

12/01/2016
Under The Influence

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Eph.5:18-21).

We find another very interesting contrast that the apostle Paul makes here today. Lets see... This week we have seen the contrast between light and darkness, and then between wisdom and foolishness. Now we have the contrast of either being filled with wine or the Spirit. In both cases, one's behavior will be affected. The contrast between being filled with wine and filled with the Spirit is obvious. He says succinctly that being filled with wine leads to dissipation, while being filled with the Spirit empowers one for worship, service and testimony. There is something in common that allows Paul to make the contrast, namely that people can be under an influence that affects them, whether of wine or the Spirit... Being under the influence of the Spirit leads people to a happy, mutual encouragement to praise God; a healthy, mutual relationship with people. Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart is a direct result of being filled with the Spirit... There are a couple of more caveats to being under the influence of the Spirit. First will desire to give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and lastly, we'll feel a responsibility for one another. (being subject to one another) With this, people that are in the Lord will feel a conciliatory and responsible attitude toward each other. In our psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord, we are not just praising Him, but lifting each other up. Now I would consider that "being under the influence..." How about you?.

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

12/02/2016
Christianity - Hard Or Easy?

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism unto death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so that we too might walk in the newness of life" (Rom.6:3-4).

Those who think that putting on Christ is a part of Christianity don't get it... It is not just a part of Christianity; it is the whole thing! Another common misconception is that being a Christian means gradually becoming good, because thinking that we can start from our natural self and go from there is a big mistake. This usually leads to one of two results. (1) We'll give up being

good all together. (2) We'll become very miserable at trying to be good. A natural man can simply not meet the demands of perfection, thus, the more one obeys his conscience, the more his conscience demands of him... The Christian way is both harder and easier than this. Notice in today's verses that we have been buried with Him through baptism unto death... Christ doesn't just want a part of us... He wants to put our old self to death and start over. Jesus Himself spoke of the "hard and easy" many times. Here's an example of the hard; "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it" (Matt.16:24-25). Here's the easy; "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt.11:28-30). As difficult as it might be to hand over our entire selves, it is much, much easier than the alternative... Why? Because we simply cannot rehabilitate our natural self, by our self... This is where Jesus comes to our rescue. Rather than struggling against our nature, we die to it and let Christ do the work of drawing us into Himself.. So.... Hard or easy?

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

12/03/2016

The Old Testament In The New

Each of these passages from the NT is a quotation from the OT. Your job is to name that OT book. You get off easy, because I won't ask for the chapter and verse... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a Son. And they shall call His name Immanuel." (Matt.1:23) (a) Psalms, (b) Isaiah, (c) Joel, (d) Micah.
- _____ 2. "Make ready the way, make His paths straight!" (Matt.3:3) (a) Psalms, (b) Isaiah, (c) Joel, (d) Micah.
- _____ 3. "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, and those who were sitting in the land a shadow of death, upon them a Light dawned." (Matt.4:16) (a) Psalms, (b) Isaiah, (c) Joel, (d) Micah.
- _____ 4. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4) (a) Deuteronomy, (b) Leviticus, (c) Joshua, (d) Numbers.
- _____ 5. "On the other hand, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt.4:7). (a) Deuteronomy, (b) Leviticus, (c) Joshua, (d) Numbers.

- _____ 6. "For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." (Matt.4:10)
(a) Deuteronomy, (b) Leviticus, (c) Joshua, (d) Numbers.
- _____ 7. "You have heard it said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (Matt.5:38). (a)
Deuteronomy, (b) Joshua, (c) Exodus, (d) Numbers.
- _____ 8. "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." (Matt.5:43). (a) Exodus, (b)
Psalms, (c) Joshua, (d) Leviticus.
- _____ 9. "Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."
(Matt.11:10). (a) Isaiah, (b) Joel, (c) Malachi, (d) Micah.
- _____ 10. "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself."
(Matt.21:16). (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Jeremiah.

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

12/05/2016
The Art Of Submission

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph.5:21).

There is a lot of energy packed into today's nine word verse, and it begs an important question.. Whether you are married or single, when is it hard to humbly submit your will to that of another person? In this section of the Book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul does a wonderful job in marvelously combining doctrine with practical instruction about marriage. In it, he enters into the topic of relationships in this "New Society of God." What is the point of unity, purity and peace in the church if there is none of this in the home? The church family ceases to be a credible concept if it is not subdivided into human families which display God's love... It is sad to think that so few folks in the world know the high and sometimes mysterious call of God to a holy marriage. Why? I think its because we live in a culture that screams out, "do whatever feels good," and "me first." It is even difficult as followers of Christ to give our marriages the proper time and energy they deserve ---- or even the commitment it takes to make it last. As in all other aspects of the Christian life, the church, the new creation of God, is vital in marriage. If our Christian faith is of any real practical value, it has to behave "Christianly" at home... The rest of Ephesians 5 explains the unique similarities between marriage relationships and that of Christ for His church. Since the word submission is a vital one, lets all get used to its importance this week as we explore human relationships, (marriage) to those with Christ and His church. I hope it will be beneficial to all of us...

