

## **The Marks of a Steward**

Good morning friends, and welcome again to Sabbath School Study Hour, coming to you from the Granite Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sacramento, California. Very warm welcome to our online members and those who are joining us across the country and around the world, part of our study Sabbath school group this morning. Also I'd like to welcome the regular members and visitors right here at the Granite Bay Church. Over the past few weeks, we've been studying through a lesson quarterly on stewardship. It's entitled "Stewardship, Motives of the Heart". It's been an excellent study so far. It's actually been convicting on a number of those topics that were brought to view in our study together. Today, we find ourselves on lesson number six, and it's entitled the "Marks of a Steward", lesson number six, the Marks of a Steward. For those who are joining us, if you don't have a copy of lesson number six and would like to study along with us, you can download the lesson at the Amazing Facts website, just [amazingfacts.org](http://amazingfacts.org).

Click on the link that says Sabbath School Study Hour, and you can download lesson number six, the Marks of a Steward, and that's what we're going to be studying today. We also have a free offer that goes along with the subject that we're looking at. It's an Amazing Facts study guide entitled In God We Trust? And this is our free offer for this morning. If you'd like to receive this anywhere in North America, give us a call on our resource phone line, that number is 866-788-3966. If you're outside of North America, you can read the study guide at the Amazing Facts website, just [amazingfacts.org](http://amazingfacts.org). But before we get to our study this morning, we like to begin by lifting our voices in song. I'd like to invite our song leaders to come join me.

Come, all Christians, be committed

To the service of the Lord

Make your lives for Him more fitted

Tune your hearts with one accord

Come into His courts with gladness

Each his sacred vows renew

Turn away from sin and sadness

Be transformed with life anew

Of your time and talents give ye

They are gifts from God above

To be used by Christians freely

To proclaim His wondrous love

Come again to serve the Savior

Tithes and off'rings with you bring

In your work, with Him find favor

And with joy His praises sing

Come in praise and adoration

All who in Christ's name believe

Worship Him with consecration

Grace and love you will receive

For His grace give Him the glory

For the Spirit and the Word

And repeat the gospel story

Till mankind His name has heard

Dear Father in heaven, we thank You for the opportunity, once again to come and open up Your Word and study this very important subject of being a faithful steward to You. For all of the blessings and all of the many things which You have been trusted to our care, help us to use our talents, our abilities wisely for the furtherance of Your kingdom. Bless our time today, for we ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Our lesson this morning is going to be brought to us by Dr. David DeRose. Thank you.

Well, we're continuing on our journey studying through Stewardship, Motives of the Heart. And as Pastor John mentioned not long ago, lesson six is our focus today, the Marks of a Steward, the Marks of a Steward. Perhaps, you've thought about it, maybe you hadn't lately, but it continuous to bombard us in the media, and it simply how the actions of a single person or a few people can totally damage a brand. Have you thought about it? A few airline employees treat someone unkindly on a plane, and what happens to the brand of that airline? A few engineers tinker with the exhaust system of a vehicle and end up trashing the brand that is represented by thousands of people throughout the world. Are you following the law? But it doesn't have to be something abstract, it maybe doesn't directly impact you, maybe it was just that last phone call to the big retailer that you deal with, perhaps an online retailer, and you make that call and you get someone on the other end of the line who is totally insensitive, maybe even rude, that's right.

What does that do to the brand of that company? Well, this morning, our lesson study brings the concept of brand into focus. As we begin this study on the Marks of a Steward, we have a scripture reading, a memory text that actually crystallizes a lot of what today's lesson is about. This week's lesson, the Marks of a Stewart, 1 Corinthians 4 is where the scripture is found, verses 1 and 2, and feel free to read that with me in the New King James Version, 1

Corinthians 4:1 and 2, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." Well, as the lesson opens up, it says stewards are known by their brand or their distinctive mark.

