

Dear Friend,

Here in New York City we are recovering from both an earthquake and a hurricane. These two events happened just a few days apart. The church was unable to meet on Sunday and we had a foretaste of the kind of strength we may all need at some point in the future.

The simple fact is that calamity often brings immediate separation between those who have walked in truth and others who have only considered but not applied what they have freely learned. What a privilege it is as a pastor to be able to say that here at Times Square Church during this time I have seen the same assurance, dedication and singleness of purpose as a people that we witnessed during the crisis of September, 2001.

It is so important to get a right focus now, as it is very difficult to get the inner strength that Christ offers in a time of panic. I trust you will let "What Will You Do When Jesus Knocks?" sink deep into your heart. To understand these things means to embrace our own source of strength.

According to Isaiah chapter 58, not hiding ourselves from human need guarantees spiritual health and direction; answers to prayer; the ability to see in dark times; continual guidance; inner satisfaction; and a supply of divine resources that will never fail. This is God's promise to us if we will be His hand of compassion on the earth.

Please ask Jesus for His heart to become yours.

Yours, in Christ,

Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

WHAT WILL WE DO WHEN JESUS KNOCKS?

by Carter Conlon

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked...As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:14–20).

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While traces of each of the seven churches that Jesus addressed in

Revelation can be found in every generation, the Laodicean condition appears to be the predominant one that we face as a testimony of Jesus Christ in the last days. The Laodicean church represents a self-focus that almost entirely excludes the genuine work of God from its profession of faith and practice. The apostle Paul called it a perversion of grace—a self-made, closed-door fellowship where sin remains unchallenged, selfishness is encouraged, and the call of God for the freedom and betterment of the poor and afflicted is shunned.

Paul described it as a time when, "...men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." (2 Timothy 3:2–5). In other words, there will be a spiritual authority in the last days that will resist the knocking of Jesus and the true call of Christ, closely resembling what Jesus Himself encountered during His life on earth.

■ THE FIRST KNOCKING

Think back for a moment to the first time Jesus knocked on the door of the very people who were supposed

to be His own. Is it not interesting that when He was about to be born into the world, He was knocking vicariously through Joseph and Mary on the door of an inn in Bethlehem? However, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus came to His own, but they received Him not.

If you and I are not careful, we will deceive ourselves to the point of concluding that thinking about something is the same as doing it.

During that time, everyone was required to return to his or her hometown in order to be numbered for taxation purposes. An inventory was taken, and people most likely gathered according to wealth, status and influence. Historians say that there was only one major inn in Bethlehem, so certainly those with the right connections reserved the best rooms. I can picture them bringing in a measurable supply of food, firewood and everything they needed, then shutting the door and saying, “Well, at least we are prepared to ride out the storm that we seem to be in.” Of course this meant that the poor outside would have to fend for themselves.

I wonder if they were singing a song or perhaps reading a portion of Scripture when a soft knocking suddenly sounded on their door. No doubt there had been many knocks on the door during this time, but they had become quite accustomed to turning people away by this point. Wrong had become right. Unfortunately, if we as the church are not careful, this is exactly what happens. We start turning people

away and somehow, with the illogical thinking of the human heart, we take wrong and make it right.

Another knock at the door prompts the question, “Well, who’s at the door this time?”

“Oh, it’s a poor couple about to have a child, and they are asking if we have any room for them here.”

Each person there was possibly gazing at their plate of hot food, feeling the comfort of the fireplace, and thinking about the nice, cozy bed waiting for them upstairs. Somebody would have to give up their bed and a portion of food to feed the couple if they opened that door. Not to mention that this woman was about to deliver a baby, which would mean screaming, crying, and loss of sleep for everyone.

How inconceivable that anybody called by the name of God could turn these people away—especially a woman in labor! How callous and coldhearted we can become when the preservation of self becomes our predominant thought. Can you imagine if someone had said, “Well, tell them we’ll pray for them! We will ask God to make a way!”

Similarly, if you and I are not careful, we will deceive ourselves to the point of concluding that thinking about something is the same as doing it. “I am thinking about giving to the poor; I am thinking about abandoning my life to the purposes of God; I am thinking about it, so leave me alone!” It does not mean we are cold to it, but it does not mean we are warmed to it, either. Yet remember in our opening Scripture that Jesus said to the lukewarm, “I will spew you out of my mouth.” In other words, “I am going to stop confessing you before the Father. I am confessing you as My church, but if you stay in this condition rather than becoming what the church is supposed to be in the earth, I will cease to confess you before the Father.”

I wonder if some of them in that inn in Bethlehem went right back to their Bible study. “Where were we before we were so rudely interrupted by this young couple? Oh, yes, here we are.”

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily...” (Isaiah 58:6–8).

The tragedy of it all is that these people knew the Scriptures inside out. They could quote verses; they could argue it all theologically. However, when Jesus Himself came knocking at the door, they failed to take to heart what they had learned.

In the coming days, I believe there will be many people knocking, looking for help as calamitous times hit.

