

CoreGroup Guide | Debunked - Part 1

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From Pastor Charity

Today we begin a new sermon series called *Debunked: Unpacking Christian Cliches*. During this series we will be highlighting the Shared Practice of **Generosity**. Click on [this link](#) to review the “Start, Grow, Stretch” opportunities listed under Generosity. Assess where you are right now, choose a next step, and share it with your group.

Throughout this series we will also be revisiting the *Much Given. Much Expected* initiative introduced in September 2025. You can learn more about this two-year effort to fund the mission and vision of The Gathering by checking out the [Much Given page](#) on our website. If you’ve not yet had an opportunity to make a commitment and feel led to do so, you can do that by using this [MUCH Commitment Form](#). Thank you for your generosity!

Welcome

We’ve all heard them, most of us have said them at some point, but many of us don’t know where the most common Christian phrases come from. Plenty are direct quotes from the Bible, but others have no roots in the actual text of scripture. What might sound like a comforting or encouraging thing to say to a friend in need, could be gradually shaping our view of the world in ways God never intended. It’s time to fact-check our faith cliches – look for seeds of truth, debunk the most misleading ideas, and discover what the Bible actually says.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you put up with so much from us. You love us even when we misquote and misrepresent you. Help us to accept your gentle correction and guidance throughout the next few weeks. Help us to be open to the uncertainty that comes with moving away from black and white answers, and draw us near to you as we seek to better understand you. Amen.

Ice Breaker

Tell us about the words and phrases you use most. Is there anything you say quite a bit, or in unique or unusual ways? What about your family or your circles of friends?

The Head

This week we are discussing the phrase, “God helps those who help themselves.” A common expression, this idea actually has roots in ancient Greek writings, Aesop’s Fables, and was popularized in America by Benjamin Franklin. Throughout scripture we see examples of God helping people, but the rationale for why God chooses certain people over others isn’t always clear. It is not always the hardest workers. Instead, the Gospel of Luke offers us a series of stories where Jesus reveals the real commonality amongst people he helps.

Luke 8:43-48

⁴³ A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵ "Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When everyone denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!"

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me."

⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she couldn't escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.

⁴⁸ "Daughter, your faith has healed you," Jesus said. "Go in peace."

Luke 7:44-50

⁴⁴ Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came in. ⁴⁶ You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my feet. ⁴⁷ This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ The other table guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this person that even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

¹² As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, ¹³ they raised their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, show us mercy!"

¹⁴ When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

As they left, they were cleansed.¹⁵ One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Weren't ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?"

¹⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Get up and go. Your faith has healed you."

- The Gospel of Luke is famously written by a physician. Why do you think the author included so many stories of Jesus healing people?
- What different types of healing are shown in these passages?
- In each story Jesus says some version of, "your faith has healed you." How do the people in these stories demonstrate their faith?

The Heart

We often turn to cliches when we don't know how to make sense of a situation or when life feels out of control. We wouldn't keep saying these things if they didn't serve us in some way. It takes vulnerability and courage, though, to move beyond half-truths and accept more complex answers.

- The idea that "God helps those who help themselves," is popular for a reason.
 - What parts, if any, of this phrase do you think are helpful?
 - What parts, if any, do you think can be harmful?
- How does it feel to acknowledge that God cannot be controlled by our individual efforts?
- What are some truths about God's character that we can use to replace the idea of a transactional God?

The Hands

If there is truly no list of requirements for receiving blessings, healing, and grace from God we will have to practice faith in a different way. We will need to submit our own lives to the power and plans of God, while at the same time, submitting our judgements around who does and does not deserve a helping hand. If God doesn't only help those who help themselves, perhaps God is inviting us into the work of helping people too.

- What is an instance where you need God's help, but have been relying on your own efforts? What perceived truth underlies that decision?
- How can you practice a faith grounded in the belief that God will show up in our times of need?
- Where can you show up and help others as the hands and feet of Christ?

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you that your love and grace are so much wilder and more unpredictable than we know. Thank you for helping us in ways big and small when we have been wholly unworthy recipients. Show us where we can extend your love and grace to those around us with no strings attached. Amen.