

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

What a wonderful privilege we have today to live on the side of faith. I'm not speaking about an ostrich type of faith that sticks its head in the sand and pretends that everything circling around it isn't really there! On the contrary, this is the type of faith that boldly faces every enemy and says, "you will not have the last word as long as the God that I serve sits on the throne of heaven in complete victory!"

On September 20th, in Times Square, approximately 40,000 believers from the tri-state area and beyond gathered to glorify Christ and declare His Lordship over all. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer, was undeniable. You will be able to see the entire event at www.nycprayer.org. I encourage you to do so as it will help you to believe God for your situation.

To have gathered so many people in Times Square a few years ago would have seemed impossible to many. However, we moved forward in faith, and once again God did what only He could do. I would like to say the rest is history, but I believe it is still in the future!

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

DON'T LET DISCOURAGEMENT TAKE YOUR STRENGTH

by Carter Conlon

Discouragement can be completely debilitating. It has the power to paralyze. It is a favorite weapon of Satan which does not need refinement. The devil does all he can to produce this kind of despair in the heart. He knows it weakens faith and creates doubt in the existence and faithfulness of God. He uses this method to pierce the trust of the believer in order to incapacitate them. This has happened to even the most mature and sincere Christians. In fact the Bible reveals that some of the greatest heroes of the faith suffered from this form of oppression. When they failed to comprehend the reason for discouragement, their only hope was to receive comfort from God.

*The Lord uses
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His work.*

Perhaps you are going through a similar season and do not understand why. I trust this message will open the Word to you and cause you to recognize the work God is doing in your life. Remember, God has promised to be with you all the way. David confirmed this

when he walked through the valley of the shadow of death. He declared not only was God with him, but "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23:6).

■ DISCOURAGEMENT REVEALS THE REASON FOR DEFEAT

A surprising number of leaders have endured intense struggles of this kind. Joshua, for instance, had a severe but momentary attack of discouragement. Having crossed the Jordan River he came face to face with his first major battle, the seemingly insurmountable walled city of Jericho. God gave him and the Israelite army an incredible victory. However, the euphoria experienced in this conquest was short-lived. Immediately after the triumph over Jericho, Israel was overcome and routed by the undersized and inferior army of Ai. They successfully halted the forward progress of Israel. Joshua, feeling belittled and scorned by his enemies, fell prostrate on the ground before God in prayer. He had instantly succumbed to a deep discouragement. The sweet taste of victory had turned sour as he struggled with the bitter dregs of defeat. To him, the great commission of occupying the land of Canaan no longer rang with promise. The whole Israelite camp stood defeated and apparently abandoned by God. "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark

of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their head” (Joshua 7:6).

When you allow hidden issues to remain in your heart, God in His mercy will do everything He can to expose them.

Here is the point I want to make. Joshua, who should have been standing as God’s mighty general over a crushed enemy, was now lying face down on the ground. This was a man of great faith, but like you and I, he was susceptible to attacks of discouragement. He must have been thinking to himself, “Why, God? Over the past 40 years in the wilderness, I have seen Your awesome power to provide and protect. I know what you can do. Now, why is our army running from the second-rate force of Ai, which is before us? Why have we lost our strength?” He literally cried out, “... *Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!*” (Joshua 7:7–8). These were no longer declarations of faith; but the questions of a man in the grip of disappointment. It was the prayer and cry of a person going through the pain of having suffered a humiliating defeat. When you have an honest heart like Joshua, God will come speedily to bring you understanding about why you are going through such discouragement.

■ HIDDEN ISSUES OF THE HEART

“*And the Lord said unto Joshua, ‘Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put [it] even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies’*” (Joshua 7: 10–12a). Joshua learned firsthand the Lord uses discouragement to reveal hidden issues that are hindering His work. The Israelites had been instructed to place all the recovered gold, silver and brass from Jericho into the Lord’s treasury and to destroy everything else. One man, Achan, took items designated for God’s treasury and destined for destruction. He buried them in the ground under his tent. By doing this he brought weakness and defeat into the camp of Israel. God effectively used a bout of discouragement in Joshua’s life to expose Achan’s deceit. From that encounter Joshua was able to take swift action in removing this hindrance to further victory. When you allow hidden issues to remain in your heart, God in His mercy will do everything He can to expose them. To get your attention, He can permit you to experience a level of discouragement in your life. The Lord knows if these issues are not dealt with, they will, over time, take away your strength. You will not be able to move forward in complete victory until they have been removed. “*I am the one who corrects and disciplines everyone I love. Be diligent and turn from your indifference*” (Revelation 3:19, NLT).

■ DISCOURAGEMENT WHICH COMES FROM WILLFUL SIN

During the time when kings usually go to war, David sent Joab, his military commander, to battle while he remained behind in Jerusalem. With unoccupied time on his hands,

he got caught up in compromise and lust. It ended in adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his soldiers who was fighting on the battlefield. This unlawful union resulted in her pregnancy. David’s fear of being found out caused him to arrange for her husband’s death in combat. He committed not only adultery but murder as well.

Nathan the prophet was sent by the Lord to lovingly confront this king. David was instantly convicted by the Holy Spirit and repented. He knew “*People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13, NLT). God forgave him immediately; however, there were still consequences to his sin. David married the now widowed Bathsheba, but was plunged into unfathomable discouragement when he heard their newborn son had a fatal disease. “*David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth*” (2 Samuel 12:16). By reading the Psalms we can know David’s heart and in this situation he must have cried out with bitter remorse, “*Oh God, it was my iniquity that brought judgment into this house. Punish me for my sin, not an innocent child.*”

The child died and, instead of dwelling in his discouragement, David got up from lying on the ground and began to sustain himself with food. He successfully put the past behind him and moved forward by holding on to the forgiveness of God. He was able to take off the garments of mourning, and bring comfort to his household. David could say, “*Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord... If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But [there is] forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*” (Psalm 130:1, 3–4).