Think about it, what are Christians known for? You might say well, Christians are known for good things, we're Christians after all, we're here worshipping in God's house, but in many people's minds Christianity is not associated with good things. Are there places in the world where someone labeled a Christian is identified with immorality? You're following along with me? There are, there are places in the world where people that take the name of Jesus Christ are identified with those who do not dress morally, do not watch things that are immoral, do not live moral lives. Are you following along with me? How is it with our representation of Jesus? How is it with my representation? That scripture, 1 Corinthians 4 is embedded in a context, and we want to spend a little time looking at the context of 1 Corinthians. I don't know what kind of churches you've been members of, and here we're in the Granite Bay Church. I'm thankful to be a member of this congregation. Not every church though has a well desirable pedigree if you will. If you turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians where our memory text came from. We're reading about a church. We're reading a letter that Paul wrote to a church that is not a church that had an enviable reputation, at least at the time Paul was writing his letter. In fact, things were so bad in the Corinthian Church that by the time Paul gets to chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians, and I'm paraphrasing. Chapter 5 opens up where Paul is saying, "Things so bad are happening in your church that not even the non-Christians would think of doing anything like this."

It's interesting to me though that 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians really give us some of the clearest insight into what it takes to be an effective steward. And it actually is crystallized in a number of descriptions of the calling that we have as believers. Let's look together at, first of all, a very key scripture that actually comes from 1 Corinthians right before that low point if you will in 1

Corinthians 5, I'm going to 1 Corinthians 4:16. 1 Corinthians 4:16, a very short verse, but one that really behooves us to really imbibe, to really take in. There Paul writes, 1 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me." Paul is urging believers to do what? To imitate him. Paul is basically saying that Jesus is calling him to be an example of believers. They might say, "Well, that's good for Paul, but what about for you and me," Paul's example as he writes the letters to the Corinthian Church, 1 and 2 Corinthians, is actually revealing his own heart in our calling as believers. Let's look at some of the descriptions here. And the reason we're doing it is because I don't want us to fall in the trap, as important as it is to understand the call to being stewards, the Bible calls us other things as well that take in a fuller idea of stewardship. In fact, a fuller idea, an idea that we might miss, where we just to think about what a steward does, and we are going to look at that in detail.

So let's look a little bit more at some of the descriptions of Paul's own calling and the calling of believers. Remember, we're looking at Paul's calling for two reasons. We're to do what? We just read in 1 Corinthians 4:16, we're to imitate Paul. So Paul's calling is my calling as well, it's your calling as well because Paul under divine inspiration was saying, God was leading in his life so that we would imitate, that we would catch in him a picture of Jesus. Isn't that what it's all about? It's not about Paul, it's not about you or me, it's reflecting the Master.

Let's see that. Let's see how that picks up. I'm going back to 1 Corinthians 3 now. We're just looking at a few other descriptors that help us have a better understanding of our calling and they all tie in ultimately with stewardship. 1 Corinthians 3:5, let's look at this, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?" So what is Paul calling himself in this verse? A minister. So what does a minister do? Yeah, you're saying ministers, I mean, well, it's a silly question. But what does it mean to minister to someone? To be a spiritual leader, to teach some of these ideas come to... Let me ask you this question, and don't all raise your

hands or don't all shout out at once, but has anyone ministered to you since you walked through the doors of the church this morning? I mean, how do, and I see some of you nodding your heads, smiling. How did someone minister to you? Did they teach? Did they preach to you as you walked in? They prayed with you, they loved you, someone was friendly to you.

