

# Skyland Conference 1980-06 Christian Stewardship

by Stan Ford

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*As Christian stewards, we are called to manage God's resources responsibly, trusting in His provision and guidance, and being faithful, honest, and generous with what He has given us.*

**Duration:** 39:17

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:2

**Topics:** "Christian Stewardship", "Faith And Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by addressing the time constraints for musical performances in the program, urging participants to keep their solos or duets to two and a half minutes. The speaker then leads a prayer, asking for guidance and blessings during the Skyline Bible Conference. The sermon then shifts to the story of Isaac, who dug a well in the valley of Gura, hoping it would bring prosperity. However, the herdsmen of Gura claimed the well as their own, causing disappointment for Isaac. The speaker emphasizes the importance of turning to the Word of God during times of disappointment and encourages prayer for those facing economic depression.

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## Transcript

I almost feel as though I ought to bark. There it is. There are some of you here who have been here during the past week, and you know that as the Lord has been helping us, so we have been looking a little at Christian stewardship.

Day by day, we've opened the Word of God, and we've considered the fact that God has called us to represent Him, to be stewards of that which is His possession in our day and in our age amongst the people with whom we live. I have on my heart that for the remainder of the week, we also will consider Christian stewardship. When I started, I thought that will be just grand for the first week.

The second week, we'll turn somewhere else. But the more I opened my Bible, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that God had something to say to me. My old friend Bill Patterson, who many of my friends from Nassau and Spanish Wales remember with such love.

Your old Bill used to say, every time you point your finger at anyone, you point three fingers at yourself. And I've been pointing three fingers at myself during the past day. I trust that God will speak to our hearts.

I don't want to go back over the week and tell you what I've said, or there will be nothing or no time left for tonight. Sufficient to remind you that we thought of the fact that a spiritual steward is a man who, first of all, is involved with the work of his master. Then we saw that he was intelligent about the work of his master.

But then we gave some consideration to the fact that in all his actions for his master, his integrity stood out above everything else. We thought a little of the fact that those who love the Lord Jesus are stewards. We are stewards of the flock.

We are stewards of the faith. We are stewards of the forsaken. In the coming days, we're going to think of the fact that we are stewards, indeed, of the finished work.

And we are stewards of the fellowship of the Spirit. And we are stewards of this fleeting life. And I may even have time to remind you that we are stewards of filthy lucre.

That God has appointed us stewards of that which is His own, our finance. But tonight, I want to, if I may, just to talk with you of the fact that those who love the Lord Jesus and are seeking to serve Him, we are stewards. And we are stewards to the fearful.

I expect some of you are saying, oh, but I thought that perfect love cast out fear. A Christian shouldn't be a person who's fearful. Would you permit me to say amen? Would you permit me to say that a Christian shouldn't be fearful? But I've been 38 years in the service of God, and I come across a lot of Christians who are fearful.

And I want to ask this question. Has the Christian steward, has a man or a woman, a young person who loves the Lord Jesus and has been sent here to represent God, have we an answer to the things that bring fear? I'm going to try, I know not whether I'll be able to get through it all, but I'm going to try tonight to ask this question. What message has a Christian steward that brings solace in the days of disappointment? Could I repeat that? What message has a Christian steward that brings solace in the days of disappointment? Tell me, what message has a Christian steward that will bring supply in the days of destitution? What message has a Christian steward that will bring strength in the days of decline? What message has a Christian steward that will bring succor in the days of danger? Tell me, what message has a Christian steward that will bring sustenance in the days of distress? Now please, am I exaggerating things, or would I be right in saying that as we look around this world of ours today, and would you please permit me to remind you of this, the world does not just consist of America.

We have representatives here from Africa. I look around this whole world of ours, and there are so many men and women in lands where things are desperately difficult, behind the Iron Curtain, behind the Bamboo Curtain. Remember, the message of the Christian faith is not just for us in America, or for those of us that live in England.

