



## Worship Study Guide for the week of January 3, 2016



### WEPC Small Group Network

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, [kevin@wepc.org](mailto: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: *Abstain as Sojourners*

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [1 Peter 2:11-12](#).

- New Year's resolutions more often than not involve some kind of self-improvement. That is OK as far as it goes. Peter, however, is talking about war, primarily against two enemies, one internal and numerous external.
- A couple of contextual notes that drive this passage and all that comes after it:
- In verses 9-10 Peter says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people..."
- We have an eternal and glorious identity in Christ that transcends and supersedes race, ethnic origin and national citizenship. It is rooted and established by the mercy of God. This identity is the driver behind our war against sinful passions. The mercy of God is the weapon we use against sinful passions.
- Nevertheless, as the 'Beloved', (of God and the Apostle), we are 'sojourners and exiles' in this world.
- Both of these identities are true and both are ours.
- Because our identity is bound up in Christ, we don't really belong here. This 'not belonging here' leads us not to turn our backs on the world into some kind of closed community, but rather turns us outward.
- "The knowledge that they do not belong does not lead to withdrawal, but to their taking their standards of behavior not from the culture in which they live, but from their 'home' culture of heaven, so that their life always fits the place they are headed to, rather than their temporary lodging in this world." (Peter Davids)
- But these standards are not just for us (not just so we lead better lives than those around us) but precisely for the people in the culture that oppose or misunderstand us. Just like mercy is our weapon against the internal passions, declaring the Gospel and good conduct is our weapon to win our enemies.
- These enemies are speaking as well, they are speaking 'against' Christians.
- Now, sometimes this is warranted and Peter will address this.
- Apparently, Christians were viewed with suspicion, distrust and even hatred. They were 'spoken against'.
- Why? Well, their founder was executed by the Empire. They called Him 'Lord', and not Caesar. They called each other brother and sister. It was even rumored that they were cannibals because in their meetings they ate the body and drank blood. They rejected the gods of the cultures around them. This had both social and economic consequences.
- So how do we deal with this?
- First we declare the excellencies not of ourselves or even our community, but His excellencies. We talk about Jesus.
- This is important. Verbal witness should be present in our lives. Jesus needs to be on our lips.
- We couple this declaring with honorable lives that not only stop the talking against us, but in the end even if begrudgingly, it causes our enemies to give glory to God.
- So, honorable and holy living is not simply for us, but for the glory of God and the observers of our conduct.
- What kind of conduct is he talking about?
- First, moral living.

- Second, living as good citizens.
- As we will see submission to authority, even authority that is not good or gentle and even unjust, is ironically, at the top of the list.
- So, make your resolutions carefully and prayerfully. But make them with an eye to those who might view you with suspicion because of your faith.

## 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.