

Skyland Conference 1980-02 Christian Stewardship

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford's sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian stewardship through managing God's resources and fostering community and fellowship.

Duration: 42:06

Scripture: Acts 20:28-29, Romans 12:13, 1 Peter 4:7-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11

Topics: "Christian Stewardship", "Serving Others"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being good stewards of God's grace. He begins by discussing the imminent end of all things and encourages the audience to be sober and prayerful. The speaker then emphasizes the importance of showing love and hospitality to one another, as well as using the gifts and talents given by God to serve others. He shares a story of a group of young people who, instead of focusing on evangelism, decided to help a struggling single mother, which led to the growth of their church. The speaker concludes by highlighting the love and compassion of Jesus towards sinners and encourages the audience to follow His example.

Transcript

I've got a nice choir on the front row. Thank you for volunteering. Just on your own.

Are you ready? And the actions as well, please. The actions as well. Are you ready? Away we go.

If you're blacker, if you're whiter, if you're fat or lean, God loves you. If you're short, or if you're tall, or if you're in between, God loves you. Are you ready? Away we go.

Thank you. If you're blacker, if you're whiter, if you're fat or lean, God loves you. If you're short, or if you're tall, or if you're in between, God loves you.

He loves you when you're, No matter what you're, No matter what you're. You must believe Him. God loves you.

First note. Yes, yes, yes. Don't you know the tune? That's it.

There's the tune right there. Are you ready? Thank you. Who can move the mountains that are hindering you today? Who can take the mob like devils, clear them from the way? Who can prove His power when a Christian needs to pray? It is Jesus.

He's the one. Amen. Jesus holds all power in His mighty hand divine.

He's the one who helps the sick turn water into wine. He makes all things possible, and He's a friend of mine. It is Jesus.

He's the one. Hey, not that good. Well God and Father, very simply, we want to say again tonight, thank you, for giving us the chance of smiling together, and enjoying company one with another.

We realize that Thy Word tells every one of us that as we see that day approaching, then we must not forsake the ascending of ourselves together. We need one another. The youngest need the oldest, and the oldest need the youngest.

We ask Thee that Thou would make this conference a time of such fellowship, that when we return to our respective spheres of service, we will return better men and women, not only to what we've learned from the platform, but to what we've learned fellowshiping one with another. Now speak to our hearts, Lord. Make Thy Word a living Word to our hearts tonight.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. You will remember that we started a consideration of Christian stewardship.

And I made one or two suggestions to you. I suggested that we would consider together in the course of the days that lie ahead, the steward as to the Christian faith, as we were called to be stewards of the faith. I said we would consider together the fact that we would be stewards not only of the faith, but of the fellowship of the Spirit.

I said that we would be stewards together of the finished work of Christ, of the fleeting life that He's given us. We would consider being stewards, indeed, of finance. But tonight, again, I want us to look very carefully at what it means to be a steward.

I have on my heart that I will share with you this evening, first of all, the scriptural meaning of a steward. Now that's most important. I know it's very simple, but it's most important.

What is the scriptural meaning of a steward? And then I want us to consider not only the scriptural meaning of a steward, but the spiritual marks of a steward. That men and women will look at us and say, I know who that man, I know who that woman is. They're stewards of the Lord.

They bear the marks of those stewards. But I want us not only to consider the scriptural meaning of a steward, and the spiritual marks of a steward. I want us to think a little of the stately manner of a steward.

I want us to remind our heart that there is a dignity about knowing and serving Jesus Christ. I want us to remind ourselves that we need to walk with that cup right. We need to be standing tall for Jesus Christ, for there's a dignity about Christian stewardship.

But if we would consider together the spiritual meaning of a steward, and we would consider together the spiritual marks of a steward, and we would consider the stately manner of a steward, I want to take you into the last chapter of Matthew, and remind you of the solemn mandate of a steward. The solemn mandate of a steward. And we'll even go further if the Lord will help us, as we will not forget that there is a

satanic menacing of stewards as well.

