

Skyland Conference 1980-03 Christian Stewardship

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford emphasizes the vital role of elders in Christian stewardship, focusing on engaging and enriching the flock with Christ's teachings and presence.

Duration: 39:49

Scripture: Genesis 24:10-11, Matthew 5:7, Luke 23:34, John 1:29, John 15:4-5, Acts 20:28, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Christian Stewardship", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of feeding the flock of God. He encourages elders and leaders to engage the saints with Christ by constantly presenting Jesus Christ to them. The speaker also emphasizes the need to enrich the saints with Christ, using the example of a steward who enriched a damsel with gifts from his master. He reminds the audience that all that they have to feed the flock of God comes from the Father himself, and encourages them to maintain a personal link with Jesus Christ in order to share with others what they have enjoyed.

Transcript

I'd like to change in the little chorus we sang the other day. We're not going to sing it now, but we were going outside of the meeting and one of our good brethren from Pembroke came up to me looking very fierce. And he said, what have you got against red folk? We sing about black and white.

How about the red folk? So we're going to change it. If you're red or if you're white. It's good to be here.

You know, I stood outside before. Please, I'm not just trying to flatter you. It was just tremendous.

Just come outside with a rain and oh, it sounded just grand, just grand. So we can praise God for the rain. Makes the singing sound better.

Really it does. I told them a story a little while ago. I was in Liverpool just before I came over here.

Went into the post office. Got into the queue. I don't know what you do in America, but all the pensioners get their pension in the post office.

So they were in the queue waiting for their turn and you should have heard them. Oh dear, dear, dear, dear. They were complaining about this going up and that going up and the other going up.

Butter was dearer and sugar was dearer. Oh, you should have heard them complain. And then one of them looked out of the window and it started to rain.

And they started to rain about something coming, grumble about something coming down. Isn't it remarkable? We rain about things going up. We complain about that.

We complain about it when it comes down. So we won't complain today. I want, if I may please, to ask you to turn with me away into the fifth chapter of Peter.

First Peter, please, chapter five. Maybe in a special way this morning, I want to talk to those that are elders. And yet as I do, I will be speaking to the young folk as well, because the Bible tells us, he that desires the office of a bishop, desires a good thing.

So for you young folks, something very special, but maybe especially to those that are older today. We're continuing our thoughts and our study in Christian stewardship. The elders which are among you, I exalt, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensembles to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, but fadeth not away.

Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Now, just a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we bless thee together that this morning we can turn to thee knowing that thou art more interested in us than we are even in thy work. But we do ask that what we have listened to in song this morning may so have a reaction in our love, that we will go from this place not just saying the Lord is worthy, but proving he's worthy by our manner of life.

Continue then to speak to us, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.

Is it not remarkable that Peter never got away from that scene on the Mount of Transfiguration? He had seen there something of the glory of the Christ. He had looked into a face, he had beheld a garment. He had listened as Moses and Elijah and the Lord had spoken of the deceit that the Lord should accomplish at Jerusalem.

And later in his life he dares to write and say, we were witnesses of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory, partakers of the glory that should follow. All the wonder of it all. And yet this did not leave him as one that was boasting and proud, for he dares exhort us that we shall be those who humble ourselves.

But it left him with a long desire, a longing desire, to feed the flock of God. And it is today as we think together of Christian stewardship, I want to think of Christian stewardship as seen in the feeding of the flock of God. Peter dares to remind himself that it all began when he beheld something of that crown of shame when Jesus was nailed to a cross.

We sing a lovely little hymn away in Wales, the English translation loses something, but the English translation says, refreshing streams now flow from Calvary. To us who dwell below, by God's decree atonement has been made for all the guilty race. Redemption's paid.

Oh, wondrous grace. If I was in Wales, I'd shout out Diocevos, really I would. I only know this, I only know this, that all that Peter dares to tell us of the feeding of the flock of God springs from the fact that he had beheld the suffering, the shame, that crown of shame.

But he goes further and he reminds them that not only had he beheld the one crowned with shame, but he had beheld the one crowned with splendour. There he'd seen the glory of the Lord, and I love that word, don't you? With a partaker of the glory. Partaker of it.

Partner with it. For that's the meaning of the word partaker, a partner with it. If you want to understand that word, you need to turn to the gospel of Luke, don't you? You need to realize that there were others in the ship, partners, and that's the same word.

And here we see indeed that he had gazed upon a Christ crowned with shame. He had gazed upon a Christ crowned with splendour. And oh, hallelujah, he looked forward to a day when he'd see a Christ crowned and crowned with serenity as the one who ruled over his subjects.

