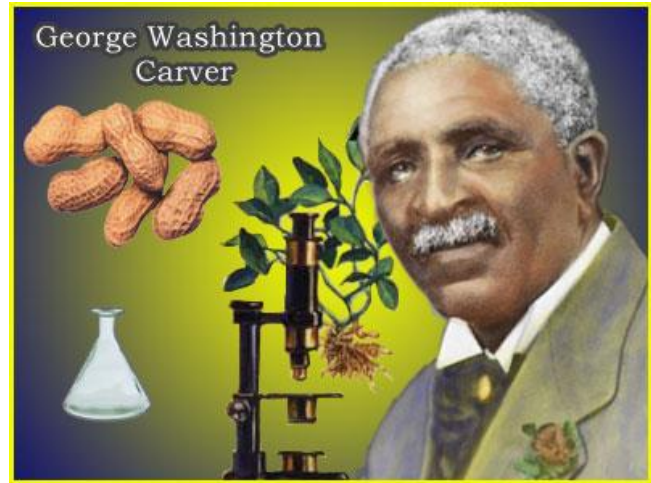


George Washington Carver

Paul G. Humber

George Washington Carver was born a slave; his beginning was difficult. His mother, a widow, was taken from George while he was still an infant, and he himself was sickly. What possible value could such a life have? He was “owned” by Moses Carver and was known as Carver’s George.

When George Carver got older and was about to enter high school, he added his middle initial. Someone else in town had his first and last names, and mail belonging to him was going to that other namesake. The young lad decided to give himself the middle initial, “W,” to distinguish himself from the other. When asked if it stood for Washington, he had no objection. Not wanting to be egotistical, however, he consistently signed his name with the diminutive, George W. Carver.



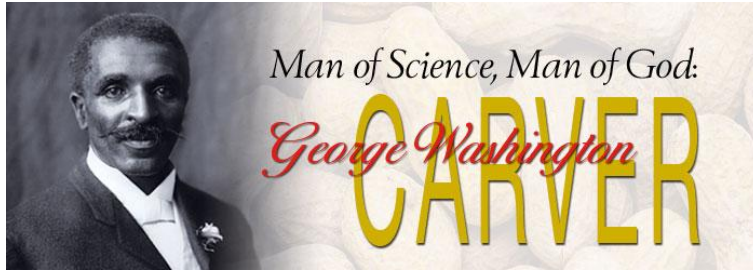
Despite difficulties, George Washington Carver did not waste his life. Rejected from one college because his skin color was thought to be too dark, he did not quit. Later in life, he attended two colleges and was accepted as an assistant professor at one.

Most importantly, Dr. Carver loved his fellow humans and God. There was a time when peanuts were thought to have little value, and the South needed another crop besides cotton. Dr. Carver, wanting to help his fellow man, discovered hundreds of valuable uses for peanuts. *Reader's Digest* reported the following concerning his visit with Congressmen in Washington:

He showed “the Congressmen a peanut substitute for quinine, peanut foods for livestock, mock oysters and 30 different dyes. By now his time was up, but the Congressmen quickly voted him unlimited time to continue. So, for nearly two hours, he held the committee spellbound as he showed still more of his products--vanishing cream, rubbing oils, milk flakes - and answered questions about the peanut.”ⁱ

Representative Barkley asked, “How does it go in punch?” Carver said, “Well, I'll give you some punches! Here is one with orange, one with lemon and one with cherry. Here is instant coffee, which already has in it cream and sugar. Here is buttermilk, Worcestershire sauce, pickles - all made from the peanut.”

Barkley added, “Where did you learn all this?” Carver, using words similar to but very different from Stalin, responded with: “From a book.” Barkley followed, “What book?” Did Carver, like Stalin, point to Darwin’s *Origin*? No. He answered, “The Bible. In Genesis we are told: ‘Behold, I have given you every herb that bears seed on the face of the earth, and every tree bearing seed. To you it shall be meat.’”



"When, at last, the Congressmen let him go, every member of the committee rose and applauded him, and in the following year a tariff was placed on peanuts."

Dr. Carver also talked to God. He told about the following in a speech he gave at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn: "Groping for solace that October day, he had walked through the predawn darkness of his beloved woodlands. As he searched for the first glimmer of the new morning, he cried out, 'Oh, Mr. Creator, why did You make this universe?' And the Creator answered me, 'You want to know too much for that little mind of yours,' He said, 'Ask me something more your size.'"

"So I said, 'Dear Mr. Creator, tell me what man was made for.' Again He spoke to me: 'Little man, you are still asking for more than you can handle. Cut down the extent of your request and improve the intent.'"

"And then I asked my last question. 'Mr. Creator, why did You make the peanut?' 'That's better!' the Lord said, and He gave me a handful of peanuts and went with me back to the laboratory and, together, we got down to work."

"Inside the laboratory, Carver closed the door, pulled on an apron and shelled a handful of peanuts. That whole day and night, he literally tore the nuts apart, isolating their fats and gums, their resins and sugars and starches. Spread before him were pentoses, pentosans, legumins, lysin, amido and amino acids. He tested these in different combinations under varying degrees of heat and pressure, and soon his hoard of synthetic treasures began to grow: milk, ink, dyes, shoe polish, creosote, salve, shaving cream and, of course, peanut butter."

Continuing with *Reader's Digest*: "Thomas Edison once invited him to come work with him in the Edison laboratories in Menlo Park, N.J., at a minimum annual salary of \$100,000. Carver declined the offer, as he had all the others, and seemed astonished that anyone expected him to claim rewards from the gifts God had given him. 'But if you had all that money,' he was once challenged, 'you could help your people.'"

"If I had all that money," Carver replied, "I might forget about my people."

Students would come to hear Dr. Carver "talk of the relationship between science and the Scriptures. In time, the group swelled until finally it became so large that the informal discussions were scheduled as regular classes and shifted to the assembly room in the Carnegie Library. It was a rare week when all 300 seats were not filled."

"It was to this 'Bible class' that Carver spoke some of his most pungent aphorisms: On cigarettes: 'If God had intended the human nose to be used for a chimney, He would have turned our nostrils up.' On nature: 'I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting

system through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune Him in.'"

To a class of seniors he said, "You may have to go into areas where the invisible 'Not wanted' sign is up. But remember that this has happened before. It happened to a man called Jesus when He went to Galilee."

Here is a final quotation: "I have made it a rule to go out and sit...at four o'clock every morning and ask the good Lord what I am to do that day. Then I go ahead and do it."ⁱⁱ

Dr. Carver died about six months after I was born. I never met him, but I hope to meet him someday in heaven and love him as a brother. I sorrow with his rejection, but I delight in his loving heart. As I and others face tomorrow, we would do well to follow Dr. Carver's example. When we get up in the morning, let us ask the Lord what He wants us to do that day, and then let us go and do it. Our lives are precious, too. Let us not waste them!

Chapter 10 Notes:

ⁱ See *Beyond Fame or Fortune* by Lawrence Elliot, *Reader's Digest Book Section*, May 1965, pp.259-310. Much of the material in this chapter was taken from this book condensation.

ⁱⁱ This was from the Internet, *Christian History Institute*, January 5, 1943-*Carver's Secret of Success*. See www.gospelcom.net/chi/DAILYF/2002/01/daily-01-05-2002.shtml.