

## Dear Friend,

I want to encourage you today to not be frightened by all of the unsettling reports which seem to increase day by day. In Matthew 24:6, Jesus said, *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."* He was saying, in effect, that there are still things which are going to happen before this world as we know it finishes its course.

One of those things should really stir our hearts! *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."* Matthew 24:14. Even though the days will be getting darker, there will be a Spirit-empowered church which will carry within herself the incredible Light of Christ!

The true Bride of Christ will come out of all that keeps her hidden and return in power to her God-appointed calling in this world. As this newsletter proclaims, you will soon come out of the wilderness! Get ready for the journey of a lifetime. Light is never triumphed over by darkness.

With you always,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## YOU WILL SOON COME OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

Carter Conlon

**M**any people today find themselves in a confusing, dry place—unaware of how they got there and perhaps unable to find a way out. If you can relate, I believe you will be greatly encouraged by a verse from the Song of Solomon. This book, one of the most beautiful in the entire Bible, is the story of a bridegroom and his bride and the beautiful love they have for each other.

The bride's description of the incredible relationship she has had with her bridegroom is probably similar to what many of us experienced when we first came to Christ. Do you remember the day when you found out Jesus died for your sins? You opened your heart, gave Him your life, and suddenly nothing else mattered but Him. I clearly remember the days when I would go to church as a new believer in Christ. I would open the hymnbook and sing, tears streaming down my face as I read the words that so stirred my heart.

However, we read that one day this bride recognizes something has happened—her bridegroom is missing. She feels that he is near, yet she cannot see him. So she heads out to find him, searching throughout the city. Eventually she finds him, or I would venture a guess that he found her. It then says in Song of Solomon 8:5: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"

The bride is leaning upon him, which reminds me of the fact that Jesus is *"touched with the feelings of our infirmities"* (Hebrews 4:15, KJV). He is not aloof from us or indifferent to us; He is not angry with us in our struggles. Therefore, as we call upon Him, even in a wilderness experience, we know that Jesus will not only come and get us, but He will strengthen and guide us to where we need to go.

## Are You in the Wilderness?

I believe a lot more of God's people than actually realize it are in the wilderness. Let me explain. In the book of Luke, we see Jesus at the age of thirty beginning the public ministry that would ultimately take Him to a cross. In order for Jesus to fulfill this ministry that God the Father had given Him, God's Holy Spirit had to come upon Him. Jesus had to walk in obedience to the will of His Father. The scripture says, *"It came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased'"* (Luke 3:21–22).

You and I might assume that because Jesus was the Son of God, He would come out of the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit would come upon Him, and then He would go straight to the temple and declare, "I have been sent by God. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for this reason" (see Luke 4:18).

However, in between the river of baptism and Luke 4:18, there is a wilderness. The scripture says in Luke 4:1, *"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness."*

## THEY ARE STUCK IN BETWEEN THE PLACE OF THE CALLING OF GOD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE FULFILLMENT OF THE MINISTRY.

Jesus also said of His cross, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Matthew 16:24). It is reasonable to conclude that if we are going to follow in the footsteps of the One who went to the cross, and bring His message of salvation to this world, there is going to be a wilderness moment for us as well. We are going to be tested. Jesus was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness to see if He was willing to fulfill the ministry that God had given Him. He was well aware that He was called to a ministry of suffering and being given for the needs of others. It was going to require the pouring out of His life. In fact, Jesus also told His followers, *"In the world you will have tribulation"* (John 16:33). You are not going to escape trouble; it will be part of this journey. "But be of good cheer, for I have given you the victory already. I have already made a way for you to come through—not in your strength but in My strength that will be resident in you" (my paraphrase).

### The First Test

So Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested, just as we will be. The first test that came to Him was when the devil said, *"If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread"* (Luke

4:3). Picture for a moment the Church of Jesus Christ going through the same wilderness testing. The devil comes with a theological test: "If you are in proximity to God, if He is your Father, then command this stone to be made bread." In other words, use your proximity to the Father for yourself. Use it to satisfy your hunger.

Sadly, many of God's people have fallen into this theological trap. They settle in churches where their whole theology is based on the idea of using the power of God to fill their bellies. These people may think they are in the promised land, but in reality, they are in the wilderness. They are stuck in between the place of the calling of God and the beginning of the fulfillment of the ministry. Although they may try to convince themselves that they are in the promised land, a strange dryness and powerlessness comes.

### The Second Test

The second test was when the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said, "If You will worship before me, all will be Yours" (see Luke 4:7). In other words, "If You will just do it my way, a quicker way, You can have the kingdom now. You do not have to suffer. You do not have to be rejected or go to a cross. You can have it all now!

