

Being A Wise Steward

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[0:00] We're going to go to the Word of God now, to 1 Corinthians 4. Talking about being a wise steward.! 1 Corinthians 4.

It tells us of a stewardship we are called to.! 1 Corinthians 4, verse 2, it says, Paul writes, Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. It's telling us here, all of us are stewards. We've all been given something. We all have something that we're going to be required to manage.

And a steward is one who's required to manage the affairs of the true owner. When you think of it, everything we have has been given to us. It's in our temporary charge.

We can't really say, that's my permanent home. We can't even say that we've got a permanent residency in Australia because it's really not true. If we are saved, our permanent residency is in the city to come.

[1:06] It's in the Jerusalem yet to come. It's in that heavenly mansion, as it were. So we've just got temporary control of what we have in our hands today. And the Bible talks about stewardship.

It says a steward can be good, faithful, or a steward can be unwise, unfaithful. So we've all got different responsibilities in our lives that we've all been given.

Given to us by God. Think of it. Life. Life itself is a precious gift. We don't know, you know, that young man, 52, Shane Warne, passed away.

He's pretty young to die, isn't he? And it's a precious gift. No matter how many years we've got, I mean, I'm living longer than Shane Warne already. So maybe my time's measured.

My time's limited too. We've all got only so much span, a lifespan, haven't we? And we don't know how long that lifespan is. So life itself is a precious gift.

[2:04] And in life, we have some things to consider how are we using. We can think in life we have time. We've all got the same amount of time every day.

It's amazing what some people achieve with the same amount of time we have. When you think of it, think of people writing books or, you know, running huge ministries or whatever it be.

How do they fit it all in? How do they make that happen? Time. We've all got the same amount.

Talents. All of us have different abilities, different kinds of things that we can use, different kind of talents.

And then we've got treasures and possessions. We've all got different such things. And for all of these things, we are responsible and we're accountable to God.

All that we have, ultimately, really, it belongs to God. It is His. And as I shared, was it last week, how someone was saying, it's not my car, it's God's car. And it's not my trailer, it's God's trailer.

[3:02] So if someone needs something, you know, I'm willing to step behind the wheel and drive God's car and God's trailer and help people out and do whatever it be. And, you know, we think of our lives likewise.

The things that we have, God's given it to us. Yes, let's use them for the glory of God. Because ultimately, everything really belongs to God. We're managers. We're not owners. We don't really own.

We're just managers. We've just got temporary management of. And God is the source and He is the owner of all things. We've just got the temporary use of them. So God's placed a number of things in our control, of things of great value in our hands as His steward.

And it's a telling thought that the Bible speaks about how we will give an account to God on what we do with our stewardship. So again, what are we stewards of? Let's look at these three things that we're stewards of.

Firstly, time. Romans 12 verse 1, it tells us that, Life, it's a precious gift.

[4:15] God has given us time, day by day. Today. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is not. Only today is ours. People say it the other way around, but there's a saying that says, There's no present like the time.

Really, it's true, isn't it? It's a present. It's a gift. And it's time. Time is a present. And we've only got one life. One life. There was a little boy who went to a sweet shop.

He just had one dollar, one shining dollar. And he went there with his mum and he was looking through all the shelves of all the different sort of sweets and all the lollies. And he was very deeply thoughtful as he wandered from display to display.

And his mum said, Hurry up, son. Spend your dollar. We must be going. And the child replied, But mum, I have to spend it carefully. I only have one. It's the same with life, isn't it?

You're not going to get reincarnated and come back as a caterpillar. Sorry, it's not going to happen. You've only got one shot at this. One shot. One life, right? And you have only one life.

[5:21] One life. How are you spending it? You know, you're like the little boy. I've got to be careful how I spend it because I've only got one. You know, time doesn't belong to us. We have the use of it.

Let's make the most of it then for God and for others. Now, the saying is time flies. People usually say that when they're having fun. But look, time flies even when you aren't having fun.

Time flies. Tempus fugit. Time is fleeting. It's passing us by. And we've all got potential and opportunity with our life. So let's maximise our life.

