



1. If you have not noticed, many times the Bible teaches things that are counter-intuitive to our human reasoning. Love and pray for your enemies, if you want to save your life, you need to lose it, there are three persons that are God and yet only one God are some of these. But maybe the one that goes against our human reasoning more than any other is this: If you want to get more you have to give away what you have. Why do you think God does and says things that don't make sense to us on a human level? Can you think of any more examples?
Answer—The reason God does this is because we have to have faith in Him to believe these statements are true and apply them to our lives. It takes faith in God to believe it is better to love my enemies instead of getting revenge on them, and it takes faith to believe that if I give more of my finances He will bless me in return. You might want to read Malachi 3:8-11 because God dares the Israelites to give what they should and test whether God will then bless them.
2. Pastor Rick said that everything that we have belongs to God, do you believe this is true? How can this be true if many things that you have are a result of your own or another person's hard work? It is easy to believe that the universe is God's since he made it, but your car? Your house? The money in your bank account?
Answer—Ecclesiastes 5:19 says that wealth is a gift from God. Who is it that gives us life that we use to produce wealth? Who is it that is able to keep us healthy so that we can earn money to buy our car? Who created the brain that you have that you use? God can take our life or our health at any time he wants. So yes, everything in our lives belongs to him and he can take it any time he wants to. Everything is on loan from him.
3. Read Matthew 25:14-27. In Bible times, a talent was an amount of money, about \$1000 in today's money. Why does he give each person a different amount, according to the passage? Do you think this is fair? Although this passage uses money as the example, since everything we have is from God, what else has God given us other than money? Do you think God wants us to use those things for him also? What "talents" has God given you that can be used to serve him? Look specifically at the reward that was given to the first two servants, what do you notice about it? What does this imply?
Answer— Each person is given an amount according to his ability, which is not fair. Fairness means that everybody receives the same amount. God is not fair, but he is just. Justice

means everyone gets what they deserve. This is totally against the current idea of “equity” which means everyone should receive the same amount, regardless of their ability or productivity. Equity and fairness in life is an un-biblical idea. We all have talents that God gives us. This might be a physical ability like strength, or singing, or the ability to play a sport. This might be a mental ability like being good at math or the ability to run a business. Everything we have can and should be use in service to God. The money we make from using these abilities should also be used to serve God, since he gave them to us. Interestingly, the reward given to the two people who used their “talents” in a good way was the exact same. The one who had two talents received as a reward the same as the one who had five. This implies that what God is interested in is not the amount we are able to produce, but instead that whatever our abilities are we use them faithfully to the best of our ability. So even though it is not fair for someone to have more abilities than me, if I use what I have faithfully, I will be rewarded the same because of my faithfulness.

4. In the passage of Matthew 25, the people who were given the talents had to give an account of what they had done with what they were given and that we will have to give an account of what we did with what God gave us. How does that make you feel? Read verses 28—30 of Matthew 25, which is what happened to the third servant. What do you think his punishment means? Do you think it means he is sent to hell? Do you think you will be sent to hell if you do not use your talents correctly? Now read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 which refers to the same idea that we will be judged by God for how we use our talents. What do you think the foundation refers to? What do you think the gold, silver, and precious stones would be? What about the wood, hay, and stubble? What happens when the fire is brought to bear on what has been built? If something is left after the fire, what do you get? If everything is burned that was built, what do you think that means? Is the person sent to hell if everything is burned? If the fire were put to everything you have done in your life up to this point, would anything be left?

Answer—It says that the third servant is cast out to darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. There are two possible explanations for this. Either the person was never a believer which is why he did not use his talents for God so it is talking about being sent to hell, or it is simply saying that there will be a great loss to the person who does not use his talents for God. The passage in 1 Corinthians actually tells us which is the correct interpretation: The foundation is our salvation in Christ. We have a choice on what to build on the foundation. The two choices coincide with using our talents for God or not for God as represented by the building materials. Those who use their abilities for God will be rewarded. Those who do not will suffer the loss of those rewards, they receive nothing. But notice: Even if I never build anything good on my foundation and everything is burned up when I give an account for my life, I am still saved. So loss of salvation is never a worry for a believer.

5. In Matthew 25:25, when giving an account for why he did nothing with the talent he was given, the third servant said he did nothing because he was afraid. What fears keep us from using what God has given us for his glory? What is the main thing you are afraid of when you consider using your life to serve God? Read 1 John 4:16-18. What does this passage say love does to fear? How do you think that having love will give us confidence when we are judged? So, what is the answer to overcoming our fears of serving God with our time, talents, and finances?
- Answer—Love drives away fear because love is a stronger force than fear. When you love someone, you are not afraid to do things for them because of love. The answer to remove our fear of serving God is to replace it with love for Christ. When you love Christ, it gives you confidence when you look forward to the judgment we will all experience because you know that*

you did all you could do for him. This is why developing a personal relationship with Christ is so important, it is what becomes the motivation for everything we do. We love him because he first loved us. We are willing to do even what we fear to do for someone we love.