

Dear Friend,

Listen, in your heart, to the following promise which comes to you today: *"But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10).

Imagine that! Have you thought recently that God has something He wants to do for you and through your life that you haven't even thought about, let alone believed that it was even possible? Yet, that's who God is and through His Son Jesus Christ, it's what He does.

According to 1 Corinthians 1:26–28, He takes us when we feel foolish, weak, insignificant, undesirable, and worthless for the express purpose of glorifying His own name by manifesting His power through us in our weakness! Which brings us back to the beginning of this thought. All He requires of us is to *ask!* *Ask*, and when He speaks to you, *believe*. *Ask*, and when He calls you to move forward, *go*. *Ask*, because you'll never know what He has for you until you do.

Do it now! *Ask!* It's time to pray.

Asking with you,

Pastor Carter Conlon

THE JOY OF ASKING by Carter Conlon

"Until now you have asked nothing in My name" (John 16:24).

Interestingly, Jesus spoke these words to His disciples who, by this point, had walked with Him for quite some time. Without a doubt they had asked a lot of questions along the way, just as you and I do in our Christian walk. Yet suddenly He made this statement, and then He added, *"Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."* In other words, *"There is a joy that you have not entered into yet. You have a lot of knowledge and a lot of experience and you have witnessed things that other people have never seen. But you have not really been a partaker of something I want to give you now. If you will open your heart to it, it will bring you into a place of joy."*

Isn't that amazing? The asking brings joy—not just a partial joy, but a full joy! Certainly, we ought to discover what Jesus meant by asking in His name. But first, let's take a look in the book of John to see some of the things His disciples had already asked, for it is likely that you and I have had similar questions along our journey with Him.

■ THE QUESTIONS THEY ASKED

In John 1:38, Peter's brother, Andrew, and some others started following Jesus. When Jesus turned around and asked what they were seeking, they asked Him, *"Where are you staying?"* In other words, *"We are willing to come to Your house*

and hear what You have to say to us." They felt they had found a teacher worth following. That is where it all began for most of us, as well. Before I was a believer in Christ, I remember sitting in the back of a church saying aloud, *"If You are real, I wouldn't mind knowing who You are."*

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As the disciples journeyed on with Jesus, they began to realize that He had a source of nourishment they did not understand yet. *"His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.' Therefore the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'?" Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"* (John 4:31–35).

Jesus was explaining that there was nourishment available for them, but

the implication was that they had to go into the harvest to get it. You can get knowledge by sitting in church, which is wonderful, but this nourishment—this ability that is God-given; the strength that comes only from the Holy Spirit—does not come until you start to walk into the work of God.

There comes a point in every Christian's life when we make the choice to keep walking with Jesus—not because we understand everything but because we know that He is the source of life, and He is leading us on a pathway of eternal value.

The disciples later discovered that Jesus' words had limitless power to heal. A nobleman came and said, "My son is at home and he's at the point of death. Will you come and heal him?" (see John 4:49). Jesus did not go to the man's house or even to the man's town. He simply said, "Go your way; your son lives" (John 4:50). There was no limitation by distance; He spoke and it was done! Can you imagine the questions that the disciples must have had in their hearts: "What kind of man is this?" It was probably similar to the time they were in a boat during a storm, and Jesus stood up to rebuke the wind and the sea. They then asked one another, "What kind of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (see Matthew 8:27).

In John 6:53, Jesus declared, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." In other

words, "There is something of Me that you need in order to truly have life." The majority of His disciples at that time turned and walked away, concluding, "This is too hard." It is the same way in the Christian Church today. People walk with Jesus, assuming that the Christian life is simply supposed to make them healthy, wealthy and wise. And then when the trials come, they conclude, "This is not what I signed up for. It's too hard."

Jesus turned to His twelve disciples and asked if they were going to leave as well. Peter responded with the question: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). In other words, "We are staying because we know You have the words of eternal life—not because we understand it, and not because we feel we can do it. We do not know where else to go." There comes a point in every Christian's life when we make the choice to keep walking with Jesus—not because we understand everything but because we know that He is the source of life, and He is leading us on a pathway of eternal value.

Later, Jesus tells His disciples, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward" (John 13:36). Peter then asks Jesus, "Lord, why can I not follow You now?" (verse 37). And Thomas asks, "You tell us to follow You, but we don't even know where You are going! How can we know the way?" (see 14:5). Similarly, you and I have had times when we ask, "God, what is it that You want from my life? How am I supposed to know the way? I have walked with You, I have studied Your Word, I have seen Your power. Now You are calling me to follow You, but I do not even know where You are going! How am I supposed to do that?"

■ I WILL SHOW MYSELF THROUGH YOU

In John 14:22, Judas (not Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him) had another question: "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" And so we come to the most pivotal question of all: "Why are You showing all of this only to us?" We could ask that today as well: "God, why are You speaking all of these things to us? Why are You sending us Your Word when You have the power to send it to the whole world?"

