

Dear Friend,

It's February the 16th and I just arrived back in the country from Mexico. While there, we had the privilege of ministering to many of the pastors of that nation and it was a joy to serve them.

While still in Mexico, I saw with you the tragic news of yet another school shooting in the United States. My heart was and is broken for the families of those killed, as well as for those traumatized and injured. If ever there was a time to pray for a spiritual awakening in this country, it has to be now!

I think of all the disaffected and lonely youth who could be reached if we as a nation were spiritually alive and sensitive to their needs again. I'm not suggesting that all violence could be stopped, but certainly some of it could be. True Christianity reaches out to the marginalized, hurting and bullied in our society. Spiritually sensitive believers are not consumed with self; rather, as many already do, they are reaching out to those who might need love and a friend to see a healthy way into the future.

Pray with me that our society will become spiritually alive again. As our leaders grasp for a solution to what seems to be an ever-growing problem, you and I know what the answer is. It's time to pray.

Yours, in Christ,
Pastor Carter Conlon

A REJOICING THAT IS DEEPER THAN KNOWLEDGE

by Carter Conlon

Although nobody knows for sure when David the king wrote Psalm 22, we do know it was during a very difficult time in his life. Some speculate that it was during the time King Saul was trying to take his life. Now remember, David was the young shepherd whom the Spirit of God came upon when the prophet Samuel anointed him with a flask of oil. He was the one who had once fought a lion, a bear and a giant, and he had led the armies of Saul into incredible victories. During those days, it probably seemed as if things could not get any better.

Suddenly, however, everything seemed to turn. The king who once honored him because of his great victory against Goliath was now mustering all the armies of Israel to pursue and kill him. And so David writes in the midst of all this, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent"* (Psalm 22:1-2). In other words, "This is not the way I thought things were going to go. I am still praying and doing my part, but where are You? Don't you see the pain and anguish I am in? Why are You not answering me?"

Just as David, we all go through seasons of despair. Sometimes we

know the reasons for it but other times we cannot point to anything tangible that is causing our foreboding sense of hopelessness. Worst of all is the feeling that God is not listening, perhaps because He is angry with us. Although there is no scriptural evidence for it, often we have the tendency to succumb to that argument. "I know in the Bible that God promises never to leave me nor forsake me. But if that is true, why does He seem so far away? Why is He not answering my prayers speedily?"

■ YOU HAVE ANSWERED ME

David goes on to say, *"Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion"* (Psalm 22:12-13). He was essentially saying, "I can feel hell laughing at me, 'You made your boast of God so why is He not answering your prayers when you need Him the most?'" Do not forget that the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour—seeking how he can get us to believe his accusations against the faithfulness of God (see 1 Peter 5:8).

David continued, *"I am poured out like water, all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My*

tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death" (Psalm 22:14–15). He was saying, "It cannot get any worse. I feel like a man who is already dead. There is no hope for me in this situation."

"For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me...They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:16, 18). In other words, "God, I was given an inheritance of You, yet all of a sudden, I can hear rumors of everybody dividing up everything that was once mine. Even my comforts are being taken away."

"I know that God promises never to leave me nor forsake me. But if that is true, why does He seem so far away?"

"But you, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!" (Psalm 22:19–21). When I read these words, I cannot help but wonder if it is even possible to go down any lower than this man was. However, it was in the worst of the worst valleys of the shadow of death—in a time of incredible trial and difficulty and hardship—that a sudden revelation came into David's heart. Right out of nowhere, he continued in that same verse, "You have answered me!" It is amazing! As he is writing, he builds no bridge to it; the verses do not go from sorrow to gradual victory. It was just a sudden revelation that hit his heart!

■ AT OUR LOWEST POINT

It gets even better after this. *"I will declare Your name to My brethren"*

(Psalm 22:22). In other words, "I am going to tell everybody that You have been faithful to me. Although I am still surrounded by enemies, somehow I know that You have answered me. I know that in all of this there is a purpose that is deeper than I can fully understand."

"In the midst of the assembly I will praise You" (Psalm 22:22). He was saying, "In fact, I am not just going to talk to individual people about what You have done, I am going to church, and my voice is going to be the loudest one there!"

"You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!" (Psalm 22:23). "Not only will I testify to my brethren and sing in church, I will start encouraging all the people around me!"

And then David saw something even bigger: *"My praise shall be of You in the great assembly"* (Psalm 22:25). He saw in his spirit a great assembly of people worshipping God. He could not fully understand it; it was only a whisper of God into a despairing man's heart. *"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive"* (Psalm 22:27–29). He saw something in the Spirit—something coming that would be so big that it would touch the entire world!

Remember that up until this point, salvation was only for the Jew. Yet, suddenly, in the midst of his hardship and despair, the whisper of God came to David's heart, telling him that what he was experiencing was so much bigger than he could understand. Of course, we know today that in

this psalm, David was writing the very words that described the scene of the greatest victory ever known to humanity—the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ! When Jesus was on the cross, He quoted the first verse of Psalm 22: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was actually quoting the entire psalm by just opening with that first verse. And so when David penned that psalm, it was as if he was being ushered a thousand years into the future to the cross! Not only that, the physical man Christ was going to come through his lineage.

