

I would like to first ask brothers and sisters to read some of the Lord's words with me.

*Luke 12:35-44*

*"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." And Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?" "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions."*

*Luke 16:1-8*

*Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes.' And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light."*

*1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

*Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*

*Titus 1:7-9*

*For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with*

*the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.*

*1 Peter 4:10-11*

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14*

*To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

The theme of the conference is “*To the praise of His glory*,” from the book of Ephesians. This phrase is applied once each to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Before the foundation of the world, God already set a glorious plan. Because of this, God started to work in all creation. Of course, God's work is to fulfill His will. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have dedicated Themselves to this work. They split the work and labor together, devoting and exerting Their all to it. When the work of the Father is completed, it will lead to the praise of His glory. When the work of the Son is finished, it will lead to the praise of His glory. When the work of the Holy Spirit reaches its goal, it will lead to the praise of His glory. Therefore, in Ephesians chapter 1, the Apostle Paul shows us God's ultimate goal is not only glory but also to gain praise. God not only purposed such a wonderful plan, He will also bring this plan into perfection according to His power. At the end when the finished work appears, it will not only be filled with glory, but also full of praise.

I would like to use a simple illustration to make it clearer. If the Lord were to reveal to you the glory which the Apostle John saw in Revelation chapter 21, how would you feel? The Apostle John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. The city's height, width, and length are all twelve thousand stadia. That is a great structure, built with jasper and all sorts of precious stones, including pure gold and pearls. If this scene was displayed before you, how would you respond? Most Americans would probably say, “Wow!” Each nation would have a different expression. Of course, this is the reaction from the people of the world. For Christians, we ought to sing praise because that is such a spectacular view. We respond by offering praise from the bottom of our heart. This city is not only filled with glory but also flows forth praise.

In the Bible, there are many words of praise God has prepared for us. I feel none can be compared to one word. What is this word? It is “Hallelujah.” You can say this word loudly, to a point you can sense the glory from within. I have a very loud voice and I can shout this word out loudly, but I won’t do that tonight. I will save it until the Lord returns. When we see God’s finished work, that immense glory, we will then all cry out with enthusiasm. Revelation chapter 14 tells us when we see our Lord reigning and the enemy defeated, the entire creation will be filled with hallelujah. In all the words of praise to God, there is none that carries such force. If you cry out, “Praise the Lord,” that cannot be compared to “Hallelujah,” because you can unleash your full voice when you say it. Many of God’s children like to cry out, “Hallelujah,” but don’t say it too casually because this word is reserved for God’s glorious work.

God will not only allow His work to reach a glorious state, the heavens and whole universe will also be filled with praise when this work is completed. The Apostle Paul tells us God’s work is not only glorious and satisfies His heart, it will also gain praise. We thank God because He set His will; one day when His purpose appears, it will be so glorious and beautiful, gaining praise from all creation. Last time, we mentioned God does not complete His work alone. He accomplishes it together with those whom He chose. The Lord has placed us within time, giving us many opportunities to co-labor with Him to finish His work. When the work is completed, all the fruits of labor from many saints throughout generations who loved the Lord and obeyed His will will also appear. Today on earth, if you serve God according to His will, all your labor will be seen in that finished work at the end. But if you walk contrary to His will, all will be in vain regardless how much you did or the amount of effort you put forth. That’s why we often emphasize obedience to God and service to Him according to His purpose. On that day when the Lord’s work is completed, may the fruits of our lifelong labor, consecration, and sacrifices be revealed. We will then truly rejoice with our Lord. We thank God for He is One who works but has also chosen man to co-work with Him.

To enable us to co-labor with Him in His work, He has given us two crucial ministries. One is priesthood and the other is stewardship, which is what we will fellowship on tonight. Of these two ministries, one is perpetual; priesthood is from eternity to eternity while stewardship is temporal. This is a very solemn reminder for saints who are still living on earth. Last time I mentioned if we are to do well in both ministries, we must hold fast to two critical principles

concerning service and serve the Lord accordingly. Then we can be good priests and good stewards.

