

07/01/2016
Bold Vs Timid

"If you won't think it presumptuous of me, I'd like to -- uh -- er -- wish you a Merry --- or at least as reasonably pleasant a Christmas as we are entitled to, things -- uh -- er -- being what they are."

A Christmas Card from Caspar Milquetoast by H.T Webster

Caspar Milquetoast was the comic strip creation of H. T. Webster in the early to mid 1900s. Milquetoast was the epitome of meek and mild... Skewing a Teddy Roosevelt saying, he was said "to speak softly and get hit by a big stick..." For many years, if a person was extremely reticent in character, they were called a "Caspar Milquetoast..." I am convinced that in this world that there are folks that are bold and those who are meek. Those characteristics may depend on one's expertise in a certain area, but the really bold people tend to be that way in every arena...

Fear may keep us from saying what we need to say to the people that we may care the most about. There may be those out there we know that are lost in a sea of sin, with the world trying to convince them that nothing is wrong... We must be bold enough to step out and share the message of Christ's power to overcome. Just as King Zedekiah had a fear of those who had abandoned Judah for fear of the Babylonians, those we may know have a fear of the consequences of obeying God... What is it that can conquer these fears? I think that these fears can only be calmed by the perfect love of God displayed in scripture. Rather than holding the message in, let's be bold enough and allow our love for people overcome our fear of sharing Christ and the good news with them... Caspar may not get it, but Jeremiah will...

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Today God Is First.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/02/2016
Naughty Ladies

Prostitutes have sometimes played interesting roles in the Bible over the the years. Today's quiz looks at some of them and the unique part they played. As always, have fun...

_____ 1. What judge of the OT was a prostitute's son? (a) Samson, (b) Ehud, (c) Jephthah, (d) Gideon.

_____ 2. What king served as a judge when 2 prostitutes argued over a child? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hezekiah.

- _____ 3. Who had a vision of a prostitute with a city's name engraved on her head? (a) John, (b) Paul, (c) Peter, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 4. According to Jesus, what prophet had prostitutes and tax collectors as followers? (a) Ezekiel, (b) John the Baptist, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Isaiah.
- _____ 5. Where did the Rahab live? (a) Gilgal, (b) Bethel, (c) Jericho, (d) Ai.
- _____ 6. Who ordered his daughter-in-law Tamar burned because she acted like a prostitute? (a) Simeon, (b) Judah, (c) Reuben, (d) Dan.
- _____ 7. Who married a faithless woman named Gomer? (a) Ezekiel, (b) Obadiah, (c) Micah, (d) Hosea.
- _____ 8. Who went on a killing spree when their sister Dinah was treated like a prostitute? (a) Simeon and Levi, (b) Reuben and Judah, (b) Dan and Naphtali, (d) it doesn't say.
- _____ 9. Who tricked the people of Gaza by leaving a prostitute's house earlier than expected? (a) Gideon, (b) Caleb, (c) Samson, (d) Absalom.
- _____ 10. What prophet warned the priest Amaziah that his wife would become a prostitute? (a) Obadiah, (b) Micah, (c) Amos, (d) Jeremiah.

Have a great day and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love mark
Phil.4:11

07/04/2016
Beware Of The Blob

A man that I taught with for many years liked to tell a story of being one of the extras in a 1958 horror movie called The Blob... Horror movies back then were pretty cheesy, and Paul was a young boy in a Downingtown, PA movie theater rushing out to escape the blob. The movie marked the debut of a young actor named Steve McQueen. The only way to escape the blob was by running away from it.. It was Steve's job to warn all the people in the town about the blob, but no one would listen to him... While the blob might have been scary back then, the prophet Jeremiah warned of something more fearful and realistic. The Babylonian empire was just as consuming as the blob, and they would integrate every kingdom they captured into their

population. The prophecies of God were being fulfilled, and King Zedekiah had been warned, but did not listen. You might want to read Jer.39:1-14 to get the full flavor of this story...When God declares his will to humanity, he always fulfills these words... However, God provides a choice for us to make in regards to these declarations. Zedekiah had a choice to live by surrendering or die by resisting, and he made a bad choice. Through the Bible, God has made it crystal clear that the final judgement will fall on all mankind. We will answer by the choices we make in our lives. The ultimate choice we make is to become believers and surrender to the Lord. We then make the choices to live each day according to his will. With these good choices, we can have the confidence that we will one day kneel before God and be accepted into his kingdom... We can escape from The Blob...

