



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of May 7, 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 5:16-21 "New Creation"

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was

reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Think about a time when you had a broken relationship that needed reconciliation. What caused the break? What steps were required for you to be reconciled?
- Paul uses the words "reconciliation" and "reconciled" five times in this passage. What happened to require reconciliation between us and God? How do you know if you are reconciled to God?
- Read II Corinthians 5:16-17. What does it mean to regard someone "according to the flesh"? What does it mean to regard Christ "according to the flesh"? What does Paul mean when as he describes believers in Jesus as "new creation"? What exactly is made new for those "in Christ"?
- Read II Corinthians 5:18-19. What is God's role in the ministry of reconciliation? What is the scope of God's ministry? What then becomes our ministry as believers in Jesus?
- Read II Corinthians 5:20. Why would Paul tell the Corinthians, who are already Christians, to "be reconciled to God"?
- Read II Corinthians 5:21. What specifically has God done to bring about this reconciliation? In the exchange described in this verse, what does Jesus become, and what does that mean? What do we become, and what does that mean?
- Re-read today's Scripture passage aloud and use it as a guide to prayer for your group:
 - Ask God for faith to see the fruit of His reconciling work.
 - Is God making His appeal for reconciliation through you to anyone? Ask God for power to be His ambassador.
 - Have you been disregarding anyone? Disregarding Jesus Christ? Ask God for grace to repent & trust Him.
 - Pray for our church, that we would be fully persuaded that Jesus was made sin on the Cross that we might become the righteousness of God.

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 5:16-21

- One of the greatest passages in the whole Bible.
- The problem with this passage. It is our understanding (or misunderstanding) of our problem.
- Is sin a verb? Trespasses in this text “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)
- Is sin a dominion? “made to be sin” (21); Romans 3:9 says, “all, both Jews and Gentiles are under sin”.
- If it is simply a verb, a number of acts, then we will interpret the new creation in an overly simplistic way. We might continue to view ourselves and others from a “fleshly” (16) viewpoint.
- “What sort of predicament are you and I in that we should require the crucifixion of the Son of God?” (*Fleming Rutledge*)
- Why would we need for Him to be made sin? “all this is from God” (18).
- Mere behavioral change will not change us from the inside out.
- The issue with the Corinthians is that they are falling back under the power of sin and it is demonstrated in how they view the Gospel and therefore other people.
- “Novelist Harry Crews [author of *Childhood: The Biography of a Place*], writes of the community of fallen humanity in his memoirs. Desperately poor and deprived in rural Bacon County, Georgia, he and his black friend Willalee daydream about the models in the Sears catalog as a form of escape. ‘Nearly everybody I knew had something missing, a finger cut off, a toe split, an ear half chewed away, an eye clouded with blindness from a glancing fence staple...But the people in the catalog had no such hurts. They were not only whole... they were also beautiful.’ Even at an early age, however, Mr. Crews knew that the pictures were lying: ‘Under those fancy clothes there had to be scars, there had to be swellings and boils of one kind or another because there was no other way to live in the world. And I had decided that all the people in the catalog were related, not necessarily blood kin, but know one another, and because they knew one another there had to be hard feelings, trouble between them off and on, violence and hate between them as well as love.’” (*Fleming Rutledge*)
- “The hideousness of crucifixion summons us to put away sentimentality and face up to the ugliness that lies just under the surface. The scandal, the outrage of the cross is commensurate with the offense and ubiquity of sin. Views of atonement wrought by Christ that do not acknowledge the gravity of sin are untruthful in two respects: they are untruthful about the human condition, and they are untruthful about the witness of Scripture, Old and New Testament alike. It is not so much something we do, but something done to us (with our cooperation), by our mortal foe, the alien Power that has lured us into becoming its agents. There is no room for sentimentality here: the stakes are too high. The cross rears up over all human life because it is the scene of God’s climactic battle against the power of a malignant and implacable Enemy.” (*Fleming Rutledge*)
- The great news is that God saw this and was actively working for us when we were totally under this alien power.
- The great exchange that happened in Christ is the only solution. Receive the reconciliation that God has wrought.