So basically, we're seeing that one characteristic of this calling, and it really, it takes in, it takes in stewardship because we're being entrusted as stewards, one's who cares for the Master's goods, for the Master's work, if you will in the eyes of the lesson, the Master's brand. Let's look at another descriptor, 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul says here, "For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building." Now here's some other interesting imagery, isn't it? Now we're what? Fellow workers. Now, what does that imply? Like workers imply, we have some kind of a job, we have a work to do, but what is that idea, fellow workers imply? Yeah, we're working side by side. In fact, as you read the opening of 1 Corinthians, what was agonizing Paul's heart? Was it, there was disunity in the church, there were factions in the church, okay. This was the report that came back to Paul, and the immorality in the church. So the church were not being good stewards of the message that God has entrusted, so as Paul's writing this letter, we see all this imagery of what he's called us to be. We're called to be God's building, His church, His body, His members, all this things come out in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Let's look at just a few others here, chapter 4 began with this imagery of stewards and servants, but as you slip down to verse 9, we catch another glimpse, 1 Corinthians 4:9, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death, for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." We are, if you will, actors on a stage, not playing a role that really isn't who we are, but actually the world is looking on at the Christian church. The world is looking at you and me, they're judging Jesus by us. I mean it's a sobering, sobering thought, isn't it? Sometime ago, I met a women, we'll call her Lowes. And Lowes was telling me with her contact

with the Christian church. It actually happened to be the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it could've just as well, you could say it had been the Baptist Church or Assemblies of God, but you think about it. What do people think when they hear Christian, or Adventist, or any denomination, what do they hear? Well, Lowes had a unique perspective on the local Seventh-day Adventist Church because it happened to be right across the street from her. So she and her husband didn't see what was happening in the church, they had never walked into the church.

They just saw what was happening in the church parking lot. So what would someone see if they were looking at the Granite Bay Church parking lot? Or for those of you that joined us from around the world, what would they see looking at your church from a distance at the parking lot? What happens in the parking lot? Are there warm greetings? Are there angry words spoken? If someone giving dirty looks to someone 'cause they pulled in their parking spot. By the way, I'm not speaking about anything that I know of happening here at Granite Bay, I'm just thinking of the scenario that could be played out in many churches. And so Lowes and her husband are looking at that local Seventh-day Adventist Church. Now, how many of you are a little bit on the edge of your seat wondering what they saw? I mean, I hear stories like this, I'm thinking, you know, what's going to happen? I mean, what does this woman get to see? She said... She and her husband said, "These look like the happiest people on earth." Said, "We have to find out why they're so happy."

When I met Lowes, she was a Seventh-day Adventist. She and her husband had been won to the church because of what? The stewardship of members. They were entrusted with this responsibility of carrying on the Lord's work. And it wasn't just something they put on when they walk through the doors of the church, it apparently was happening every time they at least drove into the church parking lot. And if it happened every time they drove in the church parking lot, you can be pretty sure, it was happening at home too. Wouldn't be good if we all had churches like the one that Lowes looked at that just drew

people in, because even if they never walked through the doors of the church, they would say, "If those people are like that, I want to find out what makes them click."

Well, few other glimpses of steward, few other glimpses here in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Maybe your mind has run to 2 Corinthians 5 because this also ties in with this broad concept of stewardship. And again, why I thought it was important to do this is because if we isolate that single descriptor for what we've called to be steward, it's powerful, but we don't catch that whole range of meanings that we sometimes appreciate when we see some of the other adjectives that are used to describe believers. So let's look here, it is actually a noun, we're called to be in 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21. Paul speaking of his own calling of which we are to emulate, 2 Corinthians 5:20, " Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be ye reconciled to God. For He made Him Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

What's the calling here? Ambassadors, representatives of the highest order, representing a dignitary, a foreign nation, a foreign ruler, we here are on planet earth, foreign territory, we're not in heaven, and we're called as what? Stewards and ambassadors, called as ministers, called as kings and priests, the descriptors could go on and on. That doesn't mean that we're all called to fulltime gospel ministry, but it means that every one of us are called as stewards to represent the king, so that's what a steward does, that's what a steward is, that's some of the picture that these descriptive words give us, so that tells us some about the Marks of a Steward, right? We are representing the King of kings, we are representing that brand of Christianity whether you like that analogy or not, but there are certain characteristics that make a steward an effective one.