And with this before us, he dares to say, see, instruct, love, lead the flock of God. My elder brethren here this morning, may I ask you please, is this the desire of your heart? But you say, how can I feed the flock of God? I'm going to suggest five ways that we can feed the flock of God. Oh, I would love to feel that you would remember this and seek to practice it.

But I'm going to suggest there are five ways that you can be exalted from the word of God to feed the flock of God. First of all, engage the saints with Christ. May I repeat that? Engage the saints with Christ.

Secondly, enrich the saints with Christ. Enrich the saints with Christ. Thirdly, not only engage the saints with Christ and enrich the saints with Christ, but encourage the saints with Christ.

Do you know any way to encourage God's people, like presenting Christ to them? Oh, this is the way to encourage them. Could I suggest that not only should we engage the saints with Christ and enrich the saints with Christ, not only should we encourage the saints with Christ, but fourthly, establish the saints with Christ. Establish the saints with Christ.

And fifthly, oh, let him fall the saints with Christ. This is the way to feed the flock of God. This is the way to encourage the flock or instruct the flock of God.

This is the way to show love to the flock of God. First of all, we are exalted as elders, as stewards, that we are exalted to engage the saints with Christ. I know of few stories in the Bible that would present this to us more than the opening verses of the Gospel of John.

Reference was made to it in the Bible reading yesterday afternoon. We were reminded that John the Baptist stood, and he longed that those that were his disciples would follow the Christ, and so he did what you and I must constantly do. He said, behold, the Lamb of God.

Behold, the Lamb of God. And this we read, and they followed him. Do you want that assembly over which God has called you to be an elder? Do you want it to be an assembly that follows the Lord? Then I tell you

how to start it.

How to start it? You must constantly present Jesus Christ to them. You must constantly say, behold, the Lamb of God. Now to you Sunday school teachers, could I give you a Sunday school lesson? Could I give you a Sunday school lesson? Since I've been here in America, do you know not once have I been asked to speak to a Sunday school teachers conference.

I don't know whether you have Sunday school teachers conferences over here, do you Brother Dick? Just once in a while. It must be once in a while. But I don't know why, but I get asked very frequently in my own land to speak at Sunday school teachers conferences.

So let me give you a little Sunday school lesson. Thinking of this fact that our responsibility as stewards is to engage the saints with Christ. If there is one title that's given to the Lord that thrills every one of us, it's the title of the bread of life.

Isn't it wonderful? If I had a loaf here this morning, I haven't got one, but if I had one I'd hold it up to you. And I'd say, if ever there was an example of the Lord Jesus, here it is, bread. And I'd spell it out.

B-R-E-A-D. You didn't know I was such a scholar, did you? There it is. But there it is.

And I'd spell it out like you've spelled it out to your Sunday school class. And I would remind you that He's the best bread. He's the best bread.

Isn't it wonderful that the Lord Jesus is the one that we must engage the saints with and engage them with Him by reminding them that He's the best? Oh God gave manna, says He, to those that were in the wilderness and your fathers perished. But here's the best bread. If you'll get occupied with Him, you won't perish.

But He's not only the best bread, He's the royal bread. I like that, don't you? Brethren, are you ever being reminded of that fact? That Jesus Christ is the one that the Father is engaged with. Jesus Christ is the one that the Father feeds upon.

It's royal bread. Of course, you don't have it here. But in my country, you know, away in the better land, oh dearie me, you will pick up a package of all sorts of things and on the outside you'll see a little sign.

Why? It is the stamp of the monarch and underneath it says providers of whatever it is, maybe cornflakes, oh for Her Majesty the Queen. It has the royal insignia. And you know, many a time I'll open my cornflakes and pour them and I'll say to Mary, well, I'm eating the same as the Queen.

Oh dearie me. Isn't it wonderful that we can say to God's people, here the Lord Jesus has satisfied heaven. The Father has gazed upon Him and said, my beloved Son, and has feasted upon His beloved.

Oh, He's the best bread. He's the royal bread. I say, He's expensive bread.

Oh, I found this out years ago, didn't you? But generally speaking, of course, there may be slight changes, but generally speaking, you get what you're paying for. You know, many a time I've come home with what I thought was a bargain and Mary's had one look at it and said, won't last a week. I say, isn't it wonderful to know that the Lord Jesus, that He might indeed feed the flock, gave His all, though He were rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.

Oh, I say, He's the best bread. He's royal bread. He's expensive bread.

Hallelujah. He's abundant bread. There's bread and nothing to spare.

Oh, thank God. I feasted on the Lord Jesus about 41 years ago. I trusted Him.

I want to tell you something. There's still bread and nothing to spare. I still find in Him that that daily satisfies my heart.

