

Dear Friend,

In 1 Samuel 30:6 we read of a time in King David's life when discouragement was knocking fiercely on the door of his heart. To combat this moment, the scripture tells us that "*David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.*"

Several times over the course of my Christian life I have known what this encouragement looks like. Just this morning I was reading parts of my own life story in the book entitled *It's Time to Pray*. Although that may seem self-serving, it's good to remember how faithful God has been to each of us in the past. Thinking on His past faithfulness gives us both faith and hope for the future! I am convinced that is what David did that gave him the courage to get up and keep going.

Today, I encourage you to think back and remember how loving and kind Jesus has been toward you in the past. It will give you courage to rise again from your present situation and keep going for His glory. As with David, even the people closest to you who would like to blame you for their present troubles, just might get up and get back into the battle with you (meaning, on your side) once more.

In that time, everyone won an amazing and supernatural victory. You and I never know what amazing things will happen if we take the time today to encourage ourselves in the Lord.

Yours, encouraged,

Pastor Carter Conlon

LUSTFUL PRAY-ERS

by Carter Conlon

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3). The original King James Version says, "*That ye may consume it upon your lusts.*"

"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

How would you like to get a letter like that? Well, as a matter of fact, you did. It came from the hand of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, given to the apostle James. Although he wrote it to the early Church, it has just as much validity for us today as it did for them.

Many want this new life of Christ while retaining their love for the things of this world.

James was considered the head of the Church in Jerusalem,

therefore, his letters carried much weight and authority. He wrote this particular epistle to many who had been dispersed because of persecution that arose against the Church. He was trying to convey something about what God wanted to do through their lives, yet they were having difficulty breaking away from their old way of thinking and living.

This is the battle we all go through. It is very difficult to let go of old ways of thinking, old habits, old practices, old pursuits of what we assume will make us happy. We often fail to understand that we fully belong to Jesus Christ when we come to Him, and He has the right to decree what our life is going to look like. Many want this new life of Christ while retaining their love for the things of this world. Sadly, there is a theology in our generation that proclaims this to be the gospel. Yet James calls this friendship with the world adultery against God.

■ SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

In the book of Matthew, Jesus addressed His disciples on a similar theme: "*Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things"* (Matthew 6:31-32). In other words, self-focus was evident

in the way you used to live—in all of your pursuits. Do not let these things govern your future any longer, but “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33).

I can bear witness to this promise. Many years ago—after having given up my career, dedicating my family, and founding a church—I came home from preaching in eastern Canada to find my house burned to the ground. We lost everything; we did not even have clothes for our children, and ended up having to stay at the home of another pastor.

Do not simply try to fit Jesus into your plan or your old pursuits. Seek His will for your life.

One January morning, I went outside and said to God, “Well, Lord, I’ve done my part. I am seeking Your kingdom and Your righteousness, and You said all these things shall be added to me. So I’m not going to worry about what I’m going to eat, or what I’m going to drink, or what I’m going to wear. I’m putting it all in Your hands, and I’m going for a run.” And that is exactly what I did. I can testify today that God was beyond faithful to our family.

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Seek His value system, His heart. Do not simply try to fit Jesus into your plan or your old pursuits. Seek His will for your life. There is something God has given you to do that will give glory to His name, but you will not know it until you put away these other things that want to occupy so much of our thinking and time.

■ THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

Looking again at our opening scripture, James said: “*You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures*” (James 4:3). There is no power in prayer when it is exercised toward ourselves. On the other hand, when prayer is used for the sake of other people, there is an incredible promise that Jesus Himself gave in Mark 11. Let’s first take a look at what was happening before He gave the promise.

Jesus was heading to Jerusalem from a town called Bethany, and He came across a fig tree. “[Jesus] was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it” (Mark 11:12–14).

Remember, the whole purpose of Jesus’ coming to earth was to die for the sins of humanity. He came to break the bondage of sin, hell and darkness, and to give us a new life. He was to leave us on the earth empowered by His Holy Spirit as a witness of who He is before bringing us home again to Him for all of eternity.

Now, if His focus had been on Himself when He walked up to that fig tree and was hungry, He would have just said to the tree, “By this time tomorrow when I pass by again, you will have fruit!” That is what some of us would do. In fact, He could have just commanded, “Bear fruit right now,” and the tree would have done so. But you see, it was not about Him.

