

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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Money, Minutes and Mysteries

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you, I praise you for again, just the fact that we can gather here today and just to celebrate who you are, to celebrate what you've done for us. I think of Asia Bibi who is sitting in a prison cell for simply acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we are free to sing to you, we are free to pray to you, we are free to open up your book and free to listen and learn from your Holy Spirit. And so I pray your spirit would give us again the privilege of understanding what it is in your word and of using it to further your kingdom. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we have been looking at the stewardship parables. We've been looking at the parables that are in Luke 16, Luke 19 and Matthew 25 to basically understand the role of a steward. And a steward is really somebody who is simply managing somebody else's resources. We defined good stewardship as a matter of passion. You see, a good steward, this is somebody who owns the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God owns him or her. And his passion is to do his part

or her part to make that kingdom grow. We've seen that a good steward thinks and he plans and he acts for the kingdom. We divided these three categories each into three subcategories that we've looked at this summer. First in the parable of the talents, we learned that a steward is someone who thinks, that is, he thinks faithfully, he thinks joyfully, and he thinks loyally. Secondly in the parable of the shrewd steward, we learned that a steward plans. He plans to redeem and restore the kingdom and to reserve new relationships while he is still at work serving his master. And third, in the parable of the minas, we learned that a steward acts, that is, he or she acts with discipline, diligence, and determination. He is determined to advance the kingdom of God through the local church. That's a lot of responsibility. You know, that can seem onerous if you don't have a passion for stewardship because passion is really what drives stewardship. You know, I could rattle off a dozen or so things you need to do if you're going to be successful at fishing, and those things could seem onerous as well. If you start to look at the list, I mean, you need a rod, you need a reel, you need a line, you need lures, you need a lake, you need boat, you need knowledge, you need patience, you need skill. I could keep on going on and on just laying out what you need to do and it can sound like a real drag if you have no passion for fishing. Now if you have that passion, well then all of that stuff is a piece of cake. I mean, now let's

say I say as a fisherman you need to know a bunch of stuff, you need to know about lures, you need to know about different kinds of lures, you know, there's surface lures, there's spoons, there's rubber worms, you have to study to learn all about these different lures. Well, you know, if fishing is your passion, then that learning isn't work at all. In fact, it's a pleasure and you're going to be all ears learning about lures. Well, it's that same passion that makes stewardship a pleasure instead of a chore, and it's Jesus who said to us that we are to be fishers of men because he wants our passion but he wants it pointed in a certain direction.

This morning I want to expand our understanding of stewardship to look at three things that a good steward is passionate about. Two of them we'll tackle today, the third next Sunday, Lord willing. And those three things a steward is passionate about are: Money, minutes, and the mysteries of God. And we'll do money and we'll do minutes today and the third, that we are the stewards of the mysteries of God, we'll need a whole sermon for that, we'll do that one next Sunday. Now we've already touched on money a little bit before, but I want to leave you with some thoughts about how passionate stewards are about the resources that God has given to us. And actually the best advice I could give you is to hold up this little book called "*The Treasure Principle*" written by Randy

Alcorn and tell you to get a copy of this, get ahold of it and read it.

Let me tell you a little bit about Randy Alcorn. For 13 years he was the pastor of Good Shepherd Church in rural Oregon. And back in the 1990s, he was a passionate pro-life activist. He participated in a number of these rescues. If you remember back in those days, rescues, they would try to surround and shut down abortion clinics, and he wound up being arrested and sued numerous times because the abortion clinics fought back furiously with every single means they had available to them, and a lot of times they used the courts. Well, they have wound up getting an \$8.4 million judgment against Randy Alcorn himself. They also obtained the ability to garnish any salary that he made that was over the minimum wage, and thus they kind of achieved their ultimate victory. What they did was they forced Randy Alcorn into a situation so that any part of his salary above minimum wage would be given to an abortion clinic. Well, in an article in *Christianity Today*, Tim Stafford describes Alcorn's response. This is what he did. It says: "After a flurry of phone calls, prayers and consultations, Alcorn concluded that he had only one alternative. Sunday evening he met with the church's elders to resign his position. On the spot, they wrote him a check for the week of May he had already worked. Though he was a founding pastor