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/06/2016
Left Defenseless

In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Louisiana coast, creating one of the deadliest and costliest natural disasters in American history...The levees that were supposed protect the city of New Orleans burst, causing much of the city to flood. Chaos reigned in the city, and because of the extensive damage, rescue workers could not get supplies to those in need. The city of Jerusalem did not fare much better in the days of Jeremiah, chapter 39, despite his warnings...After three years of siege, the people inside the walls were scared, tired, and hungry... Anyone who ran from the city during the siege was allowed to leave, but could not come back with supplies... When the siege was over, those remaining within the walls were slaughtered or taken captive and brought to Babylon. The city of God was destroyed because the king and the people of Judah refused to listen and obey the word of the Lord... Intentionally disobeying God's Word gives sin control of our lives today. Sin is at our doors in "siege mode," waiting for our defenses to weaken so that it can invade our hearts and tear down our walls. Self-control is the key to resisting sin, and the scriptures teach us how to master this skill... It is the strong wall protecting us from giving into temptation. Those same words nourish and enrich our spirit, allowing us to endure without suffering spiritual hunger. God serves as our defense and shield... Obedience leads to a fulfilling life, but disobedience leaves us defenseless.... It is a choice....

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/08/2016
Being Spared

"Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, 'Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto you' " (Jer.39.11-12).

There is a story told about WWII B-17 pilot Charles Brown who went on a bombing run over Germany four days before Christmas in 1943. His plane had taken many shots, his tail-gunner was dead and his crew wounded, as a German fighter pilot had made mincemeat of his plane. Brown knew that a few more shots would mean doom, when the fighter pilot pulled along side of his plane, waved, and left without firing a another shot. Brown and his crew made it home safely, being spared by an apparent honor code displayed by the German pilot. Jeremiah must have been worried about his own fate when the siege of Jerusalem ended, and today's verses tell us what happened. God had spared Jeremiah from death in the waterless pit, and he was again spared by the Babylonian king... Jeremiah remained behind while his people were led into exile. Christians can have the hope of their deliverance from this world and eternal life in Christ... This promise gives us eternity to look forward to and a chance to revel in the glory of God. We don't want to be like Jeremiah, and watch those we know head into exile...We should strive to be like Jeremiah, and continue to spread God's message with as many people as possible, being ready to "give an answer to all for the hope that lies within us..." (I Pet.3:15). As the German pilot spared the life of Charles Brown, the Lord wants to honor us by sparing us too... We should display that same code of honor toward others....

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/13/2016
Go Team

"Now, behold, I release you from the chains on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come and I will look after you well, but if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come..... Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land" (Jer.40:4 & 6).

Dedicated fans of professional and college teams cheer in hope that their team will advance to the championship... Game days may be filled with tail-gating and traditions, however, being a fan isn't always fun. When the team is winning, it seems that everyone is a fan, but when the team isn't doing so well, some fall off the bandwagon. We call them "fair weather fans..." Babylon has fallen, and Jeremiah has found enough favor with the king that he is given the option that is seen in verse six of today's scriptures. He will be treated well in Babylon, but Jeremiah decides to stay in Judah because that's where his people are.... He is no fair weather fan. Christians must recognize the importance they have in their own community of believers.

Folks can get excited about traveling to foreign lands to spread the gospel, and this is a noble cause that we can support and undertake. However, there are many people living without Christ right here where we are... The church should be a safe haven of hope and support in the community it serves. Jeremiah saw his nation decimated, but couldn't leave them in their time of need... We can follow that example, and meet the needs of those right around us. That's what a good and loyal fan would do....

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/14/2016
We Serve A Just God

"When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men with him, slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern" (Jer.41:7).