The fig tree, in my understanding, represents the effort of the whole of humankind to cover itself with

fig leaves, just as Adam and Eve once did in the Garden of Eden. It is humanity’s effort to be righteous or clean in the sight of God by human effort, human will, human ingenuity—believing the lie that in ourselves, we can be as God is and judge what is good and what is evil.

“I am going to the cross, and I am going to destroy this power of arrogance that entered the human heart.”

So as Jesus walked up to that tree, I am convinced that He was looking at Adam and Eve back in the Garden, covered with fig leaves instead of the glory of God. And He says, “*Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.*” In other words, “I am destroying your power to deceive. I am destroying your power over humankind that causes men, women and children to believe that in themselves, they can be godly. I am going to the cross, and I am going to destroy this power of arrogance that entered the human heart. I am going to make a way into eternal life for everyone who comes to Me, believing.” You see, when He cursed that tree, it was not about Him, it was about us!

Now from there He went into the temple—the place where God’s presence was supposed to be on the earth. It was a place where God had set apart a people for Himself, just as you and I are meant to be in our generation.

“Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to

them, *‘Is it not written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it a den of thieves’*” (Mark 11:15–17). When Jesus walked into the temple, all he saw were tables and money changers with goats and doves. You see, when the focus is on self, it is only natural that the house of God turns into a place of merchandise and convenience. Now this is the only time in the Bible you see the tangible anger of God. Fury rose up in the heart of the Son of God because of what self-focus had done to the house of God—a casual treating of what we are called to be on the earth.

There is an incredible grace of God available when we are ready to admit that we cannot break free from self-focus without His help.

The next morning, Jesus and His disciples returned and saw the fig tree, dried up from the roots. Peter said, *“Oh, look, Master. The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”* (Mark 11:21).

This is where Jesus makes an incredible promise: *“Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatsoever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive*

them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:22–24). If the focus of our prayers is that people be released from the grip of delusion, then we have the power to speak to these mountains in our society today—mountains of incivility, gender confusion, immorality, violence. Jesus promises that they will be cast into the sea!

■ THE POWER OF PRAYER REDISCOVERED

I believe that in the last days, the Church is going to rediscover this incredible power we have in prayer. In fact, I believe the Church is going to finish as she began—that we are going to gather together in one accord and one spirit, just as they did on the day of Pentecost. Even if we have to first ask God to raise us out of weakness and mediocrity, to give us power over self-focus—and then to send us out into the marketplace with something supernatural. After all, James said, *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6). There is an incredible grace of God available when we are ready to admit that we cannot break free from self-focus without His help.

When you are found in that place of humility and surrender before God, mountains can move.

James continued, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double*

minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:7–10). In other words, if your joy is coming from other than what God has destined your life to be, then let that be taken away.

Humble yourself before the Lord and ask Him to replace that old value system with something new. *“God Almighty, do not let me claim to be married to You yet have a heart that is distant from Yours. Do not let the indictment of James chapter four be mine. Help me escape self-focus, and bring me into what my life is supposed to be!”*

When you are found in that place of humility and surrender before God, mountains can move. It is in that place that prayers are answered and the supernatural begins to take over the natural. Hell gives way to heaven, captivity gives way to freedom, blindness gives way to sight, and pain gives way to healing! Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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NEW WORSHIP MUSIC FROM SUMMIT

Summit has released our debut worship song, “You Will Be”, written and produced by staff and alumni!

Inspired by an on-campus prayer meeting, the lyrics to “You Will Be” were taken from words found in Galatians 4: 6–7, which read:

“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”

We are not just His sons and daughters, but heirs! He is in us! This message has been our heart’s cry; spilling out from the classrooms and chapels into the

dorms and everyday life. Something transformative is happening during our times of prayer on campus.

Through this lens, Summit is writing and producing original music. “You Will Be” was written, recorded and produced at Summit Sounds Studio, our campus recording studio. The instruments and vocals feature Summit staff, alumni, students—and a few Times Square Church musicians too!

To watch our “You Will Be” music video, head over to Summit International School of Ministry’s YouTube channel. You can also find Summit music on Spotify or Apple Music.



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