



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of September 3, 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.

Numbers 2:1-2, 17, 32-34 "In the Midst of the Camps"

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² "The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side...

¹⁷ "Then the tent of meeting shall set out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; as they camp, so shall they set out, each in position, standard by standard..."

³² These are the people of Israel as listed by their fathers' houses. All those listed in the camps by their companies were 603,550. ³³ But the Levites were not listed among the people of Israel, as the LORD commanded Moses. ³⁴ Thus did the people of Israel. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they set out, each one in his clan, according to his fathers' house.

- Read Numbers 2:1-2, 17, 32-34. God orders things according to His wisdom, not ours. What were some of the peculiar arrangements of the Israelite camps? Why were these arrangements significant?
- Everything in the camps was positioned in relation to the presence of God, the tabernacle. For example, God could have described where the tribe of Judah was in relation to the tribe of Dan, but He did not. The reference point was always God Himself. Can you share a time recently where facing God and following Jesus Christ made your life difficult or strange?
- God must give us faith to see Him in the midst of us. One of the reasons the Lord gathers His people for worship each week is to teach us what to believe when we are His scattered people. Read Joseph Ryan's quote in this week's *Preparation for Worship*. Have you been tempted to believe something other than the Lord dominates our midst? **How has God's presence given you confidence, courage and peace recently?**
- This past Sunday, the church participated in the Lord's Supper. We believe that God is present with His people in a powerful way in the sacrament: "As surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup shared with me, so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out for me on the cross.... as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood" (*Heidelberg Catechism, 75*). As you reflect on that part of the worship service, how did you see God in the midst of His people?
- Each week in worship, we remember that God is in the midst of His people by confessing our sin to Him and trusting His grace for sinners. **This week's Words of Encouragement** came to us from [Zephaniah 3:14-15](#). Read this passage for guidance as you pray together.

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

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 2:1-34](#).

- After the census that determined how many men were available to serve in the army, we might expect more about this, but rather we have instructions for the Levites and the disposition of the Tabernacle, within a particular arrangement of the People of God at rest and on the march.
- “Thus did the people of Israel; they did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses.”
- But there may be something we gloss over in verses 47-54: What is the tabernacle called? “The tabernacle of the testimony”
- A testimony is that which affirms the continuing relevance of something through repetition. The particular testimony in mind here is probably the Ten Commandments, which acted as a repeated testimony or witness to God’s covenant with His people. Also, the tent, the ark, and the veil are themselves all testimonies that speak of God and His desire to have a people to Himself and His selection of them.
- So the tent in the middle of the camp speaks to not only the presence of God with His people, but also to their unique relationship with Him.
- However, there is a big problem: Because of our sin, God cannot simply be approached without a sacrifice and a way made open to us.
- Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”
([Genesis 3:22-24](#))
- God can only be approached in a way that takes into account his character and our character.
- In order for our life to have meaning, it needs to be centered on the Lord, our Creator and our God; at the same time, though His holy presence means certain death to sinners like us.
- It is better to have Him in the camp with us, except when it isn’t.
- [John 1:14](#) tells us of Jesus, that “the Word became flesh, (literally pitched his tent) among us”
- God desired to be with His people, then, now and forever.
- He had to make it safe for us.
- He had to do something with our sin.
- So now the way is opened and all barriers are removed in Christ.
- So, where are and what are the tabernacles of testimony in our lives today, placed in the center of our camp to remind us of what is true?