We'll remind our heart that God has left nothing out of the Scripture that's necessary for us. We will remind our heart that it's a warfare, and as stewards we have to face the satanic menacing of stewards. But hallelujah, we'll think together of the supreme master of a steward.

For greater is he that is for us than he that is against us. As we will consider lastly, the solemn motive of a steward. Now I expect some of you are going to say, oh in thirty-five minutes? Yeah, you see my friend Mr. Dettwaller's there, and he keeps his eye on me.

Oh he does, oh he does. But nevertheless, let's think together of what God has to say, and will you turn with me please into Peter's epistle. Peter's epistle, and I would like to read just a verse or two in chapter four.

We will commence reading, for the sake of time, in verse seven. But the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sin. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Amen. What a tremendous, tremendous portion of God's word is this. It seems to me that Peter is hitting, as it were, the highlights as he introduces Christian stewardship.

He reminds us that as Christian stewards, we should share our goods. Or verse nine tells us we should be those who are use hospitality one to another. Now I want to emphasize this because I went away the other evening after ministering to you all, I went away a little disappointed.

I felt that I had not conveyed the right impression. I had gone away conveying the impression that the only people who were stewards were men. Oh, let me here and now say that stewardship is for every one of us.

And Peter emphasizes surely the fact, as he reminds those to whom he is writing, that stewardship is something that affects our goods. It affects our home. It affects our hospitality.

And I want to say very simply, that as I look back over my own Christian experience, as I look back over many years of preaching the word of God in this and many other countries, that there is still a place in real vital evangelism, teaching and church building in the home. There is such a place. Oh, that you and I brethren, and you young men and women, would you please take it upon me as from an old uncle, would you please, when you set up your home, be given the hospitality, be given the hospitality.

Would you notice that not only are we exalted as stewards to consider our goods, but we are exalted to consider our gifts. For Peter goes on and he dares to say, as every man has received the gift, even so minister. Do you ever sit down and say to yourself, now what sort of gift has God given me? I'm not very good at ministering the word.

Anyway I'm a sister and so they wouldn't allow me to. Rightly so. But nevertheless, nevertheless, I wonder what gift God has given me.

Now shall I tell you something? Maybe it's not very much. The 38 years of service and I feel ashamed of it. But I've seen the commencement of 13 new events.

When we shifted in with a tent and started to work where there was nothing before. Now I go back there and there's a gathering of God's people functioning as a local church. Maybe that's not very much for 38 years of service and I feel somewhat ashamed of it.

But I want to say this, that I have never seen a church of God built up in a mighty way when it consists of just one or two brilliant individuals. Assembly life does not consist of one or two brilliant individuals. It consists of brethren and sisters whose heart is right with Jesus Christ and have a longing and deep desire to follow the pattern of his word.

And I have seen more things built up outside of what we would normally term the preaching and ministry of the word. Let me use an illustration. I was in Australia.

I went to a place just outside of the city of Sydney. When I arrived the first evening, the chapel was full. On the Sunday evening, it was full and the brethren said to me, Sam, we've got out here who've never been in before.

I thought, my, that's great. How did you get to me? This is the loveliest story I've heard. The loveliest story I've heard.

There was in, or there is in the fellowship, a dear sister who lost her husband at the age of 35. She had two children, a house with a mortgage, and I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Brother Dick, but her insurance wasn't enough to pay the mortgage on. She had to go to work to keep her children and try and make ends meet, and it was very difficult.

And the house was needing painting. And there were jobs done to be done, and she had no money, and she had to work anyway, so she couldn't get them done. Now in that gospel hall, there were about 30 or 35 teenage youngsters.

And one of the elders had gathered them together in a track band. And every Saturday, they would catch a train or a bus and go to a village outside of Sydney, give out tracks, stand on the street corner and preach and sing. And in all the years they'd been doing it, no one had come into the gospel room.