It didn't take long for the drama of the old kingdom to enter under the new leadership. Gedaliah was appointed governor of the Judean area, but not everyone who was left behind was okay with this... Ishmael, who was a part of the royal family, and royal guard, came to Mizpah with 10 men and killed Gedaliah, as well as all the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him. As if this wasn't enough the bloodthirsty vigilante killed those mentioned in today's verse also... A person who was once royal became an assassin... The lesson? No matter how tragic or terrible the situation, we should always be careful to never dwell on revenge... While Ishmael's revenge led to physical deaths, ours can do irreversible damage to the lives of those around us. We serve a just God who will not allow any unjust crime to go without consequence..."Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay..." (Rom.12:19). Bottom line?? A Christian's first reaction in times of heartache, pain, or ill treatment should never be focused on getting even. We should take comfort in knowing that evil will always be paid for, just not by us... Too much drama will always lead us down a path we should not travel....

Have a great day.... Make your little part of the world better..... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/15/2016
Standing Up For Right - Being The Hero

"But when Johanan the son of Kareah and the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, they took their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah" (Jer.41:11-12).

Word traveled fast in the crumbled kingdom of Judah, and Johanan caught wind of the murderous deeds of Ishmael described in yesterday's devotional. Heroes are described as those who fight against the injustices of the world, and we might look at Johanan in this light. It could be that a hero will try to provide safety to those in jeopardy, or they may serve those who need their help. Regardless, they are known for doing the right thing and standing up, even when the odds are not in their favor. In his epistle, James summarizes the Christian responsibility to do the right thing... "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin..." (4:17). As ambassadors of Christ, believers should always strive to do the right thing... We should do this not only because it is sinful not to, but also because we can bless others in the process. As lights of the world, confronting its evil is the right thing... The church should work with all its might to relieve suffering in the world... By relieving physical needs, we can then have the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with them. We ought to be the servants we are called to be, so that others may rejoice when we come to help... In standing up for the right, we will glorify the Lord... Now that's heroic...

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/23/2016
Spies

This morning's quiz is just what the title implies... Its about famous biblical spies. Put on your cunning caps and see if you know them. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. Who sent spies to watch Jesus? (a) chief priests and scribes, (b) Herod, (c) Caesar, (d) tax collectors.
- _____ 2. How many spies did Moses send into Canaan? (a) 8, (b) 10, (c) 12, (d) 14.
- _____ 3. Who sent spies to see if Saul had followed him? (a) Abner, (b) David, (c) Jonathan, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 4. What tribe sent out 5 spies to check out its land? (a) Benjamin, (b) Reuben, (c) Judah, (d) Dan.
- _____ 5. What counselor of Absalom was actually a spy for David? (a) Abner, (b) Hushai, (c) Zadok, (d) Ittai.
- _____ 6. Who sent 2 spies to Jericho? (a) Joshua, (b) Moses, (c) Caleb, (d) Zerah.
- _____ 7. What epistle warns against people sent in to "spy out our liberty?" (a) Galatians, (b) Ephesians, (c) Philippians, (d) Colossians.

_____ 8. What rebel sent out his spies throughout Israel, telling them to wait for the sound of the trumpet? (a) Cain, (b) Nimrod, (c) Absalom, (d) Atthaliah.

_____ 9. What Canaanite city did spies find the entrance of? (a) Jericho, (b) Ai, (c) Bethel, (d) Masada.

_____ 10. We had a great vacation and it is good to be back home.... Consider this your "bonus question..." You all get this one correct....

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love mark Phil.4:1

07/25/2016
Acting In Faith

"We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men" (2 Cor.8:20-21).

I doubt that any of you who receive and read this devotional do not work in your lives to do good stuff for others. On paper, this sounds so right and easy, but to actually putting it into practice is another thing. Its like those so-called experts who try to predict the outcomes of football games... They sum up all they know about the teams playing, and then tell who they think will win. The Problem? Well, its really simple, isn't it. Games are not played on paper, but on the field. They are played with muscles and bones and not with words... Doing good works can be tough sometimes because we cannot always readily see the outcomes of what we do. Notice the way the apostle Paul couches his words in today's verses. He knows that he is about to do a work that needs to be done and will be beneficial to its recipients, but wants to avoid any possibility that it will be misconstrued in some way.... He knows that the Lord wants him to do the work, but says this; "not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the eyes of man..." We might participate in benevolent works or help out strangers in need without ever seeing how it could change their lives. Just as we act in faith when it comes to our own salvation, we must act in faith that God will use our good work to His glory... If we are taken advantage of, it shouldn't discourage, deter, or stop us from giving to, and doing for others. The Lord will deal with the ungrateful in His own time, so we must take heart with a full assurance of faith, knowing that our Father will bring great things out of what we do for His kingdom. Lets never shy away from acting on our faith for the Lord...

