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SUMMIT
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Class of 2023



Prayer Points

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NATIONALLY

- The next president God allows into office
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LOCALLY

- A Revival in NYC—for a powerful outpouring of God to be felt in companies, schools, and on the streets

INDIVIDUALLY

- Resistant family members to be touched by the Holy Spirit and return to Christ

Becoming a Prisoner for the Prisoners

by **Pastor Carter Conlon**, *General Overseer*

Years ago, in about 1995, Armand Gilliam, a basketball player for the New Jersey Nets and a strong believer in Christ, attended our church. He had just signed another multimillion-dollar contract for one more year.

Knowing he was at a crossroads, I asked him about his plan: "So what are you going to do?"

He proceeded to tell me his father was a pastor of a small church. Growing up, he and his brother were subjected to sitting on the front row, dressed in starched and uncomfortable clothing. They did not enjoy being there. There was a little old lady who would go up and down the aisles shouting like a train, "Woo, woo, woo!" It was especially embarrassing whenever his friends came to church.

The life God wants
to give you, might be
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He explained that he had recently gone back to visit his dad's church. The little old lady was still there, a little older but still doing her thing up and down the aisles. Not much had changed, but he found himself saying, "My dad was right all along. This is what life is all about." He decided that when he retired from basketball, he would go back to help his dad at his church as the new youth director.

We often think we're going to be happier being somewhere other than where we

Becoming a Prisoner for the Prisoners (continued)

are. The grass can seem greener on the other side of the fence. But often you'll find out that the life God wants to give you, might be exactly where you are right now. It's not in getting another job. It's not in moving to another apartment. It's not in living in another city. It's right where you are. You're not where you are by accident. There's a reason.

The book of Acts records a great miracle where two men were accused, beaten with rods, and thrust into an inner prison—a dark, dank, and terrible place—but who chose to praise God. The Bible describes it this way in Acts 16:25–26 (NKJV): But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

Paul had been preaching the Gospel earlier in this chapter, and the churches were being strengthened and increasing in numbers daily. Good things were happening. But he gets it in his heart to change locations: “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6, NKJV).

No one really knows what was on his mind, or why he wanted to go to Asia. But what we do know is that it wasn't the will of God because the Holy Spirit forbade him.

Next the Bible says, “After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them” (Acts 16:7, NKJV). This was his second attempt to leave his current location, but again the Spirit did not permit them. It was shortly after this that Paul had a vision: “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’” (Acts 16:9, NKJV).

In Psalm 55, we read about King David. He found himself reigning as a king

in a place where he didn't want to be. Quite often we can find ourselves in places where we'd rather not be. In Psalm 55:5–6 (NKJV), David says, “Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, ‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.’”

Your attitude is a song of victory that tells others that they can experience the same joy.

Have you ever prayed, “Oh God, get me out of here”

Indeed, David said, “I would wander off and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest” (Psalm 55:7–8, NKJV).

Many people believe the presence of God means the absence of trouble. That is not true. And anybody who preaches that is not preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ, Himself, told us that in this world, we will encounter trouble.

When Paul went to Asia, he says, “We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:8–10).

You will encounter difficulties in the Christian life, but God has interwoven the honor of His very name in keeping you safe.

Jesus said, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:29, NIV).

Paul said, “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39, NLT).

We are called to live our lives for the benefit of others. If you don't testify about God where you are today, then who will testify? God put you in that kitchen. God put you in that classroom. God put you in that industry. There must be a testimony of the goodness of God everywhere in this society. We are salt. We are light. We're not meant to be hidden under a bed.

Paul and Silas were having a really bad day when they found themselves in jail. They were accused. Their clothes were ripped off. They were beaten with rods. The Scripture says they laid many stripes on them. And then they threw them in prison. In those days, there was no television there. There was no internet there. There was no cafeteria there. There was no light. It was the most horrid place on the face of the earth.

But Paul and Silas chose to praise the Lord. As David the Psalmist said, “I waited patiently for the Lord. And He inclined to me and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my steps” (Psalm 40:1–2, NKJV). Paul taught that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Paul could honestly say, “Silas, I don't understand the reason we're here. I saw a vision. And in that vision, there was a man who needed help.

Silas could have said, “Do you think we failed? Did we really hear from God?”

Paul could have said, “I don't know, but I do know that all things do work together for good. Why don't we just praise Him right now?”