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

12/06/2016

Submission - A Part of Love

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (Eph.5:22).

We must not interpret what Paul writes about submission in a way which contradicts the fundamental attitudes of Jesus, as He treated women with courtesy and honor in an age when they were looked down upon. We must also not look at the words of Eph.5:21-33 in a way that contradicts Paul's teaching about oneness in Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:28). In the light of the teachings of both Jesus and Paul, we can confidently affirm the dignity of womanhood, the equality before God of all human beings, and the unity of all believers as fellow members of God's family and Christ's body. The term submit in today's verse could connote obedience, but the meaning is not called for here, as we read the words as to the Lord... It would be wise for us to read the teaching of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:1-7) on this very same matter. It is so important to grasp the difference between persons on one hand and roles on the other. Once we see this distinction, then those who hold an office, like elected officials, police, judges, parents or employees will understand their God-given authority which they expect others to acknowledge. People have equal dignity as Godlike beings, but different God-appointed roles. Paul describes the husband's headship in relation to the headship of Christ the Redeemer. "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph.4:15-16). Christ's headship expresses care rather than control, responsibility rather than rule. The headship is not so much lordship, as saviorhood... More love and submission tomorrow...

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

12/07/2016

A Husband's Submission

"Husband's, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph.5:25-27).

In Eph.5:25-33, there are instructions given to the husband. Every potential husband should read these verses and take them as a personal credo. Loving one's wife with the passion that Christ loved the church is a tall order, but it is also a worthy goal. Yesterday's submission dealt mostly with the wife, so we'll shift gears today. Paul shows today that submission is certainly not a one-sided affair, but a part of a reciprocal relationship... LOVE Not only the expression of our Lord's love, but also an example of how a husband ought to devote himself to his wife's good. Verses 26-27 tell what the husband's goal for his wife ought to be. It might be good for you to read and meditate on these two verses, and craft in your own words what they really mean.

After all, the words were written as map for a couple who want to spend the rest of their lives together. There is also a great significance to verses 31-32 that say; "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." If you think that Paul is really a profound guy here by using these words, you might want to check out

Jesus' words about marriage in Matt.19:5... "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." Hmmmmm. It would seem that this is the way that God has wanted it all along. The union of a husband to his wife is to be as powerful and meaningful as that of Christ to His bride, the church, which is beyond unaided understanding... It is to be a human echo to a spiritual reality. We will finish this tomorrow as we will hopefully see that this is what real love is all about....

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

12/08/2016

The Essence Of Love And Submission

"In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church ----- for we are all members of His body" (Eph.5:28-30).

As we sum up this week's devotionals about love and submission as they relate to a marriage relationship, we ought to reflect on a few questions... Why do you think it is important for a husband to love and respect his wife? Why is it important for the wife to love and respect her husband? The apostle Paul, speaking and writing through the Holy Spirit, says that the marriage of believers represents to the world Christ's relationship to the church. The words love and submit are used several times. Each time they are used, the parallel is drawn about Christ and the church. If a wife is to submit to your husband as to the Lord (Vs. 22) and the husband is to love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, (Vs. 25) just what do the underlined words mean? When we try to define these two verbs, it is not easy to distinguish between them. What does it mean to submit? I think it means to give oneself up for someone. Do you agree? What does it mean to love? I think it means to give oneself up for someone. Do you agree? Submission and love for each other in a marriage are both to be a testament of Christ's relationship with the church. Thus, submission and love are two aspects of the very

same thing, namely, of the selfless self-giving which is the foundation of an enduring and growing marriage. If you're married believers, thank God for the gift of your marriage and the privilege of representing Christ's relationship with His bride. If you are not married, pray for marriages in your community, that they will grow and represent Christ well...

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

12/09/2016

Titus - Up To The Challenge

"To Titus, my true son in our common faith.... The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you" (Titus 1:4-5).

