

01/01/2016
Keeping Through Patience And Forgiveness

One part of the "fruit of the Spirit" in Gal.5:22-23 is patience, and there are times when it must be shown toward our brethren... We may all be members of one body, but are often at different levels of spiritual maturity. As Christians go through the growing pains of maturation, they need to be shown the patience of those who are more mature in the Lord... The process of learning the will of Christ in one's life, and changing life-long habits is not always easy. "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph.4:2). The term bearing with one another, literally means "to put up with one another..." Because folks have their own way of thinking about things is no reason to make that a source of contention. Tied closely to patience is something found in the 13th chapter of the Book of 1st Corinthians...It says this about love; "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (V 7). This doesn't mean that love is gullible. It means that it compels us to give our brethren the benefit of the doubt... Gossip has the horrible ability to destroy one's character and reputation, so we have the responsibility to hear all evidence about anything that is accusatory... "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you..." (Matt.7:12). Finally there is the imperative of forgiveness that comes along with being our brother's keeper... If we have been forgiven by God, we are obligated to forgive our brethren in their repentance. When an erring brethren returns to the Lord, we are to be quick to forgive, knowing that we stand in the need of forgiveness ourselves. I hope this week that we have looked into some of the aspects that are a part of being our brother's keeper. Maybe you have come up with some that I have neglected, and I would love to hear them...

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

01/02/2016
Some Notable Women

There are lots of women mentioned in the Bible, some notable and famous, and some a bit more obscure. This quiz is a mixture of them. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What 84 year old widowed prophetess saw the young boy Jesus in the temple? (a) Mary, (b) Anna, (c) Salome, (d) Magda.
- _____ 2. What wife of David was the widow of Nabal, who died when she told him of the gifts she had given to David? (a) Abigail, (b) Michael, (c) Haggith, (d) Abital.
- _____ 3. What prophetess, during the reign of King Josiah, consoled him while chastening the people of Judah? (a) Meshullemeth, (b) Jedidah, (c) Huldah, (d) Recab.

- _____ 4. What scheming princess of Tyre married and manipulated King Ahab and imposed her pagan religion? (a) Dido, (b) Jezebel, (c) Ashtoreth, (d) Tahpenes.
- _____ 5. What Israelite woman aided the people by murdering the Canaanite captain Sisera in her tent? (a) Jael, (b) Deborah, (c) Delilah.
- _____ 6. What Persian queen upset her husband by not appearing for them at a drunken banquet? (a) Biztha, (b) Abagtha, (c) Zethar, (d) Vashti.
- _____ 7. What sister of King David had the same name as one of his wives? (a) Abigail, (b) Michael, (c) Haggith, (d) Abital.
- _____ 8. After Eve, who is the first woman mentioned in the Bible? (a) Zillah, (b) Adah, (c) Sarai.
- _____ 9. What Old Testament woman had kids named Lo-ruhamah, Lo-ammi, and Jezreel? (a) Clydeous, (b) Gomer, (c) Asenath, (d) I made up those names.
- _____ 10. What was the name of King Saul's wife? (a) Merab, (b) Naomi, (c) Ahinoam, (d) it doesn't say.

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

01/04/2016
Like Vines And Branches

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn.15:5).

I picked one verse out of an allegory Jesus used with His disciples on the night he was betrayed... Verses 1 to 8 complete this teaching and would be good to read and meditate upon today. The emphasis of the teaching was not really about bearing fruit, but that disciples should abide in Jesus. The term "I am" is used 6 times. What the story of the vine and branches teaches us is that discipleship is more than being just a student. He or she is a follower and a supporter and has a special relationship with the Master, Jesus Christ... Disciples are related to Christ in a manner comparable to that between a vine and its branches. I think that the word "abide" means to stay or remain, and because it is used in the present tense, it means continual

action... The life of the branch, (us) depends on maintaining a connection with the vine (Jesus) to stay spiritually alive. Although becoming a Christian is the beginning of our journey, abiding in Him for the rest of our lives is an imperative and continual action... "If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love" (V 10). Specifically, to abide in Christ is to follow His teachings... "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him" (1 Jn.3:24); "If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed" (Jn.8:31) ; "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 Jn.2:5). This week we will consider some lessons to be learned about discipleship from the vine and the branches...

