

Dear Friend,

As we enter the year 2020, we must inevitably ask the question: "How will we face the opposing darkness and what will a victorious church look like?"

Part of the answer is found in 1 Chronicles 12:33, "*Of Zebulun there were fifty thousand who went out to battle, expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep ranks.*" In other words, each soldier knew, in spite of his personal skill and training, that without the persons on his left and his right walking with him, he most likely would be defeated. I have often said that "division is a peacetime luxury (or folly) but it is never a winning formula in time of battle."

Make no mistake about it. We are in a spiritual war now for the very soul of America. The time of saying, "I have no need of you" is over; that is, if we intend to be on the winning side. Today, read Psalm 133. In plain and simple language God's Word tells us that if we will walk together in unity, He will command the blessing of life. It's really that simple. The choice is now ours.

With you, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

NOT WITHOUT YOU: THE COMMITMENT TO UNITY

by Carter Conlon

"Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:17–21).

Here we see the apostle Paul talking about the grave necessity of unity within the Body of Christ. This group of Corinthian believers was gathering for a time of worship and thanksgiving in the presence of God, yet something was occurring in their midst that was displeasing to the Lord.

Paul continued, "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (1 Corinthians 11:23–24).*

Paul begins contrasting the heart of Christ with the selfishness of the Corinthian fellowship. He was saying, "This is not what the

worship of God is supposed to look like. When you come together, I want you to remember how the Lord Jesus took the cup and said, "*This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me"*" (1 Corinthians 11: 25). In contrast to the Corinthian church, Christ was willing to be broken and poured out for the sake of other people.

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"As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). There is power in that proclamation. There is power when we as the Church of Jesus Christ turn away from focusing on our own problems and needs and instead look to the needs of one another. The fellowship that Christ is looking for in His Church is found when we begin to ask, "Is there anybody I can allow myself to be broken for?"

Now, I am not talking about everybody running around with

\$50 in his hand, looking for somebody to give it to. I am talking about having a word for somebody who is discouraged; inviting somebody who looks lonely for a cup of coffee—being willing to have the plans of your day broken in order that you might be poured out for the sake of somebody else. Paul says, “If you do this, you become a proclamation of the Son of God who came to this earth and poured out His life for the sake of others.”

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). Many quote this verse with regard to people who have sin in their life yet they partake of the communion table. While it can have some application in that way, that is not the context in which Paul was speaking. He was talking about being given to one another in the Body of Christ just as Christ was for us.

There is no such thing as “just me and God.” No, we are grafted into a body.

He went on to say, *“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged”* (1 Corinthians 11:28–31).

An “unworthy manner” means coming to the communion table and partaking of the promise of the One who was given for us in totality, yet not realizing that we are called into that kind of fellowship with one another. This is the seriousness

of being committed to one another in the Body of Christ. Failure to understand what it means to be part of the Lord’s body is the reason many are spiritually weak. There is no such thing as “just me and God.” No, we are grafted into a body. Casual interaction with one another is a good thing to a point, but the call of the Lord is into something deeper.

You are exactly where God wants you to be! He set you where you are to glorify Him in the unique way that only you can.

■ ESTEEM ONE ANOTHER

Biblical unity requires that we learn to not merely tolerate each other but to actually esteem one another. Paul went on to say, *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:12–13). In other words, there is one Church composed of people from different cultures, backgrounds, and socioeconomic states—people who are known and those who are not.

“For in fact the body is not one member, but many....If the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (1 Corinthians 12:14–18). You are exactly where God wants you to be! He set you where you are, to be what you are, to do what you

do, to glorify Him in the unique way that only you can.

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker, are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty” (1 Corinthians 12:21–23). Everybody is of value in the kingdom of God. There are no big people and little people. Everyone has an incredible, inestimable worth in the sight of Almighty God.

In the next chapter, Paul sums it up with what I consider to be the glue that holds it all together: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging symbol. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails”* (1 Corinthians 13:1–8). This is the kind of love that the Lord calls us to have for one another!