Make the most of it. Think of it. The moments that we fritter away, that are wasted. They're lost. Forever gone. Have a goal to strive for. Make your life count.

Paul says, Ephesians 5.16, redeeming the time. In other words, making the most of it. Get the maximum out of it. Because the days are evil. The days are evil.

[6:17] Live life for God. Think of it. You've been given this life. Use it for him. Peter writes about how all these things shall be dissolved. Even the very planet's going to be refashioned.

He says, what manner of persons ought you to be? In all holy conversation and godliness. So live a life that's right, that's godly. Choose the right path.

Sometimes we miss out on opportunities to fellowship. There was a preacher who shared one day how someone was playing a joke on someone who tended to miss church.

And they dialed the number. And they pretended to be God. They said, this is God speaking. Why aren't you in church? But to the person's horror, they dialed the wrong number. Maybe that's just what the person still needed to hear.

But, you know, when we think about it, what can we use our time for? Fellowship's important. Invest your time, your life wisely. Honour God with it. Make the most of it. Maximise it for God.

[7:20] Because we've all got a God-given purpose for our life. It's been said you can't make footprints in the sands of time sitting down. You know, stand up and make some footprints. Make your life count for God.

Live life purposefully for the Lord. Live out that abundant life that you have. He's given it to you. Do good while you have the opportunity. We could think about those moments of time that passes by.

And there's lots of moments that do pass us by without us really making the most of them.

Redeeming the time. And we, there's a story about a man who was sitting in a car and he was really annoyed at all the red lights as he was sitting there.

One minute, two minute, three minutes. And you wonder why there's so many times just sitting at traffic lights and how frustrating it can be.

And then there was a man in the car behind him, but he didn't mind the waiting because he had some Bible verses on his dashboard and he would say them over and he had these little cards in a little holder on his dashboard.

[8:26] And he had the time to go through those Bible verses and help memorise them while he was sitting at the traffic light. You know, that's a good example of how you can make the most of those, those moments of time that can pass you by.

Maybe listen to the Bible on, on an audio way or, you know, Christian songs or such. Listen to a preacher, tune in and use those moments, even those passing moments.

It's been estimated that the average motorist spends 26 hours a year waiting for the traffic signals to change. There's time there that could be used. And so think of it, how you could use those little moments.

Maybe using moments to memorise the word, to pray, to trust the Lord, to read his word. So memory verses that could be in card form, for example, that you can just flick through.

And that's a good use of your time, for example. Because time is priceless, isn't it? You can't buy an inch of time with an inch of gold. It's a resource that is finite and it's expiring.

[9:31] So what has God given us time for? And think of that. What are the priorities that God would have us to use our time for? Instead of getting busy and not really getting things done that count.

Sometimes a saying that people say, oh, I'm keeping busy. You know, I sometimes tend to say that. But in a way, it's not about keeping busy. It's about how am I using my time effectively?

How am I using my time wisely? Lord, for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray. Keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for today.

Now set a seal upon my lips, for this I pray. Keep me from wrong or idle words, just for today. Let me be slow to do my will. Prompt me to obey. And keep me, guide me, use me, Lord, just for today. Even if you just take a day at a time to say, I'm going to commit today to the Lord. When you get out of bed in the morning and say, I'm going to make that firm commitment. Because wasting time is really wasting a life.

[10:32] There's no place for wasting time. So be a good steward, firstly, of your time. Secondly, of talents. 1 Peter 4 verse 10, Peter writes, as every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards.

There's that word again of the manifold grace of God. Peter writes about talents. He talks about the gifts that God has given to us, that we've received from the Lord, that they're to be used for him and his glory and honour.

You've all got different gifts and abilities. Every one here, every one of you has a different gift, a different ability, different opportunities, different ways that you can minister and serve, serve the Lord and serve others.

You've all got abilities and talents. And you can maximise them. Or you can bury and waste them.

Are you putting your talents to use, to good use? Are you developing your talents?