of the church, though it was the only church he had ever known since seminary, though he had expected to spend the rest of his life as a pastor there, he quit his job. On Monday morning he caught his breath and began to ask the next question: What would he do with the rest of his life?" Well, by God's providence, Randy also happened to be a gifted and prolific author and so he began to write books and novels. He and his wife formed an organization called Eternal Perspective Ministries or EPM and he went to work for that corporation for minimum wage. Tim Stafford continues, says this, he says: "Alcorn's books have reached a growing audience. He has spoken to wider and more influential audiences across the country sticking to his passions of generosity, missions, and defending life. It has been years now since EPM needed contributions to pay its modest expenses; instead the organization has become a de facto foundation, passing on all royalty checks to mission causes. In the last three years, EPM has given away \$500,000. Meanwhile the Alcorns live and do business in the same modest three-bedroom home. (Four years ago they added an office to the garage.) They drive used cars that are donated to the organization. Alcorn still receives the minimum wage, plus speaking honorariums. He has not used an ATM or written a check since 1990." Clearly this is a man whose financial walk and his talk line up precisely. Randy Alcorn sums up his approach to money with what he calls six different treasure principles based on

Jesus' words in *Matthew 6:19*, which says this: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Let me just give you a brief outline of his little book *"The Treasure Principle"*, again right here. His six principles are these: Principle number one: God owns everything. I am simply his money manager. We are the manager of the assets that God has entrusted, not given to us. *Psalm 24* says: *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.* You see, everything you and I can see, touch, feel or taste on this earth, everything belongs to God. You know, that's easy to accept in theory often times. Sometimes it's not so easy to accept in practice. The Court system made it impossible, it made it impossible for Randy Alcorn to own anything. I mean, anything that he owned, it would be passed on to an abortion clinic. So his solution, his solution was to simply stop owning things. It's a step that he describes as granting an incredible freedom. This is what he says about owning things. He says, "The greater the mass, the greater the hold that mass exerts. The more things we own, the greater their total mass. The more they grip

us, setting us in orbit around them. Finally, like a black hole, they suck us in. Giving changes all that. It breaks us out of the orbit around our possessions. We escape their gravity, entering a new orbit around our treasures in heaven." You see, being stripped of the ownership of things was not limiting to Randy Alcorn; it was in fact liberating.

Principle two is this: My heart always goes where I put God's money. Watch what happens when you reallocate your money from temporal things to eternal things. Watch what happens when you have a stake in something. You know, have you ever owned a stock, have you ever owned a bond or maybe if you invest in even a little bit of real estate here and there, you know that the minute you put your money into something, you have an interest in it. Folks say I just can't get into missions because it's on the other side of the world and it's just so far away. Well, you know, the secret to changing that is to invest in missions. Start owning a part of a missionary's support and you will start to see your heart moves in that direction. *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

Principle number three is: Heaven, not earth, is my home. You know, we are citizens of a *better country*, a *heavenly one* according to *Hebrews 11:16*. Alcorn puts it this way, he says, "Suppose you

lived in France and you were sent temporarily to live in America. And let's say you were given a very generous housing allowance. Would you, A, furnish your hotel room; or, B, would you send it back home?" You see, the point he's making is everything we furnish here is temporary and every one of us is going back home. Here's the amazing thing. He says "We can send it home today simply by giving." *Matthew 10:42* says: "*And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.*"

The fourth principle we've already looked at, you should be very familiar with, it's principle four is: I must not live for the dot but for the line. We've said this many, many times, you know, there's a difference between a dot and a line, and you start a line with a dot, touch the pen to the paper and it moves on, and some people live for the dot and some people live for the line. The dot is the beginning of our existence. The line is eternity as described by our existence moving on into infinity. Well, some folks live only within the dot. Their essence consists of their birth, their life, and their death with no thought given to the eternity that the dot represents, that the dot begins. Living for the dot gives us treasures that ends up either in junkyards or museums where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and

steal. Living for the line gives us treasures that lasts forever.

