

‘God Helps Them That Help Themselves’ Is Not a Verse from the Bible

Leader’s Guide

This Bible study is designed for junior or senior high students to investigate what the Bible says about the poor. It is suggested that this study be used in conjunction with Building on Faith, Habitat for Humanity International’s worldwide celebration of church partnerships. During the week of Sept. 11-18, churches will help build numerous homes around the world with families previously living in poverty housing.

The study is meant to encourage discussion among the students. If your group is less than 10, you may want to do the exercise as one group. Otherwise, it is suggested that you break into small groups of 5-7 people.

Each participant will need a copy of the student [handout](#), a Bible and a pen or pencil. Each group will need a discussion leader. When everyone is ready to begin, read aloud the scenario from the handout as the participants follow along. Their challenge is the same as the characters in the student material. They are to dig in and see what the Bible really says about the poor.

This Leader’s Guide includes all the material in the student handout plus some extra notes about the Scripture passages.

Following the Bible study, go over the follow up questions as a large group. Give individuals time to reflect and write on their own, but talk together about ways that they can serve the poor. You may design a class project. You may be able to work with your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to do a fund-raising event or awareness project. Older youth can volunteer on the work site. Talk with organizers in the church and with affiliate leaders about possibilities. Let the youth come up with additional ideas for service.

Close with prayer.

Student Handout

With Suggested Biblical Observations for Leaders

The handout for students does not include the biblical observations.

Economics is seldom the favorite subject of students, and Brooke and Devin are no exception. They sit by each other in the class and often help each other with problem assignments. They are also friends in the same youth group.

Today the teacher has divided the class into two groups and has asked them to prepare to debate the topic of welfare and the government's responsibility to provide services to the poor.

Brooke and Devin have been assigned to argue for a high level of government responsibility and contribution to welfare to protect the weakest in society. The opposing side will argue that only the minimum amount of services should be provided.

The class debate is lively and full of spirit. The longer the students debate the topic, the more they find themselves embracing and understanding the view they have been assigned. At one point, Brooke makes the point that caring for the weakest in society is consistent with the Judeo-Christian heritage of our country. Furthermore, she says, "It's just the right thing to do."

Tim, a student arguing from the other side, looks at Brooke and asks, "Are you trying to tell us that God says we should have a state welfare system? If that's the case, you are dead wrong. The Bible says, "God helps those that help themselves!"

Brook and Devin both respond by saying, "No way!" They try to explain that the Bible doesn't say that at all, but other students disagree. Before too long, Brooke and Devin's team begins to debate among themselves. In the midst of the discussion, one person looks at Devin and Brooke and says, "Well, if you are so sure this isn't in the Bible, then what does it say about the poor?"

Just as the guy finishes the sentence, the bell rings, signaling the end of class. Even though the discussion ended, Devin and Brooke knew they weren't off the

hook! They realize they know very little about what the Bible really says about the poor. They go home, find an online Bible concordance and start to read.

Now It's Your Turn

Read the following Scripture references and try to determine what God is saying about the poor and how we should relate to the poor.

(Hyperlinks for Scripture have been included in the Leader's Guide for convenience of those who are preparing the lesson. The links have been removed from the student handout so the youth will use their Bibles. The biblical observations below in italics are also deleted from the student handout.)

[Deuteronomy 15:3-11](#)

What do these verses tell us about God's perspective towards the poor?

- *God desires for our intent to be eliminating poverty among us (verse 4).*

What do these verses tell us about how we should relate to the poor?

- *We should see attention to the needs of the poor as a matter of obedience (verse 5).*
- *We are to have a tender heart and an open hand (verses 7 and 11).*

Are there any promises from God for the poor or for people who help the poor?

- *God will bless us as we are attentive to the poor (verse 10).*

[Psalm 69:30-33; 82:2-4; 140:12-13](#)

What do these verses tell us about God's perspective towards the poor?

- *God is attune to matters of the poor (verse 33).*
- *God is attentive to the prayers of the poor (verse 33).*
- *God places a high priority on taking care of the poor (Psalm 82:3-4).*
- *God is a defender of the poor and needy (verses 12-13).*
- *God associates attentiveness to the poor with righteousness (verse 13).*

What do these verses tell us about how we should relate to the poor?

- *We should be advocates for the rights of the poor (verses 2-3).*
- *We need to rescue the poor and become advocates for the cause of eliminating poverty (verse 12).*

Are there any promises from God for the poor or for people who help the poor?

- *God hears the prayers of the poor (verse 33).*

[Proverbs 19:16-18](#); [21:13](#); [28:26-27](#)

What do these verses tell us about how we should relate to the poor?

- *We should see serving the poor as directly serving the Lord (verse 17).*

Are there any promises from God for the poor or for people who help the poor?

- *God will reward those who are kind to the poor (verses 17 and 27).*
- *Ignoring the needs of the poor will have a negative impact on our relationship with God (verse 13).*

What are the three most important things you can take away from this discussion about the poor?

1.

2.

3.

What Can You Do?

In some communities poverty is evident and the problems of the poor are obvious. Is that true in your community? If so, what are the most obvious needs of the poor that you observe?

In other communities, poverty is not so obvious. Some people live their daily lives without seeing the needs of the poor. If that is your case, how can you find out about needs in your community? in other areas?

Drawing on what you learned from the Scripture passages today, what do you think God is calling you to do in response to those in your community who are in need? If you don't know what you can do, to whom can you go for guidance? What would you be willing to do? Would you be willing to give of your time and your abilities?

Do Some Research

Where did the adage “God helps them that help themselves” originate?

Do Some Analysis

Do you agree with the adage “God helps them that help themselves? Why or why not?

Do Some Praying

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to direct you to help those who are in need. Offer yourself as a willing and humble servant.