It is in low points of the soul when Satan does his best work. He will do what he can to place you into a vice grip of condemnation. The devil will employ his most subtle lies to convince you that there is no longer any value or further use for you in God's kingdom. Beloved, if he can persuade you to give up in the midst of this battle then he has won the fight. I want to bring to your remembrance today that if you have repented from any sin, you are in right standing with God. The second you turn to Him, His plan for your life continues to unfold. Hallelujah! This is the way you overcome the enemy; you have the authority to say, "Devil, you are a defeated foe, God has forgiven me and I am not going to let you condemn me a moment longer."

God is looking for a Caleb company who has not lost trust or confidence in Him.

■ DISCOURAGEMENT CAUSED BY THE UNBELIEF OF OTHERS

Caleb was one of twelve leaders selected by Moses to enter into Canaan and spy out the land of their inheritance. After 40 days of scouting the interior, they returned to the camp of Israel to report where they had been and what they had seen. But there were only two who brought back favorable reports filled with faith. Both Caleb and Joshua communicated to Moses that the land was ready to be taken and God would give them the victory. The other ten scouts came back bringing unfavorable reports, even though it took two men to carry the single cluster of grapes they returned with.

These men were not convinced about immediately possessing the land and overpowered Caleb and Joshua with their opinions.

From the human perspective of the ten spies, Israel as a nation was not ready to invade Canaan. They felt inferior and dwarfed by the intimidating giants who lived there. They saw not only giants but also huge walled cities which were impossible to conquer. With these statements of unbelief they crushed any faith and confidence the people had in God. These spies turned the whole nation against Caleb and Joshua and the Israelites came close to stoning them.

We cannot comprehend the discouragement that could have overtaken Caleb's heart because of the unbelief of others. He could have easily sunk in despair as the Israelites turned from the Promised Land and headed back into the wilderness. During the next 40 years as they wandered in a wasteland, Caleb had to endure the words of unbelief, as well as the many grievances, complaints and grumblings which surfaced among the children of God. It would have been easy to become bitter and carry a heavy burden of discouragement during this time. But both Caleb and Joshua refused to be contaminated by the unbelief that pervaded the Israelites' hearts. They continued to believe God throughout their experiences in the wilderness.

Finally, when they were in the Land of Promise, Caleb came to Joshua, who led the new generation to possess Canaan, and said, "*Forty years old [was] I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadeshbarnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as [it was] in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God.*"

And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while [the children of] Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I [am] this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I [am as] strong this day as [I was] in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength [was] then, even so [is] my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Joshua 14:7-11). When he made these statements, Caleb was talking about his faith and strength in God. Even though he had aged, he knew confidence in God could still give him victory, so he said to Joshua, "*Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims [were] there, and [that] the cities [were] great [and] fenced: if so be the Lord [will be] with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel" (Joshua 14:12-14).*

It is interesting to note the Lord rewarded Caleb with a new opportunity to face the giants and walled cities of Canaan after so many years. These were the same issues which had so easily turned the unbelieving Israelites away from the Promised Land. But Caleb was still eager to prove to his countrymen that God was able to overcome these obstacles. He had not changed His mind. What He was willing to do before He was still able to do now. And God did conquer that mountain by using an old man who chose to believe Him instead of being buried

under years of disappointment and discouragement. Praise God!

■ WAITING ON THE LORD TO RENEW YOUR STRENGTH

God is looking for a Caleb company who has not lost trust or confidence in Him. In spite of the many difficulties they experience and every opportunity to become discouraged, this company of faithful warriors will chose to wait upon God. They will elect to believe what He says as a greater truth than what can be seen in the natural, and thereby defy the lies of the enemy.

The devil wants you to think your problems are worse than anyone else has had to face and you are somehow excluded from God's attention. But while you wait upon Him, God will make a way for you as Isaiah exhorted, *"Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away. O Israel, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case? Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:26–31, NLT).

In Isaiah the word, "wait" means, "bind together by twisting, to be gathered together." It is like taking two twist ties and joining them or braiding strands of fiber into a rope, with the end result being stronger than the beginning. This is the most exciting part about God's invitation to trust Him with every detail of your life. He invites you to be bound together with Him in His victory and power over discouragement.

Do not allow the enemy to lie to you saying God is not interested in your particular problems and your ways are not important enough for Him to deal with. The Scriptures show that if God has numbered the stars and calls each of them by name, surely He sees and knows your struggle. God knows you by name and He knows your circumstances. God will quickly bring the understanding you need for faith and strength to get through difficult times if you cry out to Him. In the natural, this season of your life may look like a mountain filled with giants that can easily crush you, but they are nothing in God's sight. Stay united with Him and His ways and He will cause you to triumph over all your enemies.

For those who are discouraged, you do not have to live under its power and dominion any longer. Let God speak to you through this word today and let faith arise in your heart again. God has given you a promise—if you will wait upon Him, He will come through for you and give you increased strength.

Carter Conlon
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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	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

This message is an edited version of "Don't Let Discouragement Take Your Strength," a sermon given on August 23, 2009 in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You can also write to: Times Square Church, Sermon Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without written permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.