I don't know what they were singing, but whatever they were singing, the prisoners had never heard a song like that before—not in that place. When you choose to praise God and you're in the same neighborhood, in the same building, on the same job, but your song is different

than everyone else's around you, people will be listening.

When we begin to glorify God in the midst of our own trials, something happens in the spirit. For the prisoners with Paul and Silas doors began to open and chains were loosened. The things that bound them, suddenly lost their hold because two men in the same situation they were in, chose to praise God. It matters what people hear you say and sing, too.

One day as I was walking from the train station to the church when I began to sing out loud. By the time I got to the church, I had written a whole song.

It went something like this:

I walk in the presence of God. Where the saints all before me have trod,

Day to day by victory, greeted.

Here I'll never be defeated,
as I walk in the presence of God.

In the presence of God,

In the presence of God,
I walk in the presence of God.

Where I share the joys of heaven,
as I give my Jesus reverence,

And I walk in the presence of God.

I don't know who heard my song, but somebody did. As I walked down the street, I was singing loudly about being in the presence of God.

The Scripture tells us that the jailer went in because all the doors had opened, and he assumed that the prisoners had escaped. If they had, he could be executed for failing his duty as jailer. He took a sword and was going to kill himself. But Paul called to the jailer telling him not to harm himself because they were all still there. This was a miracle.

Why would these criminals stay in their prison cells? It didn't even make sense to the natural mind. The jailer called for a light and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He asked them what he should do to be saved. All this started happening because they chose to sing in their situation. Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he and his household would be saved.

The jailer took them that same night, and he washed the wounds on their backs, and immediately he and his family were baptized. He set food before them in his house and rejoiced having believed in God with all his household.

I've always been curious about why the other prisoners with Paul and Silas didn't take the chance to flee. It's possible that they became so accustomed to being imprisoned that they preferred it over freedom. However, I believe they chose to stay because they had never experienced the presence of God before. Once they did, they valued God's presence so much that they were unwilling to leave it behind. Initially, they might have thought that freedom meant being released from their physical prison cell, but through the praise and worship of Paul and Silas, the freedom of God entered their midst, and they cherished it above everything else. It's like my friend, the basketball player said: Freedom is where God is.

Having studied this chapter of Scripture, I truly believe that the man who appeared in Paul's vision was the jailer, and the "us" that he was referring to when he said, "Come to Macedonian, help us", were the prisoners.

Your attitude makes a difference. Your faith and joy in the midst of difficult circumstances will influence those around you and teach them that they too can find the victory of Christ right where they are. Almost everybody who lives around you in your circumstance thinks the same

way. They think, "If I could just get out of here, I would be happy."

That's how most people live, think, and feel. But when you choose to praise God while living in the same circumstances, it brings God into their situation. This helps them realize that victory is right where they are. They don't have to leave, be somewhere else, or find a new job. Your attitude is a song of victory that tells others that they can experience the same joy and victory you have, right where they are.

May God help us to find that song in this generation. We need to start singing that song of victory. We need to learn to have victory right where we are planted. Paul wanted to be in Asia and Bithynia, but God sent him to Macedonia into a prison where there were prisoners who needed help.

Right now where you are, some people are imprisoned by their circumstances. Every night, they go to bed saying, "God, help me, my family, my children." God has put you next door. Sing your song, so that those prisoners can hear it and be set free. Sing it on the way home. Sing it when you get home. Sing it when you go to bed. Sing it when you get up in the morning. Sing it in the hallway. Sing it when you're waiting for the elevator. Sing it when you're walking down the street. Sing it in the workplace, and watch prison doors open and shackles fall and people find that through your song, God has come to where they are. ■

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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH



Go Grandmothers!

The generous heart God has given to our congregation at Times Square Church continues to make a profound impact on the lives of hundreds of children and their grandmothers in Malawi, Africa. Since July of this year, we have partnered with SAFE, a Christian organization dedicated to supporting grandmothers in Malawi who are raising grandchildren orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

SAFE's ministry provides practical support such as emotional encouragement, spiritual development, and physical necessities. This includes supplying fertilizer and seeds for sustainable farming, enabling grandmothers to care for their grandchildren.

This year has been particularly challenging for these elderly grandmothers who cultivate maize, a crucial ingredient for Phala, a porridge vital for their diet. The physical labor of clearing and planting their maize fields is demanding, especially as they grow older. This year, tears were shed over the scarcity and high cost of fertilizer, essential for a successful harvest.

