

Dear Friend,

I hope this letter finds you well and encouraged in your journey to find the full purpose of God for your life. The book of Jude, verse 3, gives us understanding of how that pathway can become known: *"I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."*

The good news is that the way of faith, which Christ has outlined for each of our lives, doesn't have to be a mystery! God has made it available to each of us. When the early believers came out of the Upper Room, there was no ambiguity in their hearts about the divine purpose for their lives or about where the power would come from to accomplish it.

I suppose you could say that in that room all the hindrances that could obscure this purpose were dealt with. That's why this accompanying message on the "foxes" in our lives is so important. This world is waiting for you and me to show it the way to God again! Enjoy the newsletter.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

SPEAK TO THE FOXES

by Carter Conlon

Most agree that the Song of Solomon is, in measure, a representation of Christ and His Bride. In this book we find an important verse that I would like us to consider today. It is a request to the Bridegroom coming from those who know Him: *"Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom"* (Song of Solomon 2:15, NASB).

There are often little things in our lives that, if left untended, can greatly diminish our testimony.

When you consider the size of a vineyard, a fox seems fairly insignificant. Nevertheless, a little fox has the potential to eat up the grapes and diminish the beauty of a vineyard that is in bloom. In the same way, you and I may find ourselves in a fruitful season—a time when the things we have prayed and believed for are finally coming to pass. Yet we must take heed, for there are often little things in our lives that, if left untended, can greatly diminish our testimony. We see an example of this in the book of Matthew.

"When [Jesus and His disciples] had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not

pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes'" (Matthew 17:24–25, NKJV). Up until this point, almost everything had gone well in Peter's walk with Jesus. The disciples were being sent out two by two, the power of God was upon them, and miracles were abounding. It was a fruitful season, indeed! However, Jesus knew that there were small things in Peter's life that needed to be dealt with, lest his future fruitfulness be diminished.

First of all, when Peter was approached by the collectors of the temple tax, he lied! Neither he nor Jesus had actually paid the temple tax, which the Scriptures go on to reveal. I am sure Peter thought he had good reason to lie. After all, this was about taxes, and you wouldn't believe the number of taxes that existed in Roman times! In addition to an income tax, there was a marriage tax, a penalty tax, a death tax. People were even taxed if they wanted to use the roads to take their produce to the market. And on top of all this, there was a tax in the temple.

I can imagine Peter thinking to himself, "I pay enough taxes! I am not going to pay to go into the house of God. Forget this!" So when he was approached by those who asked if his Teacher paid the temple tax, Peter quickly responded, "Yeah, sure He does!"

Peter then proceeded to enter the temple where *"Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon?"*

From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers? Peter said to Him, *From strangers.* Jesus said to him, *Then the sons are free*” (Matthew 17:25–26, NKJV). Here we see Jesus explaining to Peter that they were actually exempt from paying this tax. “We are covered. Only strangers pay taxes, and we are not strangers to the house of God—we are sons of the One who owns the temple! Therefore there is no penalty for us.”

Be on guard, for whatever you do a little of now, you will do a lot of when depression or discouragement comes.

This is a type of you and me realizing that our sins are covered. David the psalmist once said, *“If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”* (Psalm 130:3). In other words, if there were a mark against us every time we did something wrong, thought something wrong, or looked at something wrong, none of us would have any hope! Yet, because we came to Christ, we have been forgiven. All our failings and shortcomings were fully covered by the sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary.

■ THE LITTLE THINGS MATTER

Despite the fact that they were covered, Peter’s lie about paying the tax was like a little fox on a vine. You see, when we as Christians do things that are wrong according to the Word of God—even the most seemingly insignificant things—our testimony becomes tainted in the eyes of those who are watching us. I can imagine the people in the temple saying, “That guy hangs out with Jesus, and he just lied.” Therefore, you and I must be mindful of the little things that reside in our

hearts. Sure, we can point to all the spiritual exercises that we are involved in and all the warfare conferences we have attended, but if there is a small compromise somewhere along the way, it taints the whole thing.