The message of the Christian faith is real for all men. And I want to ask, does the Christian steward representing Christ in our day, does he have anything to say that will bring solace to those that are disappointed? There are men and women disappointed. I want to tell you this, that I've been disappointed many a time with my own efforts.

I've had to bow my knee and say, Lord, I made a mess of it, I'm sorry, help me again, help me again. But if there is one thing that I have proved, and you have proved during the past week, if you've been here, it is this, that the Bible, both Old and New Testament, has something that's relevant to the day in which we

live. I come across some people who imagine that because the New Testament is occupied with the church, the Old Testament has nothing to say.

But that's not true. I can hardly remember when my heart has been stirred more than it has, as I've had the joy of sharing the platform with Mr. Taylor. He's opened up that first book of Samuel, and most of us have gone away from these services day by day saying, God, teach the lesson to me, teach it to me.

The Bible has something to say, and if you are going to be a Christian steward, then you must remember this, as we were saying just one or two evenings ago, that we are exalted to feed the flock of God, to present to them the Word of God. And as I look at my Bible, I can find a hundred lessons that bring to me solace in the days of disappointment. Isaac is not the easiest of characters to preach from in the Bible.

There are some things that Isaac did that I feel like saying to him, whatever did you do that for, you silly man? And yet, as you look at the story of Isaac, there are so many lessons for us, aren't there? You will remember that Isaac has left the presence of King Abimelech. He has gone down to the valley of Gera, and as he goes down to the valley with his men, and indeed with his family, he looks around knowing that if there is one thing will bring prosperity to that valley, it's a well of water. You can't grow crops, you can't reap crops, unless you have water.

And so, the first thing that Isaac does is to look around until he comes to the place where years before, his father had dug a well. Oh, it was hard work when his father dug it. I know not how many days it took, for I only know this, that eventually they got down to bedrock, and eventually the water, as always on bedrock, it flowed in and gushed up.

But then the Philistines that lived around, they swept down to that well of water, and they said, we're going to do something with it, and they filled it up with debris, they threw stones, they threw everything that would chuck that well, they threw into it. And Isaac said, we need water, and he starts the task. Oh, I tell you, in a land where the heat is as high as it is here today, he had to sit down with shovel and spade, and dig, and dig, and dig, and eventually, oh bless God, eventually, the water, the water.

And as the water gushed out, suddenly the herdsmen of Gerrah, swept over the hill, looked into the face of Isaac and said, that well is ours, we're going to have it. Suddenly all he'd worked for, all he'd done, it's finished. Oh friend, I cannot, I cannot attempt to measure the disappointment that came to Isaac.

He started off digging that well, and he said to himself, it'll bring contentment, and all it did when it was dug, it was that it brought contention. And the Philistines came, and they fought, and they argued, and Isaac stood back, in the midst of desperate disappointment. Have you ever been like that? Have you ever, please, let's bring it down to things we understand.

Have you ever started a Sunday school class, and you know, you worked so hard, and so hard, and the Sunday school class was such a success. And then suddenly, the superintendent got the praise for it. Suddenly, it was referred to not as your class.

Someone claimed it. You started it, you worked on it, but there was a teacher that was a better teacher than you. And so, yeah, I say there can be disappointment in God's service, you know.

And some of you have experienced that disappointment. I'm not suggesting just with a Sunday school class, but some of you have experienced that disappointment. What did Isaac do? He just stood back, gave God room.

Said, God, my father dug the well. The water came originally from your hand, but these people have claimed it. I'm going to give you room to work more.

And so, he looked around, and they found another well, and he did it the second time. And the second time, those herdsmen came down. And the second time, they said, it's our well.

Do you know, I think if it had been me, I got a feeling I'd have looked at them and said, so what? I think I would. So what? But not Isaac. Not Isaac.

Disappointment came to him. His heart was nearly broken, but he stood back and said, what's the use of me trying to do something about it? God knows that I need, that I need water. I'll leave it to God.