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/26/2016
Seeking Direction

"Then they said to Jeremiah, 'May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the Lord your God sends you to tell us. Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the Lord our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the Lord our God' " (Jer.42:5-6).

Judah was gone! The destruction of the walls left Jerusalem defenseless against their surrounding neighbors. The captains of the remaining Judean armies are the ones who have made the petition to Jeremiah and the Lord in today's verses... They came to Jeremiah in search of God's help. They have reached rock bottom, and in their hour of need the remaining Judeans turned their focus toward the Lord. Today's verses include a vow that they will do whatever the Lord commands through the words of Jeremiah. Only God would be able to deliver them through the situation they were facing and Jeremiah agree to petition the Lord on their behalf? Why was Jeremiah willing to do this, even though they had ignored him previously? I believe it was because he thought they were headed in the right direction... Sin will allure us with empty promises and leave us rejected and alone. Like Jerusalem, we will be left vulnerable for temptation to attack us during our time of weakness. We should not wait until we hit rock bottom. We ought to run to the Lord when our spiritual lives are compromised... "The Lord is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble..." (Psa.46:1). He will provide us with strength, guidance, and protection from the temptations we face... He offers us this when we come with a sincere heart, willing to do His will. He offers us this when we are willing to follow the instructions of His Word. The guidance it offers won't always require us to do "fun" things, but it will reveal the "right" things... We may have to give up something we have come to like that the Lord does not like... If we desire a good relationship with Him, it begins with a willingness to obey Him....

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/27/2016
Good Mentorship

" 'I have heard you, replied Jeremiah the prophet. I will certainly pray to the Lord as you have requested; I will tell you everything the Lord says and will keep nothing back from you' " (Jer.42:4).

Let me set up a little scenario for you this morning. Imagine that you are in a small room that has been gridded of with squares large enough to fit a ball... You are blindfolded and spun

around enough to be disoriented and then asked to walk. I have created a minefield and the only thing that keeps you from tripping on one of the balls is a non-blindfolded person that tells you which way to walk to keep from tripping. They will act as your eyes as a kind of guide, or mentor...Mentors can be a precious commodity in nearly all walks of life. They are individuals with plenty of experience in your particular field of need. They can guide you and direct you to avoid the dangerous parts of your job. Mentors can speak to their fields because they know them and understand them more than many others. In today's verse, Jeremiah the prophet lets the people know that he will act as a mentor to them. He has a contact with God that they do not have, and he is willing to use that contact for the people's benefit... A mentor can help one to set up realistic goals, and will more than likely rejoice with us when we find the success we are looking for. The only conceivable problem in this scenario is a very simple one... A mentor can't really help unless he or she is asked for that help. Many times folks don't get the help they need to traverse though the minefield of life, because for some reason or another, they are just afraid to ask. The remnant of Judah finally came to their senses and realized that they needed help that they could not adequately supply for themselves... Jeremiah told them; "I will tell you everything the Lord says and will keep nothing back from you..." The apostle Paul had an "in" with God too, and was always ready to mentor the people, even to this extent..."Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (I Cor.11:1). I think that Paul would like us all to reach a point in our spiritual lives that we would want to serve as a mentor to many who are in need of help that we might be able to supply. Good mentorship is indeed a precious commodity...

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/28/2016

Right From The Prophet's Mouth

"Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares the Lord, for I will deliver you from his hands. I will show you compassion so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your land" (Jer.42:11-12).