Ahoy! Avast! Aye-aye! Arr! Landlubber! Me hearties! Batten down the hatches! Blow me down! Heave ho! Shipshape! I used these "pirate/seafarer" words as an icebreaker for our teen class this past Wednesday night... It is interesting to learn new things about the places that biblical events occurred. The apostle Paul left Titus on the island of Crete. Many of the people that he would minister to would come from questionable backgrounds, perhaps even including piracy. If you travel to Crete today, you can be a "Pirate for a Day." Cretan Daily Cruises pirate ship, the Black Pearl, sets sail for an adventurous trip almost every morning, as it is a celebration of their checkered past. There was a time when if you wanted to really insult someone, you might call them a Cretan. Why use this term as a form of degradation you ask. Its actually a self-description.... "Even one of their own prophets has said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons' " (Titus 1:12). Sometimes having an idea of the background and description of a place can help us to have a deeper appreciation of a challenging job a Christian like Titus may have in ministering to the people there. Titus had done good work with the Corinthians (2 Cor.7:13-15) in helping them to iron out some problems, so Paul felt like he would be up to the task in working with the folks in Crete, Why this elaborate story about Titus and the Cretans? How is the work going within your own congregation? Better yet, how are you helping to make it successful in its mission. Any frustrations? Are some people not pulling their own weight or doing their part? Is everyone completely on board and completely cooperative? I'll bet that they are not always liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons... Lets all try to be more like Titus, who certainly worked under more trying circumstances.... Lets be up to the challenge...

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

12/10/2016

Book Within A Book

The questions found on today's quiz make mention of a book "within" a book of the Bible. Lets see how good your Bible memory is. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What prophet ate a book and found it sweet as honey? (It later gave him a sour stomach) (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) John, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 2. What book of the Bible mentions the Lamb's Book of life? (a) Psalms, (b) Revelation, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Deuteronomy.
- _____ 3. What's king's deeds are recorded in the chronicles of Samuel, Nathan and Gad the seer? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hezekiah.
- _____ 4. According to Revelation, who will open the book with seven seals? (a) Satan, (b) a beast, (c) God, (d) the Lion of the tribe of Judah.
- _____ 5. What king cut up Jeremiah's scroll and tossed it piece by piece into a fireplace? (a) Jeroboam, (b) Rehoboam, (c) Jehoiakim, (d) no one.
- _____ 6. What city in Asia in the NT did people burn their valuable books on sorcery? (a) Ephesus, (b) Athens, (c) Troas, (d) Corinth.
- _____ 7. Who described to the people of Israel what life would be like under a king, and then wrote his statements down in a book? (a) Samuel, (b) Nathan, (c) Isaiah, (d) Malachi.
- _____ 8. What OT book mentions " the book of the acts of Solomon?" (a) I Samuel, (b) I Kings, (c) I Chronicles, (d) I Peter.
- _____ 9. What phenomenal event described in Joshua is also said to be described in the book of Jashar? (a) the burning bush, (b) parting of the Jordan, (c) the sun standing still.
- _____ 10. Who instructed the men of Israel to go through Canaan and write down descriptions of the area? (a) Aaron, (b) Joshua, (c) Caleb, (d) I made this up.

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

12/12/2016
R - E - S - P - E - C - T

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother ---- which is the first commandment with a promise---- that it will go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph.6:1-4).

I couldn't help but think of the Aretha Franklin song, RESPECT, when I read this portion of the Book of Ephesians and wrote this devotional... Paul moves on from the husband/wife relationship to the dynamics to the relationships within a Christian family. I think that the operative term is respect... The honoring of one's father and mother was one of the Ten Commandments, so to say that this teaching has been around for a while is an understatement. Paul gives this teaching to the church at Colosse (Col.3:20) too. Paul doesn't present a long soliloquy on raising children, but he does touch on its bedrock. He addresses both the parents and the children, and evidently expects whole families to come together for public worship not only to praise God, but also to listen to the Word. That children have been included in the instruction is an indication they were following the lead of Jesus, their Master. Jesus rebuked the disciples when they complained about people bringing their children to Him... "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them..." (Mk.10:14-16). This was certainly a radical change from the callous cruelty toward children which prevailed in the Roman Empire. The matter of kids honoring their moms and dads is all about respect that comes from love. The concept that says; Fathers, do not exasperate your children, is the same. Finally, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, is also about respect through love. When we bring honor on the Lord's family, we respect the Lord. Communities and churches function better when families work better. Lets all respect that...

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

12/13/2016
Even More Respectful

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever He does is good. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him" (Eph.6:7-9).

