

# TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

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## Return and Discern

**01**

Tim Dilena

America is presently experiencing pockets of revival. We are witnessing one of the most remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit because it's happening on college campuses. I believe this is a solemn moment for our nation. Baylor, Texas A&M, Samford, Lee, Cedarville, and Belmont are some of the colleges and universities that are seeing thousands of students burdened to pray for an awakening in our nation. They are gathering by the thousands in campus common areas to cry out to God. It all started with Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky on February 8th. A student chapel service turned into a revival that has captivated social media attention around the world. After the regularly scheduled chapel service on Asbury's campus, approximately 20 students lingered and began to worship and pray for one another. The chapel speaker that day, Zak Meerkreebs, had exhorted the students to "become the love of God by experiencing the love of God" and closed with a prayer asking God to "revive us by your love." According to the students, as they stayed and prayed, an unexplainable, surreal peace descended upon the room, and the rest is HIS STORY. It's a return back to God.

Before the Asbury revival, something was brewing on the Ivy League campuses. Some of the leaders of these schools have been watching the Times Square Church WorldWide Prayer Meeting on Wednesday nights and felt burdened for their school. God is up to something because, on April 19th, Times Square Church and Pastor Carter Conlon led a prayer meeting at Yale University. Upon the invitation of Yale students, we led them and then

joined together to cry out for an awakening on that campus. It's a return back to God.

As a return back to God is visibly happening, there is something else that is clearly happening. There is not only a returning but an exposing. While college campuses are having an outpouring, we are also seeing churches and pulpits unmasked. God is uncovering any preacher that will not hold to sound Biblical truth. This exposing is a protection over the sovereign work of God. I believe that just as fast as you hear of another campus experiencing a move of God, you will hear of another ministry's false teachings being exposed.

“ You can't muddy what God made clear. ”

A popular pastor here in the U.S., as well as a pastor here in NYC are now MUDDYING THE SCRIPTURES on sexual identity and sexuality. They seem to affirm what God has taken issue against. Instead of speaking out to what the Bible clearly says, pulpits and denominations are letting the culture dictate theology and then using the pulpit to impose their view on timeless truth. One pastor said that when he found out about the sexual identity of a family member, he couldn't reconcile that this person's chosen sexual identity would send them to hell, so he decided hell doesn't exist. The Danish theologian is convicting when he said, "The Bible is very

easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly." You can't muddy what God made clear. When you do, you pollute the scriptures. Someone's books and popularity don't make their words inerrant. There is only one place we find inerrancy: the Word of God.

Let us be clear; THE BIBLE IS NOT A NEWSPAPER whose print changes each day based on the news and current events of the day. The Bible is TIMELESS, and truth has no expiration date. I agree with what the Psalmist says in Psalms 119:89-91 (MSG), "What you say goes, God, and stays, as permanent as the heavens. Your truth never goes out of fashion; it's as up-to-date as the earth when the sun comes up. Your Word and truth are dependable as ever."

In the second to last book of the New Testament, Jude wanted to celebrate what God was doing in the church but needed to come to a screeching halt because of false doctrines that were being preached. Here is how Jude opens up his letter in Jude 1:3-4 (NIV):

"Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."

Jude said I was going to write about THE SALVATION WE SHARE but an alarm has sounded. Jude made an about-face and needed to contend for the faith because people are "secretly slipping in among you." The Greek phrase "SLIPPED IN" has a few

memorable meanings. It means to slip into water without making a ripple. And it also means to slip through a side door of an event while everyone else uses the front door. Jude says this is what's happening in the young New Testament church. Preachers are slipping into positions and pulpits and are polluting truth. Any new work of the Holy Spirit will need someone with the backbone of Jude to help guide the new sheep to safe pastures. GOD IS NOT GOING TO ALLOW PREACHERS IN PULPITS who do not hold to God's Word to corrupt a genuine move of God amongst young people in our nation. It's God at work on our college campuses. And it's God at work exposing false doctrine. God will not allow these preachers to feed the hungry that are coming out of this revival. The return needs to discern.

“**God is bringing people back home.**”

I was reminded recently of God's follow-up work when a return back home is happening. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi prophesies a return that will happen. And the prophet says here is the protection of God to keep the return pure. Malachi 3:18 says, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not." Every return will have to discern. As college students return, they will need to discern true Biblical food. Malachi says the discernment will be clear whether these leaders serve God or not and whether it's righteous or wicked. God is bringing people back home. There is a true return happening, but there is also a true separating that is happening. Let us celebrate that a return to God is in progress. And let us also be thankful that God is protecting this return.

