

My Name and this workshop deals with the topic of being a steward of our suffering. Tonight my husband will teach the theology of stewardship in suffering and this afternoon we will look at a real life personal example. Our God wants us to be stewards of our trials as much as our talents, resources, etc. I want to introduce you to Dave Chilcoat, the man who taught me how to be God's steward of the worst of trials. I met Dave 40 years ago when I went to a Young Life club as a high school student. I met Jesus as my savior through Dave's teachings. Dave and Beth were the people that God used to teach me how to live life, love people and serve Him.

In October, 2003 Dave was diagnosed with ALS and was told that he had 1 ½ - 3 years to live. He was 55, had a great career practicing law, he was very involved in ministry and had a great marriage and family. He was living truly a full and rich life. We who were mentored by this man wanted to see what would happen to his faith because he had mentioned in his YL teachings as a 22 year old that he had one request of God in death; that he not die of suffocation. He said he would go to war, die a martyr but he did not want to die of a disease like ALS. He had asthma as a child and was scared to death of not being able to breathe. One time after his diagnosis I asked him about that request and he told me something I will never forget. "Don't ever say this is happening to me as a result of the fall. Never say that Satan caused this. God entrusted me with this disease because he knew I could glorify Him more with it than without it. Pray that I do not waste a bit of this suffering but allow God to glorify himself in all of it."

This is the attitude of a steward, “God entrusted me with this disease.” I would love to share with you how Dave and Beth uniquely went through this trial because I love them and love bragging about them. But that would not be helpful to us. We are not Dave and we could not all face this kind of trial with the same adventuresome attitude, humor and orneriness that he did. David would not even want me to make this about him. He would want me to share how great our God is, how faithful he is to his promises, and how simple it is to find his joy and peace as stewards of life’s sufferings. I am not saying it is easy but it is simple. We will see that this was not easy at all for the Chilcoats but God’s makes his ways uncomplicated and straight forward.

I am going to allow David to teach you himself. When he was diagnosed he began a personal diary that day. Within a month he began an online journal so that the hundreds of people who wanted to know all updates could keep informed without him having to answer that many calls. The journal quickly became reflections of what God was teaching him. His journal was read by 90,000 people. His wife edited his journal into book form so that he could continue to share all that the Lord taught him.

Now so that she can introduce you to her husband, allow me to introduce Beth Chilcoat, my friend and spiritual mom.

As you can see David was realistic, honest and yet still had deep confidence in the goodness of God that resulted in real peace and joy. This peace and joy in the midst of great pain and grief deepened to the time of his death.

- Trials bring about a crisis of faith and that crisis changes us.
- God wants that change to result in greater love, joy and peace because we have experienced a deeper sense of his goodness. This is when he is glorified, when a watching world says “How do you do that?”
- Too often trials crush us, harden us and leave us cynical and despairing.

What determines the outcome? It is not the severity of the trial, our personality, not our gifting even though we often believe this. You and I decide whether our trials end in joy or despair by how we steward them. We all are stewards of the suffering; we only decide if we are a wise or proud steward. A wise steward accepts that his/her loving sovereign God has allowed the suffering therefore depends on Him for all that is necessary to steward it. Mt. 25 teaches that the proud steward falls into an attitude of suspicion of God’s goodness and therefore depends more on self than God. To help us realize which steward we are and when we are going to look at 3 commands God gives us and contrast how each steward responds.

The 3 commands are to **Ask, Affirm and Wait.**

1. God wants us to **ask** him for all we need and all his provisions
2. God wants us to **affirm** all that he says in His word and all that He is.
3. God wants us to **wait** for his timing and ways to accomplish his promises.

Now let's look at how the two stewards interact with these commands.

In regards to **asking**:

The wise steward asks for everything but the proud steward does not ask unless he deems it necessary or right.

- Wise steward believes Jesus when he says ask and it will be given to you. He believes Jesus when he states in Jn. 15 that “the plain fact is that apart from me you can do nothing”
- Situations that tempt us to be proud are when we feel like we can handle it on our own or when we feel like we don't deserve God's provision because our suffering is our own fault.