Paul moves away from one family relationship and into another. Slavery was a way of life at this time in the 1st century. I believe that Paul knew that he could not abolish it and bring the message of Christ to everyone, so he wrote about respect within the framework of the system. Today's verses outline the respect that is to be shown as Paul admits no privileged superiority in the Masters, as if they could dispense with the very courtesies they expect to be shown. From

family relationships to master/slave relationships, the theme for we are all members of His body runs through this whole section... The concept of brotherhood, even with slaves, is a thread that runs through the entire Book of Ephesians. As we look at these writings some 2,000 years later, that thread still exists. For God's New Society is the Father's household, or family, all of whose members are related to one another in Christ as brothers and sisters. Maybe the crowning summary of the wonderful thread is found in Gal.3:28... "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." He continues in verse twenty nine (29) this way; "If you belong to Christ, then you are all Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Lets be thankful for the Bible, God's guide, that teaches a respectful attitude through the wide spectrum of relationships we experience. We all ought to celebrate the body of Christ in which we are all equal. Lets pray that everyone in our life will desire to grow in their relationship with HIM, and be more respectful out of love...

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

12/14/2016
The Enemy Is Named

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph.6:12).

Kind of without warning after explaining to the church about the importance of strong family and social relationships, the apostle Paul lets us know about the enemy. If all these relationships are to be brought to fruition, we must know about the enemy lurking out there trying to keep it all from happening. The enemy is named and the relentless struggle against evil has begun... Because it is a battle that cannot be seen and its casualties can be explained away, the church may have a tendency to ignore it or fight it with its own weaponry and strategies. If this is the way we, or the church wage this battle, defeat is inevitable. There is a song in our hymnbooks entitled, "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"...The words were written by Charles Wesley in 1749.

"Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armor on; Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Strong in the strength which God supplies, Thru His beloved Son.
Strong in the Lord of hosts and in His mighty power; Who in the strength which Jesus trusts,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts, Is more than conqueror.
Stand then in His great might, with all His strength endued; But take to arm you for the fight, But
take to are you for the fight, The panoply of God.
Leave no unguarded place, no weakness of the soul; Take every virtue, every grace, Take
every virtue, every grace, And fortify the whole.
That having all things done, and all your conflicts past, You may o'ercome thru Christ alone, You
may o'ercome through Christ alone, And stand entire at last."

I think that Wesley captures the essence of what Paul is writing with these words. There is little wonder why so many experience defeat. The operative teaching here is that we must "put on the full armor of God..." (Vs.13)Why? "So that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, after you have done everything to stand..." This final section of the Book of Ephesians explains to us how to do that. Lets remember, we are dealing with spiritual warfare here. Conventional weapons just won't work. By this I mean that we cannot carry on a spiritual battle with physical weaponry. We cannot do it by ourselves... If we are to withstand the enemy we must be strong in the strength which only God supplies. We'll take a closer look at this during the rest of the week.... Go ahead and read about the armor of God...

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

12/15/2016

The Battle Belongs To The Lord

"In heavenly armor we'll enter the land. The battle belongs to the Lord. No weapon that's fashioned against us will stand, The battle belongs to the Lord.
When the power of darkness comes in like a flood, The battle belongs to the Lord. He's raised up a standard the pow'r of His blood, The battle belongs to the Lord.
When your enemy presses in hard do not fear, The battle belongs to the Lord. Take courage my friend your redemption is near, The battle belongs to the Lord.
Chorus: And we sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord. We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord."

Words by Jamie Owens-Collins (1985)

No preacher worth his "preacherness" has a sermon or two tucked away dealing with this section of Ephesians, chapter six. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take a stand against the devil's schemes" (10-11). As I touched on yesterday, the battle that is spoken of here is a spiritual one. If we underestimate our opponent, Satan, we will see no need for God's armor and go into battle unprepared. With no weapons but our own puny strength, we will be quickly and soundly defeated. The apostle Paul gives exhortations to us in the above verses. Instead of relying on our own strength he says be strong in the Lord and in His might power! He then explains what we can do to resist the devil. Put on the full armor of God... I think that utilizing the full armor of God is a part of something that Paul said to the church at Corinth in his first letter to them... "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way so that you can stand up under it" I Cor.1012-13). Do you think that putting on the full armor of God is one of the ways He has

provided? He begins to present the six main pieces of the armor of God by saying, stand firm then... Though you have probably read the verses and heard the sermons about the armor, lets take a look at it tomorrow. I have almost always found that getting a fresh look at verses I read before gives me a new perspective on them. We'll look at those six pieces of armor of God and see why each is vital for the spiritual battle...

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

12/16/2016

"With the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph.6:15-17).