Get better at those things that you know how to do. Or are you misusing them? Or bringing glory to yourself? You know, we can be selfish with our talents and abilities, or we can use them for the benefit of others.

[11:37] And you can develop and use your talents. Don't just let them get rusty and sit on the shelf. Put them into action. So your talent may be to support a ministry.

Your talent may be to pray. It might be to help another, to teach a child. Be a good mum, a good dad. Be about that which you can do for God. Imagine, if you will, that there was a man, his name's Ben Puttenedoff.

Putting it off. And Ben Puttenedoff was a member of the Lord's Church. He was a good man. He did not lie, curse, drink, beat his wife or smoke. He paid his taxes.

He came to Bible study and worship. He paid his bills. He gave a few bucks to the Lord. He was never opposed to anything that was good. One day, old Ben Puttenedoff died.

And he stood before the righteous judge. And the judge said, Ben, you are charged with trying to close the church. Are you guilty or not guilty? Not guilty, pleaded Ben Puttenedoff.

[12:38] I didn't do a thing. Guilty as charged, the judge ruled. And then he continued, Ben, you've confessed to the most effective way ever devised to closing the church.

You did not do a thing. You did not visit the sick. You did not encourage the weak. You did not feed the hungry. You did not reach out to the lost with the gospel. But judge, Ben pleaded, I intended to do all of those things, but I was too busy making a living and enjoying myself.

I have just been putting it off. It's a kind of trap, isn't it? Of course, this is totally tongue-in-cheek.

We're not saying you work to get you to heaven or anything like that. But there's that sense where sometimes we're not doing what we could do.

We're just putting it off. We're putting off joining the choir. We're putting off. Putting you under conviction today. We're putting it off.

We could help in the IT booth, but we're putting it off. We could sing a song item or play a musical instrument or bless the church with this or that.

[13:43] You know what you can do, but we're just putting it off. That's a trap. Honestly, it's a trap. And the church suffers for that because what you could give to the church and be for the church unto the Lord, you're missing out.

He's missing out. The church is missing out. And the church is poorer for it. We're losing that that you could give. So if you've got something that God's putting on your heart to do, even if it's just a little seed thought, that's an ability.

It's something I could do. I could get around to using it. Don't put it off. Say, yeah, I'm going to do it now. All right, so who wants to do it? No, it's all right. So God doesn't give us all the same gifts. We've all got different ways we can serve. All have something that they can do. What has God given you that you can do? Think about it. Pray about it. And let God use your unique talents. You're unique. Every one of you. There's people you can minister to and witness to that maybe I couldn't quite get the same connection with. You could do it better than me.

[14:47] You could do it better than everyone else here because God's given you that, just that, that calling. So invest yourself in the lives of others. Use what God has given to you for others.

Are you using your talents to build up the church? Now you might say, well, who am I? I'm just, I'm pretty average. I'm just an ordinary, you know, just a kind of run-of-the-mill Christian.

What have I got? Who am I? Think of David's sling and five smooth stones. That's all he had. And God.

Yeah? A sling, five smooth stones. He only used one of them to fail Goliath, didn't he? Something small, something insignificant maybe. Five stones?

What's that? God used it. What about Samson's donkey's jawbone? And he slayed hundreds of the Philistines with that jawbone.

[15:49] That's something little, just a jawbone of a donkey. Honestly. What about Rahab's thread? That cord, that scarlet cord. That was significant, wasn't it?

It's just a thread, just a cord. What about Mary's perfume? She poured it out. Just a bottle of perfume. Well, it was expensive. It's what she had and she gave it.

Wow. Just a bottle of perfume. Yet the whole world knows about Mary's ointment, don't we now? What about Dorcas's needle? She was making things, Dorcas using her needle to make clothes and bless people with what she had made with her hands.

What about the widow woman's handful of meal and her jar of oil? That's not very special. What's that? Just a jar of oil? Just some handful of meal, some grain?

What's that? But she gave it and God used it and God brought a miracle of provision there. What about the lad's lunch?

[16:56] Five loaves and a couple of fish. He was pretty unselfish really, wasn't it? That was his lunch. Honestly, after all. That's what his mum made him for his lunch.

