

Donkeys, Dirt and Demons
by Pastor Tim Dilena

TSC MISSIONS
My Two Little Brothers Are in Heaven

From Rejection to Restoration:
How Jesus Turned Years of Pain Into a Life of Joy and Purpose
Stacie's Story

A BILLION STORIES
From Isolation to Family:
How God Met Me Through Church Online Lauren's Story



Donkeys, Dirt and Demons

by **Pastor Tim Dilena**, *Senior Pastor*

Heritage reminds us where we came from, but legacy is built by what we do with it. The real danger is not losing our history—it's losing our awe. There comes a point in every believer's life where what once stirred us deeply can become familiar, and what once moved our hearts can slowly turn into routine. If we're not careful, we can sit in the presence of God and no longer be moved by it. We can hear truth and no longer tremble. We can witness what God is doing and still remain unchanged. When awe fades, something begins to shift inside of us, and what was once alive can quietly become distant.

When God is no longer awesome to us, when wonder becomes ordinary, God has a way of getting our attention. He loves us too much to let us drift into a dull, lifeless faith. He will interrupt our patterns, challenge our assumptions, and confront our comfort. And sometimes, that reminder comes in unexpected ways—through what I call donkeys, dirt, and demons.

We are part of a powerful spiritual heritage.

Stories like those found in *The Cross and the Switchblade* remind us that God is still transforming lives, still breaking chains, and still doing what only He can do. Those stories are not just history; they are evidence of what happens when ordinary people trust an extraordinary God. They are reminders that God moves when we step out in faith, when we pray, and when we depend on Him. But if we're not careful, even the miraculous can become familiar. We can hear testimonies of breakthrough and begin to appreciate them without expecting them. We can celebrate what God did without believing He still wants to do it again.

**He loves us too much
to let us drift into a
dull, lifeless faith.**

Familiarity is subtle. It doesn't happen overnight. It creeps in slowly. We stop being

amazed. We stop being expectant. We stop leaning in. And before we know it, we are present but not engaged, informed but not transformed. That is a dangerous place to live spiritually.

In Scripture, we see Jesus take five loaves and two fish and feed thousands of people. It is a story we've heard so many times that it can lose its impact if we're not careful. But think about what actually happened. In a moment of prayer, God bypassed what would normally take months or even years. A seed would have to be planted, wheat would have to grow, it would have to be harvested, processed, turned into flour, baked into bread, transported, and then distributed. Yet in a single moment, between giving thanks and saying amen, Jesus provided for thousands. God skipped the entire process and delivered provision instantly.

That is who God is. He is not limited by time, process, or human systems. He is able to do in a moment what would take us a lifetime. And yet, when we lose our sense of awe,

Donkeys, Dirt and Demons

(continued)

even that kind of miracle can begin to feel normal. We read it, we nod, and we move on. But that is not how we were meant to respond. We were meant to be in awe of a God who can do the impossible.

In Numbers 22, Balaam was on a journey when his donkey suddenly stopped. What Balaam could not see, the donkey saw clearly—the angel of the Lord standing in the path with a drawn sword. The donkey refused to move forward, even turning aside to avoid danger. Balaam, frustrated and unaware, struck the donkey repeatedly. It is a powerful and humbling picture. The donkey responded to what it saw, while Balaam reacted out of his own limited understanding.

Sometimes we can be so locked into our plans, so focused on our direction, that we miss what God is trying to show us. We get frustrated when things don't move the way we expect. We push harder. We try to force outcomes. We assume something is wrong, when in reality, God may be protecting us or redirecting us. The donkey saw what the prophet could not. That alone should stop us in our tracks.

Even a donkey recognized the presence of God. That should challenge us deeply. Are we sensitive to His leading, or are we too distracted? Do we pause when God is speaking, or do we rush ahead? Do we trust His direction, even when it interrupts our plans? May we never need a dramatic interruption to get our attention when God is already trying to guide us.