I guess the typical way to study the spiritual armor of God is to take a close look at its six main pieces and along with this, to see why each is vital for our spiritual battle. Most sermons break down each piece of the armor and explain why a Roman soldier would find them essential. Since this is not a sermon, I'll dispense with that and notice a few important things. If you are a fan of football, perhaps you have heard the mantra that "defense wins games..." Interestingly enough, five out of the six pieces of armor are primarily defensive. Only the sword is considered to be an offensive weapon, and it can be used for defense as well... I think that this is a message to us about the adversary we are at spiritual war with. Each piece of armor represents an important quality we must engender to ward off temptations that would try to take us down....

Lets look at them a bit more closely.... belt/truth.... Breastplate/righteousness.... boots/readiness.... shield/faith.... helmet/salvation.... sword/Word of God.... I believe it is vitally important to take in verses 18-20 into this equation too. Equipping ourselves with God's armor is not a mechanical operation, even though the armor is. It is an expression of our dependence on God. Jane and I got to care for our 6 month old grandson yesterday. As we did, (with pleasure) I was reminded of how dependent and helpless a small child really is... We need God's spiritual armor because of that same dependency. There's no mistake about a child's dependency, but adults, unfortunately, think they can make it on their own. Though the spiritual battle is one that we must fight, it is wonderful to know that God gives us what we need to win...

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

12/17/2016
Book Within A Book

Today's quiz should be fun.. I will quote some verses from the Bible that are the first verses of a particular book. Your job, if you choose to take it, is to identify the books... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners...
- _____ 2. There was a man in the land of Uz....
- _____ 3. The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach...
- _____ 4. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah , Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem....
- _____ 5. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- _____ 6. Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household.
- _____ 7. The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth...
- _____ 8. The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem...
- _____ 9. God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers of the prophets in many portions in many ways...
- _____ 10. What, what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes...
- _____ 11. Then the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying....
- _____ 12. The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Answers: (a) Ecclesiastes, (b) Hebrews, (c) Matthew, (d) Leviticus, (e) I John, (f) Psalms, (g) Mark, (h) Job, (i) Exodus, (j) Acts, (k) Daniel, (l) 3 John.

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

12/19/2016

Finishing Ephesians - Grace And Peace

"Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love" (Eph.6:23-24).

In a world where writing a good letter has become almost an art form of days gone by, the apostle Paul ends his wonderful letter the Church at Ephesus. It might be good for us to go back to the beginning of the letter and examine verse two... "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" Hmmmmmmmm.... Paul must have been serious about this grace and peace thing, as he makes it the bread of the sandwich... Of the four words peace, love, faith and grace that are used in Paul's final greeting, the two that stand out as particularly appropriate are grace and peace. I guess my job in today's devotional is to try to explain the special importance of these words, and figure out why Paul has focused on these qualities. Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of the Book of Ephesians, without seeing that it is a gospel to the church. We look at it and see that it sets forth God's external purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society. This society, His church, stands out in bold and bright relief against the somber background of the world... Again and again we see Paul's desire that the members of God's new society may live in harmony as brothers and sisters... As brothers and sisters in his family, at peace and in love with Him and each other, recognizing that only through God's grace can this dream come true. I hope that through this study in Ephesians, that our goals and desires for our Christian community have been positively influenced. Real peace, the peace that transcends understanding, is only available under the lovely umbrella of God's grace...

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

12/20/2016

The Type Of People We Should Be - Steadfast

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you be?" - 2 Peter 3:11.

The apostle Peter is writing with the day of the Lord on his pen. He says that since the earth will one day pass away, what kind of people ought you be while you're here... In reality, each of our days are numbered to a certain amount of years, so all of us have a type of end time. With this in mind, Peter poses the short but important question found in today's verse. So... What type of people ought we be? I thought I might list a few traits over the next few days regarding the type

of folks we should be. We have quite a bit of biblical precedence for these traits, so I'll be referring to that. I would propose today that we ought to be steadfast people... Since this is not a word that is bantered about very much in today's world, let's see what it means... The word is defined this way; Resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering... The term must be pretty important, because it has a ton of synonyms, which include; loyal, faithful, committed, devoted, dedicated, dependable, staunch, solid, implacable.... (there lots more). Being steadfast is one of the conditions of success in every endeavor. If a storeowner opens his store at random times each day without providing some schedule, his business will probably not last very long. If a fruit tree is moved from one place to another each week, it will never produce much fruit. Likewise, a Christian who spends too much time jumping in and out of things or is hot one day and cold another, will never hope to accomplish what the Lord has intended him to. Why? No steadfastness. Jesus said; "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of the Lord" (Lk.9:62). The church at Jerusalem was steadfast (Acts 2:42). Paul was steadfast (Phil.3:8, 13, 14). The Corinthians were exhorted to be steadfast (1 Cor.15:58; 16:13). I think that the Lord wants us to have this trait so that we can be of use to Him and others... Steadfast...

