

Dear Friend,

According to the words of Jesus, you and I have been given a specific calling in this world.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5: 14–16).

It's time for you and me to move from faith to action. When we pray, Jesus will show us what we are to do and where we are to shine for Him.

People are looking for hope in this perilous time. Families and children—and, might I say, the very future itself—are now dependent on us! This is not a time for us to be hidden, so let's move into the fullness of our calling. If we have the courage to ask, Jesus will answer.

It's time to pray!

With you in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

A DRY STICK AT A RELIGIOUS MEETING

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 am tired of going to bed with these thoughts from hell permeating my mind, saying, 'Where is your God? Why are you so dry if God is with you?'"

Perhaps you have felt like this psalmist. You say, "Lord, I am thirsty for You. In the midst of what seems to be a place of plenty, I have gone dry. I can barely sing my songs of praise and worship and I feel like I don't have anything left to give. What has my life amounted to? When will You speak to me? I am tired of crying at night; I am tired of going to bed with these thoughts from hell permeating my mind, saying, 'Where is your God? Why are you so dry if God is with you?'"

In the Old Testament we read of Aaron, a man likely plagued with such thoughts. He was essentially dragged into service because somebody else invited him. I don't think he was overly certain that God was the one who had initiated the ministry in his life. Nevertheless, because somebody else insisted that he was needed, he went along with the plan.

Today, some people are like that in the house of God—uncertain that they personally heard the call to ministry because somebody else told them they should get involved. Now they find themselves asking, "God, am I in the right place? And if I am, then where is the evidence of Your presence in my life?"

We see in the Bible that as Aaron went along in ministry, he made mistakes. In fact, he made a huge one when he crafted a wrong image of God before the people (see Exodus 32:2–5). This mistake was pointed out by his own brother, Moses, and subsequently by many people around him. Everywhere he went, I am sure there were whispers, "There is the man who did that thing."

Of course, we all make mistakes. When I was a young pastor, after having been a police officer with a bachelor's degree in law, it was natural for me to read the Bible

and see the legal side of God. I saw all the requirements—all the do's and do not's. As I started traveling the country, I became somewhat masterful at discerning the underbelly of what was going on among the people because of my spiritual gifting. I could go to a church and fill the altar with weeping people. But I once said to Pastor Teresa, "The Jesus that I preach is deficient." Now, I did not believe that Jesus Christ actually was deficient, but the Christ *that I was preaching* was.

"Well, why do you say that?" she asked.

Rest assured that you did not just randomly slide into a place. You have been led by the Lord to do everything that you have done for His kingdom.

"Because I am filling the same altars in the same churches, year after year, with the same people crying the same tears over the same sins and struggles," I explained. I realized that the Jesus I was preaching was bringing everybody under conviction of their sins and shortcomings, but He was not bringing them into a life of victory. I was so discouraged that I went away for three days to fast and pray. "God, You must help me in this!" I came out of that time of fasting with a message that I did not even understand and I returned home doubly discouraged. I went back to prayer and said, "Lord, You have to show me who You really are. You must show me the other half of this coin." And He did. He gave me a

message about the New Covenant called "The Shout of a King."

After I came into a deeper understanding of the grace of God, I felt so bad about my previous preaching that I had a reunion several years ago with the people I had once pastored in Canada. I also met with those who had come under their influence, and I asked their forgiveness for not preaching the full counsel of Christ to them. Yes, we all make mistakes along the journey.

■ EVIDENCE OF HIS CALLING

At a certain point in Aaron's life, another generation arose whom the Bible describes as "men of renown." Two hundred fifty of them rose up and essentially said to Moses and Aaron, "Listen, you guys have had your time; it is our turn now. We hear from God just like you do" (see Numbers 16:1–3). I can just picture Aaron standing there with his staff—basically a dry stick—in his hand. He did not have a legacy of faithfulness in the sight of God. He just had a dry stick and a somewhat ignoble history. Now before him stood leaders who were new, innovative, smart and powerful. And to add insult to injury, Moses spoke to these men, saying, "*Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord.*" And then he says this: "*And what is Aaron that you complain against him?*" (Numbers 16:11). In other words, "What is Aaron? I mean, I can see you rising up against the Lord, and maybe against me, but him?" Now Aaron was being belittled by his own brother!

