



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of April 30, 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 5:11-15 *"The Love of Christ Controls Us"*

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³ For if we are

beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

- What would your friends and family say controls & compels you in life? Why would they have this impression?
- In this part of II Corinthians, Paul is reaching the climax of his defense of his ministry. Facing criticism from "those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart" (5:12), Paul 'opens his heart' to the Corinthians by describing what motivates him to engage in gospel ministry, even if it looks unimpressive to those who judge him..
- Read II Corinthians 5:11. Paul says he persuades others because of his fear of the Lord. How do you think one's fear of the Lord relates to his motivation to persuade others? What is Paul persuading others to believe? What is the source of Paul's confidence in ministry?
- Read II Corinthians 5:12-13. Paul's desire is to so live in service to God and the Corinthians, no matter what some may think of him. The temptation to justify ourselves in the face of criticism or misunderstanding is immense. Why is this true of us? Can you give an example?
- Read II Corinthians 5:14-15. What controls Paul? In what sense? How does the death of Jesus change our view of others? How does His death change the purpose of our lives?
- Have you ever done anything, or stopped doing something, simply because Jesus loved you? Share that story with the group.
- Re-read today's Scripture passage aloud and use it as a guide to prayer for your group:
 - Ask God for grace to be controlled by the love of Christ
 - Pray for our church, that we would be fully persuaded that Jesus died to set us free from sin and self & to love others in His Name

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 5:11-15

- “Christian, what is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong body and soul to my faithful savior, Jesus Christ....” (*Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1*)
- To whom do you belong? “The love of Christ controls us” (14) that we might live for Him and not ourselves or for others (15)
- How does belonging to Christ actually help you to have not just an appropriate relationship to God, but also to others?
- “He might have yielded to the temptation to curry favor with his hearers by whittling down his message to suit their tastes. But the knowledge that his inmost motives were fully known to God, to whom alone he was responsible, and that they would stand the test of His scrutiny, acted as a brake upon the natural desire to please others, freed from paralyzing inhibitions, and removed from the undue sensitiveness he might otherwise have felt when subjected to the unjust criticism of his fellows. He confidently trusts that, however much others may defame him, the Corinthians, with whom he has had such personal and intimate connections, will have become convinced by now of his integrity.” (*R.V.G. Tasker*)
- This freedom is tempered by the fact that the promise of judgement (knowing the fear of the Lord) causes Paul to persuade.
- He will do and become what is required to preach the Gospel and see to it that as many as possible will believe.
- What about the “all”?
- “The atoning event is universal. At the same time, it is quite clear that Paul by no means envisions a universal salvation. .. Remember, in 4:4, he has spoken of the god of this age who has blinded the minds of those who are perishing.” (*Mark Seifrid*)
- The implication for your life in Christ’s substitutionary death.
- I did this for you, now, what are you going to do for me?
- “The reality of discipleship is present within Paul’s confession, yet not as a demand but as a gift. It is present as an ‘indicative’ moment within Christ’s work. The apostle is not speaking here of dedication to Christ, but of liberation by Christ, the joyous reality of being possessed savingly by Christ as Lord. This is clear from his from his own indication that he is constrained by Christ’s love (v.14), his reference to Christ’s resurrection (v.15), and his continuing description of Christ’s work of creating new persons and reconciling them to god. Human beings, who by their very nature live for themselves, have died in Christ’s death. Obedience to God requires something more than a new motivation or a fresh dedication or ourselves. It requires a new creation of the human being. We have been given Christ as lord. We cannot make him Lord by our own decisions, which remain inherently self-seeking whether we recognize it or not.” (*Mark Seifrid*)
- I am freed from the need to impress.
- I am freed to obey.