



“God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”

Prayer

Introductory Activity

Focus: Where did this lie come from? Is it in the Bible? No, but you will find a form of it in the Koran: “Indeed, Allah will not change the conditions of a population until they change what is in themselves” (Ar-Ra’d 13:11). This lie about God has its roots in pagan religion. Five hundred years before Christ, Aesop wrote, “The gods help them that help themselves.” Our current wording was used by the deist Ben Franklin, who said in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, “God helps those who help themselves.” Satan often couches his lies in half-truths. Today, we seek to expose this lie and to give an answer for the hope that we have!

Activity:

Amen, Brother! On the internet, it is possible to find many examples of messages that reflect what we often call “prosperity theology,” a theology based on the premise that God wants us to be successful and rich. And we will be, the message proclaims, if we only do our part. A common theme expressed in these messages is that *your determination* and *your positive thinking* will produce good things in your life.

- In your opinion, why do people want to believe this lie?
- Often, an element of truth is contained in lies about God. Perhaps that is one thing that makes them so appealing. Read the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. Identify an element of truth in the lie “God helps those who help themselves.”



Where Does My Help Come From?

1. My sinful nature leads me to believe that I can do something to be right with God. This is called the *opinio legis*, which means “the opinion of the law.” Give specific examples of how you see this truth in other religions, denominations, and even in your own hearts.

2. The Bible makes it clear that by nature I am dead and blind. Point out how the following passages refute the *opinio legis*.

Ephesians 2:1—“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.”

Acts 26:17,18—“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

3. God must do 100% of the helping to make us alive. Read the following passage. Paul compares our conversion to God’s work at creation. In what way is God’s activity in creation like conversion? (*Hint: Answer the question “Why did Lazarus come out of the tomb?”*)

2 Corinthians 4:6—“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

4. The following passages underscore the truth that God helps *only* those who *can’t* help themselves!

Read Luke 18:9-14. In what ways do we sometimes behave like the Pharisee?

Romans 4:4,5—“Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.” Why is righteousness credited to us as a gift?

Romans 5:8 (emphasis added)—“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: *While we were still sinners*, Christ died for us.” What advice would you give to someone who says, “If I can just kick this habit (or sin), I’ll feel closer to God”?

5. Made alive in Christ, we will live for him.

Read Titus 2:11-14. What fuels our desire to obey God’s Word?

Group Discussion

- In Acts 14:22 we read, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” The truth is, even if we are living faithfully, God does not always help in a worldly sense. Using your Bible knowledge, give an example of someone for whom this was true. (*Think prophets, apostles, patriarchs, and even your own life.*)
- In his explanation to the conclusion of the commandments, Martin Luther said, “God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.” Is Luther saying, “God helps those who help themselves”? Explain. (*For help, look up Matthew 5:3-10; Luke 17:10; and Romans 11:35.*)

- Describe what life will be like for those who believe “God helps those who help themselves.”

Closing Activity

Pen a Proverb. Write a two-line proverb expressing a truth that exposes the lie “God helps those who help themselves.” Then look up Proverbs 28:26 to see how your wisdom compares to that of the holy writer!