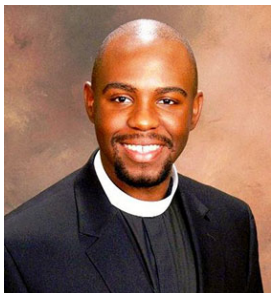


## King: A fourth generation Baptist preacher

Written by Timothy Houston  
Monday, 27 January 2014 23:52

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As we begin our Black History Month celebrations, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and legacy will of course be observed.

We must not overlook the fact that King was a man of God, a follower of Jesus Christ and a man of faith. The ultimate legacy of King, a fourth-generation Baptist preacher, will be more theological and less social or political. It was King's response to the gospel of Jesus Christ that changed him, and the world around him.

Dr. King described himself by his spiritual vocation.

"In the quiet recesses of my heart, I am fundamentally a clergyman, a Baptist preacher," King once said. It was the preacher in him that made all the difference.

With this faith, King saw his dream "deeply rooted in the American dream" but even more deeply rooted in the gospels. He grew up wanting to be a lawyer or doctor, not a preacher like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. But at Morehouse College, he met the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Mays, a eloquent man who united mind, body and soul. King began to see the ministry as a spiritual force for social change. With his faith as his motivation, the church and the pulpit became his launching pad.

With this faith, in 1957, at the age of 28, King, joined the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, and other civil rights activists who founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). By faith, the group was created to harness

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the moral authority and organizing power of Black churches to conduct non-violent protests in the service of civil rights reform. From Albany, Ga. to Birmingham, to Selma, Ala., to the March on Washington, SCLC and its preachers were there to stand against injustices. Their heads were blooded, but yet unbowed. King led the SCLC until his death.

With this faith, God is raising up a new crop of young preachers. These young men will be instrumental in championing the cause against injustice. One such man is Elder Devale Hodge who celebrates his birthday this week and in the same month as King and I. He reminds me of a younger, better version of myself. In his teenage years, Hodge received the Dr. Martin Luther King (Jr.) Motivational Speaker Award in 2009 from Buffalo Public Schools. He is the youngest ordained COGIC elder in the state and one of the youngest in the country. He is also known as a young man of prayer. Hodge has ministered in countless churches throughout the country for revivals, conferences, seminars and panel discussion, and community engagement. Married the lovely former Ms. Tiffany S. Little, it is his aspiration to serve an ethnically diverse population to promote learning and nurture spiritual growth by utilizing the word of God and prayer to effectively administer community outreach and community development. I have no doubt that he will leave his mark on the world.

Most of the civil rights leaders have gone on, but we should have no fear our faith is in good hands. There are other young leaders in our circle of influence within our community. Young men, such as Kris Edmonds, a young leader at my church who took on a project to assist our seniors and motivated the church and the community to support him in his endeavor. Even my own son, Timothy Houston, Jr. recently had a near-death experience that has served as a catalyst to motivating him to use his gifts in the service of God and community. I am sure each of you have your own young champions – both male and female. If so, you must encourage, support, and inspire them keep their faith alive and help them to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.

*Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. For questions, comments or more information, go to [www.tlhouston.com](http://www.tlhouston.com).*