



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of June 18, 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.

II Corinthians 9:1-15 "*His Inexpressible Gift*"

¹ Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, ² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³ But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that

having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

"He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

- When you have the opportunity to be generous, what holds you back?
- The theme of II Corinthians 8 was an appeal for the Corinthians to complete a collection of money for impoverished Christians—the "saints" (9:1) in Jerusalem. That same subject is continued in chapter 9.
- Read II Corinthians 9:1-5. Paul is writing from "Macedonia" and "Achaia" is the area where Corinth is located. Why does Paul send the brothers ahead to ensure that the collection from the Corinthians is ready to go when he arrives?
- Read II Corinthians 9:6-11. In this section, Paul teaches the church about the grace of Christian generosity. Take each of the five verses in turn, and ask: What do we learn about God and how He providentially works in the world? What do we learn about ourselves?

- Read II Corinthians 9:12-15. What spiritual dynamics are at work in a generous church? How does God's gift shape our giving? Is there a particular way you, your group, or your family could follow Jesus in practicing generosity?
- Thank God for His inexpressible gift. Pray together that God would give WEPC grace to follow Jesus and courage to be generous. Pray that thanks and glory would go to God for His grace to us and through us to others.

*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 II Corinthians 9:1-15

- Foundational to all of this is how you view God. What is going on in our hearts? How will I deal with my "self" which tends toward selfishness and covetousness? This has marked all human beings since the Fall.
- "The sparing heart has a relationship to God that feels Him as a Taker rather than a Giver. If my life is being drained away by God because He is so incessantly and solely demanding, then I feel like grasping after the things of the world to meet my need. If every time I look up I see the pointing finger of God demanding, 'Give me! Give me! Give me!' how can I look back down at the needs of the world and say 'Take me: I will gladly spend and be spent for your good'? O this person will give something! Because one of the draining demands that he hears when he looks to this ever-demanding, ever-taking God is: 'Give something to the church!' So out comes the gift—the draining, life depleting, exhausting, sparing gift. But what a difference between this gift and the gift that flows from the heart that has a relationship with God that feels Him as a Giver rather than a Taker!" (*John Piper*)
- Does the Gospel itself point to God as a Giver or a Taker?
- Verses 1-5 are the final exhortation and instruction about the gift and verses 6-15 expresses more teaching about the motivation and theology of giving.
- Corinth was the instrument in God's hand in Macedonia just as Macedonians to be God's instrument toward the Corinthians.
- In Verses 6 and following Paul makes clear that all true giving is dependent upon the prior giving of God.
- This produce of the field is essential to human life and existence; without the fundamental goodness of God that is richly and daily granted to us, human life could not continue, no matter how much we labored, no matter how clever we might be.
- God is the giver of growth. This is not an exchange where I work hard and then God gives. Our labors are more like acts of participation in what God has done and will do.
- God supplies both the seed and the harvest.
- God loves the cheerful giver, He loves persons, rather than loving simply their gifts. The size of the gift does not affect God's love, rather the heart of the giver is what matters. It matters because it reflects the character of God Himself.
- "Give us this day, our daily bread" ([Matthew 6:13](#)). We are made in whatever sufficiency we have to look like our Creator and Redeemer.
- Thus when we give, we can look for two things:
 - First, we will see the fruit of our trust and submission to Christ in God's glory.
 - Second we will see thanksgiving to God, (not just to us) because He is behind every gift. It is not the persons or the churches that are so outstanding but the grace of God which is upon them. Their gift points beyond themselves to the God who is first and foremost the Giver.
- What is the indescribable gift? We know its contours. It involves God's self-giving in Christ, the wonder of His taking upon Himself our poverty, sin and guilt; the wonder in which He has made us rich. It entails Christ's grace, which not only meets our every need but elevates us to share in His giving. It creates the very context in our community where we can express this work.
- Paul sees all of this as beyond our comprehension.