The fifth principle is this: Giving is the only antidote to materialism. Alcorn says: "Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It dethrones me and exalts Him." You know, he noted that PBS recently ran a special on materialism in the United States and its title described a disease that this secular station saw as attacking America and they called the disease "Affluenza." Clever. You know, PBS stated in the course of that show that the average American shops six hours a week while spending approximately 40 minutes a week playing with their kids. They also said in 90 percent of divorce cases, arguments about money are what played a prominent role. Now, mind you, this is all being reported by a secular organization. Well, Randy Alcorn has a prescription for this disease and his prescription is giving. This is again, this is what he says, he says: "As long as I still have something, I believe I own it. But when I give it away, I relinquish control, power, and prestige. At the moment of release the light turns on. The magic spell is broken. My mind clears. I recognize God as owner, myself as servant, and others as intended beneficiaries of what God has entrusted to me. Giving doesn't strip me of vested interests: Rather it shifts my vested interests from earth to heaven, from self to God. Of course, money isn't all I can give. Time, wisdom,

and expertise are wonderful gifts. Giving in any form breaks affluenza's fever. Giving breaks me free from the gravitational hold of money and possessions. Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity, heaven."

And finally, principle number six: God prospers me not to raise my standard of living but to raise my standard of giving. We all know what the American way is, the American way is to constantly raise my standard of living so that I'm just barely hanging on to this new higher level. What if God gives us more money than we need so that we can give more generously? You know, that doesn't apply just to people. It applies to us, it applies to churches. You know, America is the wealthiest nation in the history of humankind. What if our phenomenal wealth was intended for us to pass on to the churches that are in poverty? This is exactly what Paul told the Corinthians in *2 Corinthians 8:14*. He said this, he said: *Your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."*

Now, he raises the question, what if we are the Fed Ex guys who instead of delivering what God gave us to deliver decided somehow to keep it for ourselves? We start to think about what is my role

in this, we start to think of the tithe and, you know, 10 percent is a great place to start a tithe, but if God prospers you, why not increase your giving to 20, 30, 40, 50 percent? I think of Pastor Rick Warren, he made a fortune on his books. It's said that he gives away 90 percent of his income. You know what he's actually doing is he's sending it on ahead of himself. He's just being a brilliant financial planner because he's planning eternally. He lives on 10 percent of his income and he says it's more than enough. Well, no doubt his and Randy Alcorn's idea of giving is radical, but so was Randy's life experience and so is his joy. You see, what comes through in *The Treasure Principle* is the sheer joy, the sheer pleasure that he has found in radical giving. To sum up this wonderful little book, Randy says this, he says: "In the movie 'Chariots of Fire,' Olympian Eric Lindell said: 'I believe God made me for a purpose. And when I run I feel his pleasure.' Those who have discovered the treasure principle will testify, 'When I give, I feel his pleasure.' There have been days when I've lost focus, and then a need arises and God leads me to give. Suddenly, I'm infused with energy, purpose, and joy. I feel God's pleasure.'" A steward is passionate about giving money.

The next thing that defines a steward's passion is minutes.

Remember the parable we spoke about of the ten minas in *Luke 19*? A mina, if you remember, represented about three months' wage, and in

this parable everyone was given one. Jesus tells the story, the master approaches ten servants, he gives out ten minas and then he leaves. It says after a long while he returned and he demands an accounting of what they did with this mina. And this differs from the other steward accounts because in this account, everyone receives the exact same amount; they all receive one mina. Well, there's a direct application for us here because there's something that each of us all get an equal amount of, and it's not about minas, it's about minutes. You see, every single day of our lives, every single one of us gets the exact same allotment of minutes: 1440 of them every 24 hours. Now, we have to spend about 480 of them sleeping, we spend about another 480 of them working, that leaves us more or less with about 480 available minutes each day, and every single morning we wake up to a brand new set of those minutes. And how we spend those minutes is what defines our passion. You know, one of the first things I say to my wife Janice -- this morning, is she here? She's going to kill me if she -- one of the first things that I say to my wife -- oh, there she is. Nevermind. Nevermind. No, no, one of the first things that I say to my wife Janice each morning is, I say, "What are your plans for the day?" And in Janice's case, her minutes, the minutes she spends, they well define her passion. She has the gift of helps. And each day that passion is played out in the way she spends her minutes, in the way she spends her time helping her family, her