And that well, that second well that he expected to bring help, brought hatred. And he plotted on. Not much like after that.

You know, we mostly sort of say, not going there anymore. God, dear me. Not going.

I only know this, that he dug again the third well. And God said, you've given room for me to work. Everyone now knows that it's not your well.

Everyone knows now that while you worked, you were but my steward. It's my business. You can have that well.

And all the water that gushed out of that third well. And more than that, God spoke to him. God said, Isaac, I couldn't say this to you when you were first disappointed.

I couldn't say this to you when you were disappointed on the second time. I can say it to you now. I am the God of Abraham, thy father.

Fear not, for I am with thee and will bless thee and multiply thee. What you needed in that well, you'll have. Friends, as we move amongst men and women who find disappointment everywhere.

May I suggest this to you? That what we need to do is to make sure that we are men. We are women. We are young people who know their Bible.

And we can turn to them and say, all that you're passing to other people pass to, listen to this story. And how many times have I sat on a chair by the side of a brokenhearted soul and read a Bible story? And all my words could bring no comfort at all. But we fed them with the word of God.

Brethren and sisters, how about you? How about you? Most of you heard me give my testimony and I assure you I'm not going to give it again. Oh, dearie me, I still got this old thing here. But the night I was converted, you've heard me say this.

The night I was converted, the man that led me to the Lord looked at me and said, they tell me you don't believe the Bible story. Was that awful? Full of contradiction. Oh, can you tell me one? I can you show me one? I'll show you a hundred.

Oh, come on over here. And we sat down and he looked at me. Now, he said, what's the first one? And you know, the first one I trotted out, the one that every ignoramus trots out.

I looked at him and said, now, in the beginning, there were two people, Adam and Eve. And they had two sons and one of them killed his brother. And then it says the other one went off and got married.

Who did he marry if he only had two sons? And do you know what this rascal of a man said to me? Do you know what he said to me? He looked at me and he said, now, just a moment. You said you'd show me. And he handed me his Bible.

And then I was completely and utterly sad. I'd heard this business about Adam and Eve. I hadn't the faintest idea where it was.

I expect I looked in Revelation for the first of Genesis. I don't know. But he handed me his Bible and he said, you said you'd show me.

And he said, oh, is this what you mean? And he opened his Bible to it. And he read about a chap called Seth. I'd never heard of him in my life.

Seth, who's he? That fellow's popped in there since I read it last. Never read it in my life. And on he went and he showed me that Adam had sons and daughters.

And then when we went further and he said, now, that's one. We've got a hundred more to go. What's the next one? And off I went with the story of Jacob, you know.

Oh, there was a fella called Jacob. And, and, and, and, and his brothers sold him. And one part in the Bible, it says they sold him to the Ishmaelites.

And the other part says they sold him to the Midianites. Now, who do they tell him to if the Bible doesn't contradict itself? And do you know what that rascal did? He offered me his Bible and said, you said you'd show me. Well, if I didn't know where Adam and Eve was, I didn't know where Joseph was.

But I met a man, praise God, this is why I'm saying it. Listen, you young people, listen. I met a man who not only knew his God, he knew his Bible.

And I went through all the arguments that I'd learned since I was a child from the past. Every time he showed me his Bible and said, you said you'd show me. And every time he found the story I was making reference to, he knew his Bible.

Now, my friend, if you're going in people's disappointment, to be any help at all, if in the days of disappointment, you're going to bring through this and take them to the Word of God, even if it is the story of Isaac in their hearts of Israel. I say, what does a steward of the flock say to people about supply in the days of destitution? There are bitter days, the days in which we're living. I wonder sometimes at prayer meetings why it is we don't pray for our brethren and sisters in business more than we do.

