

# TRITE, *not* TRUE

JARRETT STEPHENS

rightnow MEDIA

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## SESSION 5: “God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”

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### ► SERIES RECAP

*You and I are swimming in a culture full of opinions masquerading as wisdom. What’s worse, much of what passes as wisdom today has the ring of biblical truth. How do you tell the difference? How do you see through half-truths and self-help trends to access the deep wisdom of God’s Word and the full life found in Him alone?*

*Those are the questions Jarrett Stephens tackles in his series Trite, Not True – where he explores six of the most common pop philosophies that influence people’s lives today, including Christians.*

*As you dive in, you’ll discover how to decipher superficial insights from the real truth of God’s Word, as well as how to apply biblical wisdom to your everyday life. Because ultimately, the life of meaning and impact you long for doesn’t come from a philosophy, platitude, maxim, or mantra... but from one person, Jesus Christ.*

### ► OPEN

(Simple intro to frame the objective of the group study, break the ice, and get people thinking)

**Ask the group:** If you’ve ever been on a service project or a mission trip, what’s your favorite memory from the experience? If you haven’t, what’s your favorite memory of helping someone?

Statistics show that over one billion people volunteer each year, worldwide (source). That’s one in every eight people on the planet! As humans, we enjoy helping others – it gives us a sense of purpose and significance. And it blesses both the person being helped and the one doing the helping.

Today we’re going to look at a statement about helping that 52% of Christians believe is in the Bible (source) – even though it isn’t. It’s...

*God helps those who help themselves.*

Let’s dig a little deeper and see what the Bible actually says.

### ► WATCH THE VIDEO

**Jarrett Says:** As Christians, we don’t just sit around doing nothing and then expect God to move. Instead, we get going, and God honors our faith and our obedience. In this sense, He does help those who help themselves.

But God also helps those who can’t help themselves. In fact, He’s drawn like a magnet to those who can’t help themselves. This is every one of us when it comes to salvation.

God in His mercy and grace stooped down, left the glory of heaven, and came to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He helped us when we could not help ourselves.

### ► DISCUSS (ASK YOUR GROUP):

How do you think God feels when you come to Him in need or with a request? Are you bothering Him? Or is He happy to hear from you?

When it comes to solving problems or handling issues, how much involvement do you think God expects from you? How much do you expect from Him?

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**DIG DEEPER:** In John 15:5, Jesus tells His disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing.” Without Jesus, we can do nothing. The breath in our lungs, the strength in our bodies, the ideas in our head, the skills in our hands – all of it comes from Him. So when it comes to helping ourselves, it’s not even possible to do it 100% on our own. God is the One behind even our own efforts to help ourselves.

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## ► WHAT THE WORLD SAYS

Pastor Jarrett explains that the maxim, “God helps those who help themselves,” has never been in the Bible. It originated in Aesop’s Fables then appeared again in Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richards Almanac*. Ultimately, the phrase became known within Christian circles thanks to a famous theologian in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Matthew Henry.

But the idea of “helping yourself” is appealing, especially to rugged individualists – and toddlers. Have you ever tried to help a toddler put on their coat or shoes? Usually the response is “I do it!”

So when we say, “Don’t worry, God – I got this,” what do you think He sees?

The danger in assuming God only moves once you move first is that it suggests *you* are the first line of defense when it comes to getting what you need – and God is your back-up. Scripture teaches clearly that this is out of order. More than that, God doesn’t need a back-up. When we help, it’s because He lets us.

God is calling us to move beyond the spiritual toddler stage and work *with* Him not without Him.

**IDENTIFY THE TENSION:** As we saw in the Let Go and Let God session, spiritual growth is not a hands-off process. The Christian’s motto should be, “Trust God and get going!” We fully rely on God to save and sustain us, while obediently living out the very faith He is maturing in us.

## ► WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

In Psalm 103, the Bible says that God “... *knows how we are formed, and He remembers that we are dust.*”

God knows our capabilities and limitations. Since Day 1 of human life on earth, He has known we won’t be able to get through life without Him. He designed the universe that way. So God expects us to need Him – and He delights in meeting our needs.

Needing His help is in our nature. Helping us is in His. Let’s explore that a little deeper.

## The Holy Spirit is called “The Helper.”

In the video, Pastor Jarrett says that one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit is to help believers.

*Have participants read the following passages aloud to the group:*

- *John 14:15–17*
- *John 14:25–26*
- *John 16:7–8*

What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit helps believers? (*Leader note: In the video Jarrett mentions several ways – helping unbelieving friends enter into a relationship with Christ, facing a heavy diagnosis like cancer, dealing with temptation*)

## God loves helping those who can’t help themselves.

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself to His people. He communicates again and again that He wants to be known.

As you’ve explored God’s Word, what are some names of God – or aspects of His character – that are especially meaningful to you and why? (*Leader note: Some suggestions include Father, Comforter, Healer, Shepherd, Creator, Provider, Deliverer, Redeemer, Savior*)

*Ask members of the group to read the following verses:*

- *Psalm 34:18*
- *Isaiah 41:10, 13*
- *Hosea 11:4*
- *Matthew 11:28–29*

Scripture describes God as close to the brokenhearted, reaching out His hand to help us, bending down to feed us, and offering us rest. Now how do you think that kind of God responds to your requests for help?

**Ask Yourself:** In Matthew 7:9–11, Jesus is teaching on prayer, and He says, “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” If we give good things to those we love, why would we assume God would do any less?

▶ **APPLY THE BIBLICAL TRUTH IN YOUR LIFE**

*Pastor Jarrett shared his painful experience with losing a child. What are two ways he and his wife felt God’s help as they went through that heart-wrenching time? (Leader note: By providing friends to stand with them and comforting them with peace)*

Two takeaways:

1. Being helpless in a tough situation opens the door for people who love you to step in and help. Let them.
2. When someone you love is in a tough situation, it opens the door for God to use you to step in and help them. Let Him.

God loves helping those who can’t help themselves – and He will often use us to do it.

What are some ways you can encourage someone who’s going through a tough situation and feeling helpless?

▶ **CLOSE**

We were made in God’s image. If we enjoy helping other people when they have a need, how much more do you think God enjoys helping us when we have a need? Especially when we have a need that only He can meet?

If you’re in a tough situation and feeling helpless, the best way through it is not by gritting your teeth, thinking God has more important things to do, or relying on your own strength, giftings, and abilities to get you past it.

The best way through is to get God’s help by running to Him... doubts, fears, and all.

God loves seeing us walk in obedience while trusting in Him. And He loves helping us when we don’t have the strength to move a muscle. When a problem comes in your life, the best way to handle it is by tackling it together with your Father in heaven.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank You for knowing how we are made and remembering that we are dust. You understand who we are and what we need from You. Thank You that You don’t*

*leave us to fend for ourselves, but You bend down to feed us, as a father would kneel down with his small child. Here we are, Lord, Your children, needing You to come near, needing Your help every minute of every day. Give us strength to obey You, courage to follow You, and wisdom to run to You. Thank You for loving us. We love You. In His name, Amen.*

▶ **NOTES**

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