## Summit Revival Services Recap

This year's Revival Services were three incredible days on campus that we didn't want to end! During one evening service, Pastor Jay Fallon of Acorn Community Church and the former Director of Teen Challenge UK, challenged us to rise saying, "Don't want to be an echo, be a voice! Don't just say what others have said!" John 5:25 speaks of those hearing the voice of God and coming to life. We were stirred and challenged to follow Christ, to hear Him for ourselves, and not to shrink back.

In a group development time, Pastor Tim Dilena shared with us the three forks in the road we will face in ministry—the faith/finances fork, the bitterness/forgiveness fork, and the alone/merrymaker fork. He shared personal stories, telling us of times in his life when he was faced with decisions that would inevitably change the course of his life. Twice he chose the right fork, and once the wrong fork—and the impact of those choices stay with him even today. For those of

us working in ministry, his words hit close to home. Let's just say this needs to be a book (or at the very least a sermon series!).



Another highlight was our last evening session, where Pastor Carter spoke about revival. He shared his heart about what revival is, what it looks like, and how to pray for God to revive us. He encouraged us to stand with spiritual authority on the word of God and to start praying for our loved ones as if “no” is not an option. “If you have walked honestly with with God,” he explained, “He puts a love for people in your heart. The greatest miracle I’ve ever received was God putting His love in my heart. Revival is not an event. Revival is a return to an understanding of who we are in Christ! Don’t be sold

short of what God has for you!” There was such a sweet presence of God in these meetings as people began to linger and worship in the presence of God, not wanting to be anywhere else.

After the last day, after all the goodbyes and the “see-you-next years,” we were left with overwhelming gratitude for what the Lord did in these few short days. The services, the sessions, the meet-and-greets, the Q&A times, and the poignant times of prayer all left us with our spiritual tanks full. We can’t wait for next year!

# Interview with Sibi

# 03

Times Square Church has just created a new department called Congregant Engagement. Long-time volunteer, Sibi Washington, was hired as the director of the department. Three weeks in, Sibi sat down to talk about the journey that lead her to this position.



**So you have been a volunteer for five years in the usher ministry, can you tell me a little about your journey?**

It’s interesting because I grew up a nominal Christian and accepted Christ at 13. I did not receive much discipleship early on and so I went to college and lived life one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. But in my early twenties, I rededicated my life to the Lord through involvement in a youth group and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Being Indian, I had a pseudo-arranged marriage and my long-distance fiance introduced me to TSC. I thought he was a solid Christian but after we married and I moved to NY, I found he actually was an infrequent attendee. A year or two into our marriage, he told me that he wanted to separate. I waited a long time for him but he never came back. Now I had to deal with this divorce and a lot of shame and things associated with it as well. But, God healed me through all of it.

In 2014, God started to say, “Okay, you sat long enough, and you’ve been fed long enough, now you need to get involved.” Back then, to get involved you had to go to a new believer class. Although in my mind I wasn’t a new believer, I went through it because it was the requirement. What a humbling, wonderful experience it was because

I received the discipleship I did not get when I accepted Christ at 13. I think the reason I didn’t stay close to the Lord when I was in college was because I wasn’t disciplined when I first accepted Christ.

And then I wanted to get involved. The Lord had led me to Psalm 84:10, “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”

That is the Usher ministry verse and it let me to get involved in the Usher ministry. I loved it. I loved welcoming people, I loved being part of a group, because the ministry would pray together. It wasn’t an easy ministry emotionally or physically, but it was just so fulfilling.

**Tell me about the transition from volunteering as an Usher to applying to the Congregant Engagement opening.**

The Lord led me to resign from my corporate job in April of 2020, right when the pandemic was picking up. He said to me to just be still and study the Word. That’s all I knew. After his conversion on Damascus Road, Apostle Paul was in Arabia for three years, being taught by God.

The Lord told me that this was going to be my Arabia. I’m a type A overachiever. So, every year, I would go back ask God when I could go back to work and He always told me, “not yet”.