church, or her community. I see it, there's lots and lots of minutes that are spent there. I mean, there's a great quantity of quality minutes that she spends, quality of minutes that I'm not nearly so generous as she is. In fact, I see her spending them extravagantly. Here's the point that she gets that we often misunderstand, it's this: The quality of our minutes will not make up for the lack of quantity of those minutes. You know, the single greatest complaint all of us have is about the shortage of time. None of us think we have enough of it, so we often respond to that by hoarding the minutes that we want, and by trying to invest the minutes that we're actually willing to give with enough significance, with enough quality so that the lack of quantity doesn't seem to matter. Well, trust me, when it comes to minutes, quantity matters a great deal. James Dobson summed it up nicely when he compared the concept of quality time to a steak dinner. He said if you went to a restaurant and you ordered the best steak that they had and they brought out to you this unbelievable steak that was the size of a postage stamp, well there's very little doubt you're not going to be satisfied. You see, there's no quality without at least some quantity. It's been said with regard to money, if you want to know where your treasure is, look no further than your checkbook. Well, if you want to know where your passion is, look no further than where those 480 minutes are spent each day. Here it is is where quantity determines quality. If for

example the bulk of my minutes is spent thinking about and planning and actually fishing, well that's pretty obvious that fishing is my passion, or sports, or work, or shopping, or television or whatever or wherever you spend your minutes. The problem is, Jesus has a real problem with passions that overtake the kingdom. Listen to this exchange Jesus had with his disciples in *Luke 9*. He says: *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Here's my problem. These words of Jesus are very simple, they're very direct, and they certainly seem to be saying if your passion, if your passion is not first and foremost for the kingdom of God, you are not fit for the kingdom. Now, how many of us can confidently say my passion is for God's kingdom? Frankly, here's another part that many of us struggle with. How many of us can say my passion is God's kingdom as expressed through the local body of

Christ? You see, the kingdom of God for most of us is right here in the local church. In *Ephesians 3:8*, Paul wanted everyone to see: *"What is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Paul is making a staggering statement here. Listen to what he is saying here. He is saying that God is placing his wisdom on display to the spirit world by what they see taking place in his church. I mean, he's inviting the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places to see his manifold wisdom displayed in you and me in church. Now, we don't grasp the enormity of that statement because the enemy has also been passionate about diminishing the importance and the value of the local church. You know, one of the more enlightening aspects of having a new member class is hearing the testimonies of people coming in, coming and speaking about churches that they've been in in the past, people have moved and people have just moved on. What I've been really struck with over the years is how many of you have had very bad experiences with the local church. I mean, the church's track record, frankly it's awful. You know, you have adulterous clergy, you have money hungry, legalism, psychological manipulation, social pressures, cliques, these have

all become synonymous with the church. And yet the church is so precious to Christ that he died for it. *Ephesians 5:25* says: *Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.* He shed his blood to cleanse her and fit her to be his bride. But there's a reason why church is so bad. The reason is this: That which is precious to Christ is hated by his enemy, and no institution on earth is more hated, more targeted or more attacked than the local church because it is in the local church where the kingdom of God meets earth. Church is the place where the covenant community of God exists and it exists to demonstrate to the spirit world that the kingdom of God still triumphs over the kingdom of the enemy. Now, remember, it was Jesus who said to Peter in *Matthew 16*: *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* You think the devil intends to take that challenge lying down? You see, the church is the enemy's single greatest threat. And anything he can do to destroy it, he will. Every foible, every sin, every speck in any eye can become a log in the eye of the local church because the enemy wants you to spend your money, he wants you to spend your passion, and he wants you to spend your minutes elsewhere, anywhere