I was doing a radio interview recently, and the interviewer said to me, “Pastor, I have read your book. The stories about what God has done around the world are amazing. You have done outreaches, you have spoken to governments, you have seen civil war come to an end.

But now tell me and our listening audience: What is the greatest miracle of all that you have seen in your life over the years?"

Without hesitation, I replied, "The greatest miracle of all is that I love people."

With deep emotion in her voice, she said, "I never, ever would have thought that would be your answer. With all these things that have happened over the years— all these wondrous things you could have spoken about."

When people witness the unity of the Church, suddenly there is a stirring in their hearts that says, "I want that Christ in my life!"

"If you knew me before I got saved—if you knew the journey and how difficult it has been—you would understand what I am talking about!" I said. I really do love people now. I don't fake it. It is something God put in my heart as I was willing to take the journey.

■ THE BLESSING OF UNITY

Clearly, this commitment to walking in unity and love is a huge undertaking. However, there are incredible blessings that God promises will be the result. King David wrote, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down to the edge of his garments*" (Psalm 133:1-2). Where there is biblical unity, something begins flowing through members of the

Body of Christ that cannot be produced by anything in this world.

"It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion" (Psalm 133:3). A thirst is satisfied, not only in God's people, but in all those around as well.

"For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore" (verse 3). And God commands a blessing of life! Remember in chapter two of Acts when the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room in one accord? They were unified with God and with one another—not in strength, but in weakness. They all knew they needed God as well as each other. Suddenly the door opened, and the hundred and twenty went out into the marketplace, overturning the whole known world of their day. You see, when people witness the unity of the Church, suddenly there is a stirring in their hearts that says, "Whoever their God is, is God! I want that Christ in my life!"

As a man of God, not just as a pastor, I have made a determination in my heart: I am going to heaven, but not without you. Not without the young; not without the old; not without the educated; not without the uneducated; not without those with whom I feel comfortable and those with whom I am ill at ease. Unity means the whole Body of Christ going beyond convenience—where we are not content just to get to heaven ourselves; we are unwilling to go without those around us.

Think about it! Rightfully, Jesus could have stayed in heaven and fully enjoyed it forever. He did not have to come here. But in His heart, He said, "I am not going to enjoy eternity without you." And so the love in the

heart of God compelled Him to break through the canopy of eternity into time where He walked among us, endured our frailties and went to a cross. Paul said, "This is the Christ I presented to you." This is the manner in which we must learn to interact with one another.

We have a huge fight ahead of us. We need the whole Body of Christ.

Keep in mind that in this last hour of time, we must realize that not everybody in the Church does everything the same. Unity is more important than being in agreement on every little single point of doctrine. We may have opposing viewpoints on some things, but if we can come back to that common ground where salvation is—by God's grace, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ—then I can take the hand of any man or any woman anywhere in the Body of Christ and say, "You are my brother. You are my sister. Let's go together. I am not going to take this journey without you."

We have a huge fight ahead of us for our country, our culture, our families, our children. We need the whole Body of Christ. And so by the Spirit of God, may we not fall into the trap of division thinking somehow it is holy. May we go together as one body, walking in the love of Christ and the incredible blessings of unity that God has promised!

Carter Conlon
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HAPPY NEW YEAR! COME VISIT SUMMIT IN 2020

We can hardly believe 2020 has arrived! Much has happened since fall 2019 and we eagerly look forward to all that God has for us in the second half of our academic year.

The arrival of 2020 means we are beginning to look ahead to next fall. Academic calendars are being finalized, applications processed, scholarships delegated. It is a full and exciting time!

We would love YOU to come visit us this year. Here are a few dates this semester when our campus is open to you and your loved ones:

February 20–21

Revival Services

Two days of services and seminars with Times Square Church leadership

March 9

Summit Days Open House

Drop in on a class, take a campus tour

May 18–20

Summit Week

Spend a week at Summit experiencing the life of a student (more info coming soon!)

For more information, visit summitpa.org or give us a call at 717.865.2000. We look forward to meeting you!



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 | Young Adults Connect
Emer ge Event (18–35)
Teens Night (1st Friday)
Small Groups
Special Events

Live Webcast:

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

tsc.nyc