1 Corinthians 4 said one key characteristic is faithfulness, faithfulness. Let's go to the dictionary for a minute and catch this concept. What does it mean to be faithful? First definition, loyal, constant, and steadfast. Can refer to of a spouse or a partner, never having a sexual relationship with any other. It can refer to an object, a faithful object, an object that is reliable. Second definition, true to the facts or the original. A faithful copy of something. Another definition of faithful is firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty, faithful. And actually, the dictionary tells us it's an obsolete definition, but it really hints at the origin of the word. Faithful literally means full of faith, full of faith. Here's what I'd like to suggest to you as we look at the Marks of a Steward, as we look at everything presented in this week's lesson.

The only way to be a steward and effectively represent the King of kings is to have that characteristic of being full of faith. What do you think? I mean, look at the lesson descriptors, faithfulness. In fact, we saw, and we'll look a little bit more momentarily at Monday's descriptor that's loyalty. Faithfulness and loyalty, essentially, synonymous, at least one aspect of faithfulness is being loyal. How about a clear conscience on Tuesday? What gives us a clear conscience? Being faithful, right? How about obedience? Well, we heard that in the definitions of faithfulness, right? Being obedient, being faithful, being... Holding your allegiance. What about trustworthiness? Really, all of these descriptors, aren't they aspects of being faithful? So this sets, what we might say, a very high bar because you can say, "Well, who has that kind of faith?"

Turn your Bibles to Romans, then look at Romans 12. In Romans 12 we read something that's encouraging to me. Romans 12, hopefully, it's encouraging to you too because sometimes we look in the mirror, and we feel like our faith isn't all that great. But Romans 12 reminds us of a great truth, Romans 12:3, and it's quite interesting because here Paul is getting ready to speak about the Christian church, this unified church that has different roles. It's one of those descriptions of the church as a body, but as he is beginning this description, Romans 12:3, he says this, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to

everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to every one a measure of faith." So you might say, "I just don't have faith," but you do have faith. The Bible says every one of us is given one, a measure of faith. So here's the question, how do you grow faith? How do you grow faith? Faith grows like anything else. Well, tell you about one of my patients, I can tell you about several of my patients. I've got a number of patients who've had the unfortunate experience of having had a stroke. And so the stroke destroyed a part of their brain, and I'm thinking of some patients whose brains were destroyed in regions that control the movement on one side of their body. See, you come in, and you see one of those patients with me.

If you were in the office, and you'd see a normal arm perhaps on the left, and you look at the right arm that has been afflicted with the stroke, maybe five, six years ago, and you look at that arm, and what's different about the stroke affected arm than the arm that is wholly sound, what's different? That's right, that arm that doesn't have the brain nerves supply has not been moving, okay. They've not been able to use that arm. And as a result, that arm has atrophied. "Troph" refers to "grow", "A" means "without or lack of", so there's lack of growth, it's atrophic, the muscles have wasted away. Why has their arm not gotten stronger? Or why has it not even maintained its strength, what's the problem? That's right, they've not been using their arm. The arm was not getting messages from the brain and it wasn't being used. Well, let's follow the illustration out. If as Christians, we're ambassadors and stewards, we're taking care of someone else's goods, we're representing someone else, who is that? That's Jesus. And so if we have a connection with Jesus, what does He tell us to do with our faith? To use it, right? To exercise it. Now, for how many of you did it take much faith to come to church today?

I mean, some of you may have, others, you're smiling like well, it didn't take much faith for me to come to church, and I just jumped in the car. Well, for some of you, it might have taken a lot of faith, maybe you have a car that is

very unreliable, okay, and a long drive, and you were just praying, "Lord, please help this to be the one day this week that the car gets to its destination without breaking down," right? So you had a journey of faith. I had a friend who I forget what he said his car ran on. It either ran on grace or faith, I think it was actually both, right? So think about it though. How many of you like to be in situations where you have to exercise faith? I mean, usually, we would prefer things just to go smoothly, right? But God puts us in situations where we have to exercise faith, we have to trust Him, we have to move out in faith. The quarterly gives perhaps one of the great examples of faith. It is one of the Bible's crowning examples, and it refers us to not only Hebrews but also Romans, and let's just turn there to Hebrews 11. You know that Hebrews 11 is often referred to as what? That's right, the faith chapter or the hall of faith. The hall of faith there in Hebrews 11. We read there about champions of faith, some of whom did not seem all that faithful at times. I don't know, we often don't sometimes mention that part of the story. But Hebrews 11, we're going to go to verse 8 because in verse 8 we bring in sharp focus perhaps the person who is identified for faith, and yet this individual was not always again an emblem of faithfulness.