Allow me to begin by re-emphasizing these two principles. When God sent Moses to Egypt, He said, *“Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign that I have sent you.”* The presence of God is our assurance or evidence of the work in service. To serve the Lord, we must have His presence. Without the Lord’s presence, we can do nothing. Many do not realize the importance of this matter concerning service. We establish the assurance of service based on our wisdom, education and knowledge. Accordingly, many servants of God are encouraged to read lots of books, which is not a bad thing. I admire those who can read quickly because I am a slow reader. I often feel I have not read as many books as others. But remember education and knowledge are not our assurance in service.

Some serve based on their experience, having served the Lord many years and accumulated much experience. We use that experience as our assurance. Some people use their talents as their assurance. Many use their eloquence as their assurance. Some also rely on man’s support to fuel their assurance. Some even use status. Among God’s servants, do you see those who utilize all sorts of things as assurances? God has spoken to us through Moses, telling us only His presence is our assurance or evidence in service. Frankly speaking, if you have God’s presence and nothing else, you could still serve Him. God’s work is so grand; it’s far beyond what your wisdom, strength and talents can handle. God said, *“Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign that I have sent you.”* This means God not only sends you but He will go with you.

In our service today, if we have the presence of the Lord, we don’t need to be afraid of anything. God gave us plenty of illustrations in the Bible regarding this matter. He especially uses Joseph in the Old Testament to speak of His presence. We are all very familiar with Joseph’s story. He was sold by his brothers at the age of seventeen. He was sold to the house of Potiphar as a slave, then put in prison. Later, he interpreted Pharaoh’s dream and was exalted. Joseph went through extreme hardship for thirteen years. In each adverse situation, God was with him and the difficulties were not issues for him at all. When Pharaoh brought him out of the dungeon, in an instant, from the status of a slave, he became Egypt’s prime minister. Whenever I read his story, my heart is amazed. If I were in his shoes, I would not dare take such a position. I would simply say, “Pharaoh, thank you that you have set me free. You want to make me prime minister at once?” Joseph was not educated or trained but he was made prime minister instantly. If it were

you, would you dare? What empowered him to accept the position? It was the presence of God because Joseph didn't rely on himself. God's presence enabled Joseph to forget his brothers' past hatred. He was able to treat his brothers with infinite generosity. He not only forgave them but loved them and cared for their households. God's presence was clearly exhibited through Joseph.

Before Moses was taken by the Lord, he entrusted the enormous responsibility of the people of Israel to Joshua. Joshua was very afraid. God had to say to him multiple times, "*Be strong and courageous because I am with you.*" Only with the presence of God can we serve Him. This is the greatest assurance we can have in service. No matter how great the need or how heavy the entrustment, the presence of God is sufficient. No matter how fierce the enemy, we don't need to be afraid.

Look at Elisha. He prayed that God would open the eyes of his young servant. The young attendant saw the city was surrounded by the enemy. Yet the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire. Then Elisha said, "*For those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" Many years later, the Apostle John echoed the same phrase, "*Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.*" The enemy is nothing when we have the presence of God. Can we imagine this?

The Creator of the universe, Almighty God, He is with us. Who can be against us? In the age of the New Testament, His presence is our reality. God's children should have this faith. I really like a hymn written by Sister Margaret Barber. It says, "Thou art enough." Our sister truly understood what God's presence meant. "Thou art enough. However long the day and however dark the night." We need to grasp this truth! In service, we must put aside our self-reliance and allow God to accomplish His work through us.

