

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

We are undoubtedly headed into perilous times. Professing followers of Christ who have embraced only "feel good" theology, in its various forms, may have unwittingly fed from a spiritual diet that will leave them without the strength needed to face the coming storm.

Psalm 119, verses 67, 71 and 75, speak of the spiritual understanding of a righteous person who was led by the hand of God into a place of humility, weakness and despair. He states that in this time of affliction, he learned both the power of God's Word and His unfailing faithfulness.

This newsletter, and the following, will be dealing with the power of God found in the wilderness. Meditate fully on the truths you will read. The goodness of the Lord Jesus has you exactly where you are today. If you have an honest and searching heart, the power of God that will come to you ensures that you will be able to stand with confidence and trust in the love of an unfailing Savior.

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

COMING OUT OF THE WILDERNESS IN POWER (PART 1)

by Carter Conlon

The term "wilderness experience" rarely, if ever, means a time or place of leisure. A wilderness certainly is no oasis. In fact, by definition it is a remote environment devoid of all outward appeal, hope or comfort. It is a hostile place where few would willingly go. Most of us actually would resist going into a wilderness, yet that is exactly where God sent His Son.

■ GOD LEADS HIS SON INTO THE WILDERNESS

Before Jesus began His public ministry, John baptized Him in the Jordan River. As He came up out of the water, the voice of God spoke audibly from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). Simultaneously, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, empowering Him for service. You might assume that Jesus would immediately go into public ministry, but this was not the case. "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).

Jesus embraced this barren setting as a positive rather than a negative experience for Him. We need to look closely at the truth of His example, and consider whether we too will allow God to use our time spent in the wilderness as a means of knowing Him in a greater measure.

■ JESUS CONTINUALLY RETURNS TO THE WILDERNESS

"Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place"
(Luke 4:40-42).

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Jesus voluntarily returned again and again to the wilderness after healing the multitudes and bringing deliverance to the oppressed.

"But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed"
(Luke 5:15-16).

When Jesus' fame spread abroad, He again headed for the sanctity of the wilderness. He understood the need to establish God as His sole source of strength. This would continually give God all the glory and honor.

Many of us do not want to embrace what Jesus is clearly showing us—that the wilderness is not to be avoided, but rather should be accepted and understood. As a believer, ask yourself the question: Why did Jesus keep going back to such a harsh and uninviting place? Could it be that God was revealing something of His strength there? Was Jesus receiving a hidden treasure from God which the natural mind could not comprehend?

I believe God wants to bring you to a place where you begin to understand why you go through hard times. In the Bible, there are many examples that illustrate what God can accomplish in the wilderness.

If you look only with your natural vision, the wilderness can seem an unlikely place to find God.

■ GOD LEADS HIS PEOPLE INTO THE WILDERNESS

When Israel was held captive in Egypt, God said to Moses, *“Go to Pharaoh and say, ‘Let my people go three days’ journey into the wilderness”* (Exodus 3:18). Three days into the bone-dry countryside was far enough for them to be out of reach from everything which bound them or offered creature comforts. Little did they know that it would become a place of incredible worship and provision for them. Here they

would witness God's might as He fought for them and gave them a great deliverance.

Pharaoh, who represents natural man, only saw a weak, beggarly people trapped in the desert, confused and directionless. He said to his commanders, *“Gather together the chariots and the weapons because we are going after them. They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in”* (Exodus 14:3). Pharaoh wrongly interpreted what God was doing with His chosen people. He could not see God in the wilderness. In the end he and his immense host of horsemen were defeated in the Red Sea—and the Israelites triumphed!

If you look only with your natural vision, the wilderness can seem an unlikely place to find God. And if you choose to avoid the wilderness, you will never know the supernatural pathways revealed there.

■ GOD DEALS WITH SIN IN THE WILDERNESS

In the wilderness God gave His people the assurance their sins were forgiven. In the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement, the priest killed a goat as a sin offering and sprinkled its blood upon the Ark of the Covenant. The priest took a second goat, called the scapegoat, placed his hands upon its head and confessed the sins of the Israelites. A strong man was then selected to take the scapegoat, which now bore the sins of the people, and release it into a desolate area (Leviticus 16:15–22). In this desert place God dealt with the sins of the people. In the same way, God uses your wilderness experience to go after hidden or unacknowledged sins. In His mercy, He takes you there not to harm you, but to deliver you.

What God is teaching you in the wilderness will enable you to bring down your giants in the future.

■ GOD REVEALS HIS PROVISION IN THE WILDERNESS

In the wilderness, God displayed His awesome power to provide for His people. *“And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat”* (Exodus 16:15). Manna appeared in a place with no delis, grocery stores, fast-food joints or restaurants. The people had to depend on God for their daily sustenance.

If ever you needed to lay hold of the truth that God provides for your every need, it is now! The Lord has promised to care for you, so allow Him to take you to a place where your only resource is Him. Remember, Jesus fed the multitudes on a hillside in a desolate area—and He will do the same for you.

■ GOD TRAINS DAVID FOR BATTLE IN THE WILDERNESS

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was given the task of tending the family's sheep. While David watched the flocks grazing in the wilderness, God taught him to trust Him. When the sheep were attacked by a bear and a lion, God enabled David to deliver the lambs out of the mouths of the beasts.