A little bit after the second year, I was contacted by TSC about a job that was available. I fasted and prayed one week and didn’t get an answer. The second week, I prayed and fasted, and the Lord in no uncertain terms told me that I need to return to the wilderness of Damascus. So I told the church that I don’t have permission to leave where He has me right now. A few months later, during my third year, they reached out to me again about a different job. Again I fasted and prayed and was told no.

Shortly after, God had me in the book of Nehemiah, and my heart was burning for new believers. In the book of Nehemiah, the Holy Spirit showed me that even though the temple was built, the Israelites were still very vulnerable to attacks because the wall was broken. After rebuilding the temple, they still had to rebuild the wall. When the new believer has accepted Christ, they’re so joyful but they don’t know what they don’t know. So, even though they are now the temple of God, their walls are down. As new believers, they’re at a prime time for spiritual attacks.

## INTERVIEW WITH SIBI WASHINGTON (CONTINUED)

I called my friend and prayer partner Amy and left her a voicemail to tell her that I think the Lord is telling me we really need to start praying for the new believers. Meanwhile, she's sitting in a meeting with the leadership team as Pastor Tim is telling them to pray about a new position that would be working with new believers. As Pastor Tim is talking, in her spirit, she's thinking of me. She spoke to Elder Jerry, the TSC COO, about me. That's when he told her about the past three years that he spent praying about me joining the staff and the conviction that he had that I belonged there. So, when they called about the Congregent Engagement position, the Lord had already prepared my heart to say yes.

I was very clear with them that I had nothing to bring to the table. I have no preconceived notions of what this position should look

like. I have no experience to bring to the table. The only thing I can bring is that at one point, I was a newcomer to the church. It's interesting because weeks before this job came up, The Lord led me to Solomon's prayer for wisdom. And so now with this new job, that's how I have been praying.

"Now, O Lord my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted! Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?"

# Behind the Scenes

# 04

*Behind the Scenes of the Easter 2023 Film  
with Director Rebekah Covey*



### **What inspired the story for Easter 2023?**

Before Christmas, we [the creative team] were already discussing Easter 2023. The concept that really stuck out was to show Jesus' death and resurrection through Mary and Martha's eyes. We wanted to really hone in on the relationship that Jesus had with his closest followers. Martha, especially, was a very relatable character to the team because of the way she associated her work and ability to serve as the center of her relationship with Jesus. However, He stopped her busyness and told her to relate with Him differently; just by being with Him and His presence.

### **What moments through production made you realize that you were truly doing something special for the kingdom of God?**

There were so many moments! From when we were location scouting at Chimney Bluff State Park to every day at set. Our actress for Martha, Jessica, has been wanting to play Martha since she was a little girl. She grew up in the church and when all the little kids at Sunday School were told to dress up as a Bible character and she came with a broom dressed as Martha. She cried during her audition because she had such a grasp of the character. It was extremely

easy to direct her because she already had a deep understanding of Martha and how Jesus' presence was able to impact her in the end. All of the casting choices were so easy and divine. Throughout production, there were so many moments where things should have gone wrong but didn't. Snow wouldn't fall until the moment after we stopped filming. The mild winter we had in NYC was the only reason we were able to get through the filming. We didn't have heat lamps, but we ended up not having to worry about it. Everyone got along so well. We would always start the day off with prayer.

### **Do you think that a visual telling of this story can help people understand it in ways they would not have otherwise?**

I am a visual learner so when I read the Bible, I always imagine pictures and characters. Having the Bible made in different visual mediums like film or animation has this way of bringing the stories down to earth and helps us absorb them better. We remember the stories more if we see them with our eyes and see people interact on screen the way we see people interact in real life. We can even better understand those characters. Our main goal is to understand the Bible better so we can understand God. Oftentimes, we focus on prominent figures like David and Moses. This story really shows that Jesus interacted with a lot of different types of people. There are people who aren't mentioned often in the Bible, but when they are mentioned, they help broaden our perspective.

### **What is the main takeaway that you hope for viewers after watching the Easter film?**

That we don't have to carry ourselves around with the burden of work in service of God. God wants us to lay down our burdens at His feet and focus on prayer and meditating on His voice. That's His heart for us. With the busyness of the modern world, we get distracted and we forget. In NYC especially, there are so many things: sounds and flashing lights in our faces. However, we have to set aside time to rest and be in God's presence or else we miss a core part of our relationship with God. That's certainly something that I have been learning.