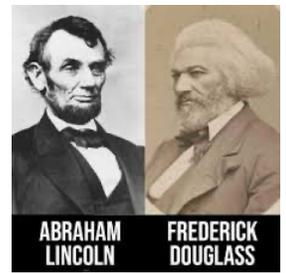




Celebrating Juneteenth - Freedom Day! By Karen Sue Nyquist



1. What is “Juneteenth”? - “On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation by freeing all those still enslaved. ...Though these slaves had been legally freed, it was on this day, June 19th, they finally tasted freedom for the first time. Juneteenth (short for June Nineteenth) is a holiday that commemorates this day which effectively ended slavery in the U.S.” (1) United? We Pray-Helping Christians Pray & Think About Racial Strife,” <https://uweppray.org>

2. What does the Declaration of Independence say about “all men?” - It declares, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Yet many in America did not consider all men equal and through slavery, they denied life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to millions.

3. What does the Bible say about “all men”? - It says “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). Wow! All of us are created in the image of God. It also says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). There are some verses that supported slavery in the Old Testament, but not in the New Testament, and not the kind of slavery that was practiced in America.

“It is important to know from beginning to end, Scripture clearly condemns the kind of slavery that took place in America. In Exodus 21:16 (ESV), right after the giving of the 10 Commandments, the Lord condemns “man-stealing” – which is kidnapping someone and forcing them into your service. The punishment for “man-stealing” according to the Law was death. In the New Testament, Paul condemns “enslavers” as being contrary to the Law of God and facing the condemnation of God (1 Timothy 1:10 ESV). Much more could be said about this point, but it is obvious both Old and New Testaments denounce as wicked the practice that was the transatlantic slave trade and those who participated in it.” (1)

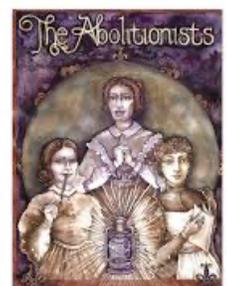
4. How should we look at America’s history? We should look at it truthfully. For more than 400 years, slavery existed in the United States. That was a horrible injustice, a sin that our nation cannot deny. This oppression brought so much pain to our African-American brothers and sisters, pain that can never be fully realized. Slavery also brought shame and guilt to the rest of America. Even some Christians supported slavery. Today, any residual racism, superiority, prejudice, hatred, bitterness, and un-forgiveness in our lives are sins. We should repent (Acts 2:38), confess and ask God to forgive us (1 John 1:9), and help us overcome these sins (Galatians 5:16-18).

5. How was slavery stopped? - The eradication of slavery was a long, difficult process with many unsung heroes who fought unwaveringly against slavery.

1st) Early Anti-slavery Movements - Most people who stood up against slavery were Christians, who were motivated by their Christian beliefs, seeing slavery as a sin and a moral wrong (2) “Abolitionism - Timeline Movement,” The ARDA The Association of Religion Data Archives, the ard.com. (3) “The Abolitionists”, ChristianHistoryinstitute.org. The Quakers were speaking out against it as early as 1688. Many more Christians turned against slavery during the First and Second Great Awakenings, (1730s-1770s; 1790s-1840s) (2). Americans around 1780, mostly in the Northern states, fought to stop the international slave trade, enacting abolition laws, and establishing anti-slavery societies. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in that territory. By the mid-1850’s, most of the Northern states had abolished slavery and were called “free states.” On Juneteenth, these anti-slavery fighters, both black and white, should be remembered and honored and the end of slavery celebrated.

2nd) The Abolitionist Movement - This started in the 1830s. These were black and white individuals who were risking their lives, speaking up against slavery, and helping enslaved people escape. Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Tubman were among them. They developed the “Underground Railroad, which assisted between 40,000 - 100,000 to escape to freedom in the “free states.” California’s admission as a free state in 1850 tipped the balance in Congress in favor of free states. On Juneteenth, these people should be remembered and honored.

3rd) The Civil War - This war was fought from 1861-1865. At that





time there were 19 “free states.” There were 360,222 American Union soldiers, both black and white, who died fighting to preserve the union and to free the enslaved Americans who were living in the 15 “slave states.” Because of their sacrifices, slavery was outlawed and nearly 4 million people were liberated. On Juneteenth, these soldiers and their families should be remembered and honored.

4th) The Emancipation Proclamation - Pres. Abraham Lincoln signed this executive order on January 1, 1863, freeing all enslaved individuals. On Juneteenth, Pres. Lincoln should be remembered and honored and the end of slavery celebrated.

5th) Juneteenth - On June 19, 1865, the enslaved African-Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally found out they were legally free. That date became known as Juneteenth - Freedom Day. Juneteenth is now a national holiday when all Americans should remember and honor all those enslaved Americans who were freed. **Yes, let's celebrate!**

6th) The 13th Amendment - On December 14, 1863 a bill was proposed in the House of Representatives to end slavery. The bill had to be passed in the House, Senate, and 3/4 of the states (27 out of 36). The process was completed and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution became law on December 6, 1865. On Juneteenth, all those people who fought in the House, the Senate, and in the 36 state legislatures should be remembered and honored.

6. God delivered those enslaved in America! - God sent His Christians to deliver those who had been enslaved for 400 years. Some slaves were Christians while living in Africa, but many more converted during slavery. “Slaves sang spirituals filled with lyrics about salvation and references to biblical figures like Moses, who led his people to freedom” (4) “The Slave Experience: Religion,” Thirteen PBS, thirteen.org). God had used Moses to deliver the Jews from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. “And the Lord said: ‘I have surely **seen** the oppression of My people...in Egypt, and have **heard** their cry because of their taskmasters, for I **know** their sorrows. So I have come down **to deliver them** out of the hand of the Egyptians’” (Exodus 3:7-8). God also saw, heard, knew, and came down to deliver those enslaved in America.

7. Did you know God still saves people who are enslaved? - More than 2,000 years ago, God sent Jesus His Son to save us from slavery. The enslaved Americans, who knew this Jesus, sang spirituals such as, “Give Me Jesus” and “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” (4). Jesus says to us, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **whoever commits sin is a slave of sin**” (John 8:34). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might **be saved**” (John 3:16-17). “If therefore the Son (*Jesus*) sets you free, **you will be free indeed**” (John 8:36). Free from sin? Wow!

8. Do you have sins: wrong behaviors, attitudes, and words, that are hard to stop? Would you like to be set free from the slavery to these sins? - Good news! When we receive Jesus, His Spirit comes inside us. As He enters, our spirits are “born again” (John 3:5-6). Then He starts working on our hearts. He warns us of **sin**, so we can decide to refuse to **sin** (John 16:8). As we cooperate, the Holy Spirit **helps us transform** our behaviors, words, and attitudes, into being more like the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). As our Helper (John 14:26), the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13) and reassures us that we are saved and are now children of God (Romans 8:16). With our hearts transformed, obeying God’s moral law is so much easier and we don’t sin so often! **Suggested prayer:** “God, I confess that I am a **sinner** but am repenting and, with Your help, I am turning away from sin. I believe Jesus is Your Son, that He died to pay for my **sins**, and rose again. I’m receiving Him now as my Lord and Savior. Please, forgive my **sins** and help me do what is right. Please, give me Your Holy Spirit, so I can be delivered and transformed to be more like Jesus. Thank You for saving me, in Jesus’ name, Amen!”

9. Congratulations! To steadily improve your relationship with God, spend time with Him. Pray to Him, read the Bible, and go to a good church where you feel God’s presence and they preach the Bible. Come visit us where you can get baptized, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and celebrate with us our freedom in Jesus. Happy Juneteenth!

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