

How Martin Luther King Jr. Still Speaks to Us Today

We are to love well. Jesus said love would be the mark of His followers—love for each other and even love for their enemies.

But we have *not* loved well.

For 2,000 years, believers have bickered and fought with each other. Splitting hairs and splitting churches over minor disagreements and going to war over major ones.

And we've behaved even worse with those outside the faith. We've judged unbelievers when they *behave* like unbelievers. We criticize those who are different from us. Different social backgrounds from ours. Different ethnic heritages. And especially, different sins.

We've concluded that if someone's sins are different from ours, their sin is worse. We create hierarchies of sin, with ours on the bottom rung of severity and theirs at the top.

Instead of taking a stand against injustice, we've sat on the sidelines, allowing the world to fight for the rights of the downtrodden.

And then along came a godly man who spoke truth and stood for righteousness: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who called people to nonviolent protests of unrighteous laws. Who called believers out in one of the saddest commentaries on the body of Christ.

In 1963, Dr. King said, "At 11:00 on Sunday morning ... we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation." While we may have made strides in this area, more than 50 years later, many Christians still worship God with people who look and act like themselves—racially, socially, economically and politically.

This year, our nation celebrates the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. on Jan. 21. In honor of MLK Day, let's consider some of his oft-repeated quotes. Quotes that spur Christians to live out their faith and testimony both inside and outside the body of Christ.

Quotes such as:

- "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."
- "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
- "The time is always right to do what is right."
- "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."
- "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."
- "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Whether or not the body of Christ has loved well in the past, there's always room for improvement. God's Word has quite a bit to say on this subject, including these verses:

- "Love your enemies ... pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44b-c).
- "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).
- "With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3).
- "And above all these things, embrace love, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14).
- "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Someday in eternity, we will all stand before the throne of God, praising Him for who He is and thanking Him for who we are: redeemed people from every tribe, language and nation. Until that day, we still have many friends to make ... and to love well. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .