

p1. **NKJV unless otherwise noted:**

January 1, 2023 Meeker Christian church

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

2022 has now been delegated to history, another year in receiving testing from the Heavenly Father to increase our obedience and service in righteousness in HIS divine will and purpose for every Christian's life. As we anticipate 2023- indulge me as I take the role of an old sage and share some insights and applications from my life experiences, in some cases thinking outside the box a bit.

1. The first insight is a summary about being a Christian: Ephesians 1:9-14 *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

When you get a really good horse you better learn quickly to take really good care of it or it will not last long or work as well as it was meant to or you expected it to. The horse for an example in the above verses is the word of God and the application is for everyone who "*purposes in his heart*" to be a Christian. i.e. It is great to study and learn everything you can about horsemanship just as you can study and learn everything you can about the word of God from the Bible. **But** if you never saddle up and put that knowledge to work, that great horse will die of old age wondering around in the pasture! One more thing about that good horse,-

p2- every time you go to catch and go to work you continue to learn and become more and more comfortable, confident and effective in your work. Just like training in working to be a partner with God.///

I know some about horses, but now-a-days many working ranches and for other recreation and work purposes a good 4 wheeler or ATV could be like a good horse or for this illustration, the Word of God. In either case – learn all you can about it, but as you learn about God’s word, put it to work in your life and then like riding a horse, each time - you become more comfortable, confident, efficient and effective.

For you and I that word of God is to our benefit for a righteous life on earth, and an eternal life in heaven. Here is another way of putting it: Galatians 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* Mark that verse for a quiet time study this week - for it is a help in checking how we are applying in our lives the things we are learning from the scripture. In other words, how the Bible is shaping our character for relationships on earth and eventually in heaven!

2. The second insight this morning is about marriage:

Genesis 2:24 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Matthew 19:5 *5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’*

Mark 10:8 *and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

Ephesians 5:31 *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*

The marriage union, “*the one flesh*” is bringing together one man and one woman with the diversity of gender, physical, mental, & spiritual talents and gifts to be

p3. utilized to a far greater purpose than either one could do or possibly become alone. Marriage is not competition but completion.

In my observation the number one competitive, combative concern in marriage is not understanding the concept of the two becoming one –each partner being completed. The phrase “*and the two shall become one flesh*” – **the two become as it were, a newborn entity and that understanding requires a constant mental focus – marriage is after the type of a new birth – *the two have become as one flesh!* // Marriage is not competition but a new birth for completion.**

Marriage is not bringing two people together to tolerate each other or compete, but marriage is a new birth – a new being. Luke 6:31 *And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.* Or as most of us learned it as the golden Rule = do unto others as you would have them do unto you!!! Paul speaks in Colossians 3 of “the new birth” when one becomes a Christian and then Paul goes on to say “*for you died*”//That means the former sinful life is dead and a new Christian life is born. The same concept makes sense to me regarding the marriage vows – the two have become one flesh and the former singleness and selfishness is dead!

The greatest impediment to that oneness of marriage we are trying to understand – is selfishness. Exactly the same thing holds true when becoming a Christian! Selfishness may be the greatest tool that satan has at his disposal and not a single person ever born has not been affected in some measure by it’s diabolical, destructive, devastating, disrespectful, consequence. /// Selfishness is all encompassing as an infant----but growing up - from the righteous perspective - is shedding the burden of selfishness to that of freedom of righteousness...the golden rule.

P4 **Definition of Selfishness** is being concerned excessively or exclusively, for oneself or one's own advantage, pleasure, or welfare, regardless of others. ///And when that definition carries into marriage – trouble is brewing! By the way - a big part of selfishness has to do with ignorance – not stupidity, but ignorance which simply means you don't know how you ought to act or respond. ///The more you understand the psychological, physiological, sociological and spiritual characteristics of the opposite gender, the better the prospects for marriage. Proverbs 3:7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. The evil is selfishness!*

Selfishness is the root of competition in marriage./// Marriage is not competition but completion. Unselfishness is a willingness to give up yourself moment by moment for your spouse. It must become a **mutual** response. It has to work both ways, both have to be equally motivated to unselfishness! When spouses say “I do” in the marriage vows – they are agreeing that the two become one and all of the rest of life is to focus on praising and lifting up the gifts and talents of each other for the common good of both. Marriage is not competition but completion. If individuals are not ready for that **mutual and I do mean** mutual sacrifice - then they are not ready and should not get married. Here is more help from 1 Peter 3:7 *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. The heirs with you phrase is inextricably tied to the two shall become one flesh'.*

Our cultural role models have polluted the minds and capabilities of most of the populace against the true meaning and purpose of marriage.

