

Dear Friend,

Sometimes we all come to a place where just a word of encouragement from somebody is truly able to make the difference when we are in danger of losing heart and hope. As we read in Proverbs 12:25, "*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.*"

This has always been my desire in sending these messages to you. I pray over what to say, even in this letter of greeting. Sometimes, knowing that Jesus knows this letter will be in your hands, I ask Him to give me exactly the words you need to be encouraged to face the trials that have come your way. As believers in Christ we need to encourage each other even more as we see the day of His appearing drawing near. Just between you and me (and this will have to remain our secret!) I go through the same times of difficulty as everyone else. 😊 Still, in the midst of it all, Jesus helps me not to forget the absolute power that simple words of encouragement can be to others.

In spite of your own trial today, I ask you to think about someone you could be a blessing to just by sending an email, giving a call or mailing a card to say that you love them and care. Remember that God sent Moses, in what must have been a season of his own need, to deliver a people who were crying out for help. Great good can be done through your life today.

Be blessed.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter

HUNTING A PARTRIDGE IN THE MOUNTAINS

by Carter Conlon

Much of the church in our generation seems to have been on a never-ending pursuit of God—only to emerge with little fruit to show for it. As a result, I believe a cry has come into the hearts of many of God's people today: "I have sought God in the only way that I know, the only way I have been taught. I have tried to find Him in all the places they said He was, but I could never seem to lay hold of Him. I feel like the psalmist who cried out, *'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?'*" (Psalms 22:1–2). I cry, but it is as if God does not hear me. Why?"

*Lord, why
have we been
seeking You
but You have
not been
answering us?*

Suddenly it seems all our religious activity has come to a screeching halt, and we realize that despite all our seeking of God, we still fail to impact our society the way the church of Jesus Christ ought to. Now we finally have the sense to stop and ask the question: Lord, why have we been seeking You but You have not been answering us?

I believe something within the story of Saul and David answers this question. Let's look at the relationship between them as a type of your and my relationship with Jesus Christ.

■ SAUL AND DAVID

Although he was king over the nation of Israel and master of his own destiny, Saul eventually came up against an enemy that he instinctively knew was too strong for him (see 1 Samuel 17). He and all the people under his leadership stood trembling before a Philistine giant named Goliath. In the midst of his dilemma, David, a type of Christ, came to Saul with words of courage and faith: "Do not fear. I am going to go fight this battle for you, and I am going to win" (see 1 Samuel 17:32, 37).

Saul ended up embracing what appeared to be a foolish battle plan. A young boy filled with a heart of faith and a desire to see God glorified in the earth went out to fight for him. It was a battle plan that Saul would not have considered had he remained strong in himself. Similarly, if we have the courage to admit it, we would not have considered Christ if we had not eventually come to recognize our inability to win our battles in our own strength.

David went into the valley and decapitated the power of the enemy's army. Saul soon found

himself in hot pursuit of the enemy although he was actually getting the spoils of another man's victory. When you and I embraced the cross, we too, entered into a power and victory that was not our own. It was Jesus Christ who won the battle over the powers of darkness. It was Jesus who unlocked our prison doors, brought healing to our wounded hearts and gave sight to our blinded eyes.

Most people do not have a problem adding Jesus to their agenda, but the thought of His becoming king and their becoming His subjects is where the real struggle begins.

After this great victory, Saul took David home and made him a part of his household (see 1 Samuel 18:2). Similarly, when we came to Christ, we didn't leave Him at church. We took Him home just as Saul took David home. David sat at Saul's table, just as you have Jesus at your table when you open the Bible and spend time with Him.

Saul also benefitted from David's skillful musicianship (see 1 Samuel 16:16–23). The Bible doesn't specify, but it is likely that a spirit of worship coming from David's heart as he played on that harp caused an evil spirit which was troubling Saul to let go of him. Today we have the assurance that the Lord "...will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). Perhaps there have been days when you felt

heavy and oppressed, and your mind seemed to be caught in a tangled web of attacks. Yet after worshiping, you found that your mind was suddenly clear and that this evil had lost its hold.

