



## A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of May 14, 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 6:1-13 "The Favorable Time"

<sup>1</sup> Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.<sup>3</sup> We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine

love; <sup>7</sup> by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

<sup>11</sup> We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. <sup>12</sup> You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. <sup>13</sup> In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

- Read II Corinthians 6:1-2. Who is the "him" Paul refers to in verse 1? Read [II Corinthians 5:20-21](#) to understand the context of Paul's statement. Paul makes a direct & urgent appeal to the Corinthians and calls on them "not to receive God's grace in vain". What is "grace"? How would a Christian receive God's grace in vain? In verse 2, Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8. Read [Isaiah 49:7-13](#) aloud as group. Why would this passage come to mind for Paul to support his appeal?
- Read II Corinthians 6:3-10. Paul defends the paradoxical character of his ministry. He could have appealed to his unique conversion experience, his special revelations, or the miracles he was used to perform. Instead, what does he use to commend himself and authenticate his ministry? Why?
  - List Paul's ministry hardships and sufferings (4-5). Why does Paul lead with his sufferings?
  - List the ways the character of Christ has been formed in him (6). Does anything strike you about this catalogue?
  - List the supernatural ministry resources Paul has been given (7).
  - List the five paradoxes of ministry for Paul (8-10). Which one encourages or challenges you most? Why?
- Read II Corinthians 6:11-12. Paul makes a second appeal to the Corinthians. What is he urging them to do? On what basis does he make this appeal?
- Re-read today's Scripture passage aloud and use it as a guide to prayer for your group:
  - Ask God for His grace and for it to bear fruit in our lives and church.
  - Ask God for strength to persevere in ministry, to conform us to Christ's likeness, for the Spirit's power for mission, for faith to believe that He uses our weakness in ministry.
  - Thank God for the ministry of reconciliation, and ask Him for grace to live reconciled lives.

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

## Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 6:1-13

- What are the biggest obstacles we can place in the way of people believing the Good News of Jesus?
- Our joy is tempered by the present reality; Our sadness is tempered by joy.
- Christian living is a paradox and when we present a perspective of the Gospel that does not hold these two things together, we fail to commend ourselves and our Savior.
- Paul cites a text from the Old Testament ([Isaiah 49:1-8](#)) that is really a lament and answer to a lament.

“Listen to me, O coastlands,  
and give attention, you peoples from afar.  
The Lord called me from the womb,  
from the body of my mother he named my name.  
He made my mouth like a sharp sword;  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow;  
in his quiver he hid me away.  
And he said to me, “You are my servant,  
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”[a]  
But I said, “I have labored in vain;  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my right is with the Lord,  
and my recompense with my God.”  
And now the Lord says,  
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him;  
and that Israel might be gathered to him—  
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord,  
and my God has become my strength—  
he says:

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;  
I will make you as a light for the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”  
Thus says the Lord,  
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,  
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,  
the servant of rulers:  
“Kings shall see and arise;  
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;  
because of the Lord, who is faithful,  
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”  
The Restoration of Israel  
Thus says the Lord:  
“In a time of favor I have answered you;  
in a day of salvation I have helped you;  
I will keep you and give you  
as a covenant to the people,  
to establish the land,  
to apportion the desolate heritages.”

- Paul seems to indicate that a big obstacle to people hearing and responding in faith is that we are not presenting an accurate picture of what life as a follower of Christ is.
- *“You broke the bonds and You loosed the chains / Carried the Cross of my shame – oh my shame / You know I believe it / But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.”* In classic U2 fashion it was a lyric riddled with paradoxes and contradictions, and so raised questions, can be variously interpreted and provided challenges. For Christians raised in conservative youth groups who regarded rock music as ‘of the devil’ here was a challenging alternative role model who demonstrated how Christians can engage with the world. Some Christians, so tied to the view that the God-shaped hole is satisfyingly filled in this age by the Christian faith, wondered what he was still looking for. Others appreciated the honest admission of difficulties in the now on the road to Kingdom come which is not yet. But for those with no connection to the Christian faith at all, the song, and the album it was from, and the band who recorded it, and the man who sang it, had put the Christian faith on the agenda of mainstream popular culture and asked, “Have you found what you’re looking for?”, and invited them to join them in their search. For all the other hype about The Joshua Tree, that was, and remains, a stunning achievement.” (Peter Collier)
- What commends Paul is not a chipper and “successful” ministry, but a faithful ministry marked by suffering and joy simultaneously.
- When we live and work in light of the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in us, we will face opposition.
- Honor, and dishonor; Slander and praise; Impostors while true; Unknown, yet known; Dying, yet living; Punished yet not killed; Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; Poor yet making may rich; Having nothing yet possessing everything