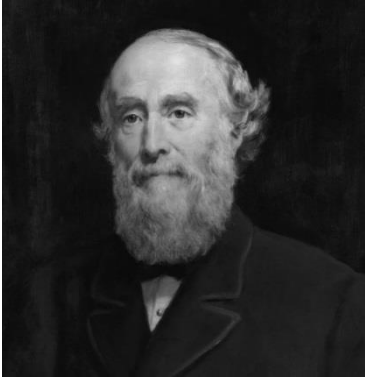


## What Is Your Ethical Legacy?

The history of mankind is a storybook of human accomplishments, with people overcoming obstacles to achieve something great and inspirational. There are countless stories of people who started new organizations to meet an ethical need. They have found purpose in their lives, serving God by serving others.

**Sir George Williams** was one of those people. George Williams was concerned about young men moving to the city during the time of the industrial revolution. In London, England young men were in search of manufacturing jobs created by new technology. Williams was apprehensive that young men who had spent all of their lives in a rural, simple environment, might be overwhelmed with the temptations of big city life. To keep them grounded in the faith, he formed a bible study organization in 1844. This may come as a surprise to many, but that Bible study organization was the YMCA. The “Y” is a Christian-based organization that has become one of the world’s largest private non-profit organizations. The creation of the YMCA would become his legacy. When you consider all the good it has done for people and its spiritual mission, the Y is his “ethical legacy.”



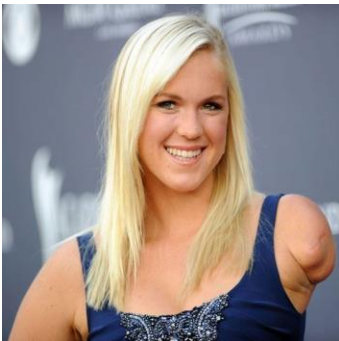
There are many well-known people who have overcome obstacles to make a major contribution to others. Here are just a few

examples:

- Cinematic “Superman” **Christopher Reeve** was paralyzed from the neck down in 1995, after being thrown from a horse. His own personal rehabilitation, which had its highs and lows, motivated Reeve to champion progressive research on overcoming paralysis. His ethical legacy was the founding of the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation.

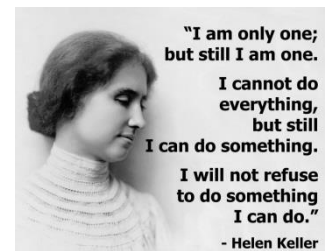


- Thirteen year old Hawaiian surfer **Bethany Hamilton** lost an arm in a shark attack. Two years later she won the national surfing championship. Her appearance on The Amazing Race was a testimony of maintaining a positive attitude in life, especially in a competitive situation. Her faith in God is the source of her strength. Her ethical legacy is her Christian inspiration through her life story in print and the motivational movie Soul Surfer.



- **Thomas Edison** failed well over 1,000 times before creating the first electric lightbulb. He showed determination to overcome repeated failures to reach his goal.
- **Franklin Roosevelt** was partially paralyzed at age 39, but became one of our most respected U.S. Presidents. He is the only person elected four times to that post.
- **Stephen King’s** first novel was rejected 30 times by publishers. Thanks to encouragement from his wife he now has sold over 350 million books.

- **Ben Franklin**, a school dropout at age 10, taught himself to read and created several inventions. His ethical legacy is his role as one of America’s Founding Fathers.
- **Helen Keller** overcame being deaf and blind since the age of 18 months. She became highly educated and motivated to achieve, creating an ethical legacy as a women’s rights advocate.
- Born with a “club foot,” **Tom Dempsey** kicked an NFL record 63-yard field goal. His ethical legacy was to encourage people with birth defects to be successful in professional sports and life.



If ethics is about the ideal human character based on moral values, then ethical legacy is a higher calling, combining ethics with accomplishments that benefit others. In each case the person had a vision for the future and how they could make things better for others. They viewed their unique situation as a platform for change and inspiration.

We all have an opportunity to do something really meaningful to help other people, and to genuinely make other people’s lives better. We never know what that will be, but God is preparing you now for that opportunity. Preparation includes the sum of your life experiences, as well as people who have influenced you and people you have helped along the way. While you may lament hardships at the time, they do strengthen you when you bring God into the picture. God’s will is not only about how you can overcome difficulties and achieve success, but how you can inspire and help others. Look around you for

opportunities to make the world a better place. Seek an ethical legacy that helps others in a lasting way. What is God preparing you to do for others?

**Question:** What legacy are you seeking to achieve? Is it a personal accomplishment, or an ethical legacy that improves the lives of others?

**Scripture:** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).*

**Prayer:** Our heavenly Father. We pray that we will discover your plan for our life. We pray that we can do something meaningful that helps others to achieve or cope with their own difficulties. Give us the guidance and strength to be what you want us to be. Amen.