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

01/05/2016

Being Like The Vine And Bearing Fruit

"My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?" (Jas.3:12).

The 15th chapter of John is not the only place in the New Testament that mentions fruit, branches or vines. The symbolism of the story is that the branches take on the nature of the vine, just as disciples take on the character of their Master... In today's passage, James tells us that "like" produces "like," as the fig tree cannot bear olives or the grapevine bear figs... As we abide in the His Words, they actually mold our thoughts, form our character, and control our will and actions. "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus walked" (1 Jn.2:6). Those (the branches) who abide in Christ (the vine) should walk as he walked. Then there's that fruit bearing thing that is mentioned no less than six times in the John 15:1-8 passage. As the vinedresser (God) is looking over the branches, He is inspecting them for fruit. The emphasis here is that God is expecting fruit in our lives. There is some conjecture over what that fruit is really referencing. I would contend that there is a kind of progression in its nature... First there comes the fruit of Spiritual growth and maturity. With that comes the fruit of increased talents, and therefore opportunities... Those increased talents lead us to the fruit of good deeds and involvement in the actual work of the gospel. We will desire to bear the fruit of witnessing for the Lord as we offer praise to Him... In my refrigerator right now there are some blueberries and raspberries, two of my favorites... Because of God's help, there is a progression in the quality of fruit that is borne... Make no mistake... We are to bear fruit...

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

01/06/2016
The Pruning Process

"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (Jn.15:2).

I think that from a study of biology and a bit of gardening, many of us understand the process of pruning branches. An untrimmed vine will develop long green shoots which must be cut off. If they are not, all of the energy and nutrients of the vine go into growing these new branches as opposed to growing fruit. Many years ago in our section of NJ, we had a terrible gypsy moth infestation. There were so many caterpillars that they ate all of the leaves off the trees. It looked like January in July. Then a seemingly miraculous thing happened... The leaves grew back and started to carry on Photosynthesis again. The energy and nutrients were not supposed to grow leaves again at that time of year, so the trees were compromised. If the caterpillars were not brought under control for the next year, the same thing would happen, and many of the trees would have died. The key here, just as in the pruning, is about the correct distribution of the energy and nutrients. God, through the pruning, will strip away everything in our lives that does not contribute to producing fruit... Here are some of the ways that God carries on this pruning: (1) Through the Word. (Psa.119:9) (2) He disciplines us through His providence... "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we might share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb.12:10-11). (3) He allows us to suffer at times, knowing that such occasions give us opportunities to mature (Rom.5:3-4). Although it may not always be pleasant, the pruning process is not a punishment. It is an expression of God's care, interest, and love. He is helping us to be more fruitful....

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

01/07/2016
It Pays To Have Connections

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn.15:4-5).

Over 30 years ago, a young lady who was in college in central Jersey, started attending our church services during the summer. She had recently become a Christian and was from the more southern part of New Jersey where there was not a congregation. Her father would drop

her off, and pick her up after services. On several occasions, I would walk her out to meet her dad, and carry on a conversation with him. Not too long after that, I applied for a teaching position in that same part of NJ that she was from, and I had an interview. Wasn't I surprised when her father was on the interviewing committee. He was the assistant superintendent there, and I got the job. I happily and successfully taught in that school for the remainder (18 years) of my teaching career. Was he the reason I got the job? I would like to believe that God works in our lives, and the connection we made was not accidental... There is a reason that disciples of Jesus must remain in Him... It's that important connection in which the branches derive their very life through the vine. Disciples draw their spiritual life and ability to produce fruit from the Christ. When we keep His commandments, we maintain this vitally important connection to Jesus, and we stay spiritually alive. Today's verses clearly point out that as the branches are totally dependent upon the vine, so disciples are totally dependent upon Christ. A disciple is lost without his Master, so Jesus said this; "apart from Me you can do nothing..." Abiding in Christ is a life-long commitment... Jesus does not want wishy-washy followers. He certainly does not want "on again -- off again" disciples. What's important here? Its the connection to Christ that must be maintained. Its good to have connections...

