

Dear Friend,

2 Timothy 2:5 tells us that if an athlete is running in a race, he must obey all the rules in order to win. Think for a moment of a relay race; one runner must know where and when to pass the baton to the next runner, firmly and securely, at exactly the right place and time.

In this context, I have felt led of the Lord to pass the baton of the TSC Newsletter to Pastor Tim Dilena, Senior Pastor of Times Square Church.

Over the past almost 20 years now I have had the pleasure of speaking to you each month through the newsletter as well as sharing a written version of my latest sermon. In that time, I have received many letters and emails from around the world, telling me how God used this newsletter, many times at the exact moment it was needed, to speak into your lives. What an awesome privilege that has been, and I look forward to staying connected with you in the days ahead. My sermons can continue to be found on the TSC website, Carter Conlon website, and all affiliated social media channels. I will also continue to send out daily devotionals—you can sign up to receive those at carterconlon.com.

As the newsletter takes on a new format next month, I am excited for Pastor Tim's vision and heart for all he will be sharing with you. I know your support will bless him as it has always blessed me. It's a true pleasure for me to pass this baton on to a good runner who will embrace this next season of encouraging you and bringing glory to God!

I'll be here cheering everyone on!
The finish line is in sight!

Yours, in Christ,
Pastor Carter Conlon

FORGIVENESS CAN MOVE A MOUNTAIN

Carter Conlon

Mark 11:22–23 says, *"Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says."* Can you imagine if we believed these two verses of scripture? People would be abandoning everything to come to prayer meetings or to go into their prayer closet and talk with God!

Of course, this incredible promise is in the context of James 4:3, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."* If we are asking for something just because we want to consume it upon ourselves, that is asking amiss, and we may not receive it. But when our motivation is the advancement of the Kingdom of God, we shall receive!

Now, before he came to this point, Jesus was going back up into Jerusalem from Bethany. He was hungry, and when he saw a fig tree afar off, Mark 11:13 tells us, *"He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."*

Jesus had approached a fig tree that only gave the appearance of bearing fruit. I have always believed this was a type of Adam, for in Genesis 3, when the Lord came down into the garden, Adam and Eve were covered with the glory of God. They did not need clothing, and they were unaware of nakedness at this point. But when they sinned against God, buying into the theology that they could be godly without God, they suddenly lost his glory, and became aware of their nakedness and their bankruptcy. So what did they do? They went to the fig tree, which has a broad, flat green leaf, and they made coverings for themselves. They exchanged the glory of God for fig leaves! How ridiculous they must have looked. This represents man's attempt to be godly in himself—covering his struggles, failings, and sin.

I want to suggest that Jesus knew there was nothing on this tree. It was not even the season for figs. So the Son of God, with all power, came to this fig tree, saw there was nothing on it, and cursed it, saying, *"Let no one ever eat fruit from you again."* Now, if we take this at face value, it makes the Son of God look exceedingly petty. It seems to be just a vain display of power, unless he is teaching us something in this.

I believe Jesus is looking at the faux covering that humanity has tried

to place upon themselves—the sheer force of human will to get back into relationship with God and to be godly by human effort. In Jerusalem, the Pharisees had these fine coverings and these wonderful garments that they had concocted for themselves. But upon close examination, there was no fruit. When you got close, you found envy and pride.

So Jesus said, *“Let no one eat fruit from you ever again”* (11:14). *“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away’”* (11:20–21). And this is when Jesus spoke to them, *“Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain ...”* (11:22–23). The fig tree was emblematic of the whole system of religion that was represented by the mountain of Jerusalem at that time—a system that had covered itself in its own religious fig leaves. It was not just the deception of the one fig tree but the whole system that offered a deceptive relationship with God. It was an exterior covering that was incapable of bearing the fruit that only God can bear in a person's life.

YOU CAN HAVE AUTHORITY IN YOUR PRAYERS!

Jesus says, *“Not only can you say this to the fig tree, but to the mountain.”* Pray for the whole thing to be taken away from your life that it may not deceive you any longer. Furthermore, you have the power to stand against it in the lives of your family members. Did you ever know you could pray like that? You can pray for somebody that has fallen into a trap, saying, *“In the name of Jesus, I stand against this deception. Let my brother, my sister, my friend no longer eat from this tree of deception!”*

If you have faith in God, you can speak to this deception. You can have authority in your prayers!

The Foundation of Forgiveness

Jesus said, *“Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your*

Father in heaven forgive your trespasses” (11:24–26). Here we see that this incredible promise of cursing fig trees and moving mountains is all placed on the cornerstone of forgiveness! We are ambassadors of a Kingdom that is all about forgiveness. When Jesus was beaten, betrayed, spat on, mocked and crucified, in the midst of all His pain, He said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

Jesus tells the story, *“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.*

“The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

“So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servant saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done” (Matthew 18:23–31).

“And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ‘So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses” (18:34–35).

This is an especially hard portion of Scripture. Many people today are Christians but are living tormented lives today. One cannot help but wonder if there is unforgiveness involved. Perhaps they have come for forgiveness from God but refuse to forgive somebody else along the way. I am not suggesting that forgiveness implies that what the person did to you was right. It is simply a law in the Kingdom of God. Trust is earned. You do not have to trust somebody because you have forgiven them, but we are commanded to forgive them.

Freedom in Forgiveness

Years ago, I was transferred to the Public Relations Department in the police force where I worked. A man named Tom was in the same department. Only about thirty-five years old at the time, he had a fatal disease with a life expectancy of only a few years.