God also uses Paul, in the New Testament, to highlight the significance of us being vessels. God chose Paul to be a vessel in His hand. Every brother and sister is a vessel in God's hand and has a definite function. A vessel is for the master's use and it must be passive. We must acknowledge our God is great. His wisdom is perfect and His power is limitless and inexhaustible. He doesn't need help from you or me. He doesn't need you or me to take initiative to help Him. We cannot belittle God and must recognize His greatness. Many of God's servants do not acknowledge Him. We only see ourselves, feeling capable of doing something for Him. As a result, we make numerous mistakes. Servants of God must recognize Him and realize His greatness. I really like the prayer of Nehemiah. He prayed, "*Great and awesome God.*"

Nehemiah saw the great and awesome God; we need this same insight today. With this understanding, we will not dare stretch out our hands to help God.

When God chose Paul, God said, “*He is a chosen instrument of Mine.*” Paul had an energetic and proactive personality. He was brilliant, diligent and liked to take the lead. When we read Paul’s story, we know he was described as an apostle in chains. Why did God bind Paul in chains? From our perspective, we feel our brother was suffering. It was as if the Romans imprisoned him. But Paul knew and said, “*I am a prisoner of the Lord.*” He knew it was not the Romans who put him in prison; it was the Lord because he was too active. Paul knew all too well he was an initiator and God feared he would take initiative. God knew this person was capable so God put him in chains so he could not run off on his own.

Paul’s experience was special. In addition, God also put a thorn in his flesh because Paul’s self-life was very strong. God used a thorn to restrain him so he could not go according to his own way. Paul said, “*Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, this was to keep me from being prideful.*” We know that thorn was a horrible thing because Paul clearly told us it was a messenger of Satan. This was a very dark and horrifying thing in Paul’s life. Paul pleaded with the Lord three times but the Lord didn’t take the thorn away. Instead, the Lord said, “*My grace is sufficient for you.*”

For a person to become a vessel in the hands of the Lord, he must realize he cannot take the initiative to do anything. He is an instrument in the Master’s hands, to be used at His will. The vessel should be at rest. When I return home and open the cupboard in my kitchen, there are cups, plates and other utensils; they are at rest. They are waiting for me to use them. We should be like that before God. We should be waiting for God to use us and not be anxious.

If we are used by God once in our lifetime, that would be most glorious. One time we held a summer conference in the San Marcos Campus of Texas State University. I walked down a hallway one day and saw a large frame hung on the wall. Inside this frame was a pen. I was very curious and wondered what is the big deal with this pen. Why did they make such a large frame to display it? Later, I learned this pen was used by President Johnson. I don’t know if Johnson was an alumnus of the university. This pen was used by President Johnson to sign one document in the White House and he gave it to the school as a gift. The university treats the pen like treasure, framing and hanging it on the wall. Of course, that is a good pen but it was only used once. You and I are instruments in the hands of God, the Creator and Almighty God. If God uses you once,

that would be far beyond glorious. God will actually use you more than once. All brothers and sisters should realize we are vessels, waiting for the Lord to use us.

Perhaps some Christians might say, “We are quite lazy. If you put it that way, wouldn’t that make us even lazier?” Don’t worry, our God is One who works. Even though you are passive, you will not remain idle. Forgive me for saying this; I am naturally very passive. I rarely take initiative to do anything. But these years, a lazy and passive person like me has become very busy under God’s use. Don’t worry, for sure you will not become lazy. Today, we should have a desire to present ourselves before the Lord and wait for Him to use us. God uses the Apostle Paul as an example to tell us we are vessels. God will use us but we must never take the initiative but just wait before Him.

God first taught Moses and Paul the lesson of self-denial in order to make them His good servants. He severely dealt with their self life through the work of the cross. Therefore, souls of Christians must be purified, a basic common experience. Today, God has entrusted this ministry to us and we want to serve Him well. We must hold fast to and keep these principles of service in order to be good priests and good stewards.

