

Dear Friend,

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you a very Merry Christmas!

Although we live in a fearful and somewhat sad time, the hope and comfort Jesus brings to every hungry heart seems to be nearer every day. I can't help but wonder if there were other people, in a society similar to ours today, who had a sense of the nearness of God as you and I do. Possibly the angels had to appear before some country shepherds because they were the only ones still enough to ponder such things.

I encourage you to take some time this Christmas to be still and let the comfort that only God can give surround your troubled heart. Jesus tells us that in this world we will face tribulation, but in the same breath He encourages us to be of good cheer because He has overcome the power that seeks to gain control over our hearts and minds.

Christ is on the throne of all power. Soon, very soon, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord of all! Let this Christmas be Merry. Let it be Very Merry!

Lots of Love,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## THE THEOLOGICAL ERROR OF "WHATHOWWHEN"

by Carter Conlon

The Bible tells us that in the last days, iniquities shall abound, and the love of many will grow cold. Who can deny that iniquity is abounding today? As society continues to spiral down into deeper darkness almost every day, it can become easy to grow cold to every form of love—particularly the love of the lost. Eventually, many Christians will end up in discouragement. In fact, some are already discouraged. And even for those who are not, I hope this message will help protect your heart from the discouragement that might await you in the future.

*We think we know what God is about to do, and we formulate in our minds the complete picture of how everything ought to unfold.*

The book of Luke tells us of a time when two disciples *"were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him"* (Luke 24:13–16). These two

were so engrossed in their own reasoning—their own assessment of what had just taken place with the crucifixion of Jesus—that they could not see when the Lord Himself began to walk with them.

*"And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?'... So they said to Him, '...the chief priests and our rulers delivered [Jesus] to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping'"* (Luke 24:17, 19–21). Things were spiraling down in a way never thought possible. What was actually a great victory was nothing but defeat in their eyes. This, of course, is the same dilemma that you and I fall into. We think we know what God is about to do, and we formulate in our minds the complete picture of how everything ought to unfold. Yet when it does not develop, we find ourselves battling discouragement.

Discouragement, by definition, means to lose courage on your forward journey. It is like crossing a deep ravine on a narrow wooden footbridge that suddenly begins to fall apart right before your eyes. You thought you fully understood the path before you, but now it is disappearing. Quite often it happens because the pathway we have crafted for ourselves is partly truth and partly fiction.

### ■ WE WERE HOPING

There are plenty of examples of this in the Scriptures. For example, in the gospel of Matthew, the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with a request. "*He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom'*" (Matthew 20:21). She, like most people, had an impression that the Kingdom of God was going to come immediately—along with an idea of what it was going to look like.

"*Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'* They said to Him, '*We are able'*" (Matthew 20:22). What do you think they were picturing? Perhaps they saw themselves sitting at the right and left hand of Jesus as kings, ruling and reigning with Him, while servants came up to them with a nice cup of red wine. They had no idea that He was talking about suffering and rejection.

Later, we see Peter put his sword in his belt at the Last Supper. After all, Jesus told them, "*He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one'*" (Luke 22:36). So Peter took his sword, and in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas and the betrayers came, he was ready to fight. He ended up cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. I am sure he had the ticker tape victory parade down the Broadway of Jerusalem already playing in his mind. "Yes, Jesus and I won the victory. Rome's dominion over our society has been destroyed!"

And then in John, when officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came to Gethsemane to arrest Christ, He asked them, "*Whom are you seeking?'* They answered Him, '*Jesus of Nazareth.'* Jesus said to them, '*I am He.'*...*Now when He said to*

*them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground'*" (John 18:4–6). There must have been people there who were thinking, "Aha! The Kingdom of God has finally come!" And James and John probably thought, "Wow, now we are really close to sitting at the right and left hand of Christ!" Yet in each of these incidents, it was not long before they all saw Jesus led away captive, and they were left to flee, discouraged.

### ■ THE ERROR

Here was their error: They took three separate moments and combined them into one word: "whathowwhen"—what, how, when. First of all, they knew what Christ came to do. He had once declared Himself to be the One sent of God to fulfill the promise He made to His people: "*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'*" (Luke 4:18). I guess you cannot blame them, for when you look at this verse in its full context, it appears to offer immediate victory.

*Even when we  
are confused and  
discouraged, Jesus  
still comes and  
walks alongside us.*

And so knowing what Jesus came to do, they made another mistake that we, too, often make: They formulated in their own minds how and when He needed to do it. For example, there are people who are lonely, yet they know that Christ came to meet the needs of their heart. They can look at the Garden of Eden and say, "Lord, You saw that Adam was lonely, and so You made a wife for him. I see in the Scriptures what You came to do!" But the problem with all of humanity is that since we know what God came to do, we start to tell Him how and when He is going to do it.

A young man sitting in church felt that way when he looked across the sanctuary and saw the woman he just knew must be his wife. "Oh, God, thank You for meeting the need of my heart!" After the service when he went to speak to her, he discovered she did not speak a word of English! She was not even from America but was only visiting.

Just like the men on the road to Emmaus, when things do not happen our way, we walk away discouraged. That is the theological error of whathowwhen. Of course, the promises of God are "yea and amen." Everything He said He is going to do for us, He will do—but not always the way we think it should be done!

### ■ WHEN WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND

The good news is that even when we are confused and discouraged, Jesus still comes and walks alongside us. Think about it: Jesus had a lot of people left in that upper room. He had many seekers in Jerusalem. But He left all of that to go after people who were walking away in discouragement from the place of promise.