Later, when David visited his brothers on the battlefield, he could not understand why they

were letting an evil giant named Goliath belittle the armies of the living God. His brothers prided themselves on being men of stature with all the right training and experience, while David was looked down upon as a common herder. His brothers accused him of weakness, because he was not formally trained in the art of warfare as they were (1 Samuel 17:28). In essence, his older brother said, “You don’t have the armor we possess and you have not had the training we completed. All you have been doing is caring for animals in the wilderness.” They could not comprehend that God was in the wilderness with David. They could not understand that in the wilderness, David found his strength and confidence in God.

David picked up five stones and, with God as his source of strength, confronted and killed Goliath as his brothers looked on. To their amazement, they saw God use a common herder to defeat an enemy which had terrorized the entire army of Israel. You may not understand it now, but what God is teaching you in the wilderness will enable you to bring down your giants in the future.

■ GOD RAISES MIGHTY WARRIORS IN THE WILDERNESS

King Saul’s jealousy drove David into the wilderness, but there God raised up a small army of discarded men who were in debt, in distress, and discontented. Under David’s leadership, God made these men into mighty warriors and what could have been a wasted time of frustration in his young life turned into triumph. God used David’s time in the wilderness to produce steel in the lives of men who otherwise would have been powerless.

As you read this message, try to grasp the full significance of every difficulty God allows in your life. Through them He will shape you into a mighty man or woman who

knows how to trust Him in the dark days ahead. You are being made into a warrior for His kingdom. Your struggles are not wasted with God. In time, you will look back and know that without the wilderness experiences in your life, you could never have accomplished what He designed for you.

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■ GOD USES THE WILDERNESS TO WIN BACK THE BACKSLIDER

In Hosea we see the pattern of how God deals with people when they have strayed from the truth and from His purposes.

“For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal” (Hosea 2:5–8).

The wife referred to in this passage of Scripture was diverted from her true source of provision and sought help

elsewhere. Instead of seeking God, she had focused all her attention on this world—and that is Baal worship. God wants you to trust Him alone for all your needs and not seek answers in the powers and institutions of this day and age. There will be no lasting peace or joy if you trust in those systems and not in the Lord your God.

■ GOD USES THE WILDERNESS TO BREAK STRONGHOLDS

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali” (Hosea 2:14–16).

God is saying, “I am going to bring my bride into the wilderness and speak to her there. I will take her far away from the clamor and noise of the things which distracted her. There in the wilderness I will talk to her tenderly and give her vineyards in the Valley of Achor.”

The Valley of Achor was where Achan, a covetous man, was judged soon after Israel entered into Canaan. After the victory of Jericho, Achan was so overcome by the love of gold, silver, brass and clothing that he stole these things and hid them under his tent. His greed brought weakness into the entire camp of Israel and God’s people were defeated by an insignificant army. Achan and all that pertained to him were removed from the camp and he was put to death.

Achan is a type of captivating sin that can lead you astray from the purposes of God. However, God in His mercy will take you to a wilderness where the strongholds that have captivated your heart are dealt with. In your wilderness, He will say,

“These things have gripped you for far too long and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I will set you free.”

God does not lead you into the wilderness to harm you. He leads you there to completely depend on Him. The dry places will bring you into a deeper intimacy with Him and you will no longer view Him as being far away. You will come to know Him in closeness and confidence. Your relationship will be a different, more intimate one, and you will call Him husband instead of master.

Through the hard times He will strengthen you by removing those areas which produce weakness. His desire is for the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through your life and the life of the church. God does this so His glory can be made known to the world. God knows that in the wilderness you will turn to Him, know His heart, and walk with Him as the bride of Christ.

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■ GOD WILL OPEN THE WORD TO YOU IN THE WILDERNESS

The Bible says, *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea”* (Matthew 3:1). In the wilderness John was schooled by the Lord and the Word of God came into his heart. By the time he came out of the desert, he was anointed and empowered by God. Through the powerful preaching of this man, God was able to confront an entire

backslidden, religious system, because John had heard the Word of God in the wilderness.

In Psalm 74:14, the Scripture tells us that the spoils of victory (the crushing of the head of Leviathan) will be given as meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. In other words, the meat or food that will sustain you will be the knowledge and revelation that Satan is a defeated foe. His head was crushed when Christ defeated him on Calvary. And the Word of God says that the triumph of that victory will be given to those who have been drawn by God into the wilderness. It is a wisdom which will be revealed to those who do not shun the difficult places but embrace them.

■ GOD WILL HAVE A BRIDE COMING OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

You and I are about to meet in the wilderness. We are about to meet with Christ there. Very soon the whole church is going into the wilderness; however, the true church will not stay there but will come out in the strength of God. Solomon saw this truth when he wrote, *“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”* (Song of Solomon 8:5). It will be a bride made up of people like you and me who have learned to lean on Christ for everything. This will be a testimony to all! There is a bride in this generation who will come out of the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved. Hallelujah!

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	

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This newsletter is an edited version of “Coming Out of the Wilderness in Power,” a sermon given on **August 30, 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.