

# *Centuries of Strife*

## *Healthy at the Top (November 1<sup>st</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 fourth week of our new series titled *Centuries of Strife*. Pastor Danny focusses our attention to *Acts 9* in order to discuss how the church is able to identify those who are called to leadership and those who may begin to lead us astray. Pastor Danny uses these texts to explore how the early church welcomed Saul, who transformed into Paul, into a role of leadership. Pastor Danny reveals his own role of properly identifying the character of those who are called to leadership in the church while protecting 3Crosses from anyone who may be wanting a position of leadership but may not yet reflect the character of Jesus. With this in mind, Pastor Danny challenges us to pray for the leadership at our church, trust in the leadership at our church, and come forward if you see ungodly behavior.

**“It’s not rocket science: You will know a church leader is fit to represent Jesus when they do a good job of representing Jesus.” – Pastor Danny Strange**

## Suggested Questions

**Check-In: Icebreaker** – When you think about your childhood, what did you want to be when you grow up?

**Study Tip:** Today’s main text comes from Acts 9! This week, we take a look at the story of Saul’s conversion as he transforms into Paul after his encounter with the resurrected and glorified Jesus. We first meet Saul as one who *ravaged* the church (8:3), *wreaked havoc* in Jerusalem (9:21), and *breathed out* murderous threats against the church (9:1). John Calvin states that the language of scripture goes out of its way to present Saul of Tarsus as a “wild and ferocious beast.” Astonishingly, this same Saul of Tarsus would become one of the most prolific and influential missionaries the church has ever known. *How did this happen? Underlying Acts 9 is a beautiful story of the love of the Holy Spirit working through His church with Jesus as the head!* In order to talk about the story of Saul, we must first remind ourselves of the boldness of Stephen. Stephen, who was chosen to serve tables as a deacon in Acts 6, proclaims the message of Jesus with tremendous courage as he faces the elders and scribes of Israel. This would eventually cost him his life. However, Stephen stepped into his role with his servant **hands** and gospel **voice** not knowing that this would be the beginning of the journey for Saul of Tarsus who oversaw and approved Stephen’s execution. Next, Jesus proactively “arrests” Paul, shines his glorious presence to him, and blinds him after confronting him on the road to Damascus! Here, Jesus intervenes as the **head** of the church and the one mapping out the Father’s glorious will! Furthermore, we read about the beautiful acceptance of God’s mission from Ananias. Think about this situation! Would you go to the one who may very well turn on you or kill you? Ananias not only goes to Saul, but trusts God’s commission enough to call Saul his “brother”, lay his hands on him, pray for him, and baptize him into the Jesus community. Ananias acts as the **feet** of the church who is willing to follow Jesus wherever he may lead. Finally, when the church remained skeptical about Paul’s conversion, we find the willingness of Barnabas to act as the **arms** of the church and openly embrace Paul fully knowing his past. As you wrestle with this study guide, keep in mind that when the church comes together and steps into their roles in the body, the [love and forgiveness of Jesus](#) spread and incredible things happen.

**Objective #1: ~~Wrestle with the tension of your call to serve the Lord and your checkered past.~~**

*Primary Texts: Acts 9:1-18* – Pastor Danny explains that his responsibility as a church leader is to lead with character, guard against ungodly leaders, and equip you to identify those who might lead us all astray. At the same time, Pastor Danny acknowledges that there is a tension here because God calls people with broken pasts into positions of leadership much like He did with Saul of Tarsus. **In your own life, how do you wrestle with this tension? “You are called to participate in ministry as a member of the church body! You also have a long list of character flaws and mistakes you have made in the past.” How might this tension in your own life affect the way you think and feel towards others in the church? / towards those in leadership at the church?**

*Supporting Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:26; Isaiah 9:16; 1 Timothy 3:6, 5:22*

**Objective #2: Explore your own spiritual giftings according to members in your small group!**

*Primary Texts: Review Acts 9:13-16* – Next, Pastor Danny uses these passages to show how an individual is ready for spiritual leadership not only when they feel called, but when God informs other people that they are ready. **Go and asking other members of your small group this question: “Where do you see me using my gifts and talents in the church?” What did your group’s answers reveal to you? Did they align with what you had in mind?**

**Objective #3: Identify where you can respond to the leadership God has put in place at 3Crosses.**

*Primary Texts: Acts 9:19-31; Galatians 1:11-24* – Finally, Pastor Danny concludes his message by pointing out that you will know someone is fit to represent Jesus if you see Jesus being represented in his or her life! Pastor Danny commits to leading the church to walk humbly with Jesus, use discernment to raise up leaders, hold them to a biblical standard, and hold them accountable for their actions. In return, he asks that **YOU** would (a) pray for the leadership of the church, (b) trust the leadership of our church, and (c) come forward if you see ungodly behavior in our leaders. **Which one of these categories stands out to you the most and why? What might our group be able to do this week to step into all three of these challenges?**

**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)