Later in the Scriptures, it says, "*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther'*" (Luke 24:27). In other words, the Lord says, "I am not going to force you to understand when everything seems to be going wrong. I will not push Myself on you, but if you desire, I will open to you the Scriptures and show you things you may not have considered yet."

Now most of these disciples had walked with Him for three years, and nothing was hidden from them. Jesus told them plainly that He was going to be betrayed, crucified, and raised from the dead on the third

day. Yet almost nobody was able to hear it because they were locked into the theological error of knowing how and when the kingdom of God was supposed to work.

### *What if God is preparing us for a very hard time to come?*

Even today, what if God is preparing us for a very hard time to come? Are we willing to let the Lord begin to unlock the Scriptures and show us that His ways are not our ways, and His plans are not our plans?

#### ■ THEIR EYES WERE OPENED

*"They drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us'"* (Luke 24:28–29). There was something in them that desired Him, even though His message was hard to hear. After all, none of us really want to suffer. Nevertheless, something in their hearts was saying, "This is right. God is not called to be my servant. I am called to be a servant of the Most High God."

The Bible says they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us because it is getting dark, and the day is coming to an end" (see Luke 24:29). That must be the cry of our hearts now in this generation. "God, maybe I got it all wrong, but something is burning inside of me. Please give me strength because it is getting dark. Help me to be willing to follow Your plan rather than mine."

*"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished*

*from their sight"* (Luke 24:30–31). Their eyes were opened as He broke bread! Jesus was broken so that they might be made whole; He was given for them. Now He was giving them for the sake of others. Suddenly, they began to see that the Kingdom of God was about more than living to see their own views fulfilled, and they now had power to rise up and go back.

### *It was when they had begun to share about their experience with Him that Jesus appeared in their midst.*

No, they were not going back to what looked like a place of victory in the natural. They were going back into a society that had just crucified Christ and was in no mood to endure His followers. But they were heading back with the understanding that there was a deeper purpose. It is as if they could somehow sense Jesus' explanation: "Yes, James and John, you will rule and reign one day. Yes, Peter, you did win the victory. I do have all power and all authority, and I could have claimed the Kingdom. But if I had done so at that time, myriads of people, including those in the year 2017, would have had no hope. So for their sakes, I am leaving you in these places of confusion and difficulty. I am leaving you as a testimony of who I am and what I am willing to do."

And so the two disciples rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the other disciples and said, *"The Lord is risen indeed?...And they told about the things that had*

*happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread. Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said to them, 'Peace to you'"* (Luke 24:34–36).

What a beautiful picture! People who formerly were discouraged now understood that Jesus was given for them, and He was now calling them to be given for others. And notice that it was when they had begun to share about their experience with Him that Jesus appeared in their midst. Likewise, as we allow ourselves to be yielded for His purpose and tell others about the depth of His love, He appears and says, "Peace." He appears in our testimony, and He starts speaking peace to troubled hearts all around us!

And so we see how imperative it is that we escape our own theological error. We must remember that God's ways are higher than ours and trust that what may look like defeat is actually victory. Like the disciples, let's ask Jesus to abide with us and show us where true strength is found. And then as we begin to reach out to others, He will appear through our testimony and touch this generation.

Carter Conlon  
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## Do You Love Yourself Enough to Let God Change You?

### Meet Blanca Garcia, Class of 2017

by Kate Hughes

It's a rainy Monday at Summit. I walk into the dining hall. The atmosphere is light and happy inside despite the weather. I stand in line behind Blanca. We both get the broccoli soup and turkey cheddar sandwich. I ask if I can sit with her. "Of course!" she laughs. She has one of those distinctive laughs you hear from down the hall and know it's her—big, joyful, and contagious.

Blanca was born and raised in Queens, New York. Her parents immigrated from El Salvador to escape the civil war. Blanca had a happy upbringing as the middle child of 11 siblings. After college, she worked at a legal firm in New York and taught English in Korea. Several years into her career, the endless cycle of work, drinks with friends, and living for the weekend became burdensome. "I started to ask 'what is this life? I'm tired of this. God, what do You want me to do?'" He replied, "I want you to serve Me."

In 2015, Blanca applied to Summit. When she was accepted to the class of 2017, she knew her life would



change. Her two years at Summit have been transformative. She has learned who she is in Christ, how to intelligently defend what she believes, and what it means to live for the benefit of others.

I ask her what she would say to someone who is on the fence about applying to Summit. "Oh man, I would probably say, 'do you love yourself enough to let God change you?'" Her eyes light up as she draws an imaginary line on the cafeteria table. "I'm a visual person. This line is your lifetime. Summit is just two years. Two years of not thinking of anything else but the relationship between you and God. Those two years can change the rest of your life." ♥

We need your help to enable students like Blanca and many more whom God is calling to go to Summit. It may surprise you to know that the actual cost of tuition and board at Summit is just under \$15,000 per year. Most people don't know this because Summit only charges students just over \$7,000. We feel God has called us to make Summit accessible by supporting students who have the desire to know Him and the call He has for their life.

To donate, go to [Summitpa.org](http://Summitpa.org) and click on "Support Summit." Or, write "Summit" on the memo line of your check and mail it in the envelope included with the newsletter.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. If you know someone who would benefit from two years at Summit, share this newsletter with them today! — **Pastor Carter Conlon**



#### CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

#### 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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#### WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday 10AM | 1PM | 3PM | 6PM

Tuesday 7PM | Prayer Service

Friday 7:30PM | The Gate  
2nd & 4th Fridays (ages 18-29)

\*Youth and Young Adult Service

#### Live Webcast:

All our Sunday and Tuesday services can be watched live and replayed for seven days on our website.

[tsc.nyc](http://tsc.nyc)