Tom and I became well acquainted, and one day as I was passing through the office, he remarked, “Carter, I see something in you, but I’m not quite sure what. What is it that I’m seeing?” I shared my personal testimony and the gospel with him in the office that day. I led Tom to Christ and we rejoiced together—what an awesome moment!

Only a few weeks later, Tom came into my office and said, “You’re not going to believe this. I’ve been to the doctor, and my disease is gone! There’s no trace of it!” His secular doctor had even concluded, “Tom, you have had a miracle. This disease does not go away on its own, yet there is not a trace of it in your body. You are cured!”

Interestingly, Tom and I never prayed for his healing. I asked him how he thought the healing happened. As a brand-new Christian, he did not have a whole lot of theology in his life, but he told me, “Carter, when I was a boy, my father was an evil man. He would stand me in a bathtub full of ice-cold water, take off his belt, and beat me until welts broke out on my body. I hated that man. I could not wait to see him on his deathbed so that I could walk in and point my finger and say, ‘You’re finally getting what you deserve!’ But the interesting thing is that when I opened my heart and gave my life to Jesus, I went home one night and said, ‘God, if You have forgiven me after all I have done, I no longer have the right to hold this grievance against my father. I forgive him.’ When the bitterness left my life, the disease went with it!” Incredible!

Remember, we are completely unjustified in holding on to old grievances, no matter what was done to us, for surely nothing could be worse than what was done to Christ. Yes, people have let us down. But if we have received the forgiveness of Christ, we must be willing to let go of the debts, even if we feel the offenders owe us at least an apology. God says, “No, let them go. And the promise that I make to you is that I am going to give you faith to see people around you set free. I will give you faith to make a difference in your society!”

Where to Begin

And so you ask, whom shall I forgive first? If Christ is your Savior, he calls you his own. He calls you clean; he calls you forgiven. Jesus said to Peter one day, “Whatever I have cleansed, do not call common or unclean anymore” (see Acts 10:15). So first, you must learn to forgive yourself. We have all made mistakes. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. Sometimes people can receive the forgiveness of God, but they cannot forgive themselves for what they have done. Accept God’s forgiveness, and then forgive yourself.

Once you are operating from that perspective, then it is easier to let go of the debt that somebody else owes you. It is not worth hanging on to any longer. There is a story about a bear coming up to a campfire where he finds a cauldron sitting on the open flame. He picks it up with his big paws and holds it to his chest. It starts to burn him, but he does not know enough to let it go, so he holds it tighter, not realizing that the tighter he holds it, the more it is going to burn, eventually killing him. We are like that with unforgiveness. We grab onto it, we hold it, and we feel justified. And even though it is hurting us, we refuse to let it go.

But God’s Word tells us clearly, *“I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says”* (Mark 11:23).

The promise of God to you is if you will receive his forgiveness, forgive yourself, and forgive others, a whole new realm will begin to open to you—a whole new way of living, an understanding of his power, a release of his life within yours. You will be able to pull down strongholds, recover your family, and reclaim your purpose in life! Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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STUDENT Q&A WITH RT KENDALL

This summer we had the privilege of hosting Dr. RT Kendall at Summit. During his visit, he sat down with students to discuss some of their theological questions. Here is a quick sample of their conversation. (Some answers have been condensed for clarity).



How do you discern between wishful thinking and prayer promptings?

Good question. I don't know, because I have that problem. When you want to do something and the door opens to do it it's easy to say, "Oh good, look what the Lord is leading me to do." I guess if I got the call to preach in Hawaii I wouldn't pray to hard about it! On the other hand, am I close enough to God to say, "no"? It's a good question. It's a hard question. We all wrestle with this. To be called to speak to you at Summit, I can't say I prayed about it. I just thought, "this is a good thing to do". I trust I've been led of the Holy Spirit. I pray every day, "Lord, help me to know when to say yes and when to say no." I look back over the years and I think, on the whole, I've been led.

In the church we sometimes anoint someone's head with oil if we are praying for them. We also take communion. We also baptize somebody. In a sense a lot of this is symbolic. What is the all-encompassing importance of doing symbolic things like this? Is it just to remember time and time again?

We started at Westminster chapel [with anointing oil] the last two years I was there. Had healing services every Sunday night. Not everybody was healed but some were. Why oil? You tell me. They even anointed with oil when Jesus was around. Don't try to figure everything out. Honor the scripture.

Baptism is symbolic. Sometimes the spirit of God comes down and blesses a person when their baptized. Not always but sometimes. But we do it because we are told to baptize, and we do it to show we are unashamed. As far as communion, Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me". We do it as obedience. Today people take the Lord's Supper and its very routine and often doesn't mean a thing, but if you were in Paul's day in Corinth and you abused the Lord's Supper by disregarding your fellow believer some became sickly, some died. Never underestimate the importance [of] obedience to the Word.

In the Lord's Supper is there a real presence in the elements or the act of communion? Is there grace or power that we receive in doing it or is it simply a reminder?

I believe it certainly is to remind because Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me". [Some] view the bread and the wine representing the spiritual presence and so the Lord's Supper should always be served after preaching. If you do it before preaching, you just take it and you don't even think about it. But if you've been preaching and then come to the Lord's Supper, you're ready to perceive God's presence...by having preaching just before you are ready to receive it and become serious. That's the quick answer.

To learn more about Summit, visit summitpa.org



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."

Senior Pastor
Tim Dilena

Church Online
Sunday 10 AM & On Demand

Worldwide Prayer Meeting
Tuesday 7 PM

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