

# *Centuries of Strife*

## *Problems Inside the Church (October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020)*

### PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- If you missed it, watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.
- Review the learning objective to focus the conversation, read the primary scriptures as a group, summarize the main points, ask the questions, and use supporting texts to enhance the concepts.

### DISCUSSION

#### **Opening Prayer:** (1-2 minutes)

*In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's a suggestion of how your group can invite God into your time together.*

Thank the Father for loving us so much that He came to us in the person of Jesus to sacrifice Himself on our behalf while we were still sinners! Pray that as we navigate the chaotic waters of our cultural moment that we would humbly listen and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we seek to love one another, just as you have loved us. Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to remind us of the spiritual victory we have over sin in Jesus Christ! Pray that the Spirit would help us find the right words to speak, new opportunities to serve our neighbors, and continue to transform us into the likeness of Jesus!

#### **Discussion:** (45-60 minutes)

#### What's Going on This Week

This Sunday, Pastor Danny led us into the first week of our new series titled *Centuries of Strife*. Pastor Danny focusses our attention to *Matthew 16:18-19* to show us that Jesus will establish his church, but there will inevitably be spiritual attacks against that mission. As evidence of this reality, Pastor Danny brings our attention to the early church to show us that everything may not have been as perfect and vibrant as we tend to think. By pointing out the *centuries of strife* inside and outside the church, Pastor Danny commissions us to work together through our issues and to normalize conflict within our local church family so that we might be able to grow from it.

**“The most dangerous enemy to the church is not outside the church. It's us in here.” – Pastor Danny Strange**

#### Suggested Questions



**Check-In:** *Icebreaker* – When you are confronted with conflict, what tends to be your initial reaction?

**Study Tip:** The key phrase that this week’s message is built upon comes from Matthew 16:18. Jesus says that even “the gates of Hell,” shall not prevail against the church. As you may already know, many other biblical translations have chosen to align closer to the Greek word ᾗδης (*hades*) instead of using the word hell. Regardless of translation choices, it might be helpful to dig deeper into what Jesus is trying to say when he uses this key phrase! Many of you are probably thinking of *brimstone and fire* right now! However, it is interesting to note that in Revelation 20:13-14, *Hades* and Death are passively judged and then thrown into the lake of fire. Furthermore, the New Testament uses γέεννα (*geena*) to refer to eternal damnation. Scholars suggest that *hades* and *hell* may in fact differ. So if it is possible that *Hades* and *hell* are referring to different realms, what is actually being said here? *What is Hades?* When ancient scholars translated the Old Testament into Greek, the word they often used *Hades* to describe the Hebrew word *Sheol*. The Old Testament reveals that *Sheol* could be used as the eternal place of torment (hell) or simply the grave. *Could Hades then simply mean the grave?* Interestingly, several texts that reveal that *Sheol* acted as the realm of death for both the godly (Job 14:13) and the ungodly (Num. 16:33; Ps. 55:15). Most notably, we read that Jacob anticipates *Sheol* in mourning after thinking that he had lost his son (Gen. 37:35). With the realm of the dead for both the godly and ungodly in mind, Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 begins to make sense. When Lazarus dies, he is carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham (v. 22). When the rich man dies, he is tormented in *Hades* and is seen interacting with Abraham begging him for salvation (vv. 22-30). Later, Jesus claims that he too will descend to *Hades* like Jonah (Matt. 12:40; Jon. 2:2) and resurrect from *Hades* rescuing those at Abraham’s side (Eph. 4:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:18-19). Meanwhile, the unrighteous in *Hades* will suffer torment until the second death (2 Pet. 2:4,9 Jude 6). This is what it means when David prays, “you will not abandon my soul to *Sheol*, or let your holy one see corruption,” (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:24, 27). As you walk through this study guide, recognize that Jesus holds the keys to *Hades* (Rev. 1:18) through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension so that death nor the powers of Satan will stop his church (Hos. 13:14).

**Objective #1: Identify any situations of strife your group may be holding onto.**

*Primary Texts: Matthew 16:18-19* – Pastor Danny begins the sermon by asking us to reflect on what we perceive to be the biggest threat to the church today. Then, he flips the question around claiming that many people *outside* of the church would recognize that the biggest threat to the church is itself. Here, he lists off many characteristics of the church that do not look like Jesus and signify a spiritual attack on the church: hypocrisy, scandals, abuses of power, narrow-mindedness, and lack of love to name a few. **When it comes to strife within the church, what kind of issues come to your mind? What is your personal experience with strife in the church?**

**Objective #2: (External) Reassurance / (Internal) Envision a pathway towards a solution.**

*Primary Texts: (External) Romans 8:31-39 / (Internal) 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 6:3-10; Colossians 2:8, 16-23; Galatians 1:1-10* – Next, Pastor Danny explains that even though the church has experienced centuries of external strife coming from outside the church, nothing has ever been able to stop the work of the Holy Spirit! However, Pastor Danny uses these passages to point out that we should equally expect internal strife, approach it in a Christlike manner, and learn how to grow from it. **In your opinion, what does it look like for the church to deal with internal issues in a proper manner? What are some of the roadblocks or hurdles you might face when it comes to dealing with issues inside of the church body?**

**Objective #3: Explore tangible ways that you may be able to bring Jesus into situations of conflict!**

*Primary Texts: Acts 2:1-4, 42-47; 4:13-22; 5:1-11; 6:1-7; 9:19b-26; 11:1-3; 15:1-21, 36-41* – Finally, Pastor Danny uses these texts to dispel the common notion that everything was perfect in the early church. In the face of conflict, Pastor Danny leaves us with two bits of encouragement: (1) we were made to get through this together and (2) as a church family, let’s commit ourselves to dealing with issues properly. **Tell us about an experience in your own life where you got to be part of the solution of an issue within a church or community. Is there anything happening in your life right now where God may be calling you to step in?**

**Closing Prayer:** (5-10 minutes)

*In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's some suggestions of what your group could talk about with God in prayer.*

Thank our Heavenly Father for sending His son to die for our sins and release us from the bondage of our spiritual enemy! Ask that the Holy Spirit would continue to equip us to live, love, and forgive like Jesus in the various situations of conflict and strife that we may face. Finally, pray that we as a church would unite as a people who are *known by* our love for one another as we humbly seek to resolve our internal issues and learn how to grow closer to you through them.

### **THROUGHOUT THE WEEK**

**-Welcome Back!:** We would love to have you *safely* join us for one of our three in-person services (9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m.). Reserve a ticket each Wednesday starting at 9:00 am by visiting our [Welcome Back Website](#)

**- Fall 2020 Daily Reader:** Interested in diving deeper? You can spend the next 8 weeks walking with us through the entire Bible as you to put on your kingdom lens through this difficult season! You can find the daily reader at [3Crosses.org/fall2020](https://3Crosses.org/fall2020)

**-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities:** Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3Crosses.org/coronavirus). If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3Crosses.org/neighborhood)

**- Find out how to pray for two people in your group this week!** Pray that the members of your group would begin to seek resolution to conflicts in their lives!

**-Community Group Fall 2020:** For more information about joining a group, leading a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at [avanegas@3crosses.org](mailto:avanegas@3crosses.org)