Remember, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "You are all reigning now. You are all kings. I wish indeed you were reigning, and I would reign with you" (see 1 Corinthians 4:8). But Paul added, "Yet we apostles are like the scarring of the earth. We are buffeted. We are struggling. We have to scrape for the strength to go forward" (see 4:9–13).

Many people have fallen into the temptation of skipping the hardship and going straight to victory. They spend their whole existence coming to church to just hear that they are kings, ruling and reigning in life. Yet there is no mention of sacrifice, suffering, or yielding to what God has for their life for the sake of others.

### The Third Test

The third test was when the devil brought Jesus to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying, *"If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,' and, 'In their*

hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Luke 4:9–11). I see this as a group of people who gather in the name of Christ, yet deep down at the core of their heart, they have difficulty believing that God is faithful and that His Word can be trusted. They always need a sign to believe. They want to have lights and all kinds of distractions. They need a sensory experience to believe that God is in their midst. And then when a trial comes, they no longer believe. They are constantly doubting the Word of God, always wanting to put God to a test to prove that He can be trusted.

## In the Power of the Spirit

After these tests in the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. News of Him spread all through the surrounding regions. He began to teach in their synagogues, and this is when He came into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, found the place in the book of Isaiah, and began to read, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Luke 4:18–19).

## THERE IS MORE FOR ME THAN I HAVE BEEN LIVING FOR.

Jesus was saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because I have been anointed to go to the cross. And by going to the cross and yielding My life as an atonement for sin, the poor will have the treasure of heaven open to them. The oppressed will be given new freedom and new life. And everyone will know that this is the day of their salvation—the day they can be free!”

In contrast, rather than being able to rightfully declare this over their lives, many of God’s people are still in the wilderness. They are still trying to use the gospel to fill their bellies, wanting to bypass the road of suffering and go straight to ruling and reigning, or needing continual proof that God can be trusted. But by the mercy of God, I believe a sudden hunger is stirring in the Church, just as with the bride in the Song

of Solomon. There is a sudden yearning for that love relationship, knowing that something has been missing. It is the realization, “There is more for me than I have been living for. I do not want to live with just a shadow of His presence—I want true intimacy! I do not want to live my life trying to figure out what I am supposed to be doing when God has already decreed a plan for my life that is greater than anything I could ever fully understand. I do not want to live this Christian life merely to preserve my comfort!”

Remember, the bride left her bed and went out into the streets in search of her bridegroom (see Song of Solomon 5:5–6). “I am going to find him; I do not care what it takes. I am going to go where he is!” It was a yearning in her heart, just like the yearning in the hearts of the true bride of Jesus Christ.

For those of you who are tired of living in a dry place, tired of pretending to reign when you are not, tired of not trusting God—I have good news: He is coming to get you! You finally recognize, “Jesus, You are the bridegroom, and I am the bride. I do not want to be apart from You. I want to be doing what You are doing!”

Yes, Jesus is going to take you by the hand, and you are going to come out of the wilderness. Just as in the verse, your only requirement is to lean on Him. Let Him take you by the hand and guide you. He will guide you through the Bible, lead you into righteousness and the plan He has for your life. He will do the miracles that He said He would do as you begin to walk with Him.

Oh, I see a bride that is going to come out of the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved! Jesus is going to have a glorious bride in this last hour of time. He is going to have a victorious Church—one that is given for the sake of other people, willing to walk in intimacy and unison with her Bridegroom!

Carter Conlon  
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## SUMMIT YOUTH CONFERENCE SATURDAY, APRIL 2!

Registration is now open!

Inviting all junior high students, high schoolers, youth leaders, and young adults to come check out Summit and take part in this one-day youth conference. Be part of breakout sessions, social events, and a chance to win a \$1,000 Summit Scholarship.

Keynote speakers include Carter Conlon, General Overseer of Times Square Church, David Ham, Senior Pastor of Evangel Church, Evan Wilkerson of World Challenge, Ajay Kunarasa, Student Life Director of True Life Ministries, and Josiah DeRoos, Youth Pastor at TSC Summit Campus.

You don't want to miss it!

Get more info and register now at [summitpa.org/youthconference](https://summitpa.org/youthconference)



**Carter Conlon** is General Overseer of Times Square Church, Inc. He joined the pastoral staff as an associate pastor in 1994 and was the 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."

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Tim Dilena

**Church Online**  
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**Worldwide Prayer Meeting**  
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