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**Lesson 4 | May 7th, 2023 | “God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”**



**Ministry Updates**

**Lesson 3 Recap**

**We Gather Together:** (*Selected verses from Ephesians 2 )*

Pastor: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins

**Group: Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.**

P: But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5**made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions

**G: it is by grace you have been saved**

P: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

**G: not by works, so that no one can boast.**

P: For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,

**G: which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

**Opening Prayer**

**Schedule for Our Study | “10 Lies About God”**

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| April 23rd | There are Many Ways into God’s Presence |
| April 30th | I Don’t Need the Bible or Worship to Be Right With God |
| **May 7th** | **God Helps Those Who Help Themselves** |
| *May 14th* | *Confirmation Sunday (Cake Reception)* |
| *May 21st* | *Congregational & Voter’s (CV) Meeting* |
| May 28th | God Has Made Death a Natural Part of Life |
| June 4th | God is Distant and Disinterested in What Happens |
| *Break for Summer... August 20th Fall Kick-Off* | |

**LIE: God Helps Those who Help Themselves**

**Introduction**

**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!

**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.”
    - (Finish this sentence) In General...

Those who work hard \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Those who work hard at their jobs \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Those who serve God faithfully in the church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If I try my hardest in this life then \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Does God Work This Way?**

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.”Point out how the following passages refute the *opinio legis.*

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| **Ephesians 2:1 –** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.  **Acts 26:17,18** - I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them **18**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.’  **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. |

**God Helps Those who CAN’T Help Themselves**

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

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| **Luke 18:9-14 – 9**To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: **10**“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11**The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. **12**I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ **13**“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ **14**“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”  *In what ways do we sometimes behave like the Pharisee?*  **Romans 5:8 –** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  *What does this mean for you?*  *What advice would you give someone who says, “If I can just clean this one thing up, I’ll be closer to God.”*  **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?*  **Titus 2:11-14 –** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **12**It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, **13**while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, **14**who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.  *What fuels our desire to obey God’s Word?* |

**Group Discussion**

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| 1. 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.)* 2. **Describe what life is like for the....**   Child who always feels the pressure from his/her parents to be perfect in school.  The worker who has a micromanaging boss and never can be enough.  The person who believes that God will bless me the harder I work and more I serve him.  The person who knows that God has shown love to the hopeless, and that we are saved by grace alone. |

**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!

*Next Week: Confirmation Cake Reception in the Lobby*

**Closing Prayer**