

Bible Story 9: PETER HEALS THE PARALYZED MAN, RESTORES DORCAS' LIFE AND TELLS CORNELIUS ABOUT JESUS

SCRIPTURE: Heals Paralyzed Man: Acts 9:32-35
Restores Dorcas' Life: Acts 9:36-43
Tells Cornelius about Jesus: Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18

MEMORY VERSE(S): John 3:16 or Acts 10:34

BIBLE STORY:

Peter was a **Jew** who was one of the twelve chosen apostles (disciples) of Jesus. Peter was going from town to town sharing the Good News of Jesus.

Peter Heals the Paralyzed Man

In the town of Lydda lived Aeneas, a man who was paralyzed for eight years. Peter said to him, *"In the name of Jesus, get up and pick up your mat."* Aeneas obeyed and he was healed. He could walk!

Peter Restores Dorcas' Life

In the near-by town of Joppa was a disciple named Dorcas (Tabitha). She helped many people by sewing clothes for the needy. Dorcas became sick and died. Two men went quickly to get Peter. When he arrived at the house, Peter went upstairs, knelt beside Dorcas and prayed. Dorcas' life was restored.

Peter went to Joppa where he stayed with Simon who worked with leather.

Peter Tells Cornelius About Jesus

Cornelius was a Roman commander of a military unit living in the city of Caesarea. The seaport was the headquarters of the ruling Roman forces. Cornelius helped the needy. Although he was a Gentile (not a Jew), he was religious, believed in one God and prayed to God. About three in the afternoon, Cornelius was praying. An angel of God appeared, saying, *"Cornelius!"*

With fear Cornelius replied, *"Lord, what is it?"*

The angel said, *"Send men to Joppa and have them bring Peter to you. God has heard your prayers."* He sent a soldier and two servants to get Peter.

Meanwhile, Peter was praying on the rooftop of the leather man's home. His meal was being cooked for him. Peter was hungry. Suddenly Peter saw a vision. With the four corners being held, something like a sheet was coming down to the ground with all kinds of four-footed animals and birds. A voice of the Lord said, *"Peter, get up, kill these animals and eat."*

Peter replied, *"I cannot eat anything impure or unclean."* (Jews were not allowed to eat certain food that was called unclean.)

The Lord answered, *"Do not say the things that God has made clean are unclean."*

Then the sheet went upward to the sky. Peter saw this vision three times. Then the Spirit said, *"Three men are at the door. Do not hesitate! Go with them to Cornelius!"*

Peter went with them to Cornelius' home. Cornelius welcomed Peter into his home where the Roman commander had invited his family and friends to come. Cornelius told Peter about the angel appearing and telling him to get him. Peter told his story of his vision. Peter continued saying, *"You know that it is wrong for a Jew to visit or be a companion with Gentiles, anyone from another race. I know now that God does not show favoritism. God accepts anyone from every nation who fears Him and does what is right."* Then Peter shared how Jesus came to earth and died on the cross. On the third day God raised Jesus back to life. The Holy Spirit filled the room. Cornelius and those gathered believed in Jesus, were saved and baptized. Peter stayed with them for a few more days.

Later Peter explained all that happened to the Jews who believed in Jesus in Jerusalem. After hearing his story, they praised God that God has offered repentance that leads to life for both Jews and Gentiles - for everyone of all races and nationalities!

Jews

are the descendants of Abraham who worship God.

Gentiles:

In the time of Jesus, Gentiles were those who were not a full-blooded Jew, which meant all the people of other races and nationalities.

Impure or Unclean Food

was certain food God instructed the Jews not to eat many years ago. (Possibly it was for health issues in preserving food.) (Read Leviticus 11:1-20 and Deuteronomy 14:3-20.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: *(Ask questions appropriate for your group of listeners.)*

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. How can you apply this story to your life?

GENERIC QUESTIONS:

1. What do you like about the story?
2. Who are the main people in the story?
3. What problems did the people face? What happened?
4. Have you had any similar problems you would like to share? What happened?
5. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

1. What happened to the man who was paralyzed?
 - What are some ways we can help people who are sick, physically challenged or disabled?
2. Who was Dorcas?
 - What happened to Dorcas?
 - How can we help: The needy? People who are grieving over the loss of a loved one?
3. Who was Cornelius?
 - When the angel of God appeared to Cornelius, what did the angel tell him?
 - How does God speak to us today?
4. When Peter was on the rooftop, what happened?
 - What did Peter learn from the Lord because of the vision?
 - Did Peter go to Cornelius home? What happened?
5. What does this story show us about sharing the good news of Jesus to others?
6. How should we relate to people of different races and nationalities? Why?

LIFE LESSONS: (Choose Life Lessons appropriate for your group of listeners.)

1. God wants His believers to help those in need.

Peter helped Dorcas and the paralyzed man. Dorcas sewed clothes for the needy.

We need to reach out and help people with their special needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, etc.

2. God shows no favoritism among people.

The Lord showed Peter in a vision that God accepts anyone from any nation who fears Him. Then God sent Peter to share about Jesus to Cornelius, a Roman commander of a military unit ruling the land.

We need to share the good news to every person, no matter of one's race or where one lives.

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES:

(Choose an activity or activities appropriate for your group of listeners.)

ROLE-PLAYING DRAMAS:

- Leader tells the Bible story.
- Leader chooses or asks four volunteers to role-play after the story is retold. They are to use their own words.
 1. Invite an individual to role-play the paralyzed man, Aeneas.
 - The “paralyzed man” will explain about being paralyzed and what happened when Peter came to his town.
 2. Invite an individual to role-play Dorcas.
 - “Dorcas” will explain who she is and what happened when Peter came to her town.
 3. Invite an individual to role-play Cornelius.
 - “Cornelius” will explain what happened when an angel appeared and spoke to him. Also what happened afterwards when Peter came to his house.
 4. Invite an individual to role-play Peter.
 - “Peter” will explain what happened when he saw a vision on the rooftop. Also what happened afterwards when he was at Cornelius’ home.
- Leader retells the Bible story.
- Leader asks the four volunteers to use their own words to role-play their characters in the story.
- The four volunteers role-play their characters in the story, explaining what happened to them.

FELLOWSHIP:

OPTION 1: Have fellowship and eat food together at the end of the session.

Suggestion 1: At the close of the session, serve food from your country or food from another country. Prior to your session, you may ask people to bring a dish of food to the session.

Suggestion 2: Do you have people from different races or localities? Prior to the session, ask volunteers to bring a dish of food from their area or country. When the time comes to eat, ask the persons to explain what their food is and what customs they have when they sit down to eat a meal. (*Examples: sit on chairs or sit on the floor; eat using utensils or use hands to break off bread to pick up food, etc.*)

Suggestion 3: Make a dish of food together before eating, such as fruit salad.

OPTION 2: Invite someone (such as a neighbor or international student) over to your home to eat with you. Christmas and Easter are excellent times to share a meal. Explain how the holiday is celebrated and after eating, share the Bible story for that holiday. (*Examples: Jesus’ birth; Jesus’ death and resurrection, etc.*)