

I have been thinking about a couple of sayings that I have heard over the years and how much faith a lot of folks put into them and consider them to be quotes from the Bible. "Cleanliness is next to godliness". Is that a Bible quote or not? If it is, where can it be found? If it's not, why do folks say it? "God helps those who help themselves", is another saying that people use a lot. Is that a true Bible verse? If it is, then where do we find that it in the Bible? If it isn't, then why do people say it?

Truth is, neither one of them are Bible quotes or verses. They cannot be found in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Yes, both sound good and both have no doubt been used over the years by folks who have meant well in trying to give others some godly encouragement in their lives in one way or another. The problem is that both sayings are not exactly in agreement with what the Bible actually teaches us and to misunderstand either of them can lead to a false sense of security or a false idea of salvation. Can I be a godly person and still have a messy house, a messy car and a yard that needs to be cleaned up? Yes. Will God help me if I help myself by doing what is contrary to my Christian walk, or by something that He wouldn't approve of? Probably not.

On the other hand, what if we look at those sayings in the spiritual sense? You see, cleanliness as pertains to godliness is a heart thing. No, not the blood pump, but the "Bible heart", or the mind. *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*(Jas 4:8). Also, *"but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* (1Jn. 1:7). Cleansing the heart does make one more "godly" and therefore closer to God. Cleansing our hands of doing what God doesn't approve of does the same. When we help ourselves to get closer to God by being submissive and obedient to Him, then He does help us through the sinless life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son. So, God does help those who help themselves, spiritually, and cleanliness (of the heart) is next to godliness.

Let me take the remainder of space in this article to encourage you. Are you trying to get closer to God? Are you trying to do what He approves with your life? One way to do these things is to become more familiar with His word. By doing that one thing, many matters of your life can begin to change for the better. No, things in your life won't begin to be perfect, and all the problems in your life won't magically go away, but you will begin to see where and how God's word will help lead you toward a better life and a closer walk with Him. Reading God's word can truly be a great blessing in your life and in your family's spiritual growth.

Many have been enjoying and benefiting from our Open Bible Readings on Thursday evenings. Let me encourage you to come and be a part of this group. This is not a teaching class, but it is a simple reading of the word each time we gather. We began a few weeks ago in the book of Genesis and will be continuing through the Revelation. There is time each week given to questions and answers. It is an eye opening experience to really know what the Bible says instead of depending on "sayings" such as those above that can lead us in the wrong direction. Won't you come and join us. Knowing God's word is just about the best thing anyone can do for themselves and for their family. Reading begins at 7 pm each Thursday. *"...The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."*(Psalm 18:30).