But this day, one of the young men said, do you know what I think we ought to do? I think we ought to help our sister. I think we ought to go down to her home and see if there's some jobs we can do. So away they went, spoke to one of the elders of the meeting, said, would you do something? Would you take out our sister and the children on Saturday? She doesn't work Saturday afternoon.

Would you take them out for the whole day? And this elder went round with his wife and said, would you come with us? We're going to take you for a trip. And away the elder went with his wife and this good sister and their two children. And the sister thought, oh, isn't that elder a wonderful person? Take us out for a trip like this.

And as soon as they left the house, 30 or 35 youngsters invaded that house. Out came the paint jets. And what did it matter if some got on the glass? They dug the garden.

They cut the lawn. Do you know, 35 youngsters working on a house, you know what happened, don't you? In two minutes, the next door neighbor was out to see what was going on. In about three minutes, the whole room was out.

And it wasn't long before the neighbors were bringing them around tea. Real tea, not this teabag tea, you know. Real tea.

They were bringing them around. And do you know that they said to them, well, we just wanted to try and help. By the way, we're starting some special meetings at the gospel hall.

Would you come? In all the years of tract distribution, in all the years of open air meetings, they never got a solding. But I started meetings with a chapel that was crowded because young folks said, maybe we haven't got the gifts to stand up and minister, but we've got the gift to be a help to people. And they started something that's never stopped.

That meeting and that district has been blessed by it. Peter says, as God has given. What sort of gift do you got, brother? A gift for a paintbrush? Oh, I wish I lived near you.

I could find you a job. I only know this. I only know that Christianity is not just sitting in a hall to eat.

Assembly life goes right through the district, and we must be known in the district as those who use our gifts. Not only have we to use our goods and use our gifts, but all praise God, he thinks about our gospel. He says, let him that speak, speak of the oracles of God.

Speak of the oracles of God. Oh, how important that is. Thus saith the Scripture.

But then we go further. And as we realize that a steward is a person who will use his gifts and his goods and his gospel for the blessing of others, then we go and we see some of the things to which I've made reference. First of all, what is the spiritual meaning of a steward? I suggest that if we were together in a Bible reading, we would read the 14th and the 15th chapters of Genesis.

We would think of the steward of Abraham. I would suggest that we would read what I referred to the last occasion, the 16th of Luke. And as I have read and prayed about every mention of stewardship in the Bible, I think without in any way exaggerating, I can tell you what it means.

And a steward in the Bible is simply a person who is instructed with the management of someone else's property, house or estate. And that's what a steward is. As simple as that.

Someone who has been instructed in the management of someone else's property, house or estate. Are you a steward of the Lord? Then whose estate are you watching over? Not yours, the Lord's. Whose house are you looking after? Not yours, the Lord's.

Whose property are you looking after? Not yours, the Lord's. What a dignity as ours! Do you know, if Her Majesty the Queen was to say to me, Lord, I'd like you to come and look after Windsor Castle, I'd be unpayable. You'd have a job to live with me ever after.

Oh, the Queen gave me the charge of Windsor Castle. The job has given me the charge of something more important than that. Oh, the spiritual meaning of a steward as someone who looks after, manages someone else's property.

I say, what are the spiritual marks of a steward? Again, the Word of God leads us in no doubt. The first mark of a steward is that he represents his master. That men and women see beyond him, they see his master.

To me it was not the truth you taught, to you so clear, to me so dim, that when you came you brought a sense of him, of him. As he is, the Scripture says, as he is, so are we in this world. We must be those who represent the master in every way and hold and show the marks of the master.

The more I read my Bible, the more I realize that the marks of the Lord Jesus can be seen and read by everyone. What would you say are the marks of the Lord Jesus? Would I be right in saying this, that the first thing that marks the Lord Jesus was his complete abandonment to the will of the Father? When I open my Bible and I ponder John 4 and 34, and I hear the Lord say to those disciples, I have meat that ye know not of, my meat is to do the will of my Father. All this marks out the Lord Jesus in every aspect.