And here today, we can say to men and women, the Lord Jesus is the one that should engage us, for He's the best, royal, expensive, abundant bread. But He's a, come on brother, what's the last one? Daily. Give us this daily bread.

That's it. Give us this day. You did say daily, didn't you? Oh, you didn't? Oh, there we are.

But give us this. And please, it's only a children's lesson. But if you and I will go from this place remembering that we need to feed upon the Lord daily.

It's no good me saying I met the Lord 41 years ago. Hallelujah. Amen.

I'm saved. What counts is what Jesus Christ means to me today. That's what counts.

What He means to me now, when I come to what is called senior years. That's the thing that counts. And thank God He's our daily bread.

I am the bread of life. And He that cometh unto me shall never hunger. So brethren, feed the flock of God.

Grant that they'll never hunger. And grant they'll never hunger by engaging them with Christ. But not only engage them with Christ, enrich them with Christ.

It's the story to which I made reference the other day in the 24th chapter of Genesis that comes to one's mind. The tremendous story of a servant of Abraham who came across a damsel worthy and fit to be the bride of the well-beloved son of his master. And there was a steward.

How, oh I say, how he enriched her. He said, I've got something to give you. I've something to enrich you.

And there he gave to her the earrings to place upon her face. He gave to her the bracelets for her hands. He gave to her jewels of silver and jewels of gold.

He gave to her raiment, I say. And he not only gave it to her, but he gave to her mother and to her brother as the scripture says. He says, I'll show you how rich my master is.

And he gave not of his own. He gave that which he brought from his master. All that we might enrich men and women with Jesus Christ.

Now please, the steward could never have given to Rebecca, could never have given to her mother and to her brothers anything unless he got it first from Abraham. And brethren, sisters, all that we have to feed is the flock of God we've got from the Father himself. And if you are indeed an elder, you are an elder because the Holy Spirit made you an elder.

Make sure that you yourselves are in personal link with Jesus Christ that you can share with God's people what you have enjoyed first, what you've carried first. I know not how long it took Abraham's servant to come from Abraham to Mesopotamia. I know this, it wasn't a very easy journey, was it? Have you ever had a ride on a camel? I never have.

I took the children to London Zoo and they wanted a ride on a camel and the man looked at me and said, too heavy. That was it. So I couldn't go.

But I found out something. I found this out, that horses and camels don't walk the same way. I do know a little bit about horses.

And you know when a horse walks, it puts its fore right leg forward first and then its hind left. And when a horse walks, it's always got three feet on the ground. And there are some folks still fall off.

But a camel, it picks up both its left legs at the same time. Then both its right legs. No wonder they call it the ship of the desert.

You can be seasick in the middle of the Sahara. I say, what a journey. Not very comfortable.

But never forget this, that while it was not going to be very comfortable for Rebekah to get back to Isaac, neither was it comfortable for the servant to come from Abraham to Mesopotamia. But as he journeyed, he was carrying with him the wealth of his master. Sometimes it's difficult to feed the flock of God.

I realize that. I remember years ago at Ilfracombe, speaking at their conference, talking on the 144th Psalm, reminding God's people that God's desire indeed was that there would be multiplication, that our sheep may bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our street. And I was emphasizing the importance of feeding the flock.

The best way to stop sheep from breaking out of a field. Now let me tell you something, because I know a bit about sheep. I come from a sheep county.

The best way to stop sheep from breaking out of field is to make sure there's good pasture in the field. It's nice to have good fences, but the best way is to tether them with their mouth. That's the best way.

And I was speaking to the saints about feeding the flock, and afterwards a dear old brother, I've never forgotten it, a dear old brother walked up over the hill with me, said to me, Brother Sam, I want to ask you something. What do you do when the sheep don't want to be fed? And I looked at him and I said, Brother Stevens, I don't know, but I'll tell you what you don't do. You don't let them die.

You don't leave them alone. You give them special attention. Special attention.

My daughter doesn't grow many sheep, but they've always got a few about them. The thing that always interests us about our daughter and her sheep is it's always the orphan ones, because she can buy them a bit cheaper. And she'll take the orphan sheep where a year has died and the farmer doesn't want to be bothered with them.

She'll have them. But they get special attention because they don't want to be fed. All we need to present, we need to present to the flock the fact that Christ will enrich them.

Christ will enrich them. But we not only need to engage the saints with Christ and enrich the saints with Christ, but to encourage the saints with Christ. How important that is.

All that we might encourage men and women with the Lord Jesus. It's the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, isn't it? May I just read those verses? Wherefore, seeing we also are comforted about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God, for consider Him. Oh, let's encourage the saints with Christ.