In another moment in Scripture, the Ark of the Covenant was being transported back to where it belonged. As it was being moved, the oxen stumbled and the Ark began to fall. A man named Uzzah reached out to steady it, and in that moment, he lost his life. It is a moment that can seem harsh at first, but the deeper issue was not just the action—it was the attitude behind it.

Uzzah had grown up around the presence of God. He had seen the Ark regularly. What was once holy had become familiar, and what was familiar had become casual. He no longer treated the presence of God with the reverence it required. He acted out of

instinct, not obedience. Out of familiarity, not fear of the Lord.

Here is the striking truth: the dirt would have obeyed God better than human hands. If the Ark had fallen, the ground would have received it without disobedience. Creation responds instantly to the commands of God. The rain falls when He says so. The sun rises and sets according to His order. The wind moves at His direction. The earth itself responds to His voice.

It is possible to sit in church, hear the Word, and leave unchanged. That is not the life we were called to live.

But we, who are created in His image, often hesitate. We reason. We justify. We take control. We step in when we should step back. We touch what we were never instructed to touch. We handle holy things in unholy ways. That is what happens when reverence is replaced with familiarity.

There is something dangerous about becoming too comfortable in the presence of God. When we lose our reverence, we begin to redefine what is acceptable. We begin to rely on our own understanding. We begin to assume that proximity equals approval. But being around the presence of God is not the same as honoring it.

Revival is not complicated. It is not about creating something new. It is about returning to what we have drifted from. As Charles Finney said, revival is simply a new beginning of obedience to God. It is a return to reverence, a return to listening, and a return to responding when God speaks.

Then we come to what Scripture says—that even demons believe in God, and they tremble. They recognize His authority. They know His power. They have seen His glory. And yet, they do not follow Him. This confronts us with a sobering reality that cannot be ignored.

Belief alone is not enough.

The question is not simply, do you believe in God? The deeper question is, does your belief move you? Does it affect your decisions when no one is watching? Does it shape your priorities when life gets busy? Does it cause you to say no to things that pull you away from God and yes to things that draw you closer? Does it lead you to obedience, surrender, and transformation?

Because believing without obedience is not faith—it is acknowledgment without change. It is possible to know about God and still not walk with Him. It is possible to agree with truth and still resist it. It is possible to sit in church, hear the Word, and leave unchanged. That is not the life we were called to live.

There is a call in all of this—a call back to wonder, a call back to reverence, a call back to obedience. God is still powerful. He is still moving. He is still worthy of our full attention, our full surrender, and our full devotion. We were never meant to live in a casual relationship with Him. We were created to live in awe, to respond to His voice, and to walk in step with His will.

In a world that is constantly shifting, where opinions change and standards move, God remains the same. He is the constant. He is the standard. He is the truth that everything else must align with. When everything around us feels unstable, He remains steady. When everything feels uncertain, He remains sure.

The invitation is clear. Don't lose the wonder. Don't allow what is sacred to become casual. Don't let familiarity replace reverence. Ask God to awaken your heart again. Ask Him to restore your sensitivity to His presence. Ask Him to help you see what you may have stopped noticing.

Because when awe is restored, obedience follows. And when obedience follows, everything begins to change. Lives are transformed. Hearts are softened. Direction becomes clear. Prayer becomes powerful. Worship becomes real again. And what once felt distant becomes alive again.

God is not distant. He is not silent. He is not inactive. He is present, He is speaking, and He is moving.

The question is—are we paying attention? ■



My Two Little Brothers Are in Heaven

One child's heartbreaking story reveals the devastation in Venezuela—and how our ministry partners are bringing compassion, practical help, and the hope of Jesus.

When Pastor Mabel arrived in La Guaira, Venezuela, she thought she was prepared for what she would see. She wasn't.

Buildings had collapsed. Families had lost their homes. Lives had been taken. A community once known for its beautiful coastline, warm communities, and joyful atmosphere was now surrounded by devastation. For Pastor Mabel, seeing the destruction firsthand was overwhelming.