but in the community that counts for eternity. And the threat doesn't just come from the failures of church leaders. You know, sometimes the threat to the church comes from very, very good sources. You know, I understand that lots of good things now compete for time that used to belong to the church, and I also understand that hard choices now have to be made. Let me give you one example of a hard choice that we had to make many, many years ago. You know, some of our kids when they were in high school were very, very good athletes and we had coaches and teachers tell us that they -- these were really special players and that they really needed their skills to develop and they suggested that we put them in leagues or travel teams that would further develop their skills and perhaps bring them up to another level. Well, the only problem, the coaches said, is that all of these things took place on Sunday morning. Well, for us that was a deal breaker. For our kids it was a deal breaker, and so we declined. Now, ten years ago that was a difficult decision. Ten years later we know it was a right decision, and better still, our adult kids know it was a right decision. You see, we have too few minutes chased by too many good venues clamoring for those minutes, and you will never regret choosing for the kingdom. You see, the church is one part of the kingdom that Christ cared so much about that he refers to it as his own body. And John Stott once said this: "If the church is central to God's purpose as seen in both history and the gospel, it

must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the center."

Joshua Harris has written a fascinating little book about our passions as they translate to minutes and the role in the -- that we have in the local church. This is the book that we use in our new members class. It's called *Stop Dating the Church*. Many of you are very familiar with it, but in this book, Harris gives an example. He talks about a fellow who calls himself "fat Bob" and this is what he says. You're going to find this interesting. "Robert lives in Gilbert, Arizona." That's where these guys were just spending the last month. He says: "Robert lives in Gilbert, Arizona. He likes friends to call him 'fat Bob.' He loves life and people and enjoys laughing at himself. He's got a good job and faithfully attends his church. But if you really want to see Robert excited, ask him about his Jeep. He talks about it like it's a person. 'She's my baby,' he says affectionately. He searched for over two years to find just the right yellow and black Wrangler. 'It was spotless. Just gorgeous,' he recounts. 'Once I got the Jeep, well, of course I had to join the Jeep club,' explains Robert. The local club had over 1500 active members. It offered meetings, parties, trail runs, and a website where members can exchange Jeep tips. It's a whole Jeep community,' Robert

says. Through the club, Robert hooked up with guys who taught him the finer points of four-wheeling. As his Jeep discipleship intensified, Robert's commitment only deepened. 'I was totally hooked,' he says, 'every free moment was consumed. I was either working on a Jeep, planning a Jeep run, hanging out and talking Jeep or going online to check our Jeep website.'"

Now, you can say of fat Bob, where your minutes are, there will your heart be, and his minutes obviously were with his Jeep. Joshua Harris says we all, each of us have our own version of the Jeep club. For most of us, that club is not the church. Robert told him how the Jeep club had pushed the church to the outskirts of his life, and he admitted that he no longer had any passion for the church or the people in it and they were now an intrusion on his true passion. It was his new master. And as Jesus said in *Matthew 6:24*: "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" He will love the Jeep and he will hate the other. He will be devoted to the Jeep and despise the other. And how will we know which one is loved and which one is despised? Well, we just look at the minutes. That's all we have to do.

Now, am I saying we have to spend all of our minutes here at the

church? No, I'm not saying that at all. What I'm saying is we need to make spending our minutes on the kingdom our priority. The church is just part of that kingdom. So is my friends and my neighbors and my money and my time and my passion when I think like a steward does, first and foremost of the kingdom. Now, I'm not the one who said, "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God,*" it was Jesus who said that. And it is we who assume he had to have been speaking hyperbole. What if he wasn't? Now you might be thinking, okay, I've got it, all I've got to do is give all of my money, all of my time and all of my passion to the church and then maybe, just maybe, I might squeak into heaven. That's not what I'm saying at all. Jesus has repeatedly shown us in these stewardship parables not what we must do to earn our way into heaven because we don't do anything. I mean, salvation is the gift of God not of works, so no man can boast. It's the movement of God's Holy Spirit in the new heart of flesh, that's where passion for the kingdom comes from. It doesn't come from me. It comes from God. And that's why the Master identifies kingdom citizens not by their performance but by whether or not they have a heart for performance. The stewards who rejected the gospel were people who had no heart and no passion for stewardship whatsoever and their hearts of stone identified them for who they were. And so I guess my question this morning is: What is your heart telling you? You know, if we look at how we