Hebrews 11 beginning with verse 8, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place where he would receive an inheritance and he went out, not knowing where he was going." I mean, I love this picture. And we were talking, some of us not long ago about this. Can you imagine you're packing the moving truck in front of your house, the moving truck is all packed. And one of your neighbors says, "I didn't know you were leaving." It was a hasty packing job. They say, "Where are you going?" "I don't know, I don't know." How would that feel? Abraham left prosperity, that's what the historical record, the archeological record shows us Ur of the Chaldees. One of the chief cities of its day, they found opulent gold artifacts from Ur. I mean beautifully crafted, I mean this was the place to live. I don't know what the place to live is in the eyes of the average person in the world. May be it's London or Paris, or New York, San Francisco, I don't know, it's some great city. You're living in an ideal circumstances. You say, but Dr. DeRose, I don't like

cities. Whatever the circumstances, it was the place to live and Abraham is told by God to do what? To leave. No, it's fine to leave but you just want to know where you're going, right?

I mean, you're okay, right, you're okay with moving for God, aren't you? You're willing to go somewhere where it's not comfortable, but are you willing to go not knowing where you're going? I mean, it's not really respectable, is it? I mean, could you imagine if our one of pastors said, "I've an announcement to make, the Lord has called me to leave, He's got a different ministry." Well, where you going? "I don't know." We say, well, I mean that's... In ministry, I mean that's just faithfulness, maybe you would be inspired by such a pastor. But most people are not impressed "by those who are exercising such faith as Abraham." But you know Abraham's story doesn't end there, and if we were to look at all the scriptures we would be reminded, we would be reminded of other aspects of the faith of Abraham, right? How about the sacrifice of his own son. I mean, have you ever thought about that? That experience on Mount Moriah. Abraham getting the message to go and to sacrifice his son of promise.

Look in Hebrews, it mentions that very story, and go with me there in Hebrews 11 again to 17. It's amazing the faith of Abraham when you think about it. "By faith Abraham," Hebrews 11:17, "When he was tested, offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said in Isaac your seed shall be called." Concluding that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Do you realize what the scripture is telling us here? Abraham knew at this point, I mean even though he wavered, his faith wavered, didn't it? But here when it comes to the sacrifice of Isaac, he knows God has called his son Isaac to be the heir. And now God, he knows, he knows God's voice, God is calling him to sacrifice his son. He says, look, I don't know how this works.

All I know is God's telling me to sacrifice my son and he is the heir of promise. I believe that if God's calling me to kill my son, He could raise him from the dead. I mean, is that not remarkable. So God is asking for us as stewards to have this characteristic of faithfulness. And we look at Abraham and we say, I mean how can we, how can we have the faith of Abraham. We've all been given the measure of faith and God gives us opportunities to exercise it. And we exercise faith, when we follow God's will, especially when it conflicts with our desires. Right? If you're just doing what you're on, common sense would tell you to do if you say, well, anybody would do that. It doesn't take faith. Hebrews doesn't end with chapter 11, unless we get so focused on things that seem awfully stern. Like rightly representing the King, and being ambassadors, and living a life of faithfulness. Let's look at really what all this is supposed to point the world to. Hebrews 12, it points us to Jesus, it points us to Jesus. Let's look there.