For as I travel from country to country, I'm beginning to realize it is not just in America, it is not just in Britain, it is not just in the Near East and the countries that we call the West, where there is economic depression. It's happening all over the world, economic depression happening all over the world. And I wonder sometimes why it is, as Christians, we don't spend a little more time in praying for our brethren and sisters that are facing problems in business.

They need our prayers. But isn't it wonderful, in days of destitution, we have a Word that will supply their needs. Oh, praise God.

Let's turn to the Word of God again. I've got a feeling most of you know where I'm going to turn. What was her name? Hagar, wasn't it? Hagar.

Oh, I say, she was turned out of her home, homeless and friendless. And there I see her, her resources exhausted, as she wends her way with a little boy by her side. She had just a bundle of food, she had a bottle of water, and as the days slipped by, that food went, and that water was exhausted, and she found herself destitute.

Now, does the Bible have anything to say to a person who's destitute? I doubt if there's anyone destitute here today. I only know this, that I have a message that is addressed to those that are destitute. And that glorious story of Hagar surely comes in the 21st chapter of the book of Genesis.

Suddenly we see this woman as she cries, she cries to the Lord, And God says, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the Lamb. Okay, could I repeat that? God hath heard the voice of the Lamb. I say, this lad of Hagar, I think you will all agree with me, he didn't know very much of the background of religious things.

I'm sure his mother would have hidden from him what was happening in the home where he had looked upon Abraham as his father. And yet the boy realized that he was hungry, and he realized that he was thirsty, and he cried to the Lord. And it is wonderful that God heard his cry.

And suddenly a bottle of water became a well of water. You know, that's the sort of miracles I like, don't you? Just a bottle of water that had run dry, and suddenly, God says, I've heard the cry of the Lamb, the Lamb. I love preaching about lads in the Bible.

Do you know there's some wonderful lads in the Bible? If I was to ask you for your favorite lad in the Bible, I wonder who you'd say. Oh, most of you would say Jesus. But I'm not speaking just of the Lord Jesus.

Who would you say as your favorite lad in the Bible? Oh, many of you would say the boy that bought his loaves and fishes. Great, wouldn't it? End of the day, everyone else was going off to buy something, and a little boy still had his loaves and fishes. Oh, that was different to me.

I've got a feeling it was different to most of you men here as well. When you went off for a picnic, you hadn't got the end of the road before you'd opened the bag and started to eat it. And when the evening came, you went back, Mom, I've eaten it all.

Well, I was like that anyway. Maybe you were. But here was a boy who got into a religious meeting.

And lunchtime came, and he never ate his loaves and fishes. And dinnertime, supper time came, and he never ate his loaves and fishes. He was listening to Jesus.

What a Savior we've got to make a boy forget his dinner. You know, I've got a feeling as many a mother here wish the Lord would do that with her boy. I only know this.

What a boy he was. When the Lord asked about how much food, they said there's a lad here. And the boy was willing to give what he had.

That's different to me, too. When I talk to boys and girls, I often say to them, you know, if it had been me, I've got a feeling I'd have said, I'll tell you what I'll do, Lord. I'll tell you what I'll do.

I've got five loaves and two fishes. I'll tell you what I'll do, Lord. You can have two loaves and a fish.

I'll have the rest. I'm hungry. You know, maybe I would have said, well, Lord, you have the bread.

I never did like it. I'll have the fish. But the wonder is this.

The boy was willing to give everything he had. Wonderful stories about boys, aren't they? But that's not my favorite boy story. Do you know my favorite boy story? I don't know his name.

Do you know his name? I don't know his name. But he did the most wonderful. There was a blind Samson.

And there was a little boy. And Samson put his hand on the boy's shoulder. And he said, leave me to the pillars of the temple.

And a little boy led the blind Samson in and out of the passageways. I know not when he tried to dodge some of those people that were there. I only know this.

And he brought that mighty Samson to the pillars. And Samson slipped an arm around one pillar. And an arm around the other pillar.

And I could hear his prayer. Oh, God, remember me this once. And suddenly, down the building came.

