

Dear Friend,

Listen to the wonderful words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:7–9: *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this world knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'"*

In this fearful time, God has indeed prepared a place of calm assurance for you. Ask Him for the eyes and ears of the Spirit to understand His provision for you. Where there is light, darkness has no power. After reading the newsletter, sit still in some quiet place and wait for Him to speak to you—for He will speak. He will calm your heart and show you the way forward. Perfect love casts out all fear.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

STILL, SMALL VOICES

by Carter Conlon

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.' And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" (1 Kings 19:1–4).

This was a season of intense spiritual conflict, very much like the day in which you and I live. Secular powers were bent on eradicating the worship of the true God and as a result, Elijah, the servant of God, became discouraged to the point of depression.

Now keep in mind that Elijah had just witnessed the fire of God coming down on the altar that he had built. The sacrifice, and even the stones, wood and water were all consumed by the presence of God. When the people saw it, they cried out, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God!" (see 1 Kings 18:38–39). A day of intense conflict had seemingly been swallowed up in victory. It was so glorious that even

godless King Ahab was astonished by it. He returned to his palace and told his queen, Jezebel, all that had occurred. However, it still was not enough to change the minds of those in power who were determined that godlessness should rule.

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I can imagine what must have gone through Elijah's mind at that point: "Where can we possibly go from here? The fire of God has come down; the contest on Mt. Carmel has been won. God, I am fed up with what is going on in our society! I don't think any power can possibly be greater than what we have just witnessed, yet nothing has changed! What more can be done to convince this generation?"

I know many of us can empathize with Elijah regarding the hopelessness that creeps into the heart. We have those moments where we sigh, "God, I am so sick and tired of the sin in our streets. I am tired of the evil speech that is even on our news programs. I am weary of the vilification of those who walk with God—how we are being cast out as bigoted and out of touch."

And so we begin to think, as Elijah probably did, “I thought and hoped my life would make a difference. But I do not know what more I can do! It seems as if my strength is depleting every day.”

■ THE LORD'S RESPONSE

How did the Lord respond? He said to Elijah, “*Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice*” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

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As I read this passage, I cannot help but wonder if God was showing Elijah something more powerful than all those things he had come to associate with the power of God.

Think about it: If somebody called you and said, “Come to our church! The power of God is falling,” you would immediately have a natural impression of what that looks like. Perhaps you would expect the glory of the Lord that filled the temple in Solomon’s day or another outpouring of fire like on the day of Pentecost, breaking all the hard hearts into pieces before God. But what was God showing Elijah here?

The Lord passed by him, and a strong wind broke the rocks before him. In Elijah’s life and ministry, he had come to believe that the power of God’s divine breath could break anything in its path. However, the Scripture says that the Lord was not in that display of power. Then came an earthquake and a fire. Elijah had known that the power of God’s presence could shake the earth and cause fear to fill the hearts of the people. Yet it says that God was not in the earthquake or the fire either. Finally God came with a power that Elijah did not expect—the power of a still, small voice. In the original text, something calm is depicted; something that is not grand in the sight of man; something not associated with greatness or power to the casual observer.

Consider what the prophet Isaiah said to the people in a time of spiritual decline: “*For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.’ But you would not*” (Isaiah 30:15). In other words, “I want to give you a peace that passes understanding. I want to bring a quietness into your heart in the midst of the chaos around you—when everybody is searching for an elusive society that cannot be found apart from God; when everything seems to be spiraling out of control.”

“And you said, ‘No, for we will flee on horses’—Therefore you shall flee! And, ‘We will ride on swift horses’—Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, and at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill. Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a

God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him” (Isaiah 30:16–18).

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Here is what the Lord was saying to His people: “Okay, do it your way! Try to find strength in whatever way you think you can. But when you are tired and have finally discovered that you have no strength in and of yourself—that your own plans or even things that worked in the past will not work in this hour—I will be gracious to you there.” It will be a place of graciousness! The thought in the original text is of “a place where the strong and the weak negotiate; the poor and needy are shown kindness.”

When we have finally exhausted all of our strategies and resources, God will come and speak to us in a soft, quiet, confident way that will settle our hearts and give us the strength to go forward.

■ TWO LITTLE OLD LADIES

I have been in some incredible church services—times when the presence and power of God filled the sanctuary. But I have found that some of the more profound moments in my life were when ordinary people came with a still, small voice. For example, I remember years ago in Canada, we ended up buying our first church for a dollar. God gave me a vision of what He was about to do, so we started renovating the building accordingly. On day one, there were probably fifty people working with me. I looked around

and felt almost like Solomon when he was building the temple. “This is awesome! This place is going to glorify God!”

However, after a few hours we realized that there was a ton of work to do. By day two, there were maybe forty-five people. By day three, forty. By the following week, there was me!