In many ways, we find ourselves in a place very similar to where Saul was in his relationship with David. Eventually, however, something happened that began to separate the two of them. Likewise, I believe that in our generation, something has begun to separate Christ from His church. If we are wise, we will stop and consider: What happened in this relationship between Saul and David?

■ THE TURNING POINT

"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward" (1 Samuel 18:6–9).

Here is the key: Up until this point, Saul was still in control of his own life, and David was merely a wonderful addition to his kingdom. This is exactly how many people regard Jesus Christ today, which is not surprising since that is the way He has been portrayed in much of the preaching of our generation. Add Jesus to your plans, add Him to your career, add Him to your self-image. Just add Jesus! He is the power of God and will make a wonderful addition to your kingdom.

Things took a turn in their relationship when one day it dawned

on Saul: David was increasing and he was decreasing. Remember, John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He must increase, and I must decrease." Suddenly Saul realized, "Wait, David hasn't come to be a wonderful addition to my kingdom—he has come to be the next king!" From that day forward, Saul gathered his men and began to pursue David.

Most people do not have a problem adding Jesus to their agenda, but the thought of His becoming king and their becoming His subjects is where the real struggle begins. One day they realize the Lord is asking something of them that does not agree with their plans, and they suddenly find themselves at a juncture. Unfortunately many people, just like Saul, refuse to yield the throne. Of course, very few would have the courage to openly admit, "I am walking away from Jesus," so they continue their pursuit of Christ. However, the pursuit is now only for the purpose of validating a throne they refuse to yield—an attempt to get the Lord to agree with their own personal agenda.

■ A FUTILE PURSUIT

"And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph" (1 Samuel 26:1–2).

What a classic picture of the type of pursuit of God so common in our generation! Saul would receive a report about where David was, and then with three thousand of his men, he would set off to find him. When the search failed, another report came and off they would go in another direction. Yet in this whole pursuit, he was never able to find David. How frustrating it must have been to always come back empty

and seeming like less of a king than when he had set out—a sentiment shared by many today as they return home empty after attending the latest conference or supposed manifestation of Christ.

In our spiritual slumber, the Lord has come and taken our spear and our water bottle.

At one point in the pursuit, David and his servant Abishai had entered the very camp where Saul and his armies were sleeping. *“So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them”* (1 Samuel 26:12). David took Saul’s spear—a symbol of his strength and ability to make war. He also took Saul’s water bottle, which is the replenishment of God. In the New Testament, this is the spring of living water that Christ promises to those who truly belong to Him.

After they had climbed a hill opposite Saul’s camp and were a safe distance away, David called over to Saul: *“Do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains”* (1 Samuel 26:20, NKJV). David was essentially saying, “You are seeking me, but you cannot find me. It is as if you are hunting a flea or a partridge in the mountains.” Did you know that a partridge can camouflage itself? It may be a foot away from you, yet it can make itself the same color as the leaves and you will easily walk right past it.

David continued to call over to Saul, *“...Behold the king’s spear! And let one of the young men come over and fetch it”* (1 Samuel 26:22). In other words, “We are a mountain apart, but here it is if you want it. Send one of the young men over to fetch it.” If only Saul had possessed a measure of humility in his heart at that point and said, “No, David, I am the one who should have been guarding it. I will come and get it.” It was a wonderful opportunity for Saul to humble himself—a moment that could have made a difference in history. In a sense, he would have been bowing his knee before the real king.

Now consider this scene again, keeping in mind David as the Christ-type and Saul as a type of what the church has become after walking in the stubbornness of our own ways. In our spiritual slumber, the Lord has come and taken our spear and our water bottle. He has taken our ability to conquer and removed what refreshes us. And now, just as David cried out from the hill, Christ is crying out to our generation from Calvary one more time, “Here is your strength to make war; here is the Living Water you are looking for. Come and get it!” Responding to this call requires humility. If you try to go up a mountain standing erect, you will fall over backwards. You must go up in a position of humility.