Hebrews 12, speaking of this great cloud of witnesses, not that they are somehow cheering us on from heaven... Most all of these individuals are sleeping in the grave to this day according to the Bible. But in chapter 12, it says, "We're surrounded by these great witnesses," Just like the Bible said, even though Abel was dead, his witness was still speaking. Are you following along? So these witnesses in Hebrews 11 are still speaking to us. And what are they calling us to do, listen, Hebrews 12... No, you there, Hebrews 12:1 and onward. "Therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Does this bring it back into focus for us? Doesn't it? Think about it, we've been called to have faith, right? But here Jesus is what? He is the author and what? The finisher of our faith. So the Holy Spirit gives everyone of us a measure of faith, and as we exercise that faith looking to Jesus, what happens? That faith grows, and Jesus is committed not only to give us that measure of faith but to bring our faith to completion.

He is the author and the finisher of our faith. And you catch what Jesus was doing as He looked to the cross. He wasn't looking at the shame of the cross. As He looked at that calling that He had, what was He looking at? He was looking at the joy set before Him. Remember Lowes and her husband, what did they see when they looked across the street at that Seventh-day Adventist Church? They saw joyful, happy people. And sometimes I just scratch my head, Jesus was a man of sorrows, right? He was acquainted with grief, but was it like to be in the presence of Jesus? It was joy to be in Jesus' presence. I mean who ran to Jesus, little children. I mean little children don't run to the grumpiest person in the group, they don't. It was joy to be in Jesus' presence, so how He had the joy of heaven in His heart, but He was still burdened with the sins of the world. We're called to be His ambassadors, His stewards. We're called to have the faith of Jesus in the midst of the world that is crashing and burning.

Well, loyalty, a clear conscience, let's go to that clear conscience because... You know, we observed already that all of these are aspects of faith. If I'm living a faithful life, I've a clear conscience, right? Before God if I'm trusting Him, if I'm walking with Him but here is the problem. How many of us have lived a perfect Christian life? How many of us have walked a perfect walk? How many of us have fallen? The Bible says, "All have sinned," right, "all have come short of the glory of God." Only Jesus, right, was tempted at all points without sinning. So what hope do we have then? Let's look, we're in Hebrews, we've been looking a lot at Hebrews. Hebrews 10 has some very sober statements. We'll look there because Hebrews has this balance of encouragement and things that bring us a greater measure of sobriety. Hebrews 10 beginning with verse 19, Hebrews 10 beginning with verse 19, it says, "Therefore, brethren having boldness to enter the holiest," the most holy place, "by the blood of Jesus.

By a new and living way, which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is his flesh. And having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." So just as there're sobering passages in Hebrews about the danger of turning away from Christ, there are these pictures of Jesus as our high priest that we can come to. We'll go back to Hebrews 4 for another picture, another word picture of this privilege we have. Hebrews 4:14. Again, this imagery of Jesus as our high priest in heaven, "Seeing then that we have," what? "A great high priest who is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us," do what? "Hold fast our confession."

We could say hold fast our faith, hold fast our call as stewards. "For we don't have a high priest who can't sympathize with our weaknesses but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." You know, the invitation is there for each one of us, we can come to Jesus boldly. We don't have to be afraid of what's in our past, we can come right to Jesus right now. He want to equip us and fit us to be loyal stewards, to be obedient and faithful stewards. But, you know, it's still a struggle, I know many times and I've dealt with it myself. We look at our own past and we say, how can God forgive me. Some of you might be here today, or you might be viewing, and you haven't fully connected with the Lord's people.

You haven't been baptized with Bible baptism. You've not come into God's fold fully because you don't feel worthy. Turn your Bibles to Luke 19. I think one of the great stories because remember, we can have a clear conscience as we're faithful but if we look at our past, we often see that our conscience is marred and sometimes we can fear to take God at His word, when He tells us to come, when Jesus says... "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus says, I won't cast you out, whoever comes to me, I'll no ways cast you out. Luke 19, I love this story, it's one of these great stories

because it teaches us something powerful about a clear conscience, it's the story of Zacchaeus. You know the story, right? Zacchaeus, chief tax collector, a Jew hated by his own people because he was in collusion with the Romans. Tax collection was synonymous with extortion because the tax collectors lined their pockets when they could extort more money from the tax collectees if you will, that's Zacchaeus. But what picture do we get of Zacchaeus when Jesus comes to Jericho? He is climbing up a tree to see Jesus. Now, I want you to think about this.