spend our money, we look at how we spend our minutes, you know, these are two of the primary venues of a steward's heart, we can easily excuse ourselves by saying, well, it's the church's fault. I mean, there's greed, there's corruption, there's manipulation and there's worse. So what do we do? Well, we can tell the Master, "I buried your money and your minutes in the ground because your church really isn't worthy enough," and we will be just like the wicked steward. Or we can spend our money, our minutes and that passion transforming our church into the covenant community that the Master intends it to be, and that's already happening here at Grace, but there's still a long, long way to go. And every one of the members of this community has been gifted by God himself to become part of the local expression of the body of Christ. *1 Peter 4:10* says this: *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

You know, if you exclude the sign gifts, there are 15 different forms the Spirit works through and each one of us has at least one. You know, there's helps, there's leadership, there's giving, there's mercy, hospitality, faith, discernment, knowledge, wisdom, prophesy, exhortation, pastor shepherding, teacher, apostle, evangelists. These are the minas. These are the talents that God distributes, and every one of us has at least one, and some have more than one. *Luke 12:48* says: *"For everyone to whom much is*

given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." You see, these minas require minutes to be used of God, and those are minutes every one of us wants for ourselves. Just as Randy Alcorn demonstrated, the great joy that accompanies great giving, so too great joy is ours for the taking when we use the gifts God gives us to build up his church. I mean, think about it. God's most precious possession on this planet is his church. He loves her, he died for her, he calls her his bride. You and I have this one lifetime to build up his bride and we have all eternity to reap what we sow. Consider the church is God's demonstration of his wisdom to the spirit world. Understand what he's saying. The spirit world watches us, the church, to discern and understand God's wisdom. Could anything be more worthy of our money, our minutes, and our passion than that?

You know, in addition to our stewardship of money and minutes, we have one more incredible privilege that I'm going to address next week. *1 Corinthians 4:1* says: We are *stewards of the mysteries of God*. You know what that means? It means that the mystery of who we are, the mystery of what we're doing here, the mystery of where we're headed and why, that mystery has been placed in our hands. You know, the deep truths that govern this universe have been revealed not to gurus, not to scientists, not to mystics, but to us. *1 Peter* tells us these are mysteries that even angels long to

look into. And they've been revealed to us. Like our money and our minutes, these mysteries and how we handle them are part of our responsibility as stewards, and the mystery is that God himself became one of us, that he lived out his life perfectly and then he offered himself as a sacrifice exchanging his righteousness for our sin, that by placing our faith in Christ, we inherit his righteousness and are therefore made fit for heaven. That mystery is something that all of God's elect have been given, and it's something the Master is going to seek an accounting for, for money, for minutes, and mysteries. The question is: Do you have a passion for stewarding them for the kingdom? You know, perhaps you wonder where do I even start? Well, like everything else, it starts with prayer and it moves with us in leadership. So talk to the elders, talk to the deacons about where and how you can fit into the kingdom here at Grace. You see, finding your gift and helping you develop it is our gift as well as yours, and it's no secret, I mean, we all know in this area, the church has often been a hindrance rather than a help but we as a church are determined to be different. So pray and seek and ask and act about your place in the kingdom because that's what really matters. We have the greatest of privileges, God revealing his wisdom through us. It's also the greatest of responsibilities, and together we can steward with passion our money, our minutes, and God's mystery for his glory. Let's pray.

Father God, I just, I thank you for what an incredible privilege the people in this room have. We are part of the body of Christ. What an extraordinary gift that is. What an extraordinary passion you have for your bride, for your church. Lord, give every single one of us that passion, I pray, give us the understanding that your kingdom and being passionate about your kingdom is what matters and what lasts, whether it's money, whether it's minutes and as we'll see, whether it's the mysteries. Lord, give us that passion, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.