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

01/08/2016

Prayer And Glorification

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you" (Jn.15:7).

God wants His disciples to succeed, so we are not left to ourselves to produce fruit or even suffer the consequences of being removed from the vine. The success I am speaking of is all about the production of fruit, so Jesus says in today's verse, "ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you." Within the context of this story of the vine and branches, this "ask whatever you wish" is certainly pertaining to prayer. More specifically, its not referring to a blanket wish-list, but rather to those things connected to the production of fruit. There is another interesting factor here in today's verse, and it shows the conditional nature of this prayer. Prayer is a wonderful privilege given to the faithful child of God. The petitions referring to getting what we wish is directly connected to the first part of the verse... "If you remain in me and my words remain in you" preceeds the granting of the prayer. If as the branch, we fail to be connected to Jesus the vine, we sever our prayer-line to God. Finally, as we close this wonderful teaching story, we get see its true purpose. God is glorified when His disciples do what they are supposed to do... "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (V 8). The fruit that is produced is a direct reflection of God's planning, efforts, care, and love for us... To take this a step further, when folks see our good works, God is

glorified too. A disciple can have no greater goal and satisfaction than to know that God is being glorified before others...

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

01/09/2016
Some More Women In The Bible

Its time to get on your thinking caps and try to remember some of the women you've read about in the Bible... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What wife of David was also given as a wife to a guy named Phalti? (a) Michal, (b) Abigail, (c) Abital, (d) Eglah.
- _____ 2. What woman's household informed Paul of quarrels among them? (a) Priscilla, (b) Rhoda, (c) Chloe, (d) Rubeous.
- _____ 3. What Egyptian woman was the wife of Joseph? (a) Mrs. Potiphar, (b) Asenath, (c) Ransal, (d) the name is not given.
- _____ 4. Who was Aaron's wife? (a) Jocabed, (b) Zipporah, (c) Elisheba, (d) it doesn't say.
- _____ 5. What Hittite woman married Esau, causing grief to Isaac? (a) Bashermath, (b) Judith, (c) Berar, (d) both a & b.
- _____ 6. What handmaid of Rachel bore Dan and Naphtali to Jacob? (a) Hagar, (b) Zipporah, (c) Claudia, (d) Bilhah.
- _____ 7. What woman of Athens became a Christian because of Paul's teaching? (a) Damaris, (b) Priscilla, (c) Rhoda, (d) Lydia.
- _____ 8. What two women of Philippi were asked to stop their quarreling? (a) Euodia, (b) Jerusha, (c) Syntyche, (d) Cozbi, (e) a & b, (f) b & d, (g) a & c.
- _____ 9. What was Esther's Hebrew name? (a) Esther, (b) Hadassah, (c) Mara, (d) Orpha.
- _____ 10. What did Naomi call herself after suffering great tragedy? (a) Hadassah, (b) Orpha, (c) Mara, (d) Norma.

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

01/11/2016
Being A Kid Again

"But as many who received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (Jn.1:12).

This week, I would like us to consider both the blessings and responsibilities of being children of God... Jesus called on His disciples to address God as their Father in heaven. Followers of Christ, therefore, have a very special relationship with God. Through Jesus, it has become possible for His believers to become God's children... Think of that... We're God's kids... For one who is on the outside looking in, claiming to be a child of God would be a futile statement. Here's the really cool thing though... According to today's verse, and several others dotted through the New Testament, those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God have the right, and even the authority, to be called His children. So.... What is the mark of certainty that we are indeed God's kids? "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry "Abba, Father". The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom.8:15-16). We see here that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. The litmus test is that the Holy Spirit tells us what we must do in order to be one of God's kids, and our spirit knows whether we have met the conditions. If we have met them, then we know that we are a child of God... To settle a dispute about greatness in the kingdom, Jesus set a child in the midst of His disciples and told them this; "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.18:3). I don't know about you, but I feel younger already...

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

01/12/2016
Born Again Or Adopted

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet.1:23).... "In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Eph.1:5).

