

# *Centuries of Strife*

## *The Miracle of Unity (November 8<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 Buz led us into the fifth week of our series titled *Centuries of Strife*. Pastor Buz focusses our attention to *Acts 10* and the story of Peter and Cornelius in order to discuss how the church is able to forge people from multiple different backgrounds into one church family! Pastor Buz explores the prayer life of Cornelius and Peter, the divinely orchestrated circumstances that lead to unity, and the work of the Holy Spirit through the message of the gospel as key factors that make the miracle of unity a possibility. With this in mind, Pastor Buz challenges us to continue to pray for unity and point people to the gospel and the lordship of Jesus!

**“Cornelius in prayer and Peter in prayer. That’s what causes unity! When we get on the same page as Jesus, we get on the same page as one another. Transitive Property!” – Pastor Buz Hannon**

#### Suggested Questions



**Check-In:** *Icebreaker* – What is the strangest *coincidence* you have ever experienced!

**Study Tip:** The apostle Peter, who has uniquely been given the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19), comes face-to-face with a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Luke shares that Cornelius was located in the coastal city of Caesarea, the port city which Rome claimed as the capital of the Judean province in the first century. Cornelius was part of the Roman military inside of the Italian cohort. Cohort's traditionally consisted of 6 different centurions commanding 6 different "centuries" equivalent to 100 men. 10 cohorts constituted 1 legion. In the modern sense, Cornelius was a company commander whose household had come to fear God without necessarily converting to Judaism. *Here is the tension driving the story of Cornelius in Acts 10: would a Gentile be welcomed into this new Jesus community?* From an outside perspective, this may seem like a simple question considering all of the passages that point to God's desire to bless Israel *SO THAT* they might become a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1-4; Ps. 2:7-8, 22:27-28; Is. 2:1-5, 42:6, 49:6; Joel 2:28-29). Unfortunately, the religious Jew had twisted this doctrine to overemphasize their own special calling as the nation of Israel to abstain from all things impure. As you will see, this included unclean animals and those outside of the circumcision. The Jew and Gentile debate would become a hotly contested issue that created strife within the ministry early church (see Acts 15). This is the situation in which Peter, a Jew, finds himself. *Would he trust in God, or would he run away out of fear or favoritism?* This is the question Peter now faces while he was in Joppa, the same territory Jonah moved toward as he ran away from God's command to prophesy to the wicked Ninevites (Jon. 1:1-3) In this study guide, pay attention to how God might be calling us to obey Him so that He might unify us as His church.

**Objective #1: Explore the visions that God is casting over your group! See if you can spot unifying factors!**

*Primary Texts: Acts 10:1-16* – Pastor Buz uses this passage to identify the way God forges people from different backgrounds into one church family. He points out that unity comes when we are a part of a team with one clear vision. That clarity can only come through an interaction with God through prayer as seen in the lives of Peter and Cornelius. **As you reflect on this series and all of the conflicts that you have been praying about, what do you believe the Lord has been saying to you in response? Have you found it difficult to be still and listen to God's voice / vision in this series? Why or why not?**

*Supporting Texts: (Animal Laws) Lev. 11:44-46; 20:25; Deut. 14:3-21 (Peter) Lk. 22:31-34, 55-62; Jn. 13:1-17; 21:15-17*

**Objective #2: Identify how you are being called toward an obedient faith based on what God says!**

*Primary Texts: Review Acts 10:17-33* – Next, Pastor Buz points out that our unity is based entirely on what God says and the mission that He is accomplishing through His faithful servants. Pastor Buz uses these texts to show how God miraculously aligns the circumstances of His church as Cornelius obeys the angel of God and as Peter continued to walk in the Spirit even as he ponders the interpretation of his mysterious vision. **Whose situation do you find the most convicting: (a) Cornelius who prayed continually, received his answer, and instantly obeyed – (b) Peter who wrestled with God and His vision, remained perplexed, but continued with an open-mindedness toward God's Spirit – (c) The servants (v. 7) and the brothers (v. 23) who do not receive the spotlight but are instrumental to the plot – (d) I'm not identifying with anyone in the story. Explain your answer!**

**Objective #3: Identify how you might contribute to the miracle of unity in the church.**

*Primary Texts: Acts 10:34-48* – Finally, Pastor Buz uses this passage to point out that unity is a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we ought to pray for the continued work of unity within the church and look for opportunities to point people to the lordship of Jesus when we share the gospel. **What stands out to you about how Peter presents the gospel in these passages? As you reflect on Acts 10, what lessons about prayer and sharing the gospel do you wish to takeaway and apply to your life?**

*Supporting Texts: (God Accomplishes) Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17-27; Matt. 19:26; (Body) Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:1-16; (Temple) 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Eph. 2:11-22*

**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 unity by getting on the same page as Jesus!

**-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)