We will be seeing something of this in the coming afternoons in the Bible readings. And we'll be thrilled as we see this was the mark of Jesus, that he was abandoned to the will of the Father. I say, do we bear the mark of our master? Are we abandoned to his will? Do we start each day in saying, Lord, I want to know what you would have me.

Not only was the Lord Jesus abandoned to the will of his Father, but I think every one of you will grant me this, that if there was one thing that marked the Lord above another, it was his love for men and women who were sinners. Isn't that great? I think I told you this, didn't I? I was away in Portland, you know, over in whatever state it's in. But we were in Portland.

And they introduced me, or interviewed me is the word, on the local wireless. And the man said to me, now Mr. Ford, this isn't a religious program. This is a topical interest program.

We're not really interested in what you come to preach, we're interested in you. But at the end of the program, I'll give you a minute and you can tell us what you've come to preach. Now you'll have a job to believe this, but I'd rather like a little bit more than a minute.

But there it was. And he interviewed, oh I did enjoy it. It was wonderful.

Do you know I could tell all those people over the air just what I thought of you Americans. I was glad. Oh dear, dear.

It was. And all I did was answer questions, you know. Everything was polite.

And after a while, he said to me, now Mr. Ford, we know that you are preaching. What have you come to tell the people? And with an eye on the clock, and a prayer up to heaven, I said, sir, I've come to tell them that everything Jesus did was for sinners. He was born for sinners.

And they shall call his name Jesus, for he came to save his people from their sin. He lived for sinners, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save. That which was lost.

He died for sinners, for God proved his love towards us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He was raised again for sinners, he was raised again for our justification. I say, he lived in the glory for sinners, because he ever lived to make intercession for us.

And hallelujah, he's coming back again for sinners. Sinner saves the great. He lived.

He's born. He lived. He died.

He rose again. He lives in the glory. And he's coming back again, and it was all for sinners.

How long did that take, Mother Baker? Fifty-five. Look at that. I saw him checking me.

Oh, I say. That's it. Listen.

That's the gospel. Jesus loved sinners. And, brethren and sisters, if you forget that, then your assembly will never be what God wanted.

Oh, that we might rescue the perishing, care for the dying, and snatch them of pity, or sin of the grave. Weep for the erring one. Lift up the poor.

Tell them of Jesus, the mighty, and say, Fill the marks of a steward. Jesus loved sinners. You loved sinners.

I say, not only did the Lord love sinners, not only did the Lord abandon himself to the will of his Father, but oh, how he loved the church. Did you hear that, John? Could I repeat that again to you? He loved the church. Isn't that lovely? The Bible says it.

Never forget it. The Bible never tells us that Christ loved the world. The Bible doesn't say Christ loved the world, God loved the world, but Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Young men, young women, you grow to love the assembling of yourselves in heaven. You grow to love the gathering of God's people. You be found amongst those who bear the marks of a steward.

A steward. But not only the marks of a steward, not only the spiritual meaning of a steward, but oh, the stately manner of a steward. I like that.

The stately manner of a steward. Let this mind be in you, says Paul to the church at Philippi. I say, walk in the spirit, says Paul to the church at Galatia.

I say, he goes even further. Rather, the word of God goes further and says, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, that you might cry, have our Father. That's it.

Did you notice? Oh, first of all, our minds, and then our feet, our walk, and then our hearts. That's how it affects us. And when, as stewards, we are found as those whose mind, whose walk, and whose heart is right with God, then we will walk in this sea of dignity.

The mind. Brethren, sisters, how about our mind? How about our mind? I haven't tried to take you right through it. And let me remind you, it was Paul to the church at Philippi.

Let this mind be in you. And he dared to remind us that we've got to have a steadfast mind. Chapter 1 and verse 27 of this.

A steadfast mind. Stand fast in one spirit and one mind. Give into your mind the truth of the word of God and stand fast.