Now some of them might have argued in their own defense, “Well, it makes no sense to give to others in calamitous times like these. Surely God knows that we need a supply for ourselves! Why would He ask us to take everything He has given us and use it to alleviate human suffering?” Yet throughout Scripture we see that the ways of God are not the ways of man. God took Elijah midway through a famine, and when he had run out of food and water, the Lord basically

instructed him, “Now go to a starving widow, for I have commanded her to feed you” (see 1 Kings 17:9). The ways of God do not make sense to the natural man! The natural man is inclined to gather his supply—to hide it and lock himself behind closed doors, leaving God to deal with human need. But God says to us today, just as He said to Elijah, “If you go to the widow—if you move toward the starving during the time of famine—not only will she be provided for, you will be provided for as well. I will unlock to you the resources of heaven.”

■ KNOCKING IN JERUSALEM

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Luke 13:34–35, NKJV). Jesus knocked in Bethlehem, and He knocked again in Revelation. But He also knocked in Jerusalem—the city of God, the very center of what was supposed to represent God in the earth. Jesus came and knocked on the door of their hearts, only to find them calloused to the point of becoming enraged when He healed somebody on the Sabbath day.

Yet in this passage we see the incredible mercy of God. Jesus said, “You shall not see Me again until...” He knocked and they resisted, but He was still willing to come back and knock again. “And I will come to you when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’” (see Luke 13:35). The word blessed in the original text conveys the meaning of speaking well of Jesus as He actually is; of letting one’s life come into agreement with what He says is right. Jesus

was not talking about merely quoting the phrase. Rather, He was referring to the heart that finally agrees, “Jesus, Your words are right. Your direction for my life is the only one that I want, and I will do whatever You tell me to do. Oh, Lord, knock on the door of my heart again!”

Once we have started locking the door in one area of our life, it becomes very easy to lock the door everywhere.

Imagine if the people in Bethlehem had opened the door for Mary and Joseph that night—what a difference there would have been in that inn! Imagine the glory that would have come down—the angels who appeared on the mountainside would have appeared inside the inn—and the miraculous would have abounded. Everyone would have been awestruck had they only taken the time to let this poor couple inside. Oh, if you and I could only see that when we turn our hearts away from helping the poor and afflicted, we are actually robbing ourselves of the very presence of God!

In the coming days, I believe there will be many people knocking, looking for help as calamitous times hit. Yes, it will be inconvenient to extend help; yes, it is going to cost us. So what will we do when Jesus knocks?

It really all depends on our response to His knocking on our hearts today. We deceive ourselves in thinking that we will suddenly open the door and enter into the fullness of God’s work, while we have been building up resistance to God all along. Once

we have started locking the door in one area of our life, it becomes very easy to lock the door everywhere. We can even become religious in it—self-justified, growing in knowledge but not growing in grace.

■ ONE DAY THE DOOR WILL BE SHUT

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” (Luke 13:24–27).

What an incredible statement! Jesus was saying that a day is coming when the door will be shut, but this time we will not be shutting the door—it will be God. Just picture the day when the religious will be banging on the door of “the ark” one more time, crying, “We studied the Bible, we sang your songs, we were in church every Sunday!” But God will reply, “None of it ever became part of you. You were hot for the truth but cold to its application.” In other words, they loved the truth of God only until it brought them to the point of truly following Jesus—of being what He has called His people to be in the world. Unfortunately, this means that they will later find themselves locked out of the provision of God—locked out of the ability to see; locked out of the compassion of God simply because they refused to open the door at His knocking.

Consider the parable Jesus told about those who will receive a reward at the end of their days: “...come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:34–36). Notice that the Lord will not be saying, “Well done, Carter Conlon, you pastored a church of eight thousand in New York City! Enter thou into the joy of the Lord!” Of course those things are great, but they do not really matter in the long term. It is not about what I do in ministry; it is about who I am as a Christian individually. I can be preaching from a pulpit yet closing the door of compassion in my heart. If any man sees his brother in need and shuts his bowels of compassion, how can he say the love of God dwells in him?

The way you open the door for the Lord is by coming into full agreement with Him.

■ WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF YOU?

Could it be that God is knocking on the door of your heart today? Did you feel it in the club you were in last night? Did you feel it as you were looking at pornography on the Internet? Is God asking you to leave a place where you should not be and come home?

Perhaps the Lord is knocking and simply asking you to have an open heart—to be willing to be given for the sake of others. Sometimes just having the willingness is a victory

in itself. In any case, no matter what the issue may be for you today, it is time to open the door.

The way you open the door for the Lord is by coming into full agreement with Him. It is when you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus, what You say is right, and where You lead is where I need to go. Let this be the pattern of my life. Do not let me justify wrong; do not let me call indifference holy; do not let me call selfishness godly. Do not allow me to hide from human need, for I know that You are willing and able to meet those needs through my life.”

As you heed His knocking and open wide the door of your heart, Jesus says to you, “Now I am going to come in. You and I are going to sit down and dine together, and I will unfold a banquet before you. I am going to unlock to you a supernatural supply of strength and provision—and many lives will be touched in this generation for My name’s sake!” Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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This newsletter is an edited version of “WHAT WILL WE DO WHEN JESUS KNOCKS?” a sermon given on **December 12, 2010** in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.

CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	