When we speak of stewardship, we can see clearly from Luke chapter 12 that our Lord entrusted His house on earth to man after He resurrected and ascended. Every assembly in various places is actually a house of God, committed to different people to manage. God wants us to be His stewards. In ancient times, many large households or those who were affluent liked to use stewards. In current times, there are still some but not that many. When we read the Old Testament, we see an old steward in the house of Abraham. Potiphar also used Joseph as his steward. Stewardship is when a master entrusts the affairs of his household into the hands of his steward. But we must first understand one thing: the church is the house of God. Paul had earnestly commended Timothy saying, “*This household is the church of the living God.*” Today all churches in different localities are the household of God. This is a place where God stores His riches, finds rest and reigns.

Today, God entrusts His household to man’s care. The Gospel According to Luke tells us one day the Lord shall return. The Lord will evaluate how we handled His household. As children of God, we cannot conduct God’s house according to our own will. We must know how to properly manage His house. Paul also said to Timothy, “*If I delay, you ought to know how to*

*conduct yourself in the household of God.*” Paul knew in God’s household, you cannot just do whatever you want, according to your will. This is not your house. This is God’s house but man often makes mistakes and turns it into his own house, making arrangements and doing things according to his preference. As a result, problems repeatedly surface in the house of God. If you can take good care of God’s house, you will usher in the praise of His glory. We should remember being a steward is an entrustment for this lifetime only. One day when the Lord returns, this ministry will cease. We must administer to God’s house according to His will. Today, there are so many assemblies on earth but oftentimes it appears man does not completely understand these are God’s house. It is vital to know the will of God and it is our responsibility to administer to God’s house according to His requirements.

In the Gospel According to Luke chapter 12, the Lord Jesus spoke with His disciples about principles of service. He said, “*As servants, be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.*” What does it mean to be dressed in readiness? In First Peter, he tells us we need to gird our minds. Our minds must be constrained by truth. You cannot make up some illusional thoughts. There is something very meaningful when we read the Bible. Sometimes I exhort the young brothers and sisters to diligently study the Bible. What does that mean? Simply reading it over many times or reciting many passages doesn’t necessarily mean you have done well. You have to read it to a point to allow the mind of the Bible to become your mind. That is the purpose of reading the Bible. When your mind is constrained by the truth of the Bible, you will naturally walk according to the truth. This is crucial because your mind has such a tremendous influence in your live and service. Your thoughts drive your behavior so your mind must first be constrained.

Then we need to keep our lamps alight. The book of Proverbs tells us *the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord*. That means your spirit must be lit. If we serve the Lord with a gloomy spirit and darkness is in us, how can we properly administer to God’s house? We must maintain the light in our spirit. The more our soul is dealt with, the more our spirit will be enlightened. Therefore, to serve the Lord, servants must be dressed in readiness, lamps kept alight, and waiting for the return of the Master.

We cannot simply treat the Lord’s return as doctrine. Our elderly brother reminded us many times in recent years the Lord is coming; He is coming quickly. Many brothers and sisters say, “Oh, I know. I know.” No, the Lord said, “Are you waiting?” Are you truly waiting for the



Lord's return? Do we have a true sense of the Lord's return? We who serve the Lord especially ought to have a trembling and fearful attitude. Even when Paul served, he was in fear and much trembling. Paul was one who honored God. Today, can we get by being casual and careless? The Lord said, "*The master is returning. He is returning from the wedding feast. You need to open the door and be alert.*" The Lord tells us if you do this, the master's heart will be full of joy. What will he do when he enters? In turn, he will serve you. The Lord makes it very clear in this parable. We hope to receive such glory one day.

After the Lord finished speaking, Peter asked, "*Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?*" The Lord didn't say if it was for them or others. He continued and said, "*Who then is the faithful and sensible steward?*" This goes one step further to tell us a steward must be faithful and sensible. The faithfulness mentioned here by the Lord specifically refers to His entrustment of His household. There are many aspects concerning faithfulness in the Bible. Many are faithful to the Lord's name. We thank God that throughout church history, many were killed and martyred because they were faithful to the Lord's name. They were killed because they refused to renounce or deny the Lord's name. Some are faithful to the Lord Himself. While living on earth, they develop an intimate relationship with the Lord because they want to remain faithful; they do not want to forsake Him and because of that, many will be martyred. Some are faithful to the Lord's entrustment. God is One with purpose and we should be faithful to His name, to Himself and His entrustment. All three aspects of faithfulness are necessary for a steward.