He was likely one of the wealthiest men in that area. How surprised would you be to see a wealthy New York businessman at the Thanksgiving Day parade shimmying up a light post to get a better view of the parade, what would you think? I mean, you think come on. I mean, a little kid might do that, right? Zacchaeus humbled himself because he was so focused on what? Looking on to Jesus, right? Now what's remarkable about the story as it relates to conscience. Jesus looks up, He tells Zacchaeus, He has already made an appointment at his home, but it doesn't stop there. As the crowd begins to grumble... Zacchaeus, sinner, Jesus is going to eat with this guy, going to his house. Zacchaeus makes a statement in verse 8, "Look Lord, I give half my goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." Now listen what Jesus says, verse 9, "Today salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham. For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Here is the question. Has Zacchaeus made everything right in Luke 19? He has not. There is still a lot of baggage in his life that he hasn't fully accounted for yet, but what has he decided? He has decided to follow Jesus. You see, you don't have to wait till everything is cleaned up in your life to come to Jesus. You don't have to wait till everything is perfect. Jesus asks you to come as you are. Yes, He wants us to repent, He wants us to make things right in the past but, you know, some of us have so much baggage that we would never come to Jesus, right? If we just looked at our past. I was brought back into the past, not

my own past but the past in the state of Arizona, just last week I was speaking at a small church, the Benson Church outside of Tucson. And some of the gracious church members decided to take me to one of the local sites. I there learned about a couple of gentlemen. Gary Tenen and Randy Tufts, couple of amateur spelunkers, cave explorers. Back in the '70s, students at the University of Arizona, they had heard rumors that somewhere outside of Benson there was a cave. In fact, Randy had been out there some seven years before. This is now back in 1974, these two individuals go to this location.

There is a sinkhole there in the middle of some vast ranch lands, nobody is around, nobody is looking. It's private property but... I mean who is going to know when you've got acres and acres of cattle ranch land. And so these two guys go down and they look at a spot that Randy had seen some seven years before. Heard there was a cave there but just doesn't seem there is anyway to get into it, but now it actually seemed like, I don't know if the ground had moved a little bit or maybe things had settled. And Gary and Randy thought that they could actually get through this small crevice, and they make their way in, and they find about a hundred feet of cave. So obvious other people had been there before, there is footprints, there is broken structures, cave structures, stalactites or stalagmites, they didn't go into detail about it. But what attracted them on this particular day is there was a warm moist breeze coming out when they first arrived. And as they got into this 100 feet or so of rooms that obviously been occupied before.

They said there was too much, too much warm breeze coming out to actually just be coming from these two small rooms. And as they scouted around, they found another small passage where they crawled for some eight feet or so and they came to a tiny three inch hole, warm moist air coming out. What would you do? I tell you what I would probably have done, I probably would have left, okay. But that was not what these two guys were going to do, they had a small sledgehammer. Now, I don't have one of these in my armamentarium at home but it was a three pound sledgehammer. We've got some

sledgehammers that are a lot bigger than that but I guess they couldn't get anything larger in. And as I read through the story, you know, in a scientific journal I don't usually read. This story is actually found in the Journal of Cave and Karst Studies from back in 1999.

They are describing exactly what they did. They started hammering on this little hole until they opened up a hole big enough, big enough... Boy, it's kind of amazing what they said. Okay, I'll read it to you 'cause some of you I can tell want to know what they did at that point. It says, "They laid in this crawlway, for two hours they widened that hole with a sledgehammer and a chisel." And it says, "Finally they were able to squeeze through the hole. Tenen first and then Tufts but only by taking off their belts and exhaling." I don't know, I think I would have probably wanted a little wider than that. But as these guys continued their explorations that day onward, they ended up finding what is called Kartchner Caverns. An amazing caverns as I looked at that... less than a week ago. Amazing cave structures, no one had ever been there before.

