

Dear Friend,

Without any doubt, we are facing the type of days that Jesus so clearly warned us about in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 24. Days of lawlessness, rage, uprisings, incivility, betrayal and false reasonings. Sadly, some of those reasonings will disguise themselves as spiritual or "reasoned" voices. Jesus called them "deceivers" who will delude not just a few, but many. Psalm 29 tells us, however, that one clear, distinct and powerful voice rises above them all. It is the undeniable voice of God calling His Church out of darkness and into His everlasting strength and light.

Don't be afraid of His voice! He speaks clearly to those who are His, always calling us into a place of divine strength and provision. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). *"He will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture"* (John 10:9).

Listen to His voice today. Listen when He speaks to you while you are spending time in your Bible. Turn off all the noise and just listen!

With you till He comes,

Pastor Carter Conlon

HEAR HIM! by Carter Conlon

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'" (Matthew 17:1–4).

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Here we see humanity and divinity meeting together on a mountain where God was about to do something phenomenal. In our humanity, we will always gravitate to present or past experiences for our sense of comfort and well-being. Peter was a man who did just that, saying, "It does not get any better than this. We have the Son of God here. We have Moses and Elijah. We are on a mountaintop and do not have to deal with the people all around us. This is a great place to camp. Let's stay here forever!"

However, that was not what God was speaking. *"While he was still*

speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid" (17:5–6). Now, this was not said for the benefit of Moses, Elijah or Jesus. God was telling Peter, James and John, "Stop speaking, and start listening to the Son of God! He is going to lead you somewhere." In other words, your opinions do not lead into the supernatural; they do not bring deliverance to people who are hurting.

All you can build is something that will ultimately become irrelevant if you are not willing to hear the Son of God. That is why many churches that once knew great moves of God are now irrelevant. We must move with the voice of God, not with what somebody spoke hundreds of years ago. We must remember that Jesus is calling us to follow Him rather than spending all our time seeking personal revelation, comfort, and spiritual experience.

There is a whole segment of the Church today running from place to place just seeking some new experience. Their whole pursuit is a "Mount of Transfiguration," and they want to camp there. However, the revelation of who Jesus Christ is ought to lead us to what He does. In Luke's account of this event, he tells us that Moses

and Elijah were discussing with Jesus what He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem—that everything that was prefigured through the law and the prophets was about to be fulfilled at the cross. A Church was going to be born to go into all the world to preach this wonderful message of salvation through Christ.

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Jesus was leading these disciples somewhere, but they were so engrossed in their own ideas of what spiritual experience leads to that they could not hear Him. It was as if God had to override the whole thing, stop Peter in the middle of speaking, and declare, “This is My Son. Hear Him!”

■ FULL OF OUR OWN STRENGTH

When the Lord speaks to each of the churches in the Book of Revelation, notice that He says, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*” I want a hearing ear; I want God to lead my life. Sure, I have had a wonderful past; in fact, it has been a miraculous journey. But I have learned that God is not interested in my ideas. If He is not leading, there is no power in it, and we are merely on our own with our little tabernacles on the top of the mountain, talking about our past spiritual experiences.

We often cannot hear the Lord because, just as with Peter and the others, we are still leaning on our own strength and understanding. It is similar to the time when Jesus

told Peter, “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me.” What was Peter’s response? “Oh, yes, I will follow You. And if You go to Jerusalem to die, I will go and die with You. These others here may not have the courage to go, but I will not turn back!” (see Matthew 26:33, 35). He was full of himself—full of his own ideas and his own strength.

Yet Jesus was trying to speak to him, saying, “Peter, before the rooster crows, you are going to deny Me three times” (see Matthew 26:34). But Peter could not hear it because he was still relying on his own strength and ideas. He did not understand that where Christ leads, we cannot follow without His strength. So, God had to bring Peter to the end of himself.

He had to bring him to a place where he had nothing left to say. After he denied Jesus three times, all he could do was weep bitterly. All his boasting came to an end, and when it did, he could finally start to hear the voice of the Son of God.

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Perhaps your testimony today is that you have come to the end of yourself. Your ideas have come to nothing and you have run into the brick wall that all humanity runs into when we try to follow God in our own strength. Well, the good news is that the end of you is the beginning of God. Now you are ready to hear and to follow where God is leading you.

■ UNWILLING TO EMBRACE THE NEW

There is another reason why many find it difficult to hear the Son of God: they are unwilling to put

away old things and embrace what is new. The Bible tells us that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; old things have passed away and all things are new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). God is not just taking us out of where we used to be, He is bringing us into where He would have us to go. The Spirit of God begins to show us things to come. He starts speaking to us about what He has for us, not what we have for Him—and there is a huge difference. In our humanity, we will make promises to God that we cannot fulfill.