We are all familiar with the story line of The Wizard of Oz... To refresh your memory, it is about a girl named Dorothy trying to make her way back home to Kansas from the mystical land of Oz. She is instructed to follow a yellow brick road to the Emerald City where she will consult with the great and powerful Wizard. The problem is, that the Wizard turns out to be a charlatan. He is a normal guy behind a curtain who uses parlor tricks. He uses flashy techniques to get others to believe his message and revere him for his knowledge. It is fortunate for God's people that the Lord used a simple man like Jeremiah to tell the people what they needed to do... No subterfuge or parlor tricks were needed...God's request through Jeremiah required the people to do something difficult but simple. He just wanted them to trust that he would deliver them from the overwhelming threat of the Babylonian armies. God protects His people, even today. However,

we might struggle with doubting His feelings for us. Why would he protect a sinner like me? Why save someone who has rebelled against Him? Why? Because God is faithful and just in His promises, and will not abandon those He has promised to save... As long as we follow Him through His Word, we can have the assurance, comfort, and confidence in knowing we have the protection and promise of the Lord. Even though the world might seem dangerous around us, we should rest easy, knowing that God is on our side. The same salvation giving us confidence in eternity, should be lighting a fire within us to constantly desire to witness for Him... No tricks...No subterfuge... Nothing flashy... Its right from the prophet's mouth....

Have wonderful day... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/29/2016
Flight Or Fight

"When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the Lord their God ----- everything the Lord had sent him to tell them ----- Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant young men said to Jeremiah, 'You are lying!' So they entered Egypt in disobedience to the Lord and went as far as Tahpanhes" (Jer.43:1-2; 7).

There are two schools of thought regarding what one should do if they confront a bear and her cubs in the woods. Naturally, we would freeze in our tracks as our heart races and we start to sweat. The bear immediately notices you and charges... Your first reaction? RUN!!! Get as much space between you and the bear as possible! However, most of the survival guides will tell you that this is the worst idea possible, and you should stand your ground. Fear instigates the self-preservation part of our brain and encourages us to run in the opposite direction... In yesterdays' devotional, Jeremiah told the people to stay there in Judah, and later says for them not to flee to Egypt. Their first thoughts are to obey, but after a while, they defy Jeremiah and the words of the Lord and run off to Egypt. Disaster is the result... The fear of being enslaved led them to abandon God's word for their own pathway... Sometimes fear convinces us that there is a better way of doing what we know we should do... We must be cautious to never allow fear to gain a foothold on our lives. Fear will lie to us and try to convince us that God's Word isn't real or meaningful... It urges us to do what we feel is the best. Folks ignore or rebel against God's Word because its approach to the world doesn't always make sense... The people of Judah allowed their fear to lead them to the "safety" of captivity... Fear should never be the motivation behind the decisions affecting our relationship with the Lord. We must choose to serve as the Lord instructs, rather than give into fear and return to sin... It about fight rather than flight....

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Today God Is First.... Love mark Phil.4:11

07/30/2016
All About Priests

Priests played an important role in the lives of the Jewish people, so this quiz is about them. Without broadening your phylacteries, try to answer these questions... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What priest in the Bible is mentioned as having no mother or father? (a) Eli, (b) Samuel, (c) Melchizedek, (d) there were none.
- _____ 2. What Hebrew married the daughter of an Egyptian priest? (a) Joseph, (b) Hosea, (c) Ezra, (d) Dan.
- _____ 3. What was the penalty for disobeying a priest? (a) 20 lashes, (b) death, (c) disownment, (d) loss of property.
- _____ 4. What priest was made mute (NT) because he did not believe the prophesy made by an angel? (a) Zechariah, (b) Josech, (c) Jonam, (d) Menna.
- _____ 5. What oil was supposed to be used to anoint Israel's priests? (a) canola, (b) sunflower, (c) olive, (d) any type.
- _____ 6. What priest, under King Joash, put a chest with a slot on the top beside the altar for contributions for temple repair? (a) Uriah, (b) Jehoiada, (c) Eliakim, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 7. What righteous king fired all the priests that had been appointed to serve pagan gods? (a) Josiah, (b) Jehu, (c) Hezekiah, (d) Joram.
- _____ 8. Which of these OT books is not named after a priest? (a) Ezra, (b) Ezekiel, (c) Daniel.
- _____ 9. What priest scolded a distressed woman because he thought she had been drinking in the tabernacle? (a) Samuel, (b) Eli, (c) Eleazar, (d) Jethro.
- _____ 10. What was engraved on the 12 stones in the high priest's breastplate? (a) 12 laws, (b) 12 tribes, (c) 12 qualities, (d) 12 regions.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love mark
Phil.4:11