Bible says Samson slayed more in his death than he did in his life. But have you ever stopped to think about something? He slayed a boy. A boy who'd done no wrong.

A boy that had led him to the pillars of the temple. He slayed a boy. I only know this.

And I wish I knew that boy's name. I think I'm going to meet him in glory. Oh, I do.

Now, I know salvation is not by work. But I think I'm going to meet him in glory. I know from the depth of my being that in times of desperate, desperate destitution, we've got a God who supplies our needs.

Just as he supplied the needs of Hagar and Israel. So he supplied the need of that boy. This is the story we've got to tell men and women.

Brethren, sisters, never be ashamed of the Bible. You sing a lovely hymn over here. I wish I knew a hymn book in our country in which it's found, but I don't.

But you sing a lovely hymn over here. The Bible stands like a rock undaunted amidst the raging storms of time. Maybe you'll sing that to us one night by the gym.

Would that be all right, sir? Ah, you didn't sound very enthusiastic. But there it was. Oh, what a lovely hymn it is.

But what has the steward to say? Not only in the days of distress and the days of destitution, but what does the steward have to say to men and women in the days of decline? Is there strength when we reach those years of decline? You see, I'm no longer a boy. The boy was round the home some time ago with the family, you know, and the daughter and their family, and he kept looking at me. And it became not embarrassing, because I don't embarrass very easily.

I lost my embarrassment years ago. But nevertheless, he kept looking at me and I said to him, what's the matter then, boy? He said, Dad, I'm just thinking. Now that's strange for him.

He said, Dad, I'm just thinking. I said, what are you thinking, son? He said, I'm just thinking you've had it. Oh, I say.

I'm still chasing round the block. I didn't say I could catch it, but I could chase it. I could chase it.

Listen, it's no good getting away from it as the years slip by. The years of decline, he said it. And there are things I used to be able to do and I can't do now.

I can't do it. I only know this, that in those years of decline when strength sometimes slips away, isn't it wonderful that the Christian steward has something to say? And do you know the story I think he ought to say? He ought to tell the story of dear old Joseph. He ought to tell the story of Jacob.

He ought to tell the story of the fact that Jacob was stricken in years and he thought his son Joseph was dead. But the news came that Joseph was not only alive, but hallelujah, he was a ruler of the people. And oh, Jacob was a hundred and thirty years old.

I've done a couple of years to go, yeah. Really, a couple of years to go, yeah. But a hundred and thirty years old.

And oh, how glad he was when he heard that his son was alive. He said, I'll go and see him before I die. I haven't got much longer.

I'll go and see him before I die. And then suddenly there came towards him all the wagons. Filled with food and corn.

And the evidence that his son was not only alive, but was ruling a nation. Jacob said, I'll go down there. I'll go down there.

And although he was a hundred and thirty years old and it was a long trying journey. As he went down, God said to him, Jacob, I am God, the God of thy father. Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation.

I will go down with thee into Egypt. A hundred and thirty years old. Do you know, if you're a hundred and thirty years, at least I presume so.

You know, I presume so. But if you're a hundred and thirty years of age, and God's with you, all's well. It's old Caleb again, isn't it? Caleb.

Now, I got a little word to say to my friend, Brother Tom. Just a little word to say to him. Very serious, Brother Tom.

Very serious. The other evening he had the audacity to call me Stanley. You know, when I was a boy, if anyone called me Stanley, that was it.

That was it. Maybe that's why I became so pugnacious. I hated the day.

Call me Stanley, if you will, but not Stanley. And I always think about it, don't you, with old Caleb. Fancy calling Caleb, Caleb.

You know what Caleb means, is it? Dog. Dog. Fancy calling him dog.

But I want to say this to you. That Caleb was 85 years of age, when he stood at the bottom of the mantle, he said, give me this mantle. Go on, Caleb, give it to him.

He learned that there was strength when God was with him. You may not be 85. You may only be 15.

