

Dear Friend,

We are now in our second month of 2021 and this season we are passing through has been quite the roller coaster. I can just imagine when people greeted you recently with, "Happy New Year!" you might have been tempted to say, "Happy? Have you been connected to reality lately?" But the truth is, they might have been more connected than we realize.

Psalm 144:15 says, "*Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy are the people whose God is the Lord!*" The promise of Jesus is an inner peace that does not come from anything in this world. It is a peace that He alone provides.

My challenge to you is to discover or rediscover that peace this year. It's a peace that carries you in the storm. David said that even if the mountains are shaking and the seas roaring, yet even then he will be kept confident because of the presence of God (see Psalm 46:2-3).

Be assured, my friend, that you are in the hand of God—and there's no safer place in the universe to be! One day we will all meet at the throne of Christ and how happy we will be that we refused to surrender our confidence in Him! We serve a God who cannot fail.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

EIGHT WORDS THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

by Carter Conlon

In the book of Acts, we read of Saul, a man who had a definitive objective in life. He thought he understood what truth was, so he set out to persecute the Church of Jesus Christ. Yet, as he was on the road to Damascus one day, a blinding light from heaven suddenly caused him to be thrown to the ground. The Scripture tells us that he was blind for three days (see Acts 9:3, 9). Everything he thought he was, all that he was attempting to do, every purpose he thought he had in life suddenly came to an end.

Part of the reason many Christians in this generation are so powerless is because they have never truly come to that place of surrender.

It may feel the same way for you today. Perhaps you thought you knew what your life was going to be. But whether gradually or suddenly, like Saul—who, as we know, became the apostle Paul—you have come to an end. You can no longer see a way forward.

Paul, trembling and astonished, had an encounter with the living God. The first thing he prayed in response was a prayer that I believe everyone who wants a living relationship with God must pray. He spoke eight words that changed everything, not just for him, but for millions of people around the world.

■ IT STARTS WITH "LORD"

The first word of his prayer was simply, "*Lord.*" In Luke 6:46, Jesus said to the religious leaders of the day, "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?*" Yet when Paul called Him "*Lord,*" he meant it. It was a confession that he was no longer in charge; there was a new boss in his life. Paul understood that he was called to lay down his plans and everything he thought his life was going to amount to.

I believe that part of the reason many Christians in this generation are so powerless is because they have never truly come to that place of surrender, saying, "God, You are Lord of my life now. Your Word is supreme. Your thoughts are above my thoughts; Your ways are above my ways. If Your Word says it is wrong, it is wrong—even though I might

think it is right. I am not going to be among those who call You ‘Lord, Lord’ but do not do the things which You say. I yield the rights to my life.”

The divine purpose of God for our life is far beyond our thinking.

■ A DIVINE PURPOSE

The next words that Paul said in his prayer were, “*What do You want me*” (Acts 9:6). This implies that God not only had the right to his life, but He had a divine purpose for his life. The will of God is not always pleasant. We often want to craft some pleasant thing in our heart and bring it to God, saying, “Okay, here is Your will for my life; obviously You are going to agree with this.” Yet Jesus Himself said in Matthew 26:39, “*O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.*”

Remember, God does not want your plans; He does not need your strength. Imagine this formerly enraged man called Saul hauling Christians out of their homes and torturing them to the point of blaspheming God just to get out of the pain. When Stephen, a precious young servant of God, was martyred, Paul was there holding the coats of the witnesses, consenting to his death (see Acts 7:58). No doubt Saul was a man full of ideas. His whole life had been governed by his own zealous agenda. But now he had come to the point of saying, “Lord, what do You want? You have a divine purpose for my life.”

We must understand that the divine purpose of God for our life is far beyond our thinking. He says in

Jeremiah, “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope*” (Jeremiah 29:11). In other words, “I am thinking thoughts about you that you have not even considered yet. I am able to do more for you and through your life than you can even ask or think.” In the natural, we are confined in our minds by our past experiences, by the depths of our struggles, by the parameters of what other people have said about us. But the Holy Spirit, who comes to live inside of you when you yield to the Lord, is not confined by these things. He is the God of the universe, and He can do things that you cannot even imagine!

The open door is set there by God. All He requires now is our cooperation.

We see in the Bible that the last two words of Paul’s prayer were, “to do,” making the full statement, “*Lord, what do You want me to do?*” (Acts 9:6). In other words, He is the Lord of my life with a divine purpose for my life, and now His plan requires my active cooperation. God starts to open doors, and we are simply required to walk through them. Remember Jesus said to the Church of Philadelphia, “*See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name*” (Revelation 3:8). The open door is set there by God. All He requires now is our cooperation—our willingness to go where we have never gone, to do what we know we cannot do without Him, to speak even though we do not know what is

going to come out of our mouth, to be put in uncomfortable places.

Although we want the entire pathway laid out before us, God says, “No, just take the first step. Just do the first thing.”

Consider Paul going from enraged persecutor of the Church to suddenly finding himself in the midst of followers of Jesus Christ—looking for acceptance and trying to convince the disciples that he was no longer against them. It must have been incredibly uncomfortable for him. Yet we know that from that initial prayer, God did things through his life that you and I are still talking about two thousand years later!

