

# HELP! An Introduction

## INTRODUCTION:

- I. Each kid is so unique when it comes to our children. This is the most evident when you look at the differences in how each child asks for help. Let me illustrate this...
  - a. Kaleb thinks he can do everything himself. After using the restroom one time he was struggling to button his pants and so I asked him, “Do you want me to help?” His response was normal, “No Daddy...I can do it!” So I allow him to struggle, and grunt, and grown until finally the light comes on and he admits defeat. He will then lower his head and say, “Daddy can you help me?”
  - b. Amelia likes to do things without asking and usually that ends in disaster. When she colors pictures she likes to do it herself without any guidance. But she is more willing to ask for help than Kaleb. She will ask specifically what she wants me to help her with.
  - c. Madelyn is a completely different story. That girl asks help for just about everything. If she can’t get in our bed for movie time she runs up to me saying, “Help...in bed.” If she took her diaper off she will look at me and say, “Help...diaper.” That girl asks help for everything.
  - d. Our fourth child<sup>1</sup> does not have to ask. The child does not have to speak a word (although crying and screaming are effective methods) because it is just assumed. The baby does not have to tell us to change its diapers, to feed it, to rock it, to clothe it, to keep it warm. This baby needs our help and it is understood.
  
- II. What’s the point?

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1. I am writing this Monday when the baby is due on Wednesday. By then I will know what the name and gender is.

- a. I think some of us are like Kaleb in that we don't ask for help until we have tried everything until we have failed.
- b. Some of us are like Amelia in that there are specific things we ask for help but there are things we do without asking.
- c. Some of us are like Madelyn in that we cannot do something unless we ask for help. If we go to this place...we ask for help. If we do this thing...we ask for help.
- d. But, most of us are like my fourth child in that it is an assumed fact that no matter where we are at in our life...we need help.

### III. What is help?

- a. Look at any standard dictionary and you will find something similar to this definition<sup>2</sup>:
  - i. Verb – To give assistance to; to give relief to; to give to the furtherance of; to change for the better.
  - ii. Noun – Relief; remedy; the act of helping; the person who is helping; a body of such helpers.
- b. I find these definitions intriguing for a number of different reasons:
  - i. Help, whether given or received, is dependent (contingent) on the giver and the receiver. To get help one must give it and the recipient must receive it. Help is not help when one does not receive it. A year ago we raked leaves for people in our community and we knocked on a few doors asking people if we could help them by raking their leaves. I would say 75% of the people turned us down. It is amazing how people do not want help.
  - ii. But I also saw something interesting in the definition that I think is helpful in springing us into this series. When we get help or give help the idea is that we are changing for the better. That's the essence of help isn't it? When a teenager asks to talk to me and to pray with me they want my help because deep at their core they want help and when they receive that help it changes them for the better.
  - iii. Help that does not change a situation is not really help at all. Job's counselors visited him and did nothing but offer their preconceived bits of

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2. Source: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/help> Accessed January 18, 2010.

information at how Job was the reason for all of his suffering. Their help was to tell Job that he sinned. Job said, in 16:2, “miserable comforters are you all!” This was not help.

- c. So help is something that changes us for the better. One might say confession is help. Baptism is help! Repentance is help! The Holy Spirit is help! Jesus Christ is help.

#### IV. My plan!

- a. What I hope to accomplish with these sermons is to discuss different contexts where we need help. From those who struggle with addictions to those who struggle with studying the Bible.
- b. Inevitably I will leave something out but I had to pick and choose which ones to emphasize and which ones to leave out.
- c. My assumption is that we all need a vibrant, authentic, reciprocal relationship with God. I believe God can do amazing things in situations I think are impossible. However, I am not going to stand up here and tell you that if you struggle with pornography and are highly addicted to it all you need to do is pray and have faith in God and he will help you the very next day.
  - i. That is unacceptable to me and would not be an accurate way of describing how God works in people.
  - ii. Sometimes the help we get is simply the arrow towards the right direction.
  - iii. The Bible is not a book that addresses every psychological, physiological or biological issue. It is a book that provides a window to look at the story of God and how we participate in that amazing story.
- d. But I do think that, like all things, a vibrant relationship with God will only increase your chance for real help to come.

- V. A lot of what I will preach will be practical in nature but sometimes it will come from a textual study. It just depends. Sometimes we will have quick answers and sometimes, like the book of Jonah, it will simply leave us hanging asking God for help.

Having said that...I wanted to introduce a snapshot of what Scripture says about help and then let that be the catalyst for our different discussions.

