

Black History Month #1

Text: Hebrews 12:1-2.

Introduction: The purpose of Black History Month is to honor the generations of African Americans who struggled with adversity to achieve full citizenship in American society; And honor the often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history. It's currently expanded to the United Kingdom, Canada, and Ireland.

- The origin--Carter G. Woodson (1875(PhD from Harvard) (1875-1950) was an American historian, author, journalist and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (Wikipedia).
- He is the father of Black History week February 1926 designated for the second week in February, to coincide with marking the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.
- The Black United Students and Black educators at Kent State University founded Black History Month, on February 1, 1970 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter_G._Woodson). Woodson made the following statements
- Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history (<https://www.biography.com/people/carter-g-wood>, emphasis added).

The theme for Black History this year is the importance of Black Health and Wellness. Not just nutritional, physical but also spiritual, emotional and mental health. To pursue this objective the Black community must look to the past, capture and practice one of the greatest weapons at our disposal, the art of encouragement and imagination (a biblical pattern). Use prominent figures present and/or past to generate imagination and encouragement. One such is the late last survivor, Tuskegee Airman Charles McGee. He was 102.

- In an essay for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, he wrote, he was often asked why the Tuskegee Airmen were so successful in combat. He said **courage** and **perseverance**. They dreamed of being pilots as boys and were told it was not possible. He stated, through **faith** and determination we overcame enormous obstacles.
- "The key to me is, again, a God-given life, to be an example for the young people who are the country's future, not only in our family but in our community and our service." ('From Beginning to End, a Blessing from God': Tuskegee Airman Charles McGee Dies After 102 Years of Making History | CBN News).

This is the epitome of the text. Examples generate imagination and encouragement as evidence by adaptation of Sarah Travis's book, *Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology* (New Studies in Theology and Trauma).

1. The conventional imagination uses the Scriptures, symbols, and practices that are familiar to the congregation to bring God's word to life-- Imagination gives us opportunity to see/vision new possibilities.
2. The empathetic imagination stretches preacher and people to put themselves in the place of others—to step into another's shoes. It ignites our creativity and move forward in our God given abilities.
3. The visionary imagination is "deliberately attentive to the fresh and unexpected movement of the Spirit"—it's a launching pad raising you above adversities to make hopes come true.

Imagination comes before implementation—that is, we must be able to imagine something before we can move toward change. This is incorporate from the biblical text and witness of faith by the late Tuskegee Airman Charles McGee.

