord, when you do come to inspect what you expect, we want to be found faithful, we want to hear the words good and faithful servant. So open up our eyes to discover our shape, and open up our eyes to discover how you want us to maximize the shape that you've specifically given us. Christ's name we pray, Amen.