Saul could not bring himself to lay hold of the spiritual principle in this, just as there are people today who refuse to humble themselves and allow Christ to be Lord of all. Seek Him all you want—travel the world; hear about a revival in some country and get on the first plane over—but if you are not willing to bow and let Christ be Lord of all, your seeking will be in vain and you will constantly come home weak, empty and dry. Eventually you will reach the erroneous conclusion that Christ

cannot be found and that revival in personal measure is just an illusion.

■ THE SEARCH IS OVER

Interestingly, the Scriptures also tell the story of four hundred distressed, debt-ridden men who headed toward where David was (see 1 Samuel 22). The beauty of it all was that they did not have a hard time finding him. Saul with his three thousand men, probably including some of the best spies and scouts in the land, travelled all over the countryside and could not find David. Yet four hundred discontented men just got up one day and essentially said, “Enough of this! We’re going where the anointing of God is.” So they went into the cave where David was, just as we are called in our generation to come outside the gate and join Christ (see Hebrews 13:12–13). They went outside of the system that had rejected Him as Lord, and David became captain over them.

I am going to where the power of God is.

These men did not come in their own strength or with their own resources, for they did not have any left. They did not come with a plan—they went to get the plan. It was as if each of them had concluded, “I would rather die with David than live in the kingdom of Saul with his powerless pursuit. I am going to where the power of God is.”

How was it that many of these men later went on to accomplish incredible feats—eventually being named among David’s mighty men (see 2 Samuel 23)? I believe it all started in that cave. I can imagine David telling them the story of the day he defeated Goliath. After all, what else was there to do in the cave? The four hundred would say, “David, tell us again. Tell us

how you had the courage to go into that valley!”

I pray that in this hour, God will give us the courage to bend our knee to the lordship of Jesus Christ and the power to humble ourselves and stop pursuing Christ for the wrong reasons.

And so David would rehearse the story over and over again—how he knew it just was not right for the men of God to be cowering on the mountainside while this giant perpetually raised his voice against the glory and honor of God. “Then the Spirit of God came upon me, and I stood there and called, ‘You come to me with a staff and a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts, the God that you have defied!’”

I can just see courage and strength rising in these men’s hearts day after day until they finally concluded, “If God did that for David, and if that is how He is going to be honored, then I refuse to live in mediocrity any longer!” It is a type of those in our generation who say, “I am not searching anymore. I have found Him, for I am no longer trying to force my agenda into the kingdom

of God. I have chosen instead to be abandoned to the will of God and to live for the honor of His name!” The four hundred found strength as they followed in the footsteps of David—just as those of us who are willing to follow in the footsteps of Christ will be empowered to change the course of history.

The Lord will once again take the weak, the discouraged, the disillusioned—the one who is an honest and sincere seeker of God. He will use the one who is not trying to bring any agenda to Him, but rather is seeking and walking in His will. Throughout history we have seen that when ordinary people seek the face of God with honesty, they find the fulfillment of the promise, “*You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV).

I pray that in this hour, God will give us the courage to bend our knee to the lordship of Jesus Christ—that He will give us the power to humble ourselves and stop pursuing Christ for the wrong reasons. No more coming into the prayer closet and presenting God with our own plan, expecting Him to bless it. Instead, let us go in and find God’s plan, for there is no other plan and no other way. One more time, let us yield ourselves to His will, unto the death if necessary. That is how we will be set free from this futile pursuit and truly empowered to influence our generation. Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
©2012 Times Square Church

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.

Founding Pastor

David Wilkerson

Senior Pastor

Carter Conlon

Tel:

212-541-6300

Fax:

212-541-6415

Church Location:

237 West 51st Street
Between Broadway & 8th Avenue

Mailing Address:

1657 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019

e-mail:

info@timesquarechurch.org

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	

tscnyc.org

This newsletter is an edited version of “HUNTING A PARTRIDGE IN THE MOUNTAINS” a sermon given on February 12, 2011 in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. 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 permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.