This is where it gets interesting because Jesus essentially answers, "I am going to show Myself to the world through you, that's why." That is the plan of God—there is no plan B. You might ask, "Well, how in the world is that going to happen? I spend my day just trying to survive. I spend my time trying not to curse those who curse me. I work two jobs to feed my kids and keep the bills paid, and You are going to show Yourself to the world through me? How is that going to happen?"

Jesus tried to explain to the disciples: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:12–15).

Here is the point that Jesus was making: "You cannot bear it because I am going to the cross. I am going to take all captivity captive; I am going to pay the price for your sins so that you no longer have to be separated from God. I am going to purchase for you a new life—

something that will make you a wonder to the people of this world. The Holy Spirit is going to dwell in you and show you the things that I have bought for you on the cross.”

He is speaking about asking for the power to serve, the power to love when others do not love us.

■ A DIFFERENT KIND OF ASKING

Jesus goes on to introduce a different kind of asking. *“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father...Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing”* (John 16:16, 22–23). He is talking to His disciples about the day when He is raised from the dead; when the debt has been paid; when the power of the Holy Spirit has come; when this new life that is promised us in Christ becomes ours. In other words, “You will not need to ask all these former questions anymore. They will all be answered.”

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23). Now the question is, do you believe that? If you truly believed it, you would pray first thing in the morning. You would pray at noon. You would pray at night. Of course, He is not talking about asking for a Porsche. He is speaking in the context of His manifesting Himself to the world through us. He is talking about asking for the power to be yielded for the sake of the lost, given for the sake

of other people. He is speaking about asking for the power to serve, the power to love when others do not love us.

“Whatever we ask the Father in Jesus’ name.” This is available to people like you and me who say, “God, I want the power to live my life for the sake of other people. I recognize the limitations of my physical body, of my natural mind, my natural heart. I recognize that I do not have the strength to go where You are calling me, but in the strength of Your victory, You are going to make me into another person. You are going to bring glory to Your own name through me. I am asking that You cause my life to make a difference for Your kingdom’s sake!”

As society is perishing around us, it is becoming more apparent that it is time to ask.

“Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). And so we begin to understand that in order to experience this fullness of joy, there must be a shifting of focus. The joy must not be about ourselves anymore but rather about others. The joy is that I see people coming to Christ; the joy is that even enemies are finding forgiveness from God. It is not just about getting happy, it is that joy that is in heaven over every sinner who comes to Christ. It is that joy that the angels know around the throne of God. However, it does not come until we are surrendered.

■ FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

As society is perishing around us, it is becoming more apparent that

it is time to ask. It is time that we rise up out of infancy and, as mature sons and daughters, say, “Lord, I understand now that I cannot follow where You are going in my own strength. I am asking for Your Holy Spirit.”

Remember that before Pentecost, the disciples all knew they had no power to go forward. But when God’s Holy Spirit came, they burst out of the upper room and started speaking about the things that God was going to do. In the first day alone, three thousand people bent their knee to Christ!

And so, my prayer for my own heart as well as for the Body of Christ is that God would give us the courage to ask in Jesus’ name. Start by asking for a life that is yielded for the sake of others. Don’t forget that the Lord is delighted to give us all we need in order to make a difference in this generation. And when you discover that your heart is changing and giftings are starting to abound in your life—when you find yourself speaking things that you never thought you would say and doing things you know you are not capable of doing on your own—suddenly you will enter a joy that words cannot even begin to describe. It is the indescribable joy of being given for the sake of others!

Carter Conlon
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A NOTE TO OUR TIMES SQUARE CHURCH FAMILY

We want to take a moment to tell you something.

Several months ago, we watched as Times Square Church, for the first time in 33 years, was forced to close its doors to the public due to the pandemic. And we prayed. We prayed for the congregation—for your homes, your families, your grandparents, your children. We prayed for Pastor Tim in his new role as Senior Pastor at such an unprecedented time. We prayed for the presence of God to be in each online service and event; for His transforming power to transcend physical distance.

In spite of every challenge, we saw people on social media watching church and raising their hands to accept Jesus. We saw Times Square Church campuses adapt and find new ways of connecting. We saw music videos from the worship team. We saw online youth events and kids being encouraged. We watched the Worldwide Prayer Meeting online continue to grow. We read your comments under our Summit Sessions video posts, encouraging us along the way. We have

witnessed an unshakable love for people from both the Times Square Church staff and congregation. And again, we prayed. We thanked the Lord that in spite of the present circumstances, He continues to move in powerful ways. And you, our beloved Times Square Church family, are part of that testimony.

This fall, as we resume on-campus classes and activities for the fall semester, we understand that this year will be different. There will be excitement and there will be challenges. As we look to the future, we have been encouraged by the path you have carved ahead of us. You have been led by prayer. And so, we follow suit. As we adapt classrooms and campus life for social distancing, we know that we face a school year like none other. And that's ok. We lean in and move forward with anticipation. God is going to do amazing things this year.

Thank you for your example. We are proud to be your Bible school.



CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is General Overseer of Times Square Church, Inc. He joined the pastoral staff as associate pastor in 1994 and was senior pastor from 2001 to 2020.

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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