Let's remember this, that real joy comes in an appreciation of Jesus Christ. Have you noticed, first of all, that as we consider Him, we consider Him doing the will of God. Now, the will of God for Jesus Christ was Calvary.

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews says He's the author and finisher of our faith. And as we think of Him, we remember that it all began with Him, as hallelujah, it's all finished with Him. The more we consider the Lord, the more we realize that He is the only one to say what I expect I've said here before.

He is the only one who finished where He began. The only one who finished where He began. Do you know anyone else but Him of whom that could be said? We were reminded yesterday in the readings, we were reminded, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

That's where He began. But that's not the thing that counts. The thing that counts is where He finished.

And hallelujah, He finished where He began. He offered Himself without spot to God. Oh, thank God, I'll tell you where He began.

He began as a boy, wishing not that I shall be about my father's business. But I've heard hundreds of boys say that. Twenty-six years I was on the shore in Hawaii, I've heard hundreds of boys come and say, Uncle Sam, I want to begin with Jesus Christ, I want to trust Him, I want to take Him as my Savior.

But that's not what counts. What counts is where you finish. Well, where did He finish? If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done. Oh, it was the will of the Father as the boy, and the will of the Father as a man. I see Him as He begins His earthly ministry, away there on a hill, and He gazes into the face of His disciples, and He says, Blessed, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Oh, hallelujah. What a sermon. But anyone can say that when they just begin their ministry.

Blessed are the merciful. They haven't been with Him long enough to find whether it's true. But what did He say at the end of His journey? Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

He is the author. He is the finisher. He is the author and finisher of our faith.

And as I look at Jesus Christ, I am utterly amazed how I can be encouraged. Lord, You did it. I can do it.

Oh, I say, He's doing the will of the Father. He's delighting the heart of the Father. As God looks down from heaven to repeat myself, and He cries, My beloved Son, in whom I find all my delight.

I find all my delight. And while I think of Him delighting the heart of the Father, would I be right in saying this? Never did He delight the heart of the Father more than when on Calvary's cross He bowed as God lifted up His rod. And we sang Sunday morning, didn't we? I don't know about you, but I sang it with a lump in my throat.

Jehovah lifted up His rod. Oh, Christ, it fell on me. Not only doing the will of the Father, not only delighting the heart of the Father, but oh, praise God, dwelling in the presence of the Father.

For this is that which we read, He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Oh, I say, isn't this how we can encourage God's people? My young friend, do you want to be encouraged? Then I'll tell you how to be encouraged. You think of a Christ who did the will of the Father.

You think of a Christ who delighted the heart of the Father. You think of a Christ who dwells in the presence of the Father. And the more you think about Him, the more you consider Him, the more you'll be able to say, He's altogether lovely.

He's altogether lovely. Oh, but that twelfth chapter goes further. It tells us that the more we're engaged with Jesus Christ, the more we will find occupation for every moment of our time.

We'll find occupation for our feet. Let us run with patience. We'll find occupation for our feet.

Let us run with patience. We'll find occupation for our eyes, looking off unto Jesus. And by I tell you, when you look at Him, He's so grand, so beautiful, you don't have much chance of looking at anyone else.

Whenever you see a brother who's always finding fault with other people, you can be assured of this, that he's stopped looking at Jesus by her. But not only occupation for our feet and not only occupation for our eyes, but occupation for our mind. Consider Him.

Oh, what occupation for our mind. And please, may I bear this testimony? May I bear this testimony? You know, I wonder that the brethren even ask me to come and speak with Brother Tom. I mean, here he's a professor with such background and knowledge.

I left school when I was thirteen and a half years of age. And everything I've got, I'll tell you why I've got it. I've got it because I've been occupied in some small measure, not as much as I should be, but occupied in some small measure with Jesus Christ.

I owe to Jesus Christ not only my salvation, but everything I have and everything I know and everything I hope to be. And I look around sometimes at some of you young folk who've been to college and you've been to university and you've come away with so many degrees, you need a whole full stack sheet of paper to write them down. And what are you doing for Jesus Christ? What are you doing? Oh, please, if I've got regrets, it's that I never had the chance or opportunity or desire, I confess that to you, to have what some of you folk have got.

And yet, and yet, I found being occupied with him has satisfied my heart as it'll satisfy yours. Oh, brethren, sisters, here's occupation for your feet. Here's occupation for your eyes.

Here's occupation for your minds. And it'll give you stronger feet. And hallelujah, stronger eyes and a stronger mind.

Oh, that we might encourage the saints with Christ. That we might establish the saints with Christ. Do you know, I wish I could sing like our good brother.