The two verses above reveal the ways that a child can become a member of a family: by physical birth (1 Pet.1:23) or by adoption (Eph.1:5). To take care of a child who is born to you is a very natural act... Adoption, however, is a deeper more meaningful illustration than being born again. To choose, accept, and take care of a child who is not born to you is an incredible act of love and compassion... When the Bible speaks about being born again, it stresses a wonderful example of spiritual creation. Adoption conjures up a very different image, however, as one of

rescue and redemption... "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more" (Psa.10:17-18). The Bible portrays those who are orphaned as being helpless and extremely vulnerable, The one who is adopted is rescued or saved from a state of helplessness... To me, here is the very special aspect that I see in this adoption process... The adopted one is given an equal place in the family. All the blessings that come with having been born into a family are given to the adopted one, which includes both the privileges and responsibilities that go along with it. This is what God does for us through Jesus Christ... We will look at those blessings, privileges, and responsibilities over the next few days...

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

01/13/2016
Chrematizo - Christian

"And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

One who is adopted into a family takes on that family's name. In today's verse, we find that disciples of Jesus were first called "Christians" (chrematizo in the Greek) in Antioch. God is the one who called the disciples (us) Christians, so we wear the name that is given to us by our Father... After all, we're His kids now... With the new name and identity, we stand in stark contrast with the children of the world, "so that we may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and perverse generation, in which we shine out like stars in the universe..." (Phil.2:15). When folks wonder whether or not God really cares for us, we have but to remember that he showed that great love and care in sending Jesus. As his kids, we have His undivided attention and interest. His eyes are open to our struggles, and His ears are attentive to our prayers... "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim.5:8). Finally, fathers are commanded to care and provide for their families, and God cares for His own. As God's kids, we are not to worry about the necessities of life, but commit to His kingdom and trust in His care. It is so wonderful to understand that God knows all of our needs and will care for us as a good and loving Father... We are simply to ask, and God will gladly give us what is good, (Jas1:5, 17) in abundance (Phil.4:19)...

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

01/14/2016
Protection, Guidance And An Inheritance

"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. And when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor.103).

As we look at a few more of the perks in being God's children, we see that the Bible shows God protecting us... Today's verse clearly points out that our Father will provide a way for us to resist the temptations of the world. God has said; "I will never leave you; never will I forsake you..." (Heb.13:5). We may have the confidence that He is our constant companion and helper. We are able to overcome the world because our Father is greater than anything in the world... There is nothing that can separate us from him (Rom.8:31-39) or snatch us out of His hand... Psalm 23, which many of us have committed to memory, shows God as our shepherd and guide. As one of God's kids, we allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit which was gifted to us at our baptism. We also get to take in the Holy Spirit inspired words of the Bible and use them as a light to guide our way, and quote with confidence; "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psa.119:105). Finally, there is the ultimate advantage in being one of God's kids, and that is about the inheritance... As children of God, we stand to inherit that which belongs to the Father. "The Spirit testifies with us that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs --- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ..." (Rom.8:16-17). As his children, we become qualified to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints, which is reserved in heaven for us... It is so good to be God's kids...

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

01/15/2016

The Responsibilities Of Being God's Children

"Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness'" (2 Tim.2:19).

As we have found out this week, adoption into God's family brings great blessings, but it brings a lot of responsibilities as well... Today's verse explains that when we become one of God's kids and take on His name, he expects us to separate ourselves from the sinful world. "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And His commands are not burdensome" (1Jn.5:3). We must gladly return God's love for us completely by showing our willingness to obey His commands... "We live by faith, not by sight" (2Cor.5:7). We must demonstrate our wholehearted trust in our Father to provide both our physical and spiritual needs. We do this by our walk of faith. This faith extends to His great promise to us regarding our eternal reward in heaven. We must follow God's word with the expectation that we will grow spiritually and also respond to His discipline as a way to escape from the temptations around us... Because our Father has given us the right

to choose, we can leave his house. When we do, however, we forfeit the rights and privileges that come with being one of His kids... "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn.1:9). When we sin, we must repent and seek the forgiveness of our Father... God wants to be our loving Father and He wants us accept the place He offers in His family... Lets make sure that we assume the responsibilities that come along with being His children...