And what did he do with it? He gave it. He shared it. Five loaves, a couple of fish. Nothing to that. That's not significant. That's nothing.

Maybe you might feel, what have I got? What can I do? What have I got that I can do for God, that I can be for God? What about Gideon and his men with those torches and trumpets and clay jars? Just ordinary things. You know, a bit of a stick with fire on it, a torch and a trumpet and a jar. But God brought a great victory through those 300 of Gideon.

Ordinary things, weren't they? Honestly. We would think maybe insignificant. We might think of ourselves. I'm insignificant.

[17:59] I'm small. Simple things. God can use everything. If we have it in our hand to give it, to be for God, to be made available, to be available for God to use.

Honestly, we can all feel inadequate. I constantly feel inadequate. Not amounting to much. We can all feel like that. We've just got to step out beyond of our comfort zone.

Step out of our excuses why not. We can feel like who we are is inadequate. Not amounting to much.

But God will use your availability. God has a way of working through the small. So don't discount what God can do. What God can do. We think of the servant of Elijah.

He saw a cloud. Hadn't rained for three years. He saw this cloud. It was just the size of a man's hand. Just a little cloud. Just a little fluffy little cloud there on the blue sky.

[19:10] Elijah knew there was a sound. Sound. Abundance of rain. It's just a little cloud. If we can see things from God's perspective, the little that we are, that we have, is an amazing prospect, isn't it?

What God can do. A mustard seed sized faith. Think of that. You might say, oh, I believe but I've just got an insy weensy tiny weenie bit of faith.

That's all. That God needs. That little seed. To do wonderful things. To move mountains.

So don't discount yourself, brother, sister. Don't put yourself in that place where, who am I? We've all got talents. We've all got something. And there's an accountability for what we have been given. Because we're meant to put it into his hands. To do what he would have us to do. To be a good steward. Of your time. Of your talents.

[20:16] And thirdly, of your treasure. Our Lord commands us to lay up treasure in heaven. We think of a world where there's values, a value system.

I think of some of the political parties, what they call values. And it's not valuable at all. It's shameful. We've seen what the, in recent days, the Mardi Gras, the government, probably all, the whole spectrum of them are standing with so-called gay pride and such things.

It's gay shame. It's not pride. There's nothing to be proud about. But the world calls it that value. It says there's values there. They value that. But what about the value system?

We don't follow the values system of this world. But the value system of heaven. How are we using our possessions? Who are? What we have? Are we showing the value?

How we use and spend our treasure? So is heaven in our mind when we make use of our money?

There's a newspaper in London that offered a prize for the best definition of money.

[21:23] And someone replied like this. They said, money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven. And a universal provider of everything except happiness.

Some people make their life all about chasing the almighty dollar and its vein, isn't it? And yet the Bible talks about being rich toward God. Being rich toward God.

The context there is of the rich fool. He said, I've got it all together now. I can sit back and enjoy the ride. My barns are full of plenty. And God says, thou fool.

It's all over. Red Rover. And his treasure was on earth. But it has had nothing there beyond. Of course, we know the believer's treasure is Christ.

He's got riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He's rich in his mercy towards us. There's the rich grace of God. And it's all entirely his grace that saves us.

[22:23] Yet as a believer, let's be mindful of what he has done for us. Of the great grace of God. Think of your possessions and yield them to him.

As I say, this picture of, it's God's car. It's God's house. It's God's bank account. It's in God's hands what we have. What he's given to us.

We hear of Moses. And another simple thing was Moses' shepherd's staff. And the Lord said to Moses, what is that in thy hand?

He said, it's a rod. It's just a stick. It's just a shepherd's staff. And God says, cast it on the ground.

He cast it on the ground and it became a serpent. And Moses fled from before it.

And then it says that he picked it up again. But the picture there is what Moses had in his hand was just this stick. This shepherd's rod, this staff, this stick. And God said, throw it on the ground.