Imagine standing there and thinking, "Yeah, you are right. Who am I that anybody should rise up against me? I have no history of faithfulness; I have made mistakes. All I have is a dry stick in my hand." Now, that staff represented the calling of God, but it was dried out because it had been dead for so long with no

moisture left in it. We get like that sometimes in our service to God—we just go dry, and it seems like there is no life left in us.

Then God said to Moses, "I am going to show you the evidence of whom I have called. I want every house of Israel to bring forth their staff. There will be twelve rods, and I want you to put these in the place of meeting. I will show you who belongs to Me and who does not" (see Numbers 17:1–5).

I believe God is reminding us, "It is My choice, not man's choice. I called you; I put you where you are." Rest assured that you did not just randomly slide into a place. You have been led by the Lord to do everything that you have done for His kingdom. Maybe all you have left today is a dry stick in your hand and, just like Aaron, you say, "There are so many people around who could do this much better than I can." Yet suddenly God says to you, "Come meet with Me. Everybody who is called by My name, come and meet with Me. Put those dry sticks down in front of that tent of meeting, and I will show you whom I have called."

Sometimes you and I do not realize how gracious and involved in our lives God is until we get to the point where we are dry.

I can see Aaron coming with his stick, just tossing it into the pile, thinking, "Man, nothing is going to happen." It is like when you and I get to the point where things just seem so hopeless, yet we perform one last act of faith. "Maybe I am

called of God; maybe God did lead me to do what I am doing.”

All the rods were placed in front of the Tabernacle overnight. The next day, Moses went to the Tabernacle and “*behold the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds*” (Numbers 17:8). The rods of all the people who had great abilities and leadership qualities were still dry, but Aaron’s had sprouted and blossomed miraculously! That is the evidence of the calling.

I am about to do something supernatural in you and through you—something that can be done only by My hand.

I can just picture Aaron walking through the camp, saying, “Would anybody like an almond?” If somebody picked one, another one would immediately appear. This man whom so many had written off was not written off by God! As he held that rod in his hand with fresh leaves coming out and new blossoms appearing every day, the scent of it must have been amazing. The people would have had to stand back and wonder at him, saying, “How is this possible after all this man has done?” It is only possible by the mercy of Almighty God!

Sometimes you and I do not realize how gracious and involved in our lives God is until we get to the point where we are dry. Suddenly it all has to be by His power. We do not feel the best about ourselves, but we come to the tent of meeting,

and the presence of God is there to say, “Now I am going to show you who belongs to Me—whom I have called.”

That is why the prophet Isaiah cried out, saying, “*Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman,*” says the Lord. *‘Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited’* (Isaiah 54:1–3). God was saying, “I am about to do something supernatural in you and through you—something that can be done only by My hand. All I require of you is to pick up that rod; pick up the calling that I gave you.”

■ A SUPERNATURAL LIFE

Remember, you and I are not called because we are noble. We are not called because we are strong or of royal birth. We are called because we are weak and foolish. We are called because we need the strength of God to stand in this hour.

The presence of God in your life will become the evidence that you belong to Him and are called by Him!

We all are aware that we are living in the last moments of time and everyone is called of God to make a

difference. It is time to throw your dry stick into the pile and pray—even if you have been wondering if God really called you to be where you are. Have the courage to bring your dryness to the tent of meeting and simply say, “Lord, if I am going to live, it is going to be You who causes me to live. If I am going to serve, it is going to be You who empowers me. If Your name is going to be brought to reputation through me, it is going to be by Your grace alone!” After you pray, you will pick up your stick again, and it will have new life. And it is going to have fruit. The presence of God in your life will become the evidence that you belong to Him and are called by Him!

Remember, nobody did anything to those rods outside the tent of meeting—God did it all. All we do is admit our condition and bring our dryness to Him, and then He does everything else. He brings the blossoms, He brings the fragrance, He brings the ripe fruit—He does it all! That way, no one can glory in anything but Him. So let’s believe God for this promise of a supernatural life—the very life of God being lived inside of us, bringing healing and hope to this generation!

Carter Conlon
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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 | Young Adults Connect
 - Emer ge Event (18–35)
 - Teens Night (1st Friday)
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