I stood in that building all by myself, gazing at all that still needed to be done, and my heart just sank. “Oh, God, can the people not see what You are about to do? How long will it be before the culture of North America escapes this ‘what’s in it for me?’ attitude? How long will it be before the people understand what You have put into our hands in this season—the privilege of being a testimony in an area that has not had a testimony of God for almost a hundred years?”

While everyone had a mental picture of what the power of God should look like, suddenly something came that was not understood.

I remember the discouragement that came into my life that day—the despair of trying to lead people who were seemingly not laying hold of what God had spoken to me. My hands started to drop, and the little thought came, “Is it really worth all the work to try to get this done?”

That was one of the lowest points of my early days of ministry. It was nearing the end of the day, and the sun was going down. The ground was covered in sawdust, and the

air was thick with dust. But suddenly as I looked up, I saw the silhouette of two little ladies standing in the big arched doorway. And then they started walking toward me.

These two ladies were very old and frail. In fact, they were so old that they had to lean on each other as they shuffled toward me. As I watched them approach, wondering what they wanted, in a quiet, small voice, one of them said to me, “Pastor, you are doing a good job. The community is not the same since you came here. Don’t be discouraged.” And then the other lady took a fifty-dollar bill, put it in my hand, and said with a very soft voice as well, “Don’t give up.”

Oh, what strength came into my heart when they spoke those words! I suddenly had the encouragement that I needed to go forward. It turned out that they were Christians who lived in another area and attended another church, but they had felt led of the Lord to come and visit me.

■ A CHILD’S VOICE

In the book of Luke, we see yet another time that society was in total upheaval. People were clamoring for influence and authority and the place where the testimony of God physically dwelt was being dominated by a foreign power. It was no doubt a time of great discouragement and resentment for many, as they were being moved about the country simply for the purposes of being counted and taxed.

I can imagine the cries of the people in the inns as they read the Scriptures. “God, where are You? Don’t You have power to make a difference? Aren’t You the God who divided the Red Sea to make a way for Your people to pass through? Aren’t You the God who once sent fire to the prophet Elijah and burned the offering, turning the people back to Yourself? Show Your power once again in this generation!”

In the natural, this would have been regarded as foolishness! But this still, small voice was the power of God being made known again.

I am sure there were prayer meetings and people crying out to God, for there were religious and devout people in that generation. However, while everyone had a mental picture of what the power of God should look like, suddenly something came on the scene that was not understood. Nobody expected God to show His power in this manner and give His people strength to go forward. In the midst of all the voices, the clamoring of the hooves of Roman horses, the chanting of religionists, the plotting of those who thought they could overthrow oppression by force, the power of God appeared—and it was a child’s voice! It was not the wind, fire, or an earthquake—it was a whisper in a manger. Yet, who was able to hear it? Who was able to understand the power of God?

The religious could not hear it. The movers and shakers could not hear it. The self-focused could not hear it; neither could the Romans who were intent on dominating with power. And so God went to a few shepherds in a field, broke open the veil between time and eternity, and sent angels to burst forth singing, “Glory to God in the highest! On earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (see Luke 2:13–14). In other words, everything you have ever longed for has come!

Those shepherds rose up and went to the manger, only to find nothing

more than a baby's whisper. It would have been such a still, small voice that everybody had to be quiet in order to hear it. Yet in the end, *"the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them"* (Luke 2:20). In the natural, this would have been regarded as foolishness! But this still, small voice was the power of God being made known to man once again.

■ THE POWER OF CONFIDENT SPEECH

In the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi spoke about something that had occurred and will happen again among God's people in a season of spiritual decline. *"Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another"* (Malachi 3:16). What were they speaking? Were they not speaking to each other before this moment in history? What was it about their speech that changed?

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The Scriptures tell us that *"anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad"* (Proverbs 12:25). It also says, *"A word spoken in due season, how good it is"* (Proverbs 15:23) and instructs us to let our speech *"always be with grace, seasoned with salt"* (Colossians 4:6).

Here is the point: There is incredible power in confident, calm speech. You and I must encourage one another now! We do not need the fire or the earthquake or the wind. Those things are wonderful, and if God should choose to do that, then so be it. But there is something more powerful than all those put together, particularly in this hour. It is that still, small voice of confidence in God. It is the voice that says, "All is well. God is in control of your situation, my sister, my brother. God is still on the throne. Jesus still is the victor, and we are still more than conquerors."

You have no idea how much power God is willing to pour through your life as you walk through your day—in your neighborhood, your workplace, or your home—simply speaking words of confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God. Therefore, let us not be like the people of Isaiah's day who, when the Lord wanted to give them quietness and confidence, refused. Let us open our hearts to the Lord and begin to speak to one another in those still, small voices. We will discover the incredible privilege of being an ambassador of the power of God to this generation!

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

Live Webcast:

All our Sunday and Tuesday services can be watched live and replayed for seven days on our website.

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