Do not buy into the lie that God is not speaking to you.

The psalm ends, *"A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this"* (Psalm 22:30–31). In other words, not only will his generation be talking about this, but multiple generations will be sharing it for years to come. The interesting thing is that David did not know exactly what this was. He did not know that somebody called Jesus Christ would be Lord. He just knew it would be really big and that it would go worldwide. And this all came to him in the whisper of God at arguably the lowest point in his life!

No matter how dark your days might be, the Holy Spirit will whisper something into your heart.

■ THE SECRET OF THE LORD

And so you can be encouraged today! Just because you are down does not mean that God will not speak something to you—something

more profound than anything you have ever heard in your entire life. Do not buy into the lie that God is not speaking to you. In those low moments, the devil's plan is to convince you that God does not love you, that He is fed up with you, that your praying is pointless. But it is often in those very moments that the secret of the Lord is revealed to those who fear Him, just as it was in David's life (see Psalm 25:14).

You may not know exactly where you are going, but you will have the assurance that it is going to be a great journey.

No matter how dark your days might be, the Holy Spirit will whisper something into your heart. You may not fully understand what He is telling you now, but He will bring you to a place of rejoicing that is deeper than knowledge. You may not know exactly where you are going, but you will have the assurance that it is going to be a great journey. The Lord may not necessarily bring you out of your difficult situation right away, but if you will allow Him to speak to you in your despair, He can put gladness in your heart that can be born only of the Holy Spirit.

We must allow the Lord do this in our hearts as a church in a generation where, like David, we seem to be surrounded by bulls and dogs—growling, snarling voices. Hatred, lies, deception, and disgust seem to be everywhere around us. We all need that secret of the Lord—His inner joy. And so

we must go to Him and ask, “Lord, would You whisper Your secret into my heart today? Would You give me just a glimpse of what You have for me?”

I remember when, as a young police officer, I had just started conducting a Bible study out in the country. The Lord began speaking to my heart about something He was going to do, although I did not know what it was. But a secret inner joy began to fill my heart with the assurance that God was going to accomplish something incredible through my life.

Around that time, I went to a little church service attended by only a few people. They were singing “Blessed Assurance” and the Spirit of God amplified their voices so that it sounded as if two thousand people were singing! It was truly amazing—I heard a crowd in that moment and I knew in my heart, “Lord, this is You. You are whispering something to me about the future.”

I encourage you today to rejoice. Do not sit in despair when the Lord wants to speak to you.

More recently, I remember sitting in the sanctuary at Times Square Church joining in as we all sang, “Blessed Assurance.” I suddenly realized, “Lord, You whispered something into my heart back in that little church and ushered me fifteen or so years into the future to this very moment!” It is truly amazing when we allow God to whisper to us.

I encourage you today to rejoice. Do not sit in despair when the Lord wants to speak to you. Sometimes when the Lord speaks, your mind will not be able to comprehend what you are hearing. But in your heart, like David, you will say, “I do not know exactly what this is all about, but I know it is a lot bigger than where I am today! And so I am going to rejoice in God's faithfulness, and I am going to encourage others to do so as well!”

Carter Conlon
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MISSIONS WEEK

by Kate Hughes

On March 17, Summit students will be climbing into vans, buses and cars as they leave campus for 10 days of hands-on help in different areas along the east coast. This is Summit's version of "Spring Break," which we call Missions Week. While many other students around the country use this time to party, our students are choosing to live life with a missions focus.

During last year's Missions Week, one of the student groups traveled to Louisiana to help a woman whose home was damaged by flooding. This year, student groups will be spreading out across 10 locations in the U.S., helping in soup kitchens, building classrooms, leading youth events, ministering to the addicted, leading worship, and a myriad of other projects in between.

At the end of 10 days, the vans and buses will pull back onto campus, and stepping out, one-by-one, will be smile after smile. There will be laughter, hugging, swapping stories, and even a few tears. It is in this moment that you can witness all that has been learned

in the classroom come to life. "Living for the benefit of others" is not just Summit's slogan, it's the call Christ has on each of our lives. And for our students, it is changing everything.



Please pray for the staff and students as we head out for Missions Week 2018. The support you give Summit through prayer is invaluable. We appreciate you so much!

To watch a video of how our students have been impacted by Missions Week, scan this QR code or visit summitpa.org/missions-week-2018.



Not a bad way to spend Spring Break! If you know of a young person between the ages of 17-39 who would benefit from attending Summit, let them know today. I repeat this message so often because I truly believe the Lord is doing something unique at our Bible school.

A limited number of scholarships are available for the 2018-2019 school year. If finances are a challenge, call Summit and talk with the finance department to see if you qualify for one of our scholarship options.

If you are interested in donating to Summit and investing in our scholarship program, visit summitpa.org and click on "Support Summit." — **Pastor Carter Conlon**



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 10AM | 1PM | 3PM | 6PM

Tuesday 7PM | Prayer Service

Friday 7:30PM | The Gate
2nd & 4th Fridays (ages 18-29)

*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.

tsc.nyc