The wise steward asks for God's will to be done but the proud steward asks for his own will to be done.

- We know that God wants us to ask for perseverance in suffering but there are times when we as proud stewards ask him to just stop the trial. How often do we ask God to show us the log in our own eye when we are in conflict with people? I too often ask God to change the other person rather than change me.

The wise steward asks for all that God promises but the proud steward asks for too little:

- When the wise steward reads Eph. 3:20 “Now to him who by his power within us is able to do infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine” he begins to ask God to show him that power.
- But the proud steward asks for what he can only imagine. Often “the ask” is for the ability to endure a trial rather than to be able to rejoice in it even though God tells us all over his word to rejoice in all circumstances even our trials.

In regards to **affirming**:

The wise steward affirms spiritual truths while the proud steward affirms natural truths.

- God wants us to so focus on his truth that it alters our view of the suffering so that we can say like Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 “these little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time **NOT** at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory; it is the invisible things that are really permanent.
- It is so easy to focus on the visible things and allow those things to alter our view of truth, especially truth about God’s character and promises. When we begin to affirm our doubts we can end up in real defeat. David’s rebuke

In regards to **waiting**:

The wise steward is willing to wait for the complete fulfillment of God's promises and wait for God's timing but the proud steward expects complete fulfillment in his/ her timing,

- The wise steward remembers Paul words in Romans 8: that we who have a foretaste of the Spirit are in a state of painful tension... We are saved by this hope, but in our moments of impatience, let us remember that hope always means waiting for something that we do not yet possess. But if we hope for something we cannot see, then we must settle down to wait for it in patience.
- I think it is very difficult for us American Christians be wise in this matter. Our culture sets us up to be proud expecting everything to come fast to be close to perfect. We have to lean against this cultural influence if we want to see God's goodness in our suffering.

The wise steward waits in God's strength while the proud steward waits in his own strength.

- Paul states in Philippians 4:13 that he is ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives in him. Do you know how to wait in God's strength? I look forward to showing you how David learned the secret of this command.

Now we are going to read through excerpts of Davis's journal and I have given you a copy with note lines on the side so that you can jot down notes on what David ask God for, what he affirmed of God's truths and how did he wait.

Conclusion:

1. Ask:

- David asked for the big things (the care of his family) the little things (encouragement for the day.) Beth just told me that God did give David the desire of his heart pertaining to his death.
- He asked for the things he wanted (healing) and for God's will (use this for your glory)
- He asked for all God promised. What really convicted me was that even though Dave was convinced this was God's will for him; he did not mind complaining about it to the Lord during their late night chats. I think that if God calls me to a trial he wants me to have no complaints about how hard it is. So too often I end up a worn out martyr rather than a well provided for steward, comforted, strengthened and refreshed!

2. Affirmed:

- David affirmed the sovereignty and goodness of God. On the first day he affirmed God was on his throne and would supply all his needs. At the end when he struggled with leaving his family he affirmed God loved them and would care for them.
- He remembered and affirmed that he was the unfaithful one and God is always faithful.
- Affirmed and trusted God's word when it didn't make sense. July 18, 2006 David is having very hard time breathing and nothing is working. Serious panic is

setting in. As he was praying 1 Thess. 5: 16-18 be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Read journal pg. 132. David did not understand but trusted anyway and it turned out that the gratitude was not a duty given by a harsh master but the very medicine that would work when others didn't.

- David affirmed that God understood his pain, his fear and affirmed God's word could put words to his pain. I loved the way that David used the Psalms in crying out to God in God's words not his. On a very bad day when he was so discouraged he prayed to God Ps. 31-9-11. What a comfort when God can speak our pain.

3. Wait:

- How was David able to wait and hope in the Lord?
Matthew 6:34 was God's provision for David and Beth to hope. Living in the past leads to regret, living in the future leads to fear and anxiety. But living in the day and receiving God's daily provisions is the key to God's joy, peace, strength and comfort.

David said *"I just wish that I had understood to live this way before I got sick.*

I just pray that we all can understand how to live this way before we face death.