"It is impossible to explain what you feel when you see all of this," she said. "There are no words."

Among the survivors was a young boy whose apartment had completely collapsed. As the building came down, his uncle saw the child in danger and used his own body to shield him from the falling debris. His courageous actions likely saved the boy from a far more serious injury.

The child survived with an injured leg—but tragically, his two younger brothers did not.

"My two little brothers are in heaven. Now it is only me and my mommy."

Today, the boy and his mother are living in a tent while he continues to recover. Their home is gone, and they are learning how to move forward after unimaginable loss. Pastor Mabel sat with him, listened



to his story, prayed with him, and reminded him that Jesus loves him and has not abandoned him.

With support from Times Square Church Missions, Pastor Mabel, her husband, and local ministry partners are responding to families throughout the affected community. They are distributing groceries, preparing meals, providing drinking water, praying with survivors, sharing God's Word, and simply being present with people carrying tremendous grief.

Every meal, grocery bag, prayer, and conversation carries a simple message: you have not been forgotten.

The Church cannot replace what was lost. It cannot erase the painful memories or answer every question. But it can show up.

It can sit beside a grieving mother. Pray with an injured child. Bring food and water to a family living in a tent. And remind those who are suffering that Jesus sees them, loves them, and remains near.

In the ruins of Venezuela, the Church is showing up—and the hope of Jesus Christ is still shining.



From Rejection to Restoration

How Jesus Turned Years of Pain Into a Life of Joy and Purpose—Stacie Bartlett's Story

Some of life's deepest wounds begin long before we have the words to describe them.

I grew up outside Philadelphia with my older brother and single mother after my parents divorced. My father was absent, and I often felt invisible and rejected. When I finally met him at ten years old, I asked, "Why did you leave me?"

His answer was, "It's complicated."

To me, it felt like abandonment.

That rejection followed me into my teenage years. Searching for acceptance, I looked for love in the wrong places. At fifteen, I ended a pregnancy—an experience that left me carrying pain for decades.

In my twenties, I married a man I believed would give me the love and security I had always wanted. Instead, the marriage became marked by emotional abuse, intimidation, and fear. God blessed me with two precious sons, and after five painful years, I found the courage to leave.

As a single mother, I worked three jobs just to survive. There were seasons when peanut butter was almost every meal because it was all I could afford. I began to wonder if I would ever laugh again.

Then God began changing everything.

Desperate for help, I started attending a church where people not only preached God's Word—they lived it. They provided food and backpacks for my boys and introduced me to the overwhelming love of Jesus Christ.

One evening, I heard a message challenging anyone who doubted God's ability to handle their problems to get on their knees before Him.

So I did.

On my living room floor, I poured years of rejection, fear, shame, and pain before the Lord. It felt as though scales fell from my eyes and chains fell from my wrists.

I stood up a different woman—and I have never looked back.

God continued restoring my life and eventually brought a Christian man into it. One of our earliest memories was listening together to the same David Wilkerson sermon while living in different states. Those messages helped build the spiritual foundation of a relationship that became a Christ-centered marriage.

Nearly eighteen years later, our home is filled with love, peace, joy, and laughter. Jesus Christ and Times Square Church have been foundational in our family's spiritual journey. Today, my husband and I serve together on the Online Prayer Team, pointing others to the Savior who transformed our lives.

My story began with rejection and hopelessness. But Jesus changed the ending. He restored my life, redeemed my past, and gave me a future filled with hope.



Stacie Bartlett



chapter by chapter

A Daily Podcast with Tim Dilena

Start
where you are.
**Read today's
chapter.**

tsc.nyc



TSC LONG-SLEEVE SHIRTS

Fall and winter are upon us—it's time to layer up!

Stay warm while representing the church you love in our comfortable, versatile, unisex long-sleeve shirts.

BLACK & GRAY

VISIT US ONLINE

tscnyc.store

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Connect Groups

Join or Lead a Connect Group that fits your season!