[23:20] In other words, yield it to him. Yield it to God. God can use the ordinary things of our life if we yield them to him. As Moses yielded that rod, it became a display of God's wonders, of miraculous power, of

God's authority.

And it was used multiple times. Moses' rod, Aaron's rod. Some say it was the same. Some think it was that Moses had one and Aaron had one. Nevertheless, it was the same picture of this rod, of this authority, of this display of God when they held it up, when they used it, going through the Red Sea in such wonderful ways.

But it was just a stick. At the end of the day, that's what it was. And so it's just an ordinary thing. You think, well, what's that in your hand? Well, what have I got that's in my hand?

What's under my control that I could yield to God, that I could give to God by faith? So let him have your life. The question is, who is the Lord of your life? We know the Bible speaks.

Our Lord says you can't serve two masters. Either you'll hate one, love the other, hold to the one, despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. So it's saying you cannot serve God and mammon, money.

[24:37] In other words, and I know there's people here today that were telling me, you know, some of their company are working, but they've chosen to be here today. You know, you can make a lot of money on a Sunday.

And we know for some, it's the nature of your job. You can't knock it back because you're rostered to work on a Sunday. But if there's opportunity not to work on a Sunday, that is to be here, isn't it? Swap your shift, if you have that opportunity. You know, and that's not always possible. I acknowledge that today, not wanting to put anyone under condemnation because it's the nature of some employment these days.

You can't help but work on a Sunday. But if there's opportunity, then rather fellowship, even if you're losing money out of it. You know, rather to serve God, not mammon.

But while we cannot serve God and mammon, we can serve God with mammon in the sense of use your money for God. So make it so you can share it, so you can give it, so you can bless, so you can minister.

[25:42] It's a good thing. If the treasures that you have, you can use them. So it's not that mammon, that money is an evil thing. It's just you cannot serve God and mammon.

But you can serve God with your mammon, with money. So we don't talk much about money as such, but it's a reality, isn't it? It's that tangible thing of it's our life.

What we have is what we've earned. Our life has produced that. We've put time into that to earn that. And John Wesley said this, Make as much as you can, save all you can, and give away all you can.

There's good principles there, isn't it? Make it, save it, give it away. Our Lord Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive. And think of our Lord's given us so much.

And giving to the Lord is a privilege and a joy. It's not something, I don't like to talk about giving in the sense of a, it's an onerous, irksome, burdensome weight.

[26:43] But rather it's a freedom. It's a liberty. You see, it's something that we can do joyfully. God loves a cheerful giver. If you can't give cheerfully, don't give it. Be cheerful.

Be sacrificial like the woman with the two mites. She just had two mites, two little coins, two little farthings. You could say of this widow, two coins. That's insignificant.

There's nothing. People would have discounted those two little coins. But she gave, even though it was only a small amount of money, she gave it with the right spirit. She gave it with the right heart. She gave it with a willingness, with an openness of heart. She gave all her living. And that's something. She gave more than these ones that threw in big dollars.

And so our giving should be cheerful. Our giving should be sacrificial. But rather that it's unto the Lord. And it's more blessed to give than receive. Again, if you're a visitor here, we don't normally talk about money.

[27:43] And I don't make a point of that. But it's good to be mindful of these matters. Because God sees the heart of the giver, not the amount.

Another thing that is quite a good thought is that God measures the gift by how much is left, not by how much we give. Some can give more. Some cannot give more.

It's how much have we got left for ourself and how much we give. So it talks about how we should sow bountifully and then we'll reap bountifully.

When we come to the end of life, the question will be, how much have you given, not how much have you gotten? And sometimes we can give and have more for ourselves than those that might give less, but have less for themselves.

So giving to the Lord is the best investment we can make. It's got an eternal dimension. And in a way, what we give, our time, our talents, our treasures, it's not yours, it's really his.

[28:49] Your time is a gift, isn't it? Your talents, what he's given you, your treasure, it's really all his. We've just got the use of them.

Someone put it like this about our life, about the stewardship that we have.