One final verse regarding the marriage relationships is to the point.

p5 Colossians 3:13 *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

The NIV chose to say it like this: *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.***

Being able to forgive and accepting the spouse forgiveness is a giant step forward that never, ever comes to an end. When forgiveness comes into the picture – always be reminded how much Jesus has forgiven you, and how He provided salvation for you./// You don't have as much to forgive anyone else as what Jesus has forgiven you!! Besides the application for marriage as the two becoming one flesh is that to forgive in a sense is actually forgiving yourself!

3. The third insights is for the parents of children, a Biblical instruction for your children to learn, and thou-gh it becomes natural for most, for some it must be carefully and repeatedly taught.: It is the 5th of the 10 Commandments: Exodus 20:12 *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

Paul emphasized that Old Testament commandment in his New Testament book of Ephesians 6:2 *“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:*

And again Paul emphasized it in Colossians 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

But parents, please oh please don't demand obedience or expect compliant children if you overlook or ignore this verse: Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Parents cannot train a child "in the way he should go", if they were not or are not trained "in the way way they should go"!!! ///If you want one verse from the entire

P6 Bible that explains the reason for the chaotic circumstance in the cultures and

communities on earth today – this is a legitimate contender!!! Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

The simple truth is that you cannot teach what you do not know! Parents if you want good, moral, ethically principled children, then train them in righteousness and that the only abiding source of truth is God and HIS righteousness. Learn it and apply it!

When someone on the Andy Griffin show told Andy he should let Opie make his own decisions – Andy's response is classic and instructive for us today: "Mr. it don't work that way round here."/// Andy is right: CHILDREN MUST B E TAUGHT RIGHTEOUSNESS JUST LIKE they are taught MATH OR ENGLISH.

Colossians 3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* The NIV translates it: *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.* Fathers your earthly natural tendencies are inspired and prompted by evil to destroy you and anyone through you whom it can prompt you to destroy by whatever means it can. You have to learn to be an overcomer.

The Bible teaches you not to provoke or embitter your children so they can have opportunity to see Jesus reflected in your life. Do you see the common assumption in all of those verses. That the parents are themselves compliant children of the Heavenly Father and know the boundaries of love Jesus modeled?

An evaluation of the present day world failures has been repeated throughout the time of man inhabiting the earth – godless parents who are ignorant of God - raise godless children who are ignorant of God. Oh yes, you can name a few exceptions and you may be one of those sacred exceptions. But I emphasize the word “few.” /// As parents and all adults of a society drift further from righteousness, future generations drift further and faster away from righteousness.

P7 Lou Holtz touches on this when he said: “People ask me what the difference is between athletes today and 40 years ago, his answer was — “today everybody

wants to talk about their rights and privileges, and 40 years ago we talked about our obligations and responsibilities,”

As simply as I know how to say it: being married and raising children is to model Jesus through our “obligations and responsibilities.” Anything short of that is different than the way we were created and the way it is supposed to be..

One footnote here for parents: We used to encourage parents to send their children to one year Bible college to give them a time of transition. I have not heard about it recently but it is worth investigating.

4. The fourth insight is for retirement:

I have been told the Bible has nothing to say about retirement! But just so you may know: Numbers 8:25 NIV *25 but at the age of fifty, they must **retire** from their regular service and work no longer.* NKJV *25 and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more.*

Summary for retirees – learn from the past, all of the past, yesterday and all of the past - and then leave it there and use those memories only as nourishment and wisdom to focus on today and whatever future you may have. Live a productive life - not productive in the terms of culture and tradition, but productive in terms of spiritual growth and living and being as much like Jesus as you can possibly learn and practice. Romans 8:31-32 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*