

# Celebrating Black History Month

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*We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.* **Carter Woodson (1875-1950)**

**on founding Negro History Week, 1926**

February, as you know, is Black History Month. As we celebrate another ingredient in America's "melting pot," we see a diverse and wonderful people, folks with a rich heritage that today we recognize and honor. We salute not only our members and attendees of African-American heritage, but we also thank the Lord for all the fine men and women of color who, past and present, have shaped our great nation through their talents, contributions and legacies.

How unusual, the one thing that seems to make us all different is the one thing that makes us all the same! With exception to the American Indians (and even *their* origins are thought to be migratory), we are all descendants from immigrants of other countries. When we trace our ancestral roots, undoubtedly we all are a hyphenated something. Scots-Irish-American, Italian-American, Jewish-American, Polish-American, Native-American, African-American... The fact that we are different and yet the same is what makes America *beautiful* and like no other country on earth. One nation under God. American, all of us.

However, it is what makes us all different that makes us *special*, and it's ok to embrace and appreciate our differences! We all need to know where we come from, to find a sense of belonging tied to family and tradition and inheritance. The more we know about ourselves and about one another, the more we understand how the multicolored fabric of life is knit together by common thread.

My heart hurts and I shudder when I see people being unkind to others because of superficial differences such as skin tone. Our roots all go back to Adam. The breath we breathe comes from our Heavenly Father and blood courses red through our veins. It must sadden our God to see injustice wreaked upon whole groups of people, often in the name of religion. Ironically, the very Person who prayed *that we might become one* is the very One whose symbol of selfless sacrifice is hatefully burned on lawns of the victims of racist groups.

Our Lord was referred to in the Scriptures as a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isaiah 53:3) Rather than coming to earth to be exalted because of Who He is, He chose instead to identify with the lowly, the underdog, the "minority." Those who truly know His heart know that we are to seek to serve and love, to be humble, and never to think of ourselves as better than anyone else. The only pure blood ever to come to earth was poured out on Calvary to save us all. Without His blood applied to our lives, flowing through our veins, we are all undone, unclean, and utterly lost.

We've come a long way as a people together, tearing down the strongholds of prejudice and injustice in our region. May this be a year unprecedented for embracing, healing, and restoration. May fear, suspicion, intimidation, and bias melt away as we learn to love our neighbor as ourselves.

So this month, let's celebrate our unity and our diversity, and take time to appreciate the subtle nuances in the Body of Christ. Show kindness to your brothers and sisters, and recognize that we all are fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. There need be no labels in the house of our Father! Praise God for His eye for detail, His penchant for variety, and the beautiful palette of colors He uses to paint the faces of His beloved children.