But I'll tell you something. Every one of us needs the strength of the Lord, because we can't fight the battle without him. We need that strength.

And in days of decline, God dares to say to us, I will make thee a great nation, or I will go down with thee into Egypt. Isn't it grand to have the Savior by your side? Let me come to a close. I believe that the message of the steward has an answer to those who seek succor in the days of danger.

Story of Jericho, is it? Lovely story, isn't it? Wonderful story. Ho, ho, ho, ho, Lord. Joshua plopped down on the ground.

Yeah. We've defeated Jericho, but we've been defeated by AI. And God looked at him and said, in the days of danger, I've something to tell thee.

Fear not, be thou not dismayed, for I have given into thy hand the King of Aeons. Defeated? He's there. Maybe sustenance in the days of distress.

Let's go to the New Testament. The story of Paul, isn't it? Being taken to Rome, and suddenly they are facing the most terrible storm they've ever known. The Bible says they were exceedingly tossed about.

You talk about going down on those rafts, on Christ, on when? Exceedingly tossed about. But the Lord came, blessed be His name, and He said to this man, Paul, fear not, Paul. And Paul looked into the face of those that were with him.

They had thrown overboard the cargo. They had thrown overboard, indeed, all the cattle. And then he looked at them and said, I believe God.

Questions, sisters? God has called us to this future. He's given us that which is His own to care for and to share with others. Oh, that we may be faithful stewards.

And this tomorrow, we step a step further. And we give some consideration of the fact that we are stewards of the finished work of Christ. I trust that the Lord will prepare us for His name's day.

Amen. Jim, it's all yours. Yes, sir.

You want to mention that, you know? Brother Stanford always leaves his notes up here. If somebody would like to come and get them after the service. Last week, one brother had them duplicated for others that would like to have it.

So if you'd like to do that, they're up here for your taking after the service. Shall we turn to number 388 in the Red Book? A beautiful hymn that we all love to sing. Number 388 in the Red Book.

And it's 386 in the Green Book. Have thine own way, Lord. I hope that we can make this our prayer this week.

Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way. Thou art the potter.

I am the clay. Mold me and make me after thy will. While I'm waiting, yield and instill.

And let's make it a prayer of our hearts during this conference time that God would speak to each one of us. Not just to the speaker, but to each one of our hearts. Let's ask God in this real way this week, as we're here together, that we'll be a blessing one to the other.

You know, this is one thing that touches my heart. To make me a blessing to someone. And I hope we can be a blessing to each other this week.

Shall we stand and sing number 388 and 386? Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way. Thou art the potter.

Mold me and make me after thy will. Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way.

Just before we're dismissed in prayer, I do want to say this. That we'll be asking many of you to take part in solo works in the morning and duets and so on. But I'd like to say we're going to try to work in two each morning.

We'll have the choir at night, and everybody has asked who would like to sing in our choir to come. This is your invitation. But if you're asked to do a duet or a solo, not over two and a half minutes.

So remember that. So you people out there are going to be the time keepers, I'm not. But you that do solos or duets, two and a half minutes is long enough, because that means five minutes taken off the time, and we have a lot to get in the musical program.

So would you be good, you that take part, and remember that, and the audience will judge you. Shall we bow and pray? Father, we thank Thee for this time together. We just pray that Thou would guide us and bless us and make us a blessing.

O God, we thank Thee for this message tonight, this opening message of the Skyland Bible Conference. O Father, how we might search our hearts, that we might do Thy will and Thy word, that Father, during this week, that we might be a blessing, maybe, to somebody on this mountaintop. Maybe there's somebody that has come that's very discouraged and despondent, and they need help.

We pray that each one of us might put our shoulder around them and help, and be a helper to God. Amen. Now, Father, bless us.

And if there's anyone we can be a help here tonight, we pray that they might feel free to talk to our brother, Ford. And Father, draw us close to Thyself, we ask in Jesus' precious and worthy name, Amen.

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