

Centuries of Strife

Parting Ways (November 15th, 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 sixth and final week of our series titled *Centuries of Strife*. Pastor Danny brings our attention to *Acts 15* and the story of Paul and Barnabas in order to discuss how sometimes God may be calling us to part ways due to strife! Pastor Danny points out that even though Paul and Barnabas, the dynamic duo in the early church, had a sharp disagreement, it was not counted against them when they split ways. In fact, God multiplied the ministry of the church as each missionary went their separate ways. Therefore, Pastor Danny challenges us that our call, first and foremost, is to obey God even if it means breaking off from a relationship, job, region, or ministry opportunity!

“Sometimes God calls us to part ways because He wants us to do more separately than we could have done together!” – Pastor Danny Strange

Suggested Questions

Check-In: Icebreaker – Paul and Barnabas started off as an inseparable duo in the church! Briefly share a story about one of your closest friends or companions and what it was (is) like to have this kind of relationship!

Study Tip: The conflict between Jews and Gentiles came to a head at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15! Paul and Barnabas attended as church leaders from Antioch, the first multi-ethnic church planted outside of Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-30). This duo came armed with miraculous stories of how God was bringing salvation to the Gentiles through the Holy Spirit (Acts 13-14). Additionally, Peter attends the council armed with his own experiences dealing with Cornelius' household and a miraculous prison break (Acts 10-12). Finally, the Pharisaic wing of the early church attended the council contending that circumcision, signifying the covenant family of Israel and an adherence to the law of Moses, was a necessary requirement for admission into the church of Jesus. James, the brother of Jesus and a prominent leader of the church in Jerusalem, writes a resolution that encourages the expanding multi-ethnic church to, "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourself from these, you will do well. Farewell," (see Jer. 12:15; Am. 9:11-12; Is. 45:21). This severance from circumcision and the moral recommendations given to the Gentiles directly from the leader of the church *in Jerusalem* would have been exciting news for those advocating for the inclusion of the Gentiles. With good reason to return to the churches they had founded, Paul and Barnabas faced one problem: John Mark. Barnabas, who had lovingly welcomed Paul with open arms (Acts 9:27) wanted to extend that same grace to his cousin Mark (Col. 4:10). Paul, zealously dedicated to the mission, lost confidence in Mark (Acts 13:13) and brought Silas instead. As we make decisions in conflict that may divide us, pay attention to the one who is able to work ALL things for the good of those who love Him and strive to live like Jesus who followed the will of the Father to the very end, even when it meant giving up his life on a cross!

Objective #1: Identify the area of tension in which you are being called by God to make a decision!

Primary Texts: Acts 15:36-39 – Pastor Danny begins by pointing out how much of a rich history Paul and Barnabas had together. However, he points out that following God might sometimes mean the difficult task of walking away from a relationship, ministry, job, or region with confidence because it is what He has called us to do. **How would you fill in the blank to this statement? "I am not in a covenant relationship with _____."** Why did you fill in the blank this way? Do you believe that making this statement has given you a renewed sense of freedom to *stay* or given confirmed that you have a green light to *leave*?

Supporting Texts: (Antioch) Acts 11:19-30; (Paul & Barnabas) Acts 13:1-4, 42-52; 14:8-18; 15:1-12, 35

Objective #2: Overcome any obstacles that may be preventing you from following what God commands!

Primary Texts: Review Acts 15:40-41 – Next, Pastor Danny points out that many of us stay in the wrong place too long because we are scared of what will happen if we walk away. However, he points out that when Paul and Barnabas part ways, there is no indication of wrongdoing and the ministry of Jesus is able to multiply as a result. **How do you believe the Lord has solidified your answer to question 1? If you answered *leave* to the first question, what are some of the obstacles that you face to following the Lord's calling in your life? If you answered *stay* to the first question, how might God be calling you to stay focused on what He has planned for you in the present?**

Objective #3: Search for a next step in your journey and pray for the tough decisions of your group.

Primary Texts: Proverbs 3:5-8; Isaiah 55:8-9; John 5:19 – Finally, Pastor Danny leaves us with three different recommendations as we wrestle with big decisions: (1) your calling is to follow God's leading (2) staying and leaving are two neutral options (3) sometimes God puts strong passion in us because He is trying to move us! Therefore, we ought to seek wisdom, make a decision, and move forward in humble confidence **After reflecting on our discussion, how do you believe God is challenging you to commit to making a next step (no matter how small) towards what He is calling you to do? How might our group be able to pray and support you in this decision-making process?**

Supporting Texts: (Decision Making) Is. 30:18-22; Jer. 29:11; Jn. 14:25-26; 16:7-15 Rom. 8:28-29; Phil. 4:4-9; Js. 1:5-8

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