A little unrighteous anger, a little cheating, a little theft! “It’s not much—just a few pens and post-it notes and envelopes from the workplace. What’s the big deal? They don’t pay me enough anyway.” Just a little gossip! “I don’t tell everything about everyone, I just tell some little things about a few.” Just a little peek in forbidden places! “It’s only for a moment. I mean, God knows my heart. He knows I am not really like that.” A little sip of alcohol! “Just enough to calm my nerves. After all, Jesus changed the water into wine, didn’t He?”

However, do not forget that even just a little bit of alcohol can alter your mind and your speech. Having been a police officer for years, I have seen the broken furniture, the beat-up bodies, the abused kids. I have personally witnessed the ill effects of alcohol. Furthermore, be on guard, for whatever you do a little of now, you will do a lot of when depression or discouragement comes. You will instinctively reach for what has been offering you comfort all along.

■ LEST WE OFFEND

“Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and for you” (Matthew 17:27, NKJV). Although Jesus had just explained that they were actually exempt from the temple tax, He tells Peter, “lest we offend them.” In other words, lest our testimony be diminished in their eyes; lest they should be able to point to us on the street and say, “Thieves! They don’t pay the temple tax!”

The Apostle Paul said it this way: *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify”* (1 Corinthians 10:23, NKJV). Yes, there are things that may be permissible in our Christian walk, but we must still consider the potential impact on those around us.

How concerned are we that Christ be glorified through our lives?

Let me give you an example of this. The man who led me to the Lord began by coming to my door week after week, sharing the Gospel and telling me about how he used to be a drunk, a womanizer, and a gambler. Although I outwardly resisted his words, I could not deny that this man stood before me as a life completely transformed by the grace of God. It was something I had to reckon with. I even offered him a beer one time in order to test him. You see, if he had taken it, or if I had gone to his house and seen him with a glass of alcohol at his table, I might not be a Christian today. I would have assumed that he was a man just like me who had simply added religion to his life. Sure, he could have argued, “But it’s just a little thing!” However, in my opinion, things were black or white. If he were truly a new creation, as he explained Christians were, old things should have passed away. There was no middle ground as far as I was concerned.

And so to this day, I recognize the significance of Jesus’ words when He said, “Lest we offend them.” God forbid that anybody should ever see something in my life that would cause them to conclude that Christ is not real. Even though it may seem to be only a little thing, it matters. Now please don’t misunderstand me—I am not suggesting that if you have a glass

of alcohol, you are going to go to hell. Remember that Jesus told Peter, “We are covered.” For us, it is not about heaven and hell anymore. We are still covered, still loved, still going to stand before God’s throne and know how deeply we are loved. The issue now is about being a testimony of Christ and recognizing those things that can cause our testimony to be diminished. Therefore, you and I have to consider: Is it really worth it? How concerned are we that Christ be glorified through our lives? How much do we care that what we speak is truth, what we see is truth, and how we live is truth? How much does it matter that we be a lighthouse to this generation?

■ SUPERNATURAL PROVISION

Now that we understand why Jesus wanted to make sure that they paid the temple tax, the next question is, Why didn’t Jesus simply reach into His pocket and give Peter the coin? Why did He give him the elaborate instructions of going down to the sea, casting in a hook, and finding money in the mouth of the first fish that he pulled up? After all, if Jesus didn’t have the money in His pocket, He surely could have manufactured it there as much as He could in the mouth of a fish! What was the point of all that?

Here is what Jesus was teaching Peter, which is the same lesson He is trying to teach us today: “If you will deal with the little things now, I will open to you the way of supernatural faith and provision. I will open to you something that will bring honor to the name of God.”

Imagine Peter going down to the seashore and explaining to people that God had instructed him to catch a fish because it had money in its mouth to pay the temple tax. The other fishermen would conclude, “This guy has lost it! He has been hanging around with this Teacher too much!” Yet when Peter returned an hour later with the coin in his hand,

he would be able to testify, “It was just as the Lord told me! I caught a fish, opened its mouth, and there was money in it—enough for me and Jesus to pay the tax.”