In the administration of God's household, we cannot afford to be disobedient to God's will but must follow the Lord's command completely. From ancient time until now, God has only given this Bible to His children. Many words are written clearly in the Bible. We don't understand why many study the Bible so diligently but in the end they still disobey the Bible. Heeding the word of God becomes a great test. We see works everywhere but many are not according to God's command. We need the mercy of God because our inner eyes are easily blinded by the devil. You may read His word but you don't understand it. Today, you need to be faithful, heed the Lord's word and serve Him according to the Bible. This is the Lord's requirement of a steward.

Another requirement is a steward has to be sensible. In the original text, "sensible" can be translated as "intelligent." When we read the Bible, we discover there are two terms, wisdom and

intelligence. What is the difference between these two terms? To most of us, wisdom is intelligence and vice versa. My personal understanding is there is a difference between wisdom and intelligence. We need to have wisdom; it allows us to understand God's will and truth. But why do we need intelligence? Intelligence allows us to apply God's will and practice truth. So wisdom and intelligence are different.

In recent years, brothers and sisters' spiritual wisdom has been gradually unveiled and they come to understand the will of God. Oftentimes, we can even speak about God's will but we don't know how to apply it when it comes to our practical daily life. The West Coast Christian Conference has been held for over thirty times up until this year. We have heard many words of wisdom and they are familiar to our ears. Many can talk about God's will all day long, service in the body and fullness of Christ. It's not that these are bad; these are good but if we look at various assemblies, nothing is put into practice. It appears we are lacking intelligence. God requires that a steward not only knows truth, he must practice truth. In order to manage God's household well, you not only need to understand all the truth in the Bible, you must know how to apply truth in God's house. So the Lord said, "*Faithful and sensible*." This is a very serious matter.

Whenever we mention the administration of God's household, perhaps this often brings uneasiness to the hearts of God's servants. The reason is we could only talk about it as doctrine but we don't know how to put it into practice. This has become an enormous problem for us. It is critical to properly take good care of the household of God. This is an important entrustment the Lord has given to us here on earth and it is the responsibility of all brothers and sisters. We need to treat all the assemblies on earth as God's household. One day the Lord will come back to settle the account with us. God is not satisfied with just individuals loving Him but He is after the church, His house. Of course, it is wonderful for you to pursue and love the Lord individually but this cannot fully satisfy God's heart. We cannot look lightly upon our local assemblies. Our local testimony is very important. If we just know how to talk about it but yet our local assembly, God's house, is a mess, I don't know what consequence awaits us when the Lord returns. We look to the Lord's mercy to be faithful and sensible stewards.

The Lord also told us we must take good care of His house. First, you must properly manage those who are in His household. If you have experience, you know this is not simple. To care for the people in the church is such a difficult task. This is most difficult in service. In the beginning when I was called, I didn't have a full understanding of the meaning of service. I

thought the Lord would simply have me preach each week, make arrangements in the church, and set schedules for some meetings. Frankly speaking, these tasks are easy. Then the Lord spoke to my heart and alerted me, reminding me that service is a matter of touching the person's fallen humanity. If we are enlightened, we would realize human nature is troublesome. The greatest dilemma in service is to turn an abnormal person into a normal person, from a fallen sinner into a glorious child of God. We ourselves are full of problems and in addition we must take care of others' troubles. This is such a difficult matter.