Local Fellowship



Discussion Groups



Season of Life



Bible & Prayer



Missions & Outreach



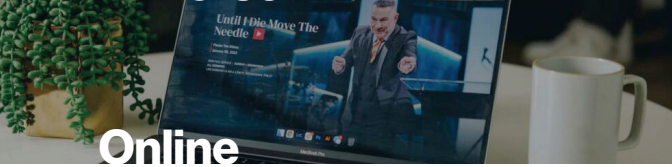
Activity & Hobby



In-Person



Online



tsc.nyc/groups

A BILLION STORIES

We Want to Hear Your Stories

The road to a billion
is paved with a billion stories.

Make Jesus known.

Tell your own.
Email your story to billionstories@tsc.nyc

When you post on social media,
tag **#BillionStories**.

ROAD TO A
BILLION
One billion starts with one.



Share your story at billionstories@tsc.nyc



From Isolation to Family: How God Met Me Through Church Online

Lauren's Story

For many people, online church is a convenient way to watch a service. For Lauren, it became the place where God rescued her from overwhelming isolation, surrounded her with a spiritual family, and renewed her hope.

"The hand of God has been on my life since I was a baby," Lauren says. "He has supernaturally intervened for my survival so many times."

As a toddler, Lauren suffered a severe chemical exposure that left her unusually sensitive to chemicals. Repeated exposures at a later workplace worsened her health, triggering illnesses that devastated her immune and nervous systems. Eventually, everyday chemicals, fragrances, and foods could leave her violently ill or unconscious. The illness confined her to her home for nearly eight years.

The physical suffering was overwhelming, but the loneliness was just as painful. There were times when death seemed kinder than what she was experiencing. Even in those darkest moments, God was working.

When Lauren reached the end of her strength, the Holy Spirit reminded her of a book she had written as a child—a reminder of the purpose God had placed inside her. God used neighbors, Lyft drivers, and others to speak words of hope into her heart, marking the beginning of her walk with Christ.

