



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of July 16, 2017

WEPC small groups meet in homes across Richmond every week to participate in Jesus Christ's mission to Richmond, enjoy fellowship, study God's Word, pray together, and explore the fruit of the Gospel on our lives. Simply put, these groups are small enough to be the church to one another, and they serve as bridges between WEPC and the community where God has planted us. It is a place where the church can go deeper in the worship of God and further in Christ's mission.

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a "worship discussion" guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Sermon: "When Weak, Then Strong"

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [II Corinthians 12:1-10](#).

- "When you come to one of the many moments in life where you must give an account of yourself, provide a ledger of what you have been, and done, and meant to the world, do not, I pray, discount that you filled a dying man's days with a sated joy, a joy unknown to me in all my prior years, a joy that does not hunger for more and more but rests, satisfied. In this time, right now, that is an enormous thing." (*Paul Kalanithi*)
- Remember here, that Paul is defending himself against accusations against himself, his ministry, his authority as an Apostle and against his Gospel.
- In the face of overwhelming religious experience he repeats his experiences with weakness: boasting of weaknesses (v.5); Jesus says his power is perfected in human weakness (v.9); boasting gladly in his weaknesses (v.9); content with his weaknesses (v.10)
- What are these weaknesses?
- They are not bad or sinful behaviors or inclinations; experiences and situations and circumstances and wounds that are hard to bear and that we can't remove either because they are beyond our control or because love dictates that we not return evil for evil.
- And then there is the thorn.
- A messenger (angel) of Satan, used by God.
- Satan uses it to harass, God uses it for glory. Satan would want to increase Paul's pride because pride kills.
- Three times Paul asks for it to be removed. This should remind us of the three times in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus asks for the 'cup to pass from him'.
- "None of this is conditional in the sense that we make ourselves weak, so that God's power might be manifest.
- Paul did not seek these things. They were given to him. Human weakness is not a condition to be fulfilled. It is a reality that is already present, into which Christ has himself entered and participated to the utmost extent in the cross. In Christ and in the Gospel, therefore, weakness performs a hermeneutical function. It exposes the truth about us as human beings; WE ARE WEAK. We are subject to suffering and death because of the remaining power of sin." (*Mark Seifrid*)
- We protest against this until, as Jesus did (and Paul) we must accept it.
- You and I are already weak. The issue comes in how we respond to that weakness.
- What is the purpose of such weaknesses? Is there a goal or an aim for why the weaknesses come? Why insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities, troubles? Why can't I find a job? Why am I trapped in this awful marriage? Why does my dad have cancer? Why can't I have children? Why do I have no friends? Why is nothing working in my life?
- Even in glory, Jesus still manifests in his body the signs of weakness.
- Grasping after simple relief or our own power, will end in spiritual death. Resting in the power of Christ to see us through will manifest a power not our own.

Going Deeper in God's Worship

Reflect on the text together. [Hear the sermon here.](#)

- 1.) What is true about God's character, promises or work?
- 2.) What does the Scripture teach you about yourself or others?
- 3.) Are you encouraged to follow Jesus in His mission? How?

Reflect **on the whole of Sunday's liturgy together.** Locate this week's [Order of Worship here.](#)

- 1.) Was there an element of the worship service that you would like to share with the group?
 - *A Scripture verse that was read?*
 - *A prayer that was prayed?*
 - *A song that was sung?*
 - *A sacrament that was administered?*
 - *A way that glory was given to God?*
 - *A way that someone encouraged you?*
- 2.) Did the Holy Spirit convict, change, or encourage you in any way you wish to share with the group?
- 3.) Is Jesus leading you or the group to take a specific risk to minister the Good News to Richmond? Your neighbors? Your co-workers? Your family and friends?

Going Further in Christ's Mission

- 1.) Have the Scripture text open in front of you as a guide to your prayers.
 - Spend time thanking God and giving Him glory.
- 2.) Ask the Lord for vision, strength and faith as followers of Jesus Christ.
 - Count on the work of the Holy Spirit for change.
 - Ask for God's forgiveness and grace to repent of sin and trust Jesus.
 - Pray for the world, our country, Richmond, and the Church.
 - Pray for members of your group, family members, or co-workers, neighbors and friends.

*Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
[To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons](http://www.wepc.org/archivedsermons)*