

Dear Friend,

I suppose it's easy to lose heart in the darkness and confusion of our times. Jesus Himself warned that in the last days, the hearts of many would begin to grow cold (see Matthew 24:12). However, for you and me, this is a wonderful opportunity. People are open to the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that they weren't when all seemed to be smooth sailing. Remember that in Acts chapter 27 the travelers on Paul's journey became open to the Word of God after all other options had disappeared.

A short time ago, a lovely young woman in her twenties committed suicide here in New York City. In the note she left behind, the reason she gave for taking her own life was that she "just felt numb...never happy, never sad." If that was all there was to life and it ended with death, with nothing after, she concluded that there was no reason to live out the rest. How tragic! It saddens me to think of what she could have been—a hope-filled worshiper of God—if only someone, maybe me, had the opportunity to speak with her.

I am asking the Lord today for a deeper boldness to speak and a greater heart of compassion for those we pass on the street every day who are losing heart. There must always be a Paul, an Esther—someone who is willing to go beyond themselves and bring the hope of salvation to so many who are starving for a reason to live. Today, I am praying for that person to be you.

With you, out where the people are,

Pastor Carter Conlon

WHY AM I SO DOWN?

by Carter Conlon

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, 'Where is your God?'" (Psalm 42:1–3).

I remember the days when I felt Your presence all around me. How did I lose this?

Just like the psalmist, I believe many people have this question today: Why am I so down? What happened to my former joy?

He continued, "*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me*" (Psalm 42:4). In other words, "God, what happened to me? I remember the days when I would go to church whenever the doors were open. I was so thankful. I felt Your presence all around me and could not wait to come back to the house of God. I was excited to get up every morning and open my Bible. How did I lose this? Why am I so down?"

■ AN EVIL REPORT

I will address three possible reasons why many Christians suffer from discouragement today. Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list,

and I will not be including physiological reasons.

The first reason is because they are receiving an evil report about themselves. In the days when God was bringing His people out of captivity and into a place of promise, He sent twelve spies into that land. When they returned, ten of them said, "It is everything God says it is. There is so much fruit in that land that when we cut just one bough of grapes, we had to put it on a beam between two of us to carry it back here. It is a land with supernatural provision. But it is not for us. There are giants in the land, and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight" (see Numbers 13:23–30).

On the other hand, two of the twelve spies agreed with God and said, "Yes, we can go in. Everything the Lord has promised us is ours! It is not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit. We will not win this victory by any of our own strategies. We will win it because God told us it is ours!" (see Numbers 13:30). However, the people believed the evil report of the ten spies, and as a result, "*the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night*" (Numbers 14:1).

It is so important that you and I put away all these other voices. The voice of our own heart will often condemn us, saying, "Who do you think you are to believe

for these things? You know your many failings.” And add to that the demonic voices coming from seemingly every side, saying, “Yes, the promises of God are true, but not for you because you are too weak. They are not for you because of what you did in the past.” However, you must remember that the devil is the father of all lies. He would not tell you these things if they were actually true.

We must learn to open the Bible and declare, “By the power of Your Spirit, I will become everything that You have promised I will be. I believe that when You died and were raised again, You took captivity captive and gave gifts unto men, including me. You gave me the ability to do things that I could never hope to do in my own strength. You gave me power to go where I could never hope to go by my own ingenuity. You gave me a calling by which You choose to glorify Your own Name. Therefore, I choose today to believe the report of the Lord!”

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■ DRIFTING

A second cause of spiritual despair in a follower of Christ is drifting. Many people come in and begin their walk with Christ with youthful exuberance. The psalmist said, “*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy*

and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast” (Psalm 42:4). How many people in the Body of Christ today have this testimony? “I used to go. I used to be. I used to have. I used to love.” Everything becomes “I used to”—just like Solomon, the former king of Israel. He was given a great task on the earth: maintaining the manifested glory of God and a place of prayer and worship. In order to fulfill his assignment, he was given giftings of God, just like you and I have received. According to the Word, Solomon was given wisdom unparalleled by any man before or since.

God has created in you a thirst to draw you back to Himself.

He started his ministry in simplicity—in personal prayer at night. In that time of personal prayer, God appeared to him and said, “Ask of Me what you would have, and I will give it to you” (see 1 Kings 3:5). Solomon asked for wisdom, and it so pleased the Lord that He gave him not only wisdom but riches in abundance. He gave him more than he could even hope for!