In Hebrews chapter 10, the author tells us the Lord Jesus is the High Priest over God's house. Only the Son of God can govern the house of God. If we heed the words of God in Christ, perhaps we can properly administer to the family of God. So as a steward, the first step is to take care of the people. I believe those who have served the Lord for many years can attest the greatest achievement in service is when we can care for the people in God's house. Service is not so simple. Many young brothers and sisters want to serve the Lord full time. I would tell them not to have a misconception. Don't ever think being a full-time servant, traveling from place to place, is so amusing. No, serving the Lord is not easy. It's easy to do some tasks but it's very difficult to manage people. From my youth, I thought I would manage machinery and not man because I knew man is troublesome. I never imagined the Lord would call me to serve and face so many people. Changes in brothers and sisters are not done by us, they are done by the Lord. By the Lord's grace, we serve Him.

God uses us to do His work. He hides Himself as if to give us glory. We must be clear we have no strength of our own; we are nothing. As a steward, you can do nothing if you don't live in and rely on God's presence. So often, we handle God's household according to our personality, thoughts and temperament. We make a big mess of His house. May the Lord have mercy on us. Our Lord has highly esteemed us; He has entrusted to you and me His most precious and beloved house. If you manage it well, you will receive a great reward when He returns. The Lord said, "*I will put you in charge of all my possessions.*" Today in the house of God, there is great testing for us. It is not easy to be a steward. We must rely on the Lord.

Luke chapter 12 mentions that when you serve the Lord, you cannot beat others, eat and drink, and get drunk. This is a solemn reminder for us. Our elderly brother already shared that if you do these things, God will cut you in pieces when He returns. This is a frightening

consequence. You cannot be rough or indulge yourself when serving the Lord. Otherwise, when the Lord returns, you will face severe punishment.

The Lord speaks of the unrighteous steward in great length in Luke chapter 16. God has entrusted His house to us. We cannot take advantage of God's house and use it for personal gains. Take a look at the condition of Christianity these days. We must solemnly remind ourselves this is the house of God; it is not a place where you gain personal benefits. You need to be extremely careful that you don't use it for any personal gains. Also, we cannot use God's house for personal favors. Look at the unrighteous steward. He asked one of his master's debtors, "How much oil do you owe?" The debtor replied, "A hundred measures." The unrighteous steward said, "Cut it in half." He said to another debtor, "How much wheat do you owe? I will cut it by 20 percent." He used his master's possessions in exchange for personal favors. Then one day, when the master takes the stewardship away from him, the debtors will receive him into their homes.

Jesus commented that this unrighteous steward was shrewd. It was highly probable that was happening among the people of Israel at the time. That was why the Lord said, "*The sons of this age are more shrewd.*" These words tell us not to imitate the sons of this age. Do not use the methods of the world. I believe brothers and sisters see these things as quite common in the church. God has given us much encouragement and stern reminders on being stewards. Today, we are in the house of God on earth. May the Lord have mercy on us so we can manage the house of God well in various localities, as this is an important entrustment from God to us.

In the epistles, the apostles had their experience and exhortation concerning stewardship. Paul said, "*We shall be servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*" Our God is a mysterious God. This universe is filled with the mysteries of God. The greatest mystery is Christ. The book of Colossians tells us God's mystery is Christ. Today, God has entrusted Christ to us. If you understand Christ, then you will understand the entire mystery of God. Another purpose of reading the Bible is for us to know Christ. The Holy Spirit continues to unfold the Lord's words revealing the mystery of Christ. After you gained them, you must guard these mysteries, serve with them and be good stewards. The basic meaning of service is how you utilize the essence of Christ to serve.

The Apostle Paul was one who received the mystery of God. Throughout Paul's life, he only employed Christ to serve the church of Christ. In his thirteen epistles, each letter is Christ, Christ, Christ. Paul resolved all of the saints' personal, church, family and marriage issues with

Christ as the origin. He truly knew how to handle the mystery of God and utilized Christ to serve man. When you read Paul's epistles, you will find it very amazing. He mentions Christ so frequently yet it flows smoothly. To Paul, Christ had become his thought, his life and his all; it was so natural for him. Thank God because today He has also entrusted Christ to all of us. If you understand God's mystery when the Holy Spirit opens up God's word and serve according to Christ, then the house of God will be built up. God has His own requirements and restrictions concerning His house. So Paul said, "*It is required that stewards be found faithful.*" This tells us we cannot add anything outside of Christ. We cannot bring man's experience or worldly ways into the church.