It's a living cave, and what struck me about the whole story is listen to the description of the finders of this cave. Here's what they said, "Since we discovered the cave in 1974, all our efforts have been for the purpose of protecting the cave for posterity." They saw themselves as stewards of the cave. And they tell the whole story there of how they worked with the State Legislature trying to keep everything secret the whole time, blindfolding state officials driving them in, you know, circuitous routes to bring them to the cave, amazing story. But now there is this amazing cave and the state has spent some, they told me \$38 million to this point developing this cave, blasting up until they got to, you know, so close that you couldn't say if we blast without damaging the cave structures. But blasting through large amounts and in order to go into this living cave, they had to take us through barrier after barrier. It's like you're entering some kind of a clean room in a semi-conductor factory or going into some carefully guarded prison.

I used to spend a little bit of time in the State Mental Facility when I was doing my preventive medicine training. We had to go through these different doors, and all these safeguards, and that's what it was. They're controlling the humidity. The cave is a living cave. Now, here is my point, and I think there is some interesting illustrations. First of all what drew them into the cave was what? This warm wind. And in the Bible we often speak about the wind being what? The Holy Spirit, right? Now you might tell, Dr. DeRose, you're taking some liberties here with the account. But really, they were drawn into something, there was incredible treasure but it wasn't visible. I mean isn't that really what Christianity is. It's a great treasure that God's entrusted to us. I mean, the Bible uses the same illustration of the buried treasure, right?

Where man would sell everything to have the field. I guess these guys couldn't buy all the acres that the Kartchners owned. The Kartchners actually owned that land, that's what the caverns are named after. Now it's a state park but, and what do they see their privilege as. It was a joy and privilege to enjoy this amazing cave but they didn't wanted just for themselves, but they wanted to preserve it. They saw themselves as stewards, and they were obedient to the trust that was committed to them. You know, some of you may have scratched your head in Thursday's lesson where it speaks about trustworthiness. Just talked about couple of people who were trustworthy because the scripture focus there is on the parable of the steward in Luke 16. We won't read that whole parable there, but it is one of the more difficult parables because this is a steward who is not being faithful. And when his unfaithfulness is discovered by the master, what does he say?

He said, "Listen, I can't do manual labor, I can't dig, I'm ashamed to beg, I'm not going to be a, you know, pauper begging." So what does he do? He actually starts trading on the master's goods. But not in an honest way, in a dishonest way, he starts lowering the indebtedness of all the debtors to his master, you remember the story, right? Someone owes, you know, a hundred pounds or something, look, okay, I'll make it fifty. And what did the master in that story

do? He commended that unjust steward. Now the master there is not Jesus, it's a worldly master, who is commending a worldly steward for being shrewd in a difficult position. But his shrewdness was in taking the goods off the master and sharing them with other people. Isn't that amazing insight into stewardship. You know, it's interesting to me, Luke 16 is also where you have that parable of the rich man in Lazarus. And most Christians will not say they'd be happy with the church treasurer who was skimming the books and cheating the church, right? But they want to take the parable of the rich man in Lazarus very literally. I mean you can't do it with either one, they are parables, okay, to teach a lesson. And the lesson is God has made us stewards of His goods, and we're to take those goods and do what? To share them with others. Are we hoarding them to ourselves?

You know, when I read Tenen and Tufts' account of their finding of the Kartchner Caverns, they wanted to keep those caves a secret to themselves, they did for a number of years, several years. But they realized that was not a way to be stewards of that great treasure. They had to give away what they were given. And I think their faith in the whole process increased. They had a lot of doubts about what the state would do and how things would work out. But now thousands of people seeing something of beauty that they were entrusted as stewards with. Well, there is a lot more we'll be taking about in this quarter about stewardship. We've also got a free resource for you, it's called In God We Trust. You can get it free if you're in the US, North America by calling 866- Study-More. I invite you all to be back with us next week as we continue our study on Stewardship, Motives of the Heart. We'll look forward to seeing you then.