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about all the little things that have the potential to take away your strength.

This is a picture of how when you and I make the choice to do right, we will find the supernatural provision that we need—provision to be honest, provision of joy, provision of comfort that we might have been trying to obtain elsewhere. And it all starts when we simply allow Jesus to go into the corners of the temple (that temple being you and me) and say to us, “I want to talk to you about something.” When Jesus was talking to Peter in the temple, Peter easily could have walked away and said, “Okay, I’m free, so I am not going to pay the temple tax.” Yet, thank God he didn’t, for Jesus was teaching him something about the supernatural.

You and I are facing an onslaught of evil, and we are going to need God’s supply for the days ahead.

And so I urge you to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about the little plans, little dreams, little visions—all the little things that have the potential to take away your

strength. Remember, the Lord does not do it to condemn you but rather to draw you into the supernatural. As you allow the Lord to deal with these little foxes, suddenly you will be given faith, vision for the future, and an ability to trust God. You will find yourself with spiritual authority over darkness, and power in your voice to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. And when others look at you and see this supernatural provision in your life, they will be provoked to ask you where it came from.

For example, think about when the hundred and twenty disciples burst out of the Upper Room (see Acts 2). They had been willing to do things God’s way—living in one accord with a singleness of heart and purpose. As a result, God’s supernatural provision—that coin that Peter found in the mouth of the fish—was in them now, and they stood boldly in the marketplace, filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, three thousand people who had a belly full of religion looked at them and essentially said, “Our religion doesn’t give us that! Where did you get that?” It had been miraculously given to them of God—a supply only available to those who are willing to allow their lives to be a testimony for Christ.

■ IT IS TIME TO SPEAK

The Lord foresaw that Peter would need great courage not only on that Day of Pentecost but for all of the other subsequent difficulties he would encounter. Historians tell us that Peter was eventually crucified upside down. And so we see why Jesus took the time to deal with the little foxes in Peter’s life back when the issue of the temple tax came up. Similarly, you and I are facing an onslaught of evil, and we are going to need God’s supply for the days ahead. Therefore, we must be determined to deal with the little

things now—polish the windows, check the hinges. God wants to give us power, but these little things can make a huge difference in the long run.

Don't be surprised if the enemy comes and tells you that you are not going to make it.

Once you are determined to set things in order in your life, don't be surprised if the enemy comes and tells you that you are not going to make it. Even Jesus had to face these lies, but He knew it was only a fox trying to destroy the fruit of the vineyard that God had given Him. The Scriptures tell us of a time when the Pharisees came to Jesus and said to Him, *"Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."* Jesus said *"Go, tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"* (Luke 13:31–32, NKJV). "Perfected" means that He will reach His goal. The devil will no doubt attempt to get you off course, saying, "This pathway is too hard for you. Take an easier way. You don't have to do things God's way!" Yet notice Jesus' response, "No! I cast out demons and healing is flowing. And on the third day, I am going to attain my goal by the power of God!"

No little fox is going to drive me from the plan of God for my life!

You, too, have the power to speak to the foxes in your life today. "I will entertain you in my life no longer! By the grace of God, I will be rid of you. I have been given power to confront evil and healing is flowing through my life. I am not bringing something to my workplace that calls itself Christianity but stinks as I pass by. No, I am bringing that sweet presence of God with me everywhere I go! I am going to finish my journey, and I am going to reach the full potential of what my life is called to be! No little fox is going to drive me from the plan of God for my life!"

Speak to the foxes and then simply trust the Lord for His grace and provision. As you do so, you will find that He will supply you with things you don't naturally possess—courage, power, and everything else you need to take you through the days ahead with victory and an undiminished testimony of Christ!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

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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	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	The Gate*	

*Youth and Young Adult Service

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