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

12/21/2016

The Type Of People We Ought To Be - Prayerful

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11); "But in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil.4:6).

Being thankful would seem almost second nature for a true believer, but there is another area that would seem even more natural, and that is the spiritual act of prayer... Simply put, at the risk of stating the obvious, prayer is communication with God. Christians ought to be people that pray often to the Father through the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We ought to be these type of people because when praying, we demonstrate humility and a trust for what we cannot do ourselves. Let's take a quick look this morning at some of the varied components of biblical prayer. A few of these are; asking God for daily needs, petitioning God to help keep us out of harm's way, intercession on behalf of others... God hears all the prayers of righteous people and answers them, both according to His plan, and for our ultimate good. It seems weird that someone that professes to be a Christian and empowered by the Holy Spirit would either not pray, or pray haphazardly... Jesus set the bar for us in His prayer life, as He often prayed for hours at a time. He showed us that there was a time for public prayer, but the best of personal prayers were done in solitude. The letters of the apostle Paul were replete with prayers for churches, his personal well-being, for the well-being of others, for his travels, but most of all for his mission on earth... Each of those ought to be a part of our rich prayer life. When praying to God, we speak, listen and react. We're sharing with God what is on our minds

and asking Him to show us his will, just as Paul did... "And He who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom.8:27). As we each reflect on what kind of people we ought to be, lets add prayerful people to that list...

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

12/22/2016

What Type Of People Ought We Be - Forgiving

"What kind of people ought you to be" (2 Pet.3:11)? "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col.3:13).

As we continue with answering the question posed in 2 Pet.3:11 regarding the type people we ought to be, we come to the wonderful virtue of forgiveness...Mark Twain is quoted as saying; "forgiveness is the scent the violet sheds on the heel that crushes it..." Just as long as there is sin in the world, there will be the need for forgiveness... Today's verse from Col.3:13 really brings this forgiveness thing home. Eph.4:32 says just about the same thing. "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you" One thing that jumps out at us in this verse is that forgiveness is linked to being compassionate. Compassion is the act of feeling or showing sympathy and true concern for one another. There is something that jumps out even more... "forgive as the Lord forgave you..." "Forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you." These teachings come from Jesus Himself, particularly from the Sermon On The Mount. He said that the stipulation regarding God forgiving us is contingent upon us forgiving one another. (Matt.6:12, 14, 15). To me, this takes on the aura of a command, and makes it a necessity for us to forgive each other. The Old Law said that the operative number of times one should forgive was 7, but to Peter Jesus said 77 times, really meaning endlessly. There is one more item here about God's forgiveness that we need to examine and that's found in Heb.10:17. "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." True forgiveness involves absolutely forgetting the offence. Is this hard? Of course it is. Its what makes Christianity so great, as we accomplish what is difficult. What kind of people ought we be? Forgiving people...

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

12/23/2016

The Type Of People We ought To Be - Soul Winners

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11) "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4).

As we continue with this series about what type of people we ought to be, we come to what Christ-likeness demands of us. "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost..." (Lk.19:10). Because Christ came and died for the lost, we are to be soul winners ourselves... "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, he who wins souls is wise" (Prov.11:30). So much of New Testament teaching is wrapped around bringing people to the Lord. Lest we think that this was only emphasized after the church had its start, we must look at Jesus' last words in Mk.16:15-16 & Matt.28:19-20. This is commonly referred to as The Great Commission, and in it Jesus literally commands us to be soul winners... "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Most of us look at "The Golden Rule" as a mantra for life, so what better thing can we "do unto others," than to bring them to salvation? One of the reasons that the gospel spread so quickly in the 1st century revolves around today's verse... Folks were so excited about the truth of the gospel that they preached the Word wherever they went... Some people think that just getting people to church will win them over, but getting them into your home, or into a conversation where you can share your testimony is even better. People are not won over by a slick preacher or church show... They are brought to Christ by people who are happy with their lives and content with where they will spend eternity. Did someone have a big effect on you in bringing you to salvation. Jesus commands that we do the same. What type of people ought we be? Soul winners...

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

12/24/2016
Christmas Quiz

"Tis the season." I would be remiss if I didn't ask a few questions regarding the birth of Jesus... Your answers will determine whether you are a part of the inn crowd, or just the stable crew... Above all, don't forget His "presence..." Have fun...

_____ 1. Which gospel(s) speak of the events surrounding Jesus' birth? (a) Mark & John, (b) Matthew, Mark, Luke & John, (c) Luke only, (d) Matthew & Luke.