In the book of Titus, the Apostle Paul especially spoke about elders and deacons. These are stewards and leaders of the church. In the administration of God's house, these leaders are especially vital. Paul encourages us to have a good family life and to manage our own household well. This is also mentioned in First Timothy. Next, we must serve well. We read many passages earlier telling us to live out a normal life in the midst of abnormal conditions. Today as we come to the end times, the world is becoming more and more abnormal, influencing individuals, families, and even the entire church. The leaders of the church are role models and must set good examples by being good stewards. There is great encouragement for the leaders of the church in the book of Titus.

In Peter's epistle, he tells us that as saints, we must be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. God has given us many gifts and various functions. The purpose is to build up, maintain and manage His house. Every brother and sister have a gift. You must first be a good steward of your gift. You cannot throw your gift aside and neglect it. You must let the Lord use you. Each one of us has a different function. We must serve one another based on these gifts, not excluding one another. There are so many different functions in the house of God. If we can all be good stewards of our function, then we will see the richness of God's house. Peter categorized the functions into two groups, some to preach and some to serve. Whether you speak or work, it is good that you serve according to the strength given by God.

The apostles in the first century realized God had entrusted His house to them. Many apostles and saints were good stewards of God's house. Therefore, in the first century, we see the glory of God appeared on earth. We know church history took a great fall afterwards. Then Catholicism surfaced after the fifth century and God's house turned into a big mess. Martin

Luther's reformation wasn't a trivial matter but it only changed the salvation experience at the personal level. There was no recovery of the church, the house of God. It wasn't until the beginning of the Brethren Movement when we again saw the glorious appearance of God's house on earth. This Movement also impacted China. A few decades ago, the house of God in China held a wonderful testimony. My heart often grieves because we have lost all of these good conditions in our generation. Brothers and sisters, we should be very ashamed. I often shed tears before the Lord. I pray, "Lord, I cannot be compared to my forefathers. I shortchange You so much serving in Your household." Look at all the assemblies and our local fellowship. Can we give glory to God? He doesn't want just a little bit of glory; He wants His glory to be praised.

The Lord has not yet returned and still gives us opportunities. In this limited time, may all brothers and sisters from all localities be of one heart. We need to pray diligently, look to the Lord to be good stewards and truly administer to our respective assemblies according to His heart. If that be the case, we don't have to wait until the Lord returns; we could bring praise to His glory even today on earth. I often prostrate before the Lord and pray in tears. "Lord, I want to see Your glory return to Your people once again in my lifetime. If that is not the case, I am so unwilling to accept it." Brothers and sisters, are you willing? Is our condition today pleasing to the Lord? What has become of God's house under our management? Are we not ashamed? We look to the Lord's mercy. May the words of the Lord encourage us. The Lord has not yet returned. Indeed, He is patient towards us. Not only do we need to love the Lord individually, we hope the Lord will gain good stewards from each and every assembly, to administer well the house of God in different locations. Brothers and sisters, when the Lord returns, everything will come to a close. There will not be time for regrets. Today is an opportunity for you and me. We look to the Lord's mercy. Let's bow our head for a word of prayer.

*Lord, we look to You for Your mercy. You have not returned. You have patience towards us and You still give us opportunities. We pray You will enlighten us and give us a tender heart so we will surrender to You. Let us not be stubborn, hold our ground and continue to err. Restore us and recover us. Lord, we hope the whole earth will be filled with Your glory when You return. May all the assemblies everywhere be revived and may You find Your house on earth. May Your house reveal Your glory and Your glory be praised. Lord, hear our prayer. We look to Your mercy. In Jesus Christ's precious name. Amen.*