Kings bearing gifts came from all over the earth to visit Solomon. The presence of God was emanating through his life; it just could not get any better. When the temple was dedicated, Solomon knelt on the scaffold, raised his hands to heaven, and prayed that God would be glorified in the earth by answering the prayers of even foreigners who would come into His presence. God was so pleased with Solomon that His glory came down into that temple so powerfully that even the priesthood could not stand and minister (see 2 Chronicles 5:14).

Yet, sadly, Solomon eventually grew bored—bored with familiarity, which tends to be the struggle of all of humanity. People become bored in their marriages and in their jobs because they always seem to want something new.

It is almost unthinkable that Solomon, with such a great calling and all the giftings of God, began to drift. However, it is very easy to drift. In fact, it can happen so gradually that you are unaware it is happening, until one day God just seems to be far away. You go to church, and the worship is familiar but you cannot seem to touch it. You are left wondering, “Why, God?”

You see, God has created in you a thirst to draw you back to Himself. Remember, in Psalm 42:1–2, the psalmist says, “*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*” If we heed that thirst and return to the Lord, we will not end up like Solomon, who at the end of his life concluded, “*All is vanity and vexation of spirit*” (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

I want you to know a joy that is deeper than just coming to church and asking, ‘What is new for me today?’

■ TOO GREAT A CALL

The third reason why many Christians may be feeling down is because the Lord is calling them to something they have been unwilling to consider. More than once in my life it seemed as if the hand of God just lifted, and suddenly He was out of reach. I believe He does

this because we fail to consider Him otherwise. He tries to speak something to us, but we are not listening. Therefore, He creates this moment where out of exasperation, we cry, “God, where are You? What are You doing? What is happening to me? Where did my joy go?”

There comes a point when we stop living for ourselves and start living for the benefit of others.

At that point, the Lord says, “Okay, I am glad we are finally here together. Now we can talk about something. You see, I want to give you a joy deeper than you have ever known. I want you to experience the joy of the father when he covered his prodigal son and empowered him; he put shoes on his feet, struck up the band, killed the fatted calf, and began to dance before his whole household. I want you to know a joy that is deeper than just coming to church and asking, ‘What is new for me today?’ So I am going to set before you an open door, and I want you to go through it. Do not worry about how you are going to win the battle. Do not worry about the resources. Everything you need will be provided for you on this journey.”

As the psalmist said, “*Deep calls unto deep*” (Psalm 42:7). In other words, the deep need of God is calling out to the deep resource He has planted within you. So if you have been feeling down lately, perhaps God is calling you to arise and glorify Him in a way that you have not yet considered. For many

of us, our zeal was once youthful, but now God is calling us to a place of maturity where we follow Him not because we get a tingling feeling in His presence but because we know it is the right thing to do.

There comes a point where childhood must be put away—that transition in the Christian life when we stop living for ourselves and start living for the benefit of others. Rather than continually seeking to have our own needs fulfilled, our joy now comes from entering into the work of Christ—the saving of the lost. That is where the lasting presence of God is found. We no longer live with only that first felt joy of salvation; we now rejoice with the angels over every soul that repents and comes to the saving knowledge of Christ.

No matter what he had been feeling, he had a determination in his heart to say, “God, I will praise You again.”

■ A RETURN TO PRAISE

Although the psalmist was feeling down, notice how he ends the psalm: “*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God*” (Psalm 42:11). No matter what he had been feeling, he had a determination in his heart to say, “God, I will praise You again. I am done with this dryness. My testimony will no longer be ‘I used

to go with the multitude.’ Today I am going back to the house of God and getting involved in the work of God!”

I hope that is the cry in your heart today. It is the cry of the heart that will get the victory. It is those who simply lay hold of God by faith, saying, “I may not fully understand it all, but I will not let You go. I will not lose my joy. I am going to get involved in Your work on the earth. I am going to pray, and I am going to believe, speak, teach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ! And then I am going to find a joy deeper than I have ever known!”

Carter Conlon
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MISSIONS WEEK 2019 IS HERE!

This month, our students will leave campus to travel to New York City, New Jersey, Virginia, Alabama and Florida for ten days of hands-on ministry help. Missions Week is a favorite time of year for Summit students. They will take care of kids whose parents are incarcerated, serve meals, teach Sunday school, lead worship, help with construction projects and much more.

Every year students come back from Missions Week excited and inspired. They are choosing to live life for a cause greater than themselves, and spending this week serving is just one of the ways they get to live that life out loud.



Please pray for the staff and students as we head out for Missions Week 2019. The support you give Summit through prayer is invaluable. We appreciate you so much.

To learn more about Missions Week and how you can get involved, visit summitpa.org



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 | Worldwide Prayer Meeting

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

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

tsc.nyc