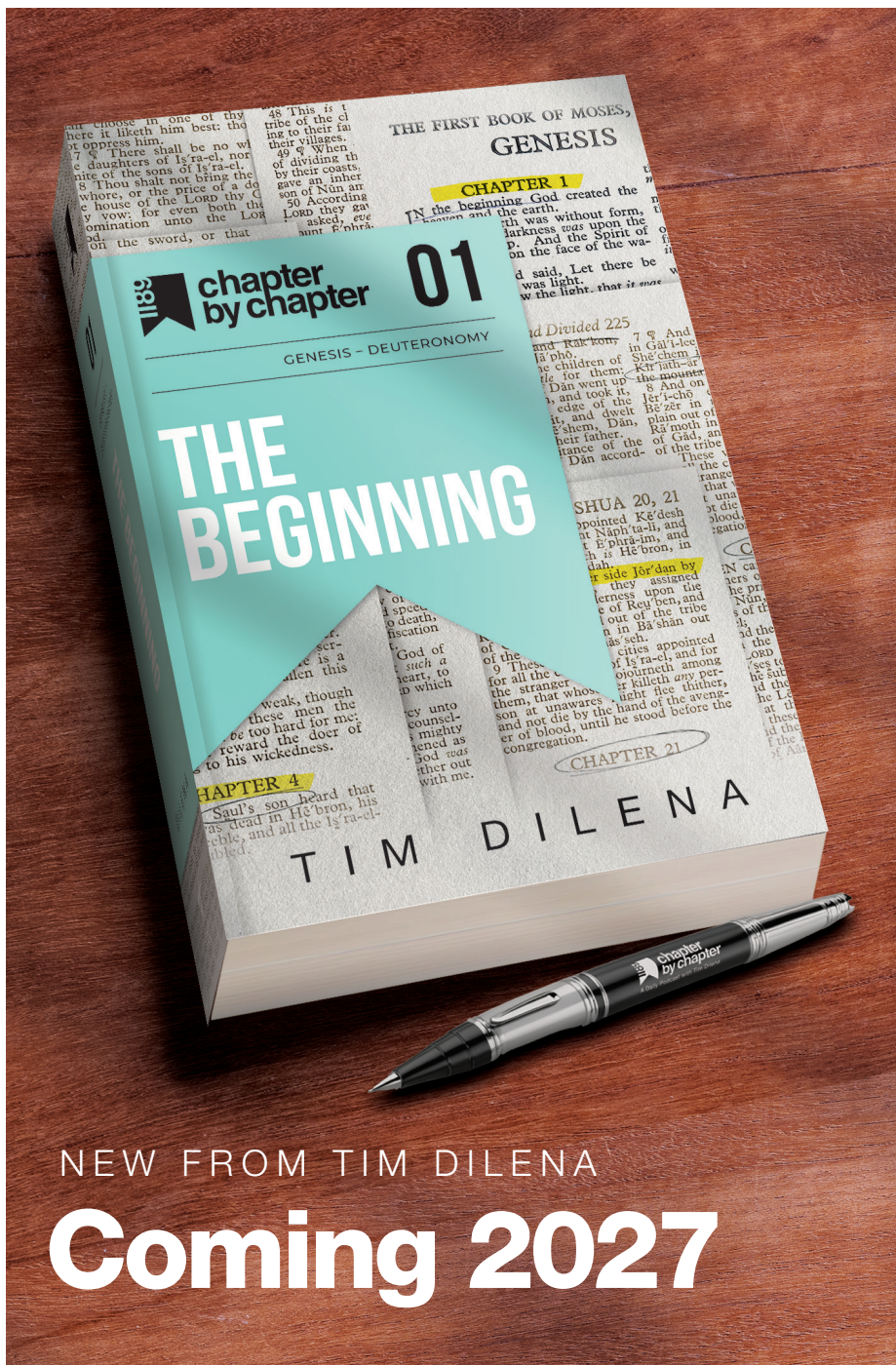
Years later, Lauren discovered a sermon by Pastor Carter Conlon and surrendered her life to Jesus while watching a Times Square Church service from her living room.

Through Times Square Church Online, she found what she desperately needed: community. Weekly after the service Zoom gatherings became a lifeline. Then came an unexpected invitation to join the Online Prayer Team—though she felt she was the one who needed prayer. As she stepped out in faith and prayed for others, the Holy Spirit renewed her own heart, and for the first time in years she felt genuine hope.

The online ministry became family, surrounding Lauren with love and support through financial hardship and the loss of her father.

Despite years of being homebound, Lauren was even able to travel to Summit, worship in person, and meet the pastor whose preaching had led her to Christ.

Today, Lauren's greatest testimony is what God has already done in her heart. Through Times Square Church Online, He transformed isolation into community, despair into hope, and weakness into ministry.



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.

CONTACT

212.541.6300 | info@tsc.nyc

CHURCH LOCATION

237 West 51st Street | NY, NY 10019

OUR SERVICES

Sunday | 10AM & 1PM

In person and online

Tuesday | 7PM

In person and online

Wednesday | 12PM

Noon Prayer NYC

In person only

Wednesday | 7PM

Worldwide Prayer Meeting

TSC Summit Campus

In person and online

GIVE TODAY



TEXT
"givetscnyc"
to 77977

ONLINE
at tsc.nyc/give

MAIL
check or money order
Times Square Church
Attn: Finance
1657 Broadway, 4th Fl.
NY, NY 10019

STAY CONNECTED



Submit a
Prayer Request

Explore
Connect Groups

Subscribe friends
to this Newsletter



Send Us Your
Prayer Request
at tsc.nyc



tsc.nyc

DIGITAL TAP. INSTANT ACCESS.

Tap your wrist band to access the **CHAPTER BY CHAPTER PODCAST**

- TAP**
Your wrist band
- ACCESS**
Instantly
- LISTEN**
Anytime, Anywhere

chapter by chapter
A Daily Podcast with Tim Dilena

tscnyc.store