Finally, when we come to the end of that, suddenly God starts making promises to us. It is through these promises that we become everything He has called us to be. It starts with a willingness to put away old things—for example, old comforts and old experiences. Yes, we can remember them, but we cannot camp there with them. Sometimes old friends have to be put away. A lot of people want the kingdom of God, but they want their old friends at the same time. Some want to keep those old relationships alive, that old romance with someone who is not a believer in Christ. Remember when the children of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt and suddenly, in the wilderness, they started remembering the fish and the leeks and garlic in Egypt (see Numbers 11:5). They somehow forgot that they were crying out to God in their bitter bondage!

We are all prone to saying, “It was so good back there, wasn’t it?” We forget the depression, the addiction, the brokenness. And so we are unwilling to make the break. A lot of people want that little sip of something to make them feel good, or that little peek on the internet at things they should not be looking at—and then they wonder why they cannot hear the voice of God.

Sometimes we are unwilling to make the break from our past achievements. We want to sit in our office and gaze at all our certificates on the wall. Yet consider how the apostle Paul said, *“What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ”* (Philippians 3:7). We must be willing to be led away from even good things. Remember, Peter had concluded, *“Lord, it is good for us to be here”* (Matthew 17:4). Yet what God has for us is even better than what we declare to be good.

You and I can live our Christian life just talking about old experiences, or we can follow Jesus down the mountain to where human need really is.

■ WHERE HE LEADS

Last, just as happened with Jesus after the Mount of Transfiguration, we must be willing to be led from spiritual experience to spiritual need. Jesus could have stayed on the mountaintop with Moses and Elijah, with His Father speaking from heaven. He had a small entourage—followers whom He could teach, and He could have stayed there forever. But He had a mission!

Yes, the mountaintop offered this wonderful spiritual experience. But at the bottom of the mountain was a father crying out for his demon-possessed child who

was being destroyed by the powers that had hold of him. Consider what is happening to our children—the unbridled passion, the unmitigated confusion, the sense of hopelessness and anger that is consuming this present generation. You and I can live our Christian life just talking about old experiences, or we can follow Jesus down the mountain to where human need really is.

That is exactly what happened in Acts chapter two. The disciples were in the Upper Room having a marvelous experience. The Spirit of God filled every one of them, and they were given this explosive ability to communicate with people of other cultures and other languages. They could have just stayed there and spoken in tongues for the next five years.

However, they were led by the voice of God to spiritual need. Just outside, there were thousands of people coming from the temple, making great journeys to get there. Worshiping God in the best way they knew how, they remained deficient and short of redemption through the Son of God. The disciples heard the voice of God leading them out of their wonderful spiritual experience right into a morass of spiritual need. That is how the Church was born, and that is how she was led all the way through the Book of Acts.

The best thing that could ever happen to you and me, as well as to this present generation, is that we learn to hear the voice of God once again. If you are broken, if you feel like a failure, if you are wounded, if you feel destroyed—you are the perfect candidate to be used by God! Get up from where you are and start to walk with Him. Walk toward not just the

healing that you need, but also walk toward the healing that somebody else needs.

You do not have to have it all together to tell somebody else that God is good, and that Jesus died for them. All you need is to be willing to go where Jesus is leading you. You have a choice now. You can camp on an old experience and die there—yes, you will get to heaven, but you will spiritually die in that old experience. Or you can just leave it and go where God is leading you.

If you are willing to hear Him, you will be amazed at what He will do. He will give you light in darkness, water in seasons of drought, strength when strength is failing all around you. And you will be a part of God’s answer to the great mountain of spiritual need we see in this generation!

Carter Conlon

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NEW MUSIC FROM SUMMIT!

Summit has released a new original song, “Thick and Thin” written and produced by Bennett Hughes and Joey Sommers, recorded at Summit’s campus recording studio. This upbeat, anthemic song is a reminder that our trust is in Christ who holds us through every situation.

Bennett and Joey teach songwriting and audio production at Summit. Ben says, “This song came from a devotion I read in Psalm 62. There is a line in verse 11 and 12 that says *‘God has spoken once, twice I have heard this; power belongs to God. Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy.’* That line really amazed me. That was the creative spark. Being intentional about staying close to the Lord can see you through anything. At times there is a desperation in the lyrics, it’s a plea with the Lord, but then it goes right back to ‘You are my rock and my strength.’”

Joey agrees and says, “The genre of music we chose for the song plays into that. It’s a carefree rock song and I think

the carefree nature of the song really reinforces that rest and trust we have in God.”

The relevance of “Thick and Thin” translates more than ever during this poignant moment in history. Summit’s accompanying lyric video for the song includes candid moments of Summit students arriving on campus—embracing this unusual season, finding their joy, and choosing to trust.

*I will trust in you
Through thick and thin
When these walls go up
I will keep you near*

*‘Cause you hold the world in your hands
And nothing can stand against
Our fighter fights on for us
I will trust in Him*

“Thick and Thin” is available now wherever you listen to music. The “Thick and Thin” lyric video can be found on Summit’s website and YouTube channel.



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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