We've got to have a steadfast mind. I say, we have to have a loving mind. He said, having the same love one to another.

Chapter 2, verse 2. A loving mind. Have we got a loving mind? Do we love one another? Not just talk about it, but do we do it? I say, he speaks not only of a steadfast mind and a loving mind, he speaks of a humble mind. Let this mind be in you.

The mind of the one who thought it not a thing to be held on to, who brought that to be equal with God that made all those seven steps down. Hallelujah, God took him seven steps up, didn't he? But oh, what a mind. And he goes further and he speaks of an unselfish mind.

Oh, he dares to tell us, let, that there's no man like minded, but we should be like minded. Oh, that we might have an unselfish mind. Oh, well, I don't know further.

This will have to take you right through the book. Sufficient to say this. If you want to know what the mind of Christ is, you go back to your room and read again Paul's letter to the church at Sinai.

And you'll know what a godly mind is. It's the mind of a steward. But not only the mind of a steward, but the walk of a steward.

Why? Because, he says, we should walk in the Spirit. Isn't that lovely? Walk in the Spirit. Isn't it grand that when Christ saved us, He gave to us His Spirit? If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you're none of His.

Oh, that I might know something day by day of being filled with the Spirit. That I might know something day by day of saying, Lord, I want to be filled and filled to capacity. Do you know the biggest problem today? It's not that the Spirit doesn't indwell us, but the biggest problem is that we have so much in our lives that takes its place.

If I had a glass of water here, and I was to fill that glass with pebbles, and then pour water on top, it wouldn't need very much to fill the glass. I could say, look at that, that glass is filled with water. But if I was to take the pebbles out and fill that glass with water, how much more water? There are so many of us, you know, we say, I'm filled with the Spirit.

All right, we'd be a bit better off if we were to kick some of the pebbles out. If we were to say, Lord, you can move the mountain, just take that mountain out, let a little more Spirit come in. Oh, brethren and sisters, that we might be filled.

But how big is our capacity? That's the question. How big is our capacity? Or walk. I say, he goes further.

Let this mind walk in the Spirit. And our heart. In such a condition that we can say.

Another. Have you ever been in a Jewish home? Ever heard a little tacker in a Jewish home say to his dad, Alex, please, I don't know how it can be expressed really. Not in our English language anyway.

My dear dad. How would you express it, Brother Tom? You're the Hebrew student here, sir. Scholar, I beg your pardon.

Daddy. Daddy. Isn't that lovely? Daddy.

That's America. We say pop. But I say something.

You know, we got a little youngster. Well, of course, they grow up, don't they? They grow up. Rebecca, just a little tacker.

And she'd always heard Mary call me Sam, you see. So she started off by calling me Sam. Sam.

But of course she couldn't get the S's out, so it was Tam. Do you remember that advert on the paper with the dog pulling the youngsters? You know. There we are.

But there it was. And one day. One day.

I got home. And my little granddaughter was sitting on the stairs making an unearthly noise. An unearthly noise.

And Mary said, Rebecca, what's that noise? Oh, she said, that Tam thing. Oh, I get it. Now, that doesn't explain it.

But the joy I had in my heart when I heard my little granddaughter. Then she was about three years of age. Say that.

Oh, there was a link. That's what Abra's all about. It means I'm linked with the pot.

He's my father. My father. Oh, brethren, sisters.

What a stately manner we should have when we realize that we're linked with him. But not only the stately manner of a steward, but the satanic menacing of a steward. Oh, never let us forget, please, the twenty-ninth verse of the twentieth chapter of Acts.

We are informed that the Holy Spirit has made certain men overseers. But there on that twenty-ninth verse of the twentieth chapter of Acts, he reminds those overseers that grievous wound entering to you, not sparing the flock. Never let us forget this, that as stewards we must ever be watchful.

Three things we should be. We should rise. We should be refreshed.

