



## A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of April 9, 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 4:7-12 *"Treasure in Jars of Clay"*

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of

Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death is at work in us, but life in you.

- When do you grow discouraged? Why?
- Read II Corinthians 4:7. In this passage, Paul is describing the reality of Christian ministry. He has been urging the Corinthians to accept him, but his suffering is a problem for those who judge things by outward appearance. We often assume our weakness will hinder the Gospel and detract from our ministry. But Paul paints a very different picture. What role does our weakness play in ministry?
- Read II Corinthians 4:8-9. What kinds of suffering did Paul experience in his ministry? What are examples of each kind of trouble in your own life?
- Read II Corinthians 4:10-12. What purposes does Paul see in his suffering? Who benefits from his suffering?
- How does being given over to death for Jesus' sake allow the life of Jesus to be revealed in us?
- Have you ever seen someone's suffering be used to magnify the "life of Jesus"? Share one way you've seen this with the group.
- Does Paul's encouragement spur you on in an area of your life where following Jesus is so costly? How?
- Re-read today's Scripture passage and use it as a guide to prayer for your group:
  - That God would be glorified in our weakness as "jars of clay"
  - For strength to persevere in following and trusting Jesus Christ
  - For the life of Jesus to be manifested in our church.

## Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 4:7-12

- Paradox a king riding into a capital city on a donkey
- Treasure in clay pots
- Afflicted but not crushed...
- Life and death
- So difficult for us
- "The Gospel is the power... not programs, or clever preaching, but the Gospel. Yes, I know Tim is a good preacher. I've heard him more than anyone. But I've also sat under the preaching of pastors who did not have good speaking gifts and wept, and seen people converted. It was the clarity of gospel, not the level of giftedness.
- "Friends, always trust the power of the message of the mystery of Christ, God come to save his people through his life and death applied to our need. Knowing that you are not facing the Ultimate Taskmaster and Judge, but the open arms of your loving Father changes everything." (*Kathy Keller*)
- We are drawn not to weakness and suffering but to strength
- However only in the gospel do we see how real power is demonstrated
- Clay pots are not worth very much. They are fragile. Their value is what is contained inside.
- "We are always carrying around the deadness of Jesus. The resurrection does not undo his death. It overcomes it. Jesus is the crucified one who lives... he makes it clear that the death of Christ for the unrighteous means constant identification with that death on the part of his followers." (*Rutledge*)
- We are always manifesting death, even in these 'small' deliverances. Until the ultimate deliverance.
- What does this say about our lives?
- What do you demonstrate?