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

01/16/2016

Some Kings, Pharaohs, And Rulers

- _____ 1. What king of Israel had a reputation as fast and wild chariot driver? (a) Joram, (b) Ahaziah, (c) Jehu, (d) Jehoshaphat.
- _____ 2. What king did Esther marry? (a) Xerxes, (b) Artaxerses, (c) Darius, (d) none of these.
- _____ 3. What king of Judah had to be hidden as a boy to protect him from Athaliah? (a) Ahaziah, (b) Joash, (c) Jehoiada, (d) Jehu.
- _____ 4. What king had golden bulls set up at Dan and Bethel so his people would not go to Jerusalem to worship? (a) Jehu, (b) Jehoiada, (c) Joram, (d) Jeroboam.
- _____ 5. What king of Israel made Elisha mad by not striking his arrows into the ground enough times? (a) Jehoash, (b) Amaziah, (c) Ahaz, (d) Hoshea.
- _____ 6. What king of Israel was stricken with leprosy? (a) Shallum, (b) Uzziah (Azariah), (c) Joash, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 7. What evil king of Judah sacrificed his son as a burnt offering and built a foreign altar in Jerusalem? (a) Shallum, (b) Jotham, (c) Ahaz, (d) Hoshea.
- _____ 8. What godly king of Judah tore down the idols and broke the power of The Philistines? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Hoshea, (c) Rezin, (d) Ahaz.
- _____ 9. What king was criticized by Isaiah for showing Judah's treasure to Babylonian ambassadors? (a) David, (b) Ahaz, (c) Hezekiah, (d) Jehoshaphat.
- _____ 10. What king of Judah reigned only 2 years and was murdered by his court officials? (a) Manasseh, (b) Amon, (c) Josiah, (d) Zedekiah.

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

01/18/2016
Being A Member Of A Body

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom.12:4-5).

More than likely, many of us have been a member of some organization or team in our life. We joined that team or organization for a reason. Maybe it was for the sense of camaraderie. Perhaps it was about the fun we might have, or even the good that we might be able to do. Our Bibles refer to the church as the body of Christ.... "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph.1:22-23). The church is a spiritual body, with Christ as its head, and every member as a part of it. The Bible actually refers to the church in two ways. Sometimes the word refers to the church in a universal sense, referring to those who are saved. At other times it is referenced to in a local way, referring to those who are saved in a particular location. The moment someone is saved, they become a member of the universal church. The scriptures teach us, however, that individual disciples are to identify themselves as members of a local church or congregation. The apostle Paul often paints a portrait of the church as a body, emphasizing the importance of disciples working together in a local way... Members of a local body have not only a special relationship with Jesus, their Master, but with other disciples within the congregation. This week we will look at the special place and role that disciples of the Lord have in a body of fellow believers...

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

01/19/2016
Benefits Of Membership

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Cor.12:27).

Membership in AAA or AARP gets you discounts at most major motel chains and if you are a member of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, you get a reduced rate and can bring in a friend. Organizations use various inducements to get you to join, but they pale in comparison to being

a member of the Body, the Lord's church... "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). The first and most obvious benefit is that of salvation. All spiritual blessings are found in Christ and not outside Him. Today's verse lets us know that members of the church are members of the body of Christ. Within the body we find support and edification. The Lord has seen fit to have us meet regularly as a basis for lifting and stirring one another up in love and good works... In the body, the weak become stronger and those that are hurting get comforted. "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying for him" (Acts 12:5). When the local church gathers together, they pray for one another, whether the needs be physical or spiritual. Finally, there is that things about strength in numbers. It is God's will that his disciples draw strength from one another, and that happens best when they meet together often and build relationships. The church at Jerusalem in the 1st century was said to be "one in heart and mind..." (Acts 4:32) With blessings of membership come responsibilities, so we'll look at those tomorrow...

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

01/20/2016

Responsibilities Of Being A Member

"So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor.12:25-26).