And hallelujah, we should remember. We should rise. Take heed unto yourself and to all the flock.

Take heed. Don't go to sleep as a steward. Take heed.

Rise up. Realize the privilege. Refresh.

Feed the church of God. Feed the church of God. Brethren, you elder brethren here today, you know, I want to just say this if I may, about the afternoon reading.

I think most of us felt that somehow this afternoon the Lord had been with us. But please remember this as we gather in the afternoon. We're wanting to hear from you.

You elders, you brethren that have had years of caring for the flock, we want to hear what you have. We want your contribution. We want to learn from you.

Feed the flock. And when you gather in the afternoon, gather as stewards to feed the flock, to feed the flock. I say, remember.

Remember that He has purchased you with His own blood. That will give you power as a steward to walk in this scene saying, I've been purchased by the blood of Christ. Oh, the wonder of it.

The wonder of it. Let me home you to a clove. The supreme master of a steward.

Lord, says the apostle. He wasn't then an apostle. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I'm quoting, of course, from Acts 6 and 9 and 6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? It always seems to me, doesn't it seem to you? It always seems to me there are three things about Paul's meeting the Lord.

First of all, Paul was overpowered. And then Paul was overshadowed. Hallelujah.

Paul was overtaken. He's not that way. He was overpowered.

He was on his way to do a desperate deed. Suddenly he was stricken to the ground. I say, he was overshadowed.

He could see, but now it's all darkness and blind. He's overtaken. Oh, God sends Ananias to him.

And Ananias, filled with doubt, says, that's the persecutor of the church. Ah, but just a moment. The holy prayer.

The prayer. What a gift. The Lord overtook Paul and praised God commissioned him and sent him forth to serve him.

The supply motive of the stewards. Says the twenty-fifth chapter and the wonderful twenty-first verse of the gospel of Matthew. Well done thou good and faithful church, faithful human.

Brethren and sisters, shouldn't it be our motive so to live out our lives that when we see the Lord Jesus, He is saying, well, I missed out part of it, didn't I? I said that I was going to speak a little about the tremendous mandate, the solemn mandate. But my time is up. Please.

Would you take the mandate? This is the mandate that that one who owns the property gives. Go into all the world. Preach the gospel.

Appointing them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things. I have commanded you and know I am with thee always.

His confidence. His confidence. Go ye.

A master has confidence in the future. He's got confidence in you, the Christ of God. He says go.

Go ye. His confidence, I say. His commission.

Preach the gospel. You've heard me say this many a time, haven't you? Make disciples. Mark disciples.

You want to get that now? Let me say it again. There it is, look. No, it's the wrong one.

Wrong one. I got one somewhere. You know, I often say to you that I got one with a little s in the corner.

I expect my son stole it. His name's Peter. There it is.

But never you forget this. That little monogram in that handkerchief doesn't make that handkerchief mine, does it? What made that handkerchief mine was the sixpence we paid for it at Woolworth's. That's what made it mine.

The price that was paid. That's what makes it mine. But that monogram marks it is mine.

Baptism doesn't make it his, it marks you as his. That's it. Make disciples.

Mark disciples. Come on John, what's the last one? An M. Teaching them to observe all things. But your name's not John.

Mark. Welcome. You can see how he wants me to shut up.

There we are. Make disciples. Mark disciples.

Teaching them to observe all things. Mold disciples. That's the commission.

His confidence? So be it. His commission? Preach. Make disciples, having baptized them.

Then he says, this is his companionship. Lo, I am with thee always. Even unto the end of the age.

Whatever happens to him. Oh, that I might know his companionship. Praise Jesus.

Amen. I don't think I'll ever be invited back again. Shall we pray? Oh God and Father, we've smiled again and enjoyed just being able to consider thy Word.

But oh Lord, make it real to us. It's thy Word. It's a living Word.

We want to go from this place as stewards. Managing, caring, watching over your property. Help us to do it.

And do it for your glory. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

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