_____ 2. What does Emmanuel mean? (a) God with us, (b) He who is God, (c) Son of God, (d) Anointed One.

_____ 3. When Joseph 1st discovered that Mary was pregnant, he: (a) Beat her, (b) Tore his robe, (c) No longer wished to marry her, (d) Rejoiced.

- _____ 4. According to the Bible, _____ magi visited Jesus. (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) an undisclosed number.
- _____ 5. What was the shepherd's initial reaction to the angel that visited them? (a) They were afraid, (b) They were upset, (c) They were excited, (d) They were amused.
- _____ 6. What did the angel tell the shepherds? (a) To not be afraid, (b) The location of the newborn Savior, (c) How to recognize the newborn Savior, (d) All of this.
- _____ 7. On the night He was born, who visited Jesus, Mary, and Joseph? (a) Shepherds, wise men and some locals, (b) Shepherds and wise men, (c) Wise men, (d) Shepherds.
- _____ 8. The wise men traveled _____ to Jerusalem? (a) Westward, (b) Southward, (c) Northward, (d) Eastward.
- _____ 9. What was Jesus' approximate age when the magi visited Him? (a) A newborn, (b) 6, (c) 12, (d) 2 or under.
- _____ 10. Where is Jesus when the magi come and visited Him? (a) In the manger, (b) In a house, (c) In the womb, (d) In the temple.

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

12/26/2016

What Type Of People Ought We Be - Happy

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11). "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil.4:4) ; "Be joyful always..." (1 Thess.5:16).

It is clear in the verses I have used this morning, that God intends for us to be happy people... I know that it takes some serious thought on our part to make a decision to follow Jesus. It also takes an amount of seriousness to study and meditate. But I have to keep coming back to today's verses and others in the Bible. When I do this, I have no other conclusion to draw than the fact the Lord wants us to be happy folks. When Ezra read the law to the people of Israel, they mourned and wept. Nehemiah told them not to... He said this; "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh.8:10). When David called

on the Lord for mercy and to protect him from evil, he said this with great confidence; "Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song" (Psa.28:6-7). Here at the Northfield church we have a custom around the Christmas holiday. In lieu of a "regular sermon," we present to the congregation a lesson entitled "The Life Of Christ In Scripture." It consists solely of scripture readings, interspersed with appropriate songs. We find it to be inspiring and uplifting, and in the end everyone has found joy in the truth of God's Word... People out there go to great lengths to be happy, but I find that the only true happiness is found in God. It has been my philosophy that we cannot convert folks to the Lord if they perceive that they are happier than we are... For a quick "pick-me-up" why not read the 1st Psalm today, and substitute the word "happy" for "blessed...." See how much you can enjoy today....

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

12/27/2016

What Type of People Ought We Be? Cooperative

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11). "As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain..." (2 Cor.6:1).

Indulge me for a moment as I quote to you a couple of my favorite verses about cooperation.

Perhaps this is a treasured topic of mine, because as a ex-team sport athlete, I valued cooperation and called it teamwork... One of the best things about being on a team is striving together with others toward a common goal. "Behold, how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head...." (Psa.133: 1-2); "Two are better than one because they have a better return for their labor. For if either one of them fall, the other will lift up his companion..." (Eccl.4:9-10). "But I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment..." (1 Cor.1:10). The apostle Paul dedicates a big part of 1st Corinthians 12 to cooperation in the church. He uses the metaphor of the various parts of a human body (ie. feet, hands, eyes, ears) to bring the idea of cooperation across to us in bold terms. When a particular body part is hurt or not functioning well, the whole body is out of sorts. An old story is told about 2 donkeys that were tied together, both pulling toward opposite bundles of straw. If one had been willing to give way to the other, both could have eaten well. Neither would give in, and both eventually starved... Whether it is on a team, in a family, in the workplace, or especially in the church, we must cooperate with each other for the good of all... "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, united in spirit, intent on one purpose..." (Phil.2:2).

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

12/28/2016

What Type Of People Ought We Be - Sacrificial

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11). "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16). "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8).