When I was a 9 year old, I took this oath; "I, _____ promise to do my best, To do my duty to God and my country. To help others and obey the laws of the pack." This was a loyalty oath that I took to be a member of the Cub Scouts... We did a lot of fun things in the Cub Scouts, but had to fulfill the responsibilities that the oath entailed. As we noted the past two days, there are many blessings that come with being a member of the Body of Christ. Today we'll look at some of the responsibilities... 1st Corinthians chapter 12 addresses many things about the relationships, including responsibilities of members of the Body... First, there is the respect that we must have for God's great plan and purpose. He has created a church and equipped individual members with various talents and abilities. Its our responsibility to use those talents and abilities... With this comes the respect we must have for the authority of Christ. As our heads direct our bodies, so does Christ, as the Head of the church, direct it. We can be members of the Body only if we adhere to its Head. Lastly, we must have respect for our fellow members. "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom.12:5). As members, we are to care for one another, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... (Eph.4:1-6) We are not to think too highly of ourselves, but rather treat each other with humility, gentleness, patience, compassion, and kindness. We are to be quick to forgive and anxious to share. Why? Because there is much work to be done, and only the members can do it... Members are to be participants rather than spectators... givers rather than

takers... We are to be willing to utilize those gifts that we are blessed with for the good of the body. We'll look at diversity tomorrow...

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

01/21/2016

Membership Is Diverse Yet Equal

"You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one with Christ" (Gal.3:26-27).

The scriptures let us know that there is certainly diversity in the body of Christ, but also shows how God is able to use that diversity for our benefit. There are several ways that this diversity is shown to us. Today's verses show diversity in race, gender, and socioeconomic status. It clearly says that these things do not make any difference in the ability one has to access Christ... Though many of us come from different backgrounds, through Christ we have equality. I believe that we are all considered as equals under Christ, the Head of the church. I also believe that the New Testament does not make a "clergy/laity" distinction. "You, also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..." (1 Pet.2:5; 9). There are no such entities as "2nd class citizens in God's kingdom... There is no difference between a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation Christian, as they all have equal standing in the eyes of God... A person who has been a Christian for many years has no higher spiritual standing than one who has recently become one. The "babe" in Christ is no less a member than a long-time disciple. There is no probation period for a new Christian or even a restored one. Some Christians may be more mature or knowledgeable than others, but each stands equally before God. This does not, however, assume that one must strive to become more mature and knowledgeable... We will look a little deeper into our diversity tomorrow..

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

01/22/2016

Diverse But Equally Important And Unified

"But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to those that lacked it, So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor.12:25-26).

The apostle Paul had laid his hands on some of the members of the church at Corinth, and they were given certain "spiritual gifts." It seems like speaking in tongues was the special gift, deemed to be of the greatest importance. When Paul saw that those who had the "gifts" were looking down upon members that did not have them and causing division, he knew this had to change. He used the composition of one's physical body as a means of showing the foolishness of such an idea... That's what 1st Corinthians 12 is all about... He addressed both those with gifts and those without them. To those without them he emphasized their importance, and for them to not be jealous of those with the gifts... Each of them, like us, is unique with the talents we possess that are given to us by God for a purpose. To those with the gifts, Paul emphasized that they not look down upon those without them. We may play different roles in the local church with our different talents and levels of maturity, but each member is equally important. We cannot function as a body without all of the members working together. I believe that God has dispersed different abilities and talents among a congregation for the benefit of the whole body! Through these efforts of folks with different abilities and talents, the whole body is to grow to a greater level of maturity. We are all striving to reach the stature and measure of the fullness of Christ. The growth happens only when the whole body participates. "And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity" (Col.3:14). When every part does its share in working effectively, the body grows and unifies itself in love....

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

01/23/2016
Its Quiz Day

Just a few Bible questions to get you started this morning... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. In what book of the Bible is the word rainbow used twice? (a) Genesis, (b) Exodus, (c) Job, (d) Revelation.
- _____ 2. In what book do we find the term, "Twisting the nose produces blood?" (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Revelation.
- _____ 3. What Bible character said, "I have escaped with only the skin of my teeth?" (a) Job, (b) Samson, (c) David, (d) Daniel.
- _____ 4. According to King Solomon, "good news gives health to the _____ ." (a) heart, (b) bones, (c) stomach, (d) pancreas.
- _____ 5. How long did Ezekiel lie on his right side for the sins of Judah? (a) 10 days, (b) 20 days, (c) 30 days, (d) 40 days.

_____ 6. What guilt offering were the Philistines to include with the returning of the Ark of the Lord? (a) silver jewelry, (b) 5 gold tumors and rats, (c) a bronze carving, (d) they were to return it empty.

