

Crossroads Daily Guide

Week of April 10, 2016



There is truth to the idea that God helps those who help themselves. However, the danger in half-truths such as ‘God helps those who help themselves’ is that it is sometimes used as a way of avoiding helping others. “If those people would just help themselves, then God would help them further. Why should I help them if they aren’t willing to do their part?” The whole truth that is at the heart of this matter is that God, working through us and through others, does help those who cannot help themselves. As a matter of fact that truth is the heart of the Biblical story.

Throughout the Biblical story we see God revealed as the one who is the champion of hopeless causes. In fact, God’s fullest revelation often comes in those situations where we humans have gone as far as we possibly can on our own. When we surrender to our great need for God’s help, then we can truly be open to receiving help from those whom God uses to help us.

We give, we receive. We give again, we receive again. The cycle continues in a beautiful dance of action and reaction, revealing the deep loving heart of God reaching toward each of us every day of our lives helpless or not.

Sunday, April 10, 2016

II Thessalonians 3:6-10 – For you yourselves know how you must imitate us; we were not irresponsible among you; we did not eat anyone’s bread free of charge; instead we labored and toiled, working day and night, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. It is not that we do not have the right to support, but we did not make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: ‘If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat.’

The Apostle Paul’s teaching here reminds the church and its leaders that they should not expect to be taken care of because they were somehow special and set apart. Instead he flips that idea and shows that the leaders should be the example of responsible behavior working hard alongside brothers and sisters. This example of humility coupled with action continues to be the model given to followers of Jesus. The way of Jesus is never the way of entitlement; rather it is the way of a life of service lived out faithfully in community with others. How do you react to the last line of today’s scripture – “If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat.”? How, if at all, does your reaction change if it reads, “If anyone isn’t able to work, he should not eat.”?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Open my eyes...* Exhale: *to the needs around me.*

Monday, April 11, 2016

Deuteronomy 15:10-11 – God says, “I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.”

Throughout the Bible we see God characterized as the God of the hurting, the hopeless and the helpless. God is always urging us to live our lives in the same way, as people who are generous, gracious and compassionate

to all regardless of their state. This is the hallmark of the way of Jesus and the exact opposite of the concept of God only helping those who can help themselves. How hard or easy is it for you to help the poor and the needy? What are your first thoughts when you see a homeless person on the street?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Compassionate God...* Exhale: *Give me a heart of compassion.*

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Philippians 2:14 - God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out his good purposes. Do everything without grumbling and arguing.

Most often we say, God helps those who help themselves, to those who need to get up and do something about their situation. If they do their part, then God will do God's part. What if we applied this saying to ourselves in those times when we serve the needy? The words in today's scripture could be interpreted as God helps those who help the helpless. God is the one who enables us to serve. We don't serve just from our own strength of will or strength of body. We serve because God has made it possible for us to serve. God gives us passion. God gives us empathy. God gives us hearts that break for those in need. God gives us resources. Yet in some cases we want to serve but we don't know how. In a very real way we are helpless even in our desire to serve. That's when God comes to help us with our own helplessness. Have you ever wanted to help some but felt helpless? What did you do to find help? Would you say that help came from God?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Open my eyes....* Exhale: *to the needs around me.*

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

Psalms 68:5-6 Father of orphans and defender of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the lonely in their homes; he sets prisoners free with happiness, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

To an orphan or a widow in a developing nation, it would be nonsense to say, "God helps those who help themselves." With no legal or social status, and no influential male relative to take their side, widows and orphans simply have no way to help themselves. Throughout the Bible we see God as the defender of those who cannot help themselves. Living in the way of Jesus calls us to stand with the defenseless and be their advocates. After reading this passage how can anyone say that God only helps those who help themselves? How does this reality change how you see others who are helpless?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Compassionate God...* Exhale: *Give me a heart of compassion.*

Thursday, April 14, 2016

Ephesians 2:8-10 - You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. It's not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Here again we see The Apostle Paul reminding the people of the early church of God's many and great gifts given to them. We humans will always struggle to understand God's deep connection to us, regardless. We are God's great accomplishment, created in Christ to carry out God's work in the world. God gives us gifts to be doers, to be helpers, but we must freely chose to live into our God given identity and therein apply ourselves to the opportunity to do good work in our everyday lives. When the Apostle Paul says, "We are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things", it is like hearing him say we are co-creators with God. How does it feel to see yourself as a co-creator with God? How might that reality change how you see yourself in the world?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Open my eyes...* Exhale: *to the needs around me.*

Friday, April 15, 2016

Micah 6:8 – He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love and walk humbly with your God.

This ancient Hebrew scripture makes it crystal clear what God desires as true worship from us. It is not lofty prayers, fine singing, endless fasting and religious display; although there is nothing wrong with any of those ways to worship God. What God desires most, as true worship from each of us is to be about the work of justice in the world, embracing love and compassion and walking humbly on our journey. If God desires us to be about justice what does that mean about helping the helpless, the ones who have no voice? Who are the voiceless that you care most about helping? Can you see how through you that God is helping the helpless?

Breath Prayer - Inhale: *Compassionate God...* Exhale: *Give me a heart of compassion.*

Saturday, April 16, 2016

I Corinthians 4:7 - What do you have that you didn't receive? And if you received it, then why are you bragging as if you didn't receive it?

Here the Apostle Paul reminds the people of the church that their connection with God was not about their human wisdom or accomplishments. It was never about being self-sufficient, but was all about receiving the gift of God's grace. That's why the Apostle Paul asked them, "What do you have that you didn't receive?" He wanted to emphasize the point that God helps us in more ways than we can imagine. The work of God's spirit in our lives is a gift to us, not a reward or prize to be won. God gives freely with an open heart; the choice to accept all that God would have us to be is ours; as is the choice to give away what we have to help others. How hard or easy is it for you to believe that ultimately everything comes to you as a gracious gift from God? If it is all a gift, then for what reason is the gift given to us?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Freely you give...* Exhale: *Gratefully I receive.*