



STUDY GUIDE

Introduction:

In his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, William Law reflects on a core misunderstanding common to human experience. Many people believe that true peace is achieved once we rid ourselves of all struggles and striving. In his experience and learning, this is folly. Peace is not achieved through the cessation of striving; rather the greatest peace and contentment is achieved through the greatest devotion. We out to seek not the end of our striving, but the alignment of our striving toward something truly worth striving for. We all know this intuitively. We all know how frustrating it is to exert great effort towards something that ultimately ends up being a waste of time.

When is a time you have worked hard only to find out that, in the end, all your striving was wasted.

Share a few stories of fruitless struggle.

Text: Revelation 12:1-6

In our third Advent sermon, we asked a question that might seem strange for the Christmas season: *Who are you fighting?* To answer, we turned to an uncommon Christmas passage: Revelation 12:1-6. In this vivid and symbolic vision, John describes a woman giving birth to a child while a terrifying red dragon waits to devour the newborn. It's unsettling, but it reveals a profound truth about the nature of the Christmas story. The birth of Christ is the beginning of the end of the forces of evil in the world.

The dragon represents the forces of sin, evil, and death—the ultimate enemies of God's purposes and His people. The child represents Jesus, whose humble birth stands in stark contrast to the dragon's arrogance and destruction. Jesus is born a humble child, the dragon places golden crowns upon all his heads. Christ gives his own life for the good of others, the dragon tries to achieve his own purposes by taking the child's life. Jesus is the incarnation of the God of beauty and creation; the dragon seeks only destruction.

This all adds up to an invitation. It is an invitation to understand the one purpose deserving of our greatest devotion. Joining Christ in this battle is worth every ounce of struggle and effort we might exert.

How did your reading of this revelation story impact the way you think about our upcoming celebration of the birth of Christ?

What does it look like to remember the eternal battle between good and evil? How do you stay mindful of that in helpful ways day to day?

YOUR MOVE

The final invitation was this, remember, if it has flesh and blood, it is not the enemy.

Are there any people in your life who you are at risk of seeing as your enemy instead of seeing them as a beloved child that God desires to redeem and restore?

Where is it most difficult to remember this fundamental biblical truth?

How can your community pray for you this week as you seek to join God in God's mission to bring the final – and guaranteed! - end to the dragon and further the goodness of his Kingdom?