■ SMALL BEGINNINGS

When Paul prayed, “*Lord, what do You want me to do?*” we might expect God to have replied, “Paul, I want you to get up and start writing the Scriptures. I want you to go out and establish churches.” You see, you and I always want the whole package—the full answer. But God’s first answer to Paul’s prayer was simply, “*Arise and go into the city*” (Acts 9:6). That was all God told him! Although we want the entire pathway laid out before us, God says, “No, just take the first step. Just do the first thing.” He does not lay it all out before us, because He knows that we would not be able to handle it. If, within the first few weeks of my salvation, Jesus had told me the plan He had for me, I think I would have collapsed on the sidewalk! I had a lot of struggles

in my life at the time. I was not yet free from fear and could not speak publicly, so everything He would have laid out before me would have seemed like an absolute impossibility. So in His mercy and His gentleness, God just tells us to do the first thing first.

Remember, do not despise the day of small beginnings. Do not regard that initial answer to your prayer as nothing. Perhaps God will tell you to just get up and open your Bible. Maybe He will tell you to go to the pantry and pour that bottle of liquor down the sink or flush those drugs down the toilet. Maybe He will tell you to get a word and speak it to the heart of your wayward son or daughter. Whether they scoff or scorn or curse you out, just go through that first door by faith.

■ A FAR-REACHING MINISTRY

In Paul's case, after he was told to go into the city, the second answer that came to him was when God sent a man called Ananias to lay hands on Paul so that he would receive his sight back. The Lord said to Ananias, *"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:15). So Ananias obeyed God, went to Paul, and essentially said, "God sent me here, and this is what He told me about you: Your ministry is going to be greater than anything you could ever imagine it to be. But it is not big to God, it is just big to you. God is going to use you because you have chosen to obey. However

there is a caveat that comes with it—*"For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"* (Acts 9:16).

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life is so much
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In other words, "Yes, your ministry is going to be far-reaching, but it is not going to be easy." Likewise, I believe there is going to be hardship ahead for many who choose to stand for Christ today. They will go on to have a widespread ministry, but it will be costly. Nevertheless, we know that our generation desperately needs the Church to begin to walk in all that God has ordained for us.

My prayer is that God will give each of us the grace and willingness to say the words, *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"* Remember, Paul did not start by saying, "Lord, I have a hundred ideas about how to advance Your kingdom. I have a strategy." He came in surrender to the Lord's plans.

Don't forget that God's plan for your life is so much bigger than even the best one you can imagine for yourself. It simply starts with the desire to get up and then wait until the Lord speaks to you. If you will follow the leading of His voice, though it will not be easy, you will

impact your known world—starting in your own home. In fact, your ministry could change the trajectory of your entire family; it could have a lasting impact at your workplace, within your community, and beyond. If God can simply find an obedient heart, it is amazing what He can do!

Carter Conlon

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REMEMBERING PASTOR WILLIAM CARROL

It is with heavy hearts we announce the loss of our brother, pastor, teacher, and friend, William Carrol. Pastor William went home to be with Jesus on Wednesday, January 27, 2021.

“Pastor Will,” as he was known to students, was the Chair of Curriculum Development at Summit, as well as a member of our faculty, teaching courses on Systematic Theology, New Testament Survey, Harmony of Bible Doctrines I & II, as well as an elective called Defending the Faith. He held a degree in Bible, an MA in Philosophy of Religion, and was pursuing his MA in Divinity. He was awarded several distinguished memberships, including the Delta Epsilon Chi and Sigma Chi Pi Honor Societies.

Having had the honor of William Carrol teach at Summit can never be overstated. There are few people who can genuinely be called a genius; but he, without hesitation, fit that description. His in-depth understanding of scripture, grasp of apologetics, and ability to communicate complex subjects in a simple manner was second to none. Students often waited after class, saving their most complicated theological questions for him; and he, always

with a gentle smile, would speak truth to their questions layer by layer, gently and effectively unraveling the mysteries of scripture until all that remained was the simple truth of Christ.

His brilliance, however, came second to his humility and humanity. He loved people. Often, he and his wife Tressy would invite students and alumni to stop by their home for a cup of tea and a chat. The day after his passing, students gathered informally in the chapel to pray and share memories of Pastor Will’s impact on their lives. One student described his “unmatched grace for those around him.” Another said, “He always told us, ‘You can change the world,’ and we believed him.” Another spoke about him like a father, telling the story of how he called to check in on him when he was sick. One by one, they spoke of his patience, his encouragement, his love. No matter who you are, if you knew him, you knew he was in your corner. And so, as one student shared so poignantly, “Let us continue with our faces toward heaven, let us live up to our greater potential, changing more and more to the image of Christ.” In his honor, let us endeavor to live like he did, for the benefit of others.



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

Times Square Church is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City, founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.”

Senior Pastor
Tim Dilena

Church Online
Sunday 10 AM & On demand
Tuesday 7 PM (Prayer Service)

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