_____ 7. What king broke the bronze snake that Moses made into pieces? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Hezekiah, (d) Jeroboam.

_____ 8. What OT prophet was told to hide his linen belt in a crevice in the rocks? (a) Isaiah, (b) Hosea, (c) Jeremiah, (d) I made that up.

_____ 9. What was the name of the young virgin who kept King David warm in his old age? (a) Abishag, (b) Haggith, (c) Basemath, (d) it doesn't name her.

_____ 10. What kind of tree did King Saul sit under while Jonathan went to attack the Philistines? (a) oak, (b) sycamore, (c) pomegranate, (d) gopher.

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

01/25/2016
A Loving People

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn.13:35).

While Jesus was teaching and drawing followers, today's verse makes it perfectly clear how the world would be able to recognize His disciples. "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other, and in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, do so more and more" (1 Thess.4:9-10). The church at Thessalonica got the message loud and clear! They had wrapped themselves up with the blanket of Jesus... They loved one another. What is more, they refused to huddle behind closed doors and just take care of their own homes.. The love of the Thessalonians extended to the churches of Macedonia. Wherever the apostle Paul taught, churches were caught in the same net of love... They loved one another, asked about one another, visited with one another, and supported one another. They laughed and cried together... Does this describe us and our church? The church is not "my church..." The church is not to be an isolated congregation or a "community church" that does its own thing. During our weekend storm, tides were driven along the coast by fierce NE winds and a full moon, to almost record levels. It served to remind me that the church is to be a "flood-tide" of God's people, spread over the face of the earth, sharing in the same body..."In him the whole body is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built

together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph.1:22-23). We are to compose Jesus' church as a loving people....

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

01/26/2016
A Comforted Life

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (1 Thess.4:13-14).

Without Jesus Christ, death is a cheerless prospect. When archaeologists searched through ancient Roman gravestones, they found some with this inscription; NFFNSNS... There was no need to write the words for them. They were the first letters of a Latin phrase which had its origin with the Greek philosopher Epicurus. Epicurus had a large following that adhered to his philosophies, which included the inscription. In translation it says this; "I was not, I was, I am not, I care not" It subscribed to living a life of painless pleasure, because that's all there was...

They call it Fate, and they worshipped it as a God. In complete opposition were the Stoic philosophers who taught that one did his best when, like a limb, he bent with the winds. It was all about, "go along, get along..." The message of Jesus Christ changed all that, for the gospel is message about the conquest of death... Because the grave did not hold Jesus, it will not hold anyone. That's what Paul taught in today's verses, as he turns attention to the resurrection of the dead. The same Jesus who had descended from heaven and ascended to be with God was going to come again (Eph.4:9-10)... 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 explains the coming of the Lord with all of its glory. Christians are not to grieve as do those who have no hope. He promised to be with us in life as we seek Him first, and gives us comfort in the resurrection of Christ and in the promises He gives His people.. That's us! There's no NFFNSNS here....

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

01/27/2016
The Self-Approval Test

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you ---- unless indeed you fail the test" (2 Cor.13:5).

Athletes do a lot of practicing, and then test themselves when they play the actual game. A student studies, and then tests himself by taking a test on the material that the teacher has

prepared. The apostle Paul admonishes the Christians at Corinth in today's verse to "test themselves..." Why? I believe he is making this suggestion with an implication that there was a standard by which they ought to measure themselves... Here's the real deal... One can only improve if he or she knows what they ought to be. Paul had always taught them what they needed to be and how they were to live... Guided by the Holy Spirit, New Testament authors have left the written Word to guide subsequent generations.... That means us! Jesus put it this way; "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth..." (Jn.16:13). Believers are to constantly test themselves, along with what they believe and practice, by the yardstick of God's revealed Word. The Corinthians needed correction on several counts, as Paul dealt with a church that existed 2,000 years ago. Though their needs and questions may not have been exactly the same as ours today, the principles of the self-approval test remains the same. Today, we may use those principles to work out differences between and among our brethren. Christians are to constantly test themselves individually, and the church collectively. We are to do this so that we will know how to be the people that God wants us to be. Mature and sincere believers should always recognize that they must not allow sin to infiltrate their lives, or become approved within the community that is the church. The self-approval test must be ongoing...