Christianity was born through sacrifice... First, God gave His Son, and then His Son gave His life. It was very common for Christians to actually die because of their faith in the 1st century... When the apostle Paul knew that his death was imminent, he penned these words; "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim.4:6-8). In the Old Testament days, the Israelites were required to make animal sacrifices to God, but today, we are called on to be sacrificial in a very personal way..."Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to view your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ----- this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom.12:1). These are some of the most powerful words in the New Testament that speak about being sacrificial people. Being a living sacrifice says volumes about what kind of people we ought to be when we make a commitment to Jesus Christ. We are to be sacrificial in regard to our service to the Lord through the serving of others. This not only extends into physical service, but monetary support for Christ's church... "On the 1st day of the week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come, no collections will have to be made..." (1 Cor.16:2). I believe this to be the living rule for giving in the church today. When the plate is passed, we should have already purposed in our hearts what we are going to give. If you reach into your pocket for some loose money to give, is that purpose and sacrifice? Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of Christianity revolves around the humility it takes to be sacrificial people, and we must work on it each day...

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

12/29/2016

What Type Of People Ought We Be? Exemplary

"What kind of people ought you be?" (2 Pet.3:11). "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (Jas.2:18).

That old faith/works thing has been bantered about for centuries, and is addressed very specifically in the Book of James. Lest we think that James is out on an island by himself with the teachings that involve the works we do, lets listen to Jesus Himself... "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven..." (Matt.5:14-16). Let me see if you agree with me... It would seem, from these words of Jesus, that there is no real choice for us when it comes to doing good stuff and being examples. When He compares us to light, He says we are to light the whole house. He goes on farther to let us know about doing good deeds, and even gives us the rationale behind it, to praise your Father in heaven... When it comes to living the type of Christian life the Lord wants us to, we all get to be preachers. Our lives are our sermons, and we get to preach them through our good deeds everyday of the week. We can win people over to the Lord through our actions much more readily than through our words. Being Christ-like actually means just that! The apostle Paul was bold enough to say this; "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.." (1 Cor.11:1). Let me finish today with a portion of an Edgar A Guest poem...

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one would walk with me than merely tell the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear,
And the best of all the preachers are men who lead their creeds
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs.

12/30/2016
What Is Your Life?

"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (Jas.1:14).

The age old question about what life actually is, is a complex thought. Rather than looking at it in the stark terms of being opposite than death, a human life is certainly much more significant than just a mere existence... Rather than the ticking of a clock, human life should be defined in terms of preparation and service. According to the Bible, Methuselah was 969 years old when he died, but he may not have ever lived at all in the sense of real living... For the next few days, I would like to explore this thought and distinguish between existing and living. Lets start with the idea that life is actually a gift from God. Since God has given us life, it makes sense to me that we be held responsible to Him for the way we live it. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes has some words of wisdom on this matter..."Remember your Creator in the days of your

youth..." Later, as he finishes his book he concludes; "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter; Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (12:1; 13). It would surely seem to me that the Lord desires that we live to His glory. Much like our parents, He wants us to make Him proud of us... Jesus lived His life this way, and told us that we should too. "Let your light shine before men..." Why? "That they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven" (Matt.5:16). Though life is a gift, it must be well-lived. When the day comes that this physical life is over, we will have to face Him with our record. The record will consist of what we did with the wonderful gift He gave to us... Lets make it a good one...

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

12/31/2016

Quiz About Food And Fasts

Since we probably all ate too much over the holidays, today's quiz is about food. I hope you all can recall some of these examples from the Bible. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. To prove He was not a ghost, what did Jesus eat with His disciples after the resurrection? (a) Ham, (b) Honey, (c) Lamb, (d) Fish.
- _____ 2. Who fasted for 40 days on Mt. Sinai? (a) Moses, (b) Aaron, (c) The priests, (d) All the Israelites.
- _____ 3. Who received meals at the hands of birds?(a) Elisha, (b) Elijah, (c) Hosea, (d) John.
- _____ 4. Who was raped after bringing food to her supposedly sick brother? (a) Gibeath, (b) Tamar, (c) Amnon, (d) unnamed woman of Tekoa.
- _____ 5. What meat was eaten at the Passover meal? (a) Lamb, (b) Ham, (c) Spam, (d) Fowl.
- _____ 6. Who humbled himself and fasted when accused of Naboth's murder?(a) David, (b) Abimilech, (c) Ahab, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 7. How many men bound themselves by an oath to fast until they had Paul killed? (a) 10, (b) 20, (c) 30, (d) Over 40.
- _____ 8. Who prepared a meal for 2 angels in Sodom? (a) Lot, (b) Lot's wife, (c) Lot's daughter, (d) Rubeous.

_____ 9. After His baptism, Jesus fasted for 40 days. What food did He immediately eat? (a) Unleavened bread, (b) Just water, (c) Honey, (d) It doesn't say.

_____ 10. Who read the prophecy of Jeremiah when the people of Jerusalem gathered for a fast? (a) Jehoiakim, (b), Josiah, (c) Baruch, (d) Micaiah.

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