It all depends on whose hands it's in. A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19. A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$33 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in. It's just a colourful way of thinking about it. A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6. A baseball in some professional's hands is worth \$19 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in. A tennis racket is useless in my hands, but a tennis racket in Pete Sanfres' hands is a Wimbledon championship. It depends on whose hands it's in.

A rod in my hand will keep away a wild animal. A rod in Moses' hands will part the mighty sea. It depends on whose hands it's in. A slingshot in my hands is like a kid's toy.

[29:49] A slingshot in David's hands is a mighty weapon. It depends on whose hands it's in. Two fish and five loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches. Two fish and five loaves in God's hands will feed thousands.

It depends on whose hands it's in. Nails in my hands might produce a birdcage. Nails in Christ's hands will produce salvation for the entire world. It depends on whose hands it's in.

So you see now it depends whose hands it's in. So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families, your relationships into God's hands.

Because it depends whose hands it's in. It's a telling thought, isn't it? Are you putting your life in God's hands? There was a preacher meeting a wealthy man who took the preacher out for lunch and he showed him his elaborate gardens and everything.

He showed him his great things. All the great things that he had to show off. And the man said, now you're going to tell me that all this land does not belong to me? And the preacher said, ask me that same question a hundred years from now.

[30:56] You know, even the wealth that we have. If we have something of wealth, who's it going to be in a hundred years from now?

David Livingston said, I will place no value on anything I have or possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. I close with a challenge.

Judgment Day is coming. And it tells us that everything's going to be revealed. It's going to be open to him. It says that there's going to be nothing hidden that's not going to be revealed.

It talks about how we're going to give an account. Everyone will give an account. It says that every idle word we're going to give an account of. Every careless and thoughtless word.

And there's going to be an accounting time where he's, as pictured in a parable here, Luke 16, where he's going to ask us, give an account of thy stewardship.

[31:55] How have we managed the master's possessions? What have we made of the life God has given to us? How are we investing our life and our time?

Is it in the purposes of God? Let us be a good, wise and faithful steward. As we approach judgment day, knowing that salvation is assured, it's a gift.

But there is that sense of give an account of thy stewardship. How have we spent our life, our time? What have we done? With our gifts, our talents, our treasures, our possessions. Have we used our life to glorify God? Paul tells Timothy of some, they trust in uncertain riches.

We don't trust in uncertain riches. We trust in the living God. And so, friends, the most important question is, be sure that you are saved.

[33:03] Be sure that you are saved. And trusting in the Saviour. Know Him as your Saviour. That He died on the cross for your sin. Rose again. He's

your living Saviour and Lord.

You've trusted Him. Believed on Him. By faith, you've had that mind shift of repentance. And you've come to the very throne of grace.

And you're pleading for Him to be your Saviour and Master. To know His saving grace in your life.

And then, as a believer, be a good steward of the time that He's given.

Your talent. Your treasures. Place it in His care. It's in His hands. Place it all in His hands. Give ourselves to Him in love and faithful service. Such that we can be a wise steward.

We've all got a stewardship. And we've all got to think of these things. Let's pray. Lord, we thank You that You are awesome. And You give so much to us, Lord.

[34:04] Our life, while we have this mortal span of time, help us, Lord, to reckon it wisely, to so number our days, to apply our hearts to wisdom.

Lord, none of us have any idea, really, how long we have. Where there are only moments, only days.

Lord, help us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom. Lord, we pray for the use of our capacities that we all have.

Lord, to know Your calling, to know what it is You put on our hearts to be, to do. What You've given us as far as gifts and talents.

Lord, we don't want to waste those things that You want us to use. And, Lord, also our treasures and possessions, Lord, help us not to be so fixated on this or that of this earth, but, Lord, to have a yielding to You and to Your great purpose for our life.

[35:19] Lord, guide our steps that we might know Your will. Lord, we'd like that day to come where we do have to give an account of our stewardship, Lord, that it won't be with regret, but with that thought of blessing and joy as we come into Your presence, Lord, that we can know that great love that You give to us.

Lord, we pray for every believer today that You do this work for Your praise. In Jesus' name, amen.