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Here is the plan of my sermons:

- Sermon #1: Help! An Introduction
- Sermon #2: Help! I am Struggling with Doubt
- Sermon #3: Help! I am Struggling with Addictions
- Sermon #4: Help! I am Struggling with Relationships
- Sermon #5: Help! I am Struggling with Depression
- Sermon #6: Help! I am Struggling with Purpose
- Sermon #7: Help! I am Struggling with Prayer
- Sermon #8: Help! I am Struggling with Studying the Bible
- Sermon #9: Help! I am Struggling with Fitting-in With This Church
- Sermon #10: Help! A Conclusion

## **BODY:**

Disclaimer: Because of the volume of occurrences in Scripture I am only going to mention a few that discuss the Bible's view on the concept of help. I am also hesitant with this type of approach because it lends itself quickly to proof-texting if one is not careful in his exegesis. But I think it is also a helpful (pun) endeavor to look at the entire story of God to see how he revealed himself in Scripture and how different thoughts and ideas are woven into the story.

## I. Help as a Companion

- a. **Genesis 2:18-20** <sup>18</sup> *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* <sup>19</sup> *So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.* <sup>20</sup> *The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.*
- b. Sometimes in Scripture the companion can be those who **help** someone in battle as was the case with the conquests in Joshua when people would **help** those in battle.
- c. **Help** here is simply the assistance given by someone to make a situation better. The Hebrew word in this instance is either the noun עֵזֶר (*ezer*) or the verb עָזַר (*azar*) both of which have the general meaning of **helping** or sustaining someone. A lot of time this is word is used to denote

military assistance when threatened by a nation. But this word also carries with it the connotation of simply **help** or support.<sup>3</sup>

## II. God is the Source of Help

- a. In Genesis 4:1 when Eve bore a child named Cain she said it came with the **help** of the Lord.
- b. In the book of Judges (4:3; 6:6) when the nation would turn for the worst in their cyclical pattern of evil they would cry out to God to **help** them.
- c. The book of Psalms is filled with verses about the nature and character of God. One of the characteristics of God as seen in Psalms is that he is our **helper**.
  - i. Consider Psalm 121:1-2: ***“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”***
  - ii. Psalm 33:20 - ***Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.***
- d. Do you remember the story in Mark 9 when a man brought his son who was possessed by a spirit that made him mute? The disciples could not cast the spirit out and so the man wanted Jesus to do it. Jesus asked the man, “How long has this been happening to him?” The man replied, ***“Since childhood, and it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us”*** (Mark 9:21-22). Jesus responded, ***“If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.”*** Do you remember what the man responded with? The bible says he cried out (κράζω *krazo* – meaning he shouted with a shriek) and said. In verses 24, ***“I believe, Lord, help my unbelief!”***
  - i. This man needed first physical help with the necessity of his son. Imagine your own son being tortured by a demon ever since he was born and the desperation you would go through to find healing.
  - ii. But that was a second-level story for him. At the basis of it all he also needed spiritual help as he struggled with the idea of belief.
  - iii. Either way the source of help for this man was the incarnate Jesus Christ.

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3. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980): 660.

- iv. This why the Hebrew author tells us, *“because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted”* (Heb. 2:18).
- e. But there is a third way in which help is used in the Scriptures.

### III. Help is something asked in a time of need!

- a. See how we have swung full circle to the story of my children? Not only is **help** described as companion and not only the source for companionship is God but we can approach God in the hour, minute and second of our time of need.
- b. Again...look at the Psalms!
  - i. **Psalm 40:12-13** <sup>12</sup> *For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.* <sup>13</sup> *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!*
  - ii. **Help**, like I said earlier, comes from the presence of evil whether it is their relationship to God or the presence of an enemy in their lives (Psalms of Lament). But God is seen as the only one who can deliver and the only one who can give them the **help** that they really need.
- c. We see this concept in the Book of Hebrews
  - i. **Hebrews 4:15-16** <sup>15</sup> *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* <sup>16</sup> *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
  - ii. The word here used for “**help**” (*boētheia* - βοήθεια) is spoken of as God’s response to his people’s troubles.<sup>4</sup>
  - iii. Today’s English Version renders that last phrase: *“Let us have confidence, then, and approach God’s throne, where there is grace. There we will*

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4. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993): 271.

*receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it*" (Heb. 4:16).

- iv. God is in the business of helping us and he does it at the very moment we need it. The moment we are at our lowest...the moment we are the most afraid...the moment when we tried all other options and finally admitted that God is the only **helper** for us!!!
- v. God, at just the right time, helps us! Why? Because at just the right time, Christ died for the ungodly!

## CONCLUSION:

- I. So what? What is the point of all of this information? Why all the verses? This launches us into the series with the following understandings concerning **help**!
  - a. The definition for **help** is something given and received that causes a change for the better in our lives!
  - b. Simple statements of faith will not **help** every situation!
  - c. To get the ultimate **help** we need there is only one source: **GOD ALMIGHTY!**
  - d. We must lower our pride and ask God for **help** to receive it not when we want it, but when we need it!
- II. Invitation!