I wish I could. Wish I could sing like Larry. I can't.

If I could, I'll tell you what I do. Right at this moment, I'd sing. And do you know what I'd sing? My heart is fixed eternal, God.

Fixed on thee. Fixed on thee. And my immortal life is changed.

Christ for me. Christ for me. I wish I could, but I can't.

So I won't do it. I only know this. I only know this.

That when the psalmist in the 57th Psalm and verse 7 cried, My heart is fixed, O God, he was daring to tell us that we can be established in Christ. My heart is fixed. Is our heart fixed with the Lord Jesus? Has our immortal choice been made? Can we say Christ for me? Christ for me.

This is the way to feed the flock of God. To establish them with Christ. With Christ.

Oh, let's present Christ to the people. I suppose the greatest revival that ever has been known in my country is the revival that so many of you heard so much about. The revival of righteousness.

0-4 to 0-8. Away and well. The worst revival was revival indeed.

Now I've heard lots of people talk about revival, but I don't know anything that ever would savour like the 0-4, 0-8 revival. It was a revival of righteousness. I'll tell you how it worked.

It worked by going into shops and saying to a shopkeeper, how many bad debts have you got? Haven't got any since the revival. They all came in and paid their bills. I'll tell you how it worked.

That in Swansea, the largest theatre shut down because they couldn't get anyone to buy tickets to go in. They got converted. I'll tell you how it worked.

In Loughborough itself, three pubs had to shut their door and they've never opened since. That's revival. Campbell Morgan went down to Gorsina.

Went down at the bidding of the fraternity of ministers in the city of London. Went down to this little Welsh emotional village to see about this Welsh revival. He got out of the train.

He walked down the road. He saw a road sweeper. And he said, you'll excuse me sir, can you tell me where the revival is? The man put his brush down and he said, right inside here.

That's revival. Oh that we might see those days again. But Evan Roberts couldn't preach your pardon of colloquialism.

Evan Roberts couldn't preach for toffee. I got a list of his sermons. There's not one bit I could use in any of them.

Not one bit. Mrs Penworth published them. But he couldn't preach for toffee.

But Evan Roberts knew how to get to the heart of God. And he stood there in the Baptist chapel in Loughborough and leaned on the rostrum and they started to pray. And the heavens were like brass and suddenly a little old lady up in the front shouted out, Evan! Evan! You know what's wrong? They've come to see Evan Roberts and not Evan Roberts' God.

Evan Roberts leaned over the rostrum and rebuked them. How dare they come to see him? We came to see God. Brethren, dare I say it, how dare we go along to the service to listen to a preacher? How dare we? Let's go along to listen to God.

Do you know I found God has spoken to me through some of the preachers I don't like more than He's preached to me through some of the preachers I love. Because God chooses His own servants. Oh, that we might not only establish the saints with Christ.

Oh, dear. Sorry, Wyvern. We must enthrall the saints with Christ.

We must enthrall the saints with Christ. Psalm 45 verse 1, my heart is indicting a good man. You know what the word means.

My heart is bubbling up, an effervescing heart. My heart is bubbling up over a good matter. That's the way to enthrall the saints with Christ.

Present the Lord Jesus to them and they'll go away saying, isn't the Lord wonderful? Not only my heart is indicting a bubbling heart, but please, at John 20, 16, a dear Mary who looked at the Savior and said, Rabboni, Rabboni, not only a bubbling heart, but a bursting heart. Oh, Rabboni. I say, John, I beg your pardon, Luke 24.

Come on, you be the sermon makers. A burning heart. Brother, you can join my preacher's class anytime you like.

I say, a burning heart. Isn't that it? Why did not a heart burn within us? Could I ask you something? Brethren and sisters, do you want to go from this conference with a bubbling, bursting, burning heart? Then I tell you what to do. Talk about Jesus.

Be occupied with Him. Feed the flock of God. Engage the saints with Christ.

Enrich the saints with Christ. Encourage the saints with Christ. Establish the saints with Christ.

Enfold the saints with Christ. Could I sum it up? Use the words of Wesley. I offered Christ to the people.

Oh, let's offer Christ to the brethren and sisters to whom we are the stewards of the things of God. May it be so for His namesake. Amen.

Shall we pray? Oh, God and Father, we bless Thee together. We praise Thee for Thy kindness. We rejoice that tonight, today, this morning, Jesus Christ will be the center of all our ministry.

We ask Thee that You'll prepare our hearts to learn something more of Him, that we might be able to say, Oh, Lord, our heart's mercy, Rabboni, Rabboni, granted for Jesus' sake. Amen. I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I'm waking, yielded and stilled.

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