



THE NONCONFORMIST

THE **PUZZLING** STORIES
OF JESUS

12



YES, NO + MAYBE

1. I am more of a risk-taker than the people sitting beside me.
2. I have made some financial investments that have really done poorly.
3. God wants us to take risks with what He has given us.
4. Once you are saved, you must remove yourself from the worldly crowd.
5. It is upsetting to God when individuals focus on their own spiritual protection.

DIG DEEPER

● **READ Matthew 25:14-30** (NIV)

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

22 “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’

28 “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

✦ **15 Bags of gold** - Also referred to as “talents.” The talent was the largest unit of currency in the Hellenistic world. A single talent was equivalent to 15-20 years of wages for a laborer! In Roman currency, a dēnaron was a worker’s daily wage (see 20:1-16), and a talanton was equivalent to at least 6,000 dēnaria. In that case, 5 bags of gold could equal as much as 100 years wages.

✦ **15 Each according to his ability** - (κατά την ἴδιαν δυναμὶν [kata tēn idian dunamin]). Each had all that he was capable of handling. The use that one makes of his opportunities is the measure of his capacity for more.

DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

+ 18 Dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. - Jewish teachers used to say that anyone who immediately buries money entrusted to him is no longer liable, because he has taken the safest course possible in protecting the money. On the other hand, if a man wraps the money in a cloth and it is lost, then he is responsible to replace the money (compare Luke 19:20). Jesus does not indicate at this point why the man did this (laziness? fear?). The important thing for this man was that the money was secure and that he could produce it when the time came.

- How do people “dig a hole” and bury the talents that God give us?

+ 21, 23 You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. - This indicates that the faithful servant will be rewarded with a position that will give him more scope for the use of the abilities that he has shown he possesses. Once again Jesus is teaching that the reward for good work is the opportunity of doing further work, but on a bigger scale.

- What does it say about God that his reward to you for faithfulness is more responsibility?

+ 24 I knew that you are a hard man - Sklēros (“hard”) with reference to persons can also mean “strict, harsh, cruel, merciless.” This servant’s limited knowledge of his master—he knew only the man’s stern side but not his love—was his excuse to handle his master’s wealth irresponsibly. Many believers today know only a God of rules and wrath, so they float passively and attempt to excuse their sins of omission. God has given them ample opportunity to learn of his love (11:29), but their own undisciplined hearts make them blindly foolish, and they squander their lifetimes. They call themselves Christians, but they are biding their time, trying to “stay out of trouble,” awaiting glory in heaven. Perhaps Jesus sensed this behind the disciples’ question (24:3).

+ 26 You wicked, lazy servant - “Lazy” (oknēros) more literally means shrinking or hesitating. This servant’s tragic error lay in allowing himself to be paralyzed by his fear. The master accepts the description of himself as reaping what he did not sow and gathering what he did not winnow, but interestingly he drops the word “hard” that the defaulter had applied to him. It may well be that he is not saying that he really is the kind of man he has been said to be, but saying that if the third servant really thought that he was like that he would have acted in a different manner.

- Why do you think it is important to God that we don’t see him as a hard man?

+ 27 Received it back with interest - In the early Roman Empire legal interest was eight per cent, but in usurious transactions it was lent at twelve, twenty-four, and even forty-eight. The Mosaic law did not allow interest in dealings between Hebrews, but only with strangers (Deut. 23:19 & 20; Psa. 15:5).

- What is the interest that God is looking for?

+ 28 So take the bag of gold from him - “So” (therefore) is important. The master is not acting in an arbitrary fashion. The man has had the money for quite some time and has shown that he has no intention of making any use of it. Left with him it would stay buried in the ground. But money should be used, and therefore it was necessary to take the money away. “Give it to him who has the ten talents,” he goes on. That man has shown that he knows how to use money profitably. He will make the best use of it, and therefore it should be left with him.

- What do we lose when we don’t utilize the talents that God give us?

+ 30 Worthless servant - (τον ἀχρεῖον [ton achreion]). Useless (α [a] the absence, removal, or loss of some quality or attribute that is normally present; and χρεῖος [chreios], useful) and so unprofitable, injurious. Doing nothing is doing harm.

The first two servants acted out of loving loyalty, but the third acted out of selfish fear. The first two were motivated by the hope of pleasing the master; the third by fear of displeasing him. The two motives sound the same, but the end result is quite different. A certain “fear of the Lord” is critical to holy, faithful living (Prov. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:17). But this is not paralyzing fear. Healthy fear is accompanied by a knowledge of the love of God, while paralyzing fear knows nothing of God’s love.

- How does an unhealthy fear of displeasing God ruin our relationship with Him?



MY PRAYER...

1. How am I investing God’s talents today?
2. In what ways am I allowing unhealthy thoughts of fear take the place of God’s love?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?