But thanks to your generosity, Times Square Church was able to make a significant difference. Through our missions funding,

we assisted grandmothers with the fertilizer they desperately needed to feed themselves and the vulnerable children in their care for the coming year. Additionally, our support extended to providing food for children in SAFE's village preschools, helping to prevent malnutrition through our ChildCry feeding program ministry.

Your contributions enabled us to cover the costs of fertilizer ingredients for each of the 2,341 grandmothers in the program, ensuring they can sustain themselves and the children in their care throughout the year. We also provided funds for essential nutritional items like nuts, soya, sugar, salt, and more, ensuring these children receive the nutrition they need to thrive.

In Malawi, hope takes the form of elderly caregivers nurturing the young, all finding solace and strength in Christ's faithfulness and love, demonstrated through His people. Through your support, we not only meet their immediate needs but also educate and disciple them in faith.

We are deeply humbled and grateful to witness God's hand bringing together this new partnership, a testament to the gift of giving among believers at Times Square Church. ■



Looking Back, Moving Forward

As we look back on stories of God moving through our lives, we can move forward with encouragement and anticipation of what He will do next. by Anna Ivanishchuk

JENNIFER'S STORY

Jennifer says she found TSC when she was going through a very difficult time in her life. She had an accident at work, which put her in the intensive care unit (ICU), and her work refused to accommodate her. As a result, she lost her job and began to struggle financially.

"I just wanted to give up," Jennifer recalls, "until one day I was lying in bed, crying out, asking the Lord to take away the pain. I just couldn't handle it anymore. But then it felt as if someone took my heart out and placed it back in my chest, and I was overcome with complete and total peace. It was the strangest, yet most comforting, feeling I have ever felt."

The next day, Jennifer decided to take a chance and try church again. She came across TSC, and one of the speakers was a young woman who spoke about coming from a tough background. She instantly started to cry because it was as if the woman was telling Jennifer's own story. It was at that moment she realized she was meant to find this church. Since then, Jennifer has been joining every Sunday.

She says, "TSC saved me from myself, and I am very grateful to be a part of this wonderful family."

To read more stories or to submit your testimony, check out tsc.nyc/stories.



A Conversation with Gene Badavath, Class of 2023

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to Summit?

I was born and raised in a Christian family from a lower caste system in India. Growing up, I wasn't permitted to speak to any authority. Official documents indicated my lower caste status, which made it difficult for me to share my ideas or speak up in class. As a result, I became afraid to speak.

In 2020, I completed my Bachelor's in Communications and Journalism and was trying to figure out my next steps. I considered pursuing a Master's degree but then heard about Summit through my friend, Yohan. I had also been thinking about Bible school, so I decided to take a chance and see if I could get in.

After I was accepted, I made a visa appointment, but I was rejected immediately. The waitlist for another visa appointment was two years. Miraculously, one week before Summit started, I got another visa appointment 2000 miles from my home. The interview took only 30 minutes, and the interviewer would ask questions and then answer them himself! I think the only thing I said was "yes" a few times. He approved my visa, and I ran to the nearest phone to call my parents, telling them I was leaving for America in a week.

You mentioned being afraid to share your ideas. When you came to Summit, what was the process like for opening up more?

It was definitely a process. Every time I tried to talk to anyone, I thought of them as higher than me. For about the first three months, I didn't really talk to anyone. It was a battle inside me. In chapels, they would say that we should talk to the staff anytime and that they wanted to get to know us. I was encouraged to ask questions, and it was really freeing.

Is there a specific valuable moment that stands out to you during your time as a student?

During one of our theology nights, we were discussing pain and suffering, and the staff were so open in sharing their struggles. They were leaders, yet they shared their weaknesses honestly. They were able to still praise God, not question Him, and remain faithful. It moved me deeply, and my faith was uplifted tremendously.

What advice would you give to someone considering applying to Summit?

Take a leap of faith. Come here and see what God will do in your life. Be patient when you come, and enjoy being a student. I would do it all over again. You learn more about people, different cultures, and about God. It will change your life.

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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CHURCH LOCATION

237 West 51st Street
Between Broadway & 8th Avenue

OUR SERVICES

Sunday | 10AM & 1PM

In Person and Online

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