

THE POWER TO BECOME

BY GUY HAMMOND

Chances are high that you have never heard of this man before, which is a shame, because without his accomplishments, our lives would be considerably different. His story however is quite remarkable. His name is George Washington Carver. In 1855 a white slave owner bought a 13-year old girl named Mary. It is uncertain how many children Mary bore, but it is known that by her early twenties, (due to the hard life conditions as a young slave girl in the deep southern United States), she lost three children before they reached the age of 10. Her next child, George, was born during the U.S. civil war. His father was a slave on a neighboring farm who was killed in a logging accident shortly after George was born.

The western border of Missouri was the site of considerable guerrilla warfare and Mary and George along with the other slaves were prey to looting and killing by Confederate soldiers. Near the end of the war a group of men rode onto the land in search of money. Mary and the infant George were kidnapped and taken into Confederate Arkansas. It was during this time that Mary, young, yet very old in her mid twenties, died. So George Washington Carver grew up as a slave in the deep south in the late 1800's, with no parents.

Not a very auspicious beginning for anyone, is it? However, to make a long story short, George eventually won his freedom and as a young man got himself into school. He received a B.S. in 1894 and a M.S., in 1896 at the Iowa State College of Agriculture. He became a member of the faculty of Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanics in charge of the school's bacterial laboratory work in the Systematic Botany Department.

His work with agricultural products developed industrial applications from farm products. His research developed 118 products, many of which we use in our everyday lives, even now. Because of his genius, we owe the inventions of these following products:

- Adhesives
- Bleach
- Chili Sauce
- Dyes
- Instant Coffee
- Meat Tenderizer
- Soil Conditioner
- Hair Shampoo
- Shaving Cream
- Refined Sugar
- Talcum Powder
- **PEANUT BUTTER**

You'll notice that I highlighted the words "peanut butter." In my estimation, that one accomplishment is truly Mr. Carver's greatest. It's the best invention since the zipper! George Washington Carver was honored by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A national park has been named after him. As well, he was bestowed an honorary doctorate from Simpson College and was made a member of the Royal Society of Arts in London, England.

Quite amazing, isn't it? All of this from a slave who was raised without parents, in the abusive U.S. south of the late 1800's. George Washington Carver has gone down in history as one of the greatest minds of science the world has ever produced.

I love stories like this; someone who beats the odds, who won't listen to the critics, who overcomes to become something that everyone else in the world would think impossible.

Before Walt Disney built the empire we all know today, he was fired by a newspaper editor because "he lacks imagination and has no good ideas." At the age of 22, Oprah Winfrey was fired from her job as a television reporter because she was "unfit for television." Lady GaGa was fired only 3 months after making her first recording deal because they didn't think anyone would buy her music.

For the follower of Jesus, we too are overcomers; people who are capable of going on to do amazing things with our lives, regardless of what others think or say about us, regardless of who we have been when we have been at our worst. In the following passage we have a brief statement that shouts of triumph and victory for the Christian.

John 1:10-13:

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

The NSV translates the second half of verse 12 as:

"But as many as received him, to them gave the POWER TO BECOME the sons of God."

After watching the movie FINDING GUY, it should be clear to you what a broken vessel I truly am. God knows all too clearly what I am really like too; he sees all the sin, the hurt, the insecurities, the warts and all. I don't know about you, but it is so easy for me when I look at who I really am before God, when my failures are glaring and naked for Him to see; for me to feel like I am a failure, and unable to do anything great with my life, especially in light of my same gender attractions. Yet God, somehow, is able to see me, weaknesses and all and believe that I can *become* so much more. In fact, he gives you and I the POWER to become so much more.

While self-help books and books on psychology abound, and professional help from a therapist may have its role, but absolutely nothing can take the place of God, who has in His very nature, a desire to see us rise above, to conquer, to improve, and to become so much more than who and what we currently are.

- When Luke says in chapter 17 that the kingdom of God is within us, what's that but another way of saying that we have the "power to become?"
- When Paul in Philippians says that "*we can do all things through him who gives us strength,*" what's that but another way of saying that we have the "power to become?"
- When John tells us that "*faith overcomes the world*" is he not telling us that we have the "power to become?"

When Jesus was in the world He always saw the potential in people. He saw people as "diamonds in the rough", needing only to be refined and polished. This is how God looks at you! God sees that each of us possesses undreamed possibilities; pent up skills and talents just crying out for discovery and release

and development and exercise. George Washington Carver, Walt Disney, Oprah Winfrey and Lady GaGa were able to overcome incredible odds to become something most never thought possible. How much more for you and I who are in Christ, who have the Holy Spirit living within us?

Don't let your past failures and mistakes get you down. Go and do something great for God. You are an overcomer in Jesus because he has given you the power to become much more than who you used to be or who you are today!

Thoughts presented in this devotional are taken from the book *MESSED UP: Proof That You're More to God Than Your Mistakes* by Guy Hammond and published by Illumination Publishers. The book is a companion to the documentary movie *FINDING GUY* by One Compass Media.

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