



sermon notes

“God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”

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### Bible Quiz – True or False

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The “epistles” are the wives of the “apostles.”         | T | F |
| 2. The Minor Prophets had day jobs in Israel’s coal mines. | T | F |
| 3. Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.               | T | F |
| 4. Hercules was a great Old Testament hero.                | T | F |
| 5. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a rock group in the 60s.   | T | F |
| 6. “God helps those who help themselves” is in the Bible.  | T | F |

### I. The Origin of “God helps those who help themselves.”

- Attributed to Benjamin Franklin, but Franklin only popularized it when he published it in *Poor Richard’s Almanac* in 1735.
- The phrase is actually from an old Aesop Fable from the 1<sup>st</sup> century called, “Hercules and the Wagoneer”:  
“A Wagoneer was once driving a heavy load along a very muddy way. He came to a part of the road where the wheels sank half-way into the mire, and the more the horses pulled, the deeper sank the wheels. So the Wagoneer threw down his whip, knelt down, and prayed to Hercules: ‘Oh, Hercules, help me in my hour of distress.’ But Hercules appeared to him and said, ‘Man, don’t sprawl there. Get up and put your shoulder to the wheel. The gods help them that help themselves.’”

### II. Why the statement is TRUE-ish: \_\_\_\_\_

God expects us to use God-given abilities:

- earning and preparing the food we eat
- the legwork needed to get a job

*You lazy fool, look at the ant...let it teach you a thing or two. Nobody has to tell it what to do. All summer it stores up food... So how long are you going to laze around doing nothing? How long before you get out of bed?*

Proverbs 6:6–7 (MSG)

When Paul established a new church in Thessalonica, some new Christians took Paul’s teaching that Jesus would soon return as an opportunity to quit their jobs and incur a large amount of debt. When Paul heard what these new Christians were doing, he wrote them:

*For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

2 Thessalonians 3:10–12 (NIV)

### III. Why the statement is false: It ignores \_\_\_\_\_

“If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn’t help the poor, either we’ve got to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we’ve got to acknowledge that he commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition; and then admit that we just don’t want to do it.” —Stephen Colbert

If we are followers of Jesus, our calling is clear:

*True devotion, the kind that is pure and faultless before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their difficulties...* James 1:27 (CEB)

*As far as our relationship to Christ Jesus is concerned...what matters is a faith that expresses itself through love.* Galatians 5:6 (GW)

*If you refuse to listen to the cry of the poor, your own cry for help will not be heard.* Proverbs 21:13 (GNT)

*...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with you God.* Micah 6:8 (NIV)

### IV. Why the statement is false: It leads to \_\_\_\_\_

*You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...* Deuteronomy 8:17–18 (NIV)

### V. Here’s the truth: God helps those \_\_\_\_\_

- God is the God of the hopeless cause
- The God who loves sinners
- The God who walks with us through the darkest valleys
- The God who brings light into our darkness
- The God who helps us find peace amid our anxiety
- The God who rescues, redeems and forgives

There is a word for God’s mercy toward those who cannot help themselves:

\_\_\_\_\_