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

01/28/2016
A Delicate Balance

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel..... But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:6 & 8).

Have you ever noticed that some people are quick to embrace new products and technologies, while others either don't embrace them or do so more slowly? I am reminded of the silly commercial on TV about the "settlers.." The church in Galatia was an enigma to the apostle Paul in several ways, but their most glaring fault was in how easily they were swayed. Some folks are too slow to change; the Galatians were too easily changed. They were unstable, moving from one gospel message to another with the ease that one might change their socks... It is clear in this letter that Paul was irritated with them. He was irritated at the false teachers who had followed him around and at the way they had perverted the gospel message. I guess he was just as irritated that some of the Galatian Christians had so quickly and easily believed them. Jesus said this: "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn.14:6). The balance between openness to change and stability is a delicate one. This, however, is an immutable truth... No one can be saved unless they open their minds to the message of Christ. No one can live faithfully in Christ unless they have sound judgment and perseverance to resist false doctrine and appeal to the flesh... I think that Christians will find

stability to the degree that they study, meditate upon, and adhere to the gospel taught by Jesus and other apostles that were guided by the Spirit of truth... It is a delicate balance....

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

01/29/2016
Election Time

"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall" (2 Pet.1:10).

In today's 24/7 news cycle, it is virtually impossible for us to not know that there is an election coming up. The presidential candidates are debating, posturing, tweeting, and holding meetings and press conferences. Each one of these people want to be elected to the presidency of the United States. I hope you noticed the word election in today's verse. From a very personal and spiritual sense, there is a more important election going on than the one we watch on TV and read about each day... In many of his letters, the apostle Paul deals first with doctrinal issues. After that, he rounds out the Christian confession with an exhortation to godly living... Why? Election means a "choosing," and Christians are an elect and chosen people. We choose to have God as our Father and Jesus as our Brother and Savior... Because we then belong to Christ, we are to live as the people He has made us to be. God has chosen us to be His people, and we are to live accordingly. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Pet.2:9). Christian living is not limited to ceremony, assemblies, and public praise of God. Like yeast into dough, it is to spread into the everyday matters of life... Love, kindness, compassion, patience, humility, and gentleness are hallmarks of Christ, and therefore to those who are in Him.... After all... Its election time...

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

01/30/2016
Hairy And Hairless

I hope you enjoy these questions that have to do with "hair..." As always, have fun.

_____ 1. What apostle purified himself, along with 4 other men, by shaving his head? (a) Peter, (b) John, (c) Paul, (d) Nathaniel.

- _____ 2. What OT prince had his hair cut only once a year? (a) Absalom, (b) Joram, (c) Ahaziah, (d) Jehoshaphat.
- _____ 3. What sort of person had to shave all his hair twice, 6 days apart? (a) one who had made a vow, (b) one who had repented, (c) a leper, (d) no one.
- _____ 4. What race of people were forbidden to "round off the side-growth your heads?" (a) Philistines, (b) Jews, (c) Moabites, (d) Amorites.
- _____ 5. What smooth-skinned man had a hairy twin brother? (a) Perez, (b) Cain, (c) Thomas, (d) Jacob.
- _____ 6. What prophet did God tell to shave his head and beard? (a) Ezekiel, (b) Ezra, (c) Isaiah, (d) Jeremiah.
- _____ 7. What prophet told the people of Jerusalem to cut off their hair as a sign that God had rejected them? (a) Ezekiel, (b) Ezra, (c) Isaiah, (d) Jeremiah.
- _____ 8. Who had to shave their whole bodies as part of the ceremony of consecrating themselves to the Lord? (a) new kings, (b) Women who married kings, (c) Levites, (d) prospective prophets.
- _____ 9. If an Israelite man took a female prisoner of war as his wife, what did she have to do with her hair? (a) wash it 3 times, (b) shave it off, (c) braid it, (d) I'm making this up.
- _____ 10. What group of consecrated men never cut their hair?(a) priests, (b) Samsonites, (c) Nazarites, (d) Clyodians.

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

