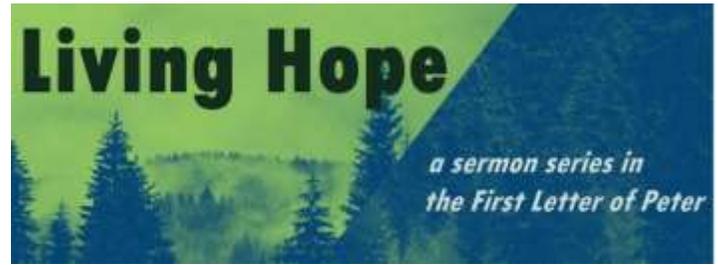




Worship Study Guide for the week of March 6, 2016



WEPC Small Group Network

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org

WEPC's Small Group Network meets 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: *The Living & The Dead*

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [1 Peter 4:1-6](#).

Suffering

- What is the point of suffering, if in the end, there is no vindication, no 'fruit', no growth or no hope in the suffering? Is it worth it?
- Remember the questions of John the Baptist as he languished in prison.
- Peter wants us to see in suffering, rejection & being maligned there is an ultimate vindication and satisfaction.
- The point of this passage is to give us confidence not in missing suffering, but in Jesus.

There are at least 5 reasons to 'arm ourselves' with the purpose to suffer.

- Christ suffered. In fact suffering was His calling. Richard Wurmbrand who spent 14 years in a Romanian prison wrote, "I have accepted this proposal. Christian are meant to have the same vocation as their King, that of cross-bearers. It is this conscience of a high calling and partnership with Jesus which brings gladness in tribulations, which makes Christian enter prisons for their faith with the joy of a bridegroom entering the bridal room."
- I have fellowship with Christ in a more profound way when I suffer for and with Him.
- Suffering for the sake of Christ is powerful. When I identify with Christ, I make a decisive break with other thing that might identify me. If I have answered the question: Is the Gospel, is Jesus, is the Cross, so wonderful, I will suffer if need be for them, then sin shrinks in its power over me.
- However much (a lot or a little) you have sinned, it is enough. Stop it. It is better to be maligned for not sinning than to be popular because you do.
- We do not have to defend ourselves against those who would malign us. We entrust ourselves and those who would mock us over to God's judgment and verdict. We say He will come to judge the living and the dead.
- Death is not the same for everyone. Why miss all the parties of life, if in the end we all die? "Yes, I was bursting with a longing to be immortal. I was too much in love with myself not to want the precious object of my love never to disappear... Because I longed for eternal life, I went to bed with harlots and drank for nights on end. In the morning, to be sure, my mouth was filled with the bitter taste of the mortal state. But, for hours on end, I had soared in bliss... You know that even very intelligent people glory in being able to empty one bottle more than the next man. I might ultimately have found peace and release in that happy dissipation. But, there too, I encountered an obstacle in myself. This time it was my liver, and a fatigue so dreadful that it hasn't yet left me. One plays at being immortal and after a few weeks one doesn't even know whether or not one can hang on till the next day" (Albert Camus)
- Just because Christians die does not mean their hearing and believing the Gospel was in vain.
- "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality." (The Wisdom of Solomon)
- Those who die are alive in the Spirit and will be resurrected at the last day and all of us will be vindicated.

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.

Kevin Greene, 2016