

DORCAS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

Acts 9:36-43

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Peter and Dorcas

Key-location: Joppa

Key-repetitions:

- Dorcas was dead: Dorcas died (Ac 9:37); her body was prepared for burial (Ac 9:37); Peter spoke to the dead woman (Ac 9:40).
- Good deeds: Dorcas always did good and helped the poor (Ac 9:36); Dorcas made clothes for widows (Ac 9:39); Peter helped Dorcas to her feet (Ac 9:41).

Key-attitudes:

- Church's grief over Dorcas' death.
- Church's need for comfort.
- Astonishment and joy over Dorcas returning to life.

Initial-situation:

After Pentecost, the number of Jewish believers increased. After Stephen's death, believers scattered. Philip went to Samaria and preached Jesus. Then he went to a desert road and evangelized an Ethiopian official. Saul, the great persecutor of the church, was converted on the road to Damascus. Saul spent a short time in Jerusalem and then returned to his home city of Tarsus.

Initial-problem:

A believer named Dorcas was always doing good and helping the poor. Dorcas became sick and died.

Final-situation:

Many people in Joppa heard the news and as a result believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa.

BIBLE STORY

Peter was in the town of Lydda visiting the believers.

A believer named Tabitha, or in Greek called Dorcas, lived nearby in the city of Joppa. Dorcas was always doing good and helping the poor. Dorcas became sick and died. Dorcas' body was prepared for burial and placed in an upstairs room.

The disciples in Joppa sent two men to Lydda and urged Peter, "Please come to us at once!"

Peter went to Joppa with the two men. Peter arrived and went upstairs. Crying widows stood around Peter and showed him clothes which Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Peter sent everyone out of the room. Peter knelt down and prayed. Peter spoke to the dead body, "Dorcas, get up!" Dorcas opened her eyes and sat up. Peter helped her to her feet. Then Peter called the believers and widows, and presented Dorcas to them alive.

Many people in Joppa heard the news and as a result believed in the Lord. Peter remained in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon (Ac 9:36-43).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of person was Dorcas?
2. Why did the disciples in Joppa send for Peter?
3. Who would you send for in a crisis?
4. What did the widows feel for Dorcas?
5. Have you experienced a "Dorcas" helping you in a time of need?
6. To whom should you serve in the role of Dorcas?
7. The Jerusalem church had a program providing food for needy widows, and Dorcas made clothes for the widows. What does this signify for a group's responsibility as well as an individual's responsibility?
8. Peter was in Jerusalem when Stephen was killed and buried (Ac 8:2), but he went to Joppa and brought Dorcas back to life. One believer died while another was brought back to life. How do you explain God working differently in the lives of different people?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Individual Christians should help needy people.** They should not just depend upon ecclesiastical organizations to help the needy. Widows who showed Peter the clothes that Dorcas had made were not benefitted by an ecclesiastical organization or program. They had benefitted from the actions of Dorcas' love (Ac 9:39).
2. **The spiritual gift of mercy, the ability to voluntarily help those in need, is highly valued by God.** Dorcas, the only believer who Peter resurrected from the dead, had that ability; she made clothes for widows (Ac 9:38-41).

3. **God uses the doer of good works to impact others.** Dorcas made an impact on her community by always doing good and helping the poor (Ac 9:39). God used great preachers like Peter and Paul who spoke powerful words; however, he also used Dorcas who was always kind and did good deeds for those in need. Instead of wishing you had other spiritual gifts, use the gifts God has given you to impact others.

4. **The life-giving gospel is relentlessly expansive.** Tabitha was a Jewish lady who also had a Greek name Dorcas. Her dual names suggest that she straddled the cultural line between Judaism and the wider Greek Roman world. She was at home both in the cultural confines of her Jewish culture and in the Greek culture that surrounded her. While in Joppa, Peter stayed in the home of Simon the tanner (Ac 9:43). Tanners made animal hides into leather. This involved contact with dead animals, and Jewish law considered it an “unclean” job. The gospel began to break Peter’s prejudice against people who were not of his kind and customs. It was on the roof of Simon’s house where Peter saw a vision that led him to welcome Cornelius’ men (Ac 10:1-21). This encounter led to Peter’s realization that God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34), welcoming individuals and communities from every corner of the world.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Pantomime Retelling of the Story:

The storyteller tells the story one time. Then the storyteller:

- Invites a volunteer to pantomime the story as the storyteller tells it a second time. The storyteller retells the story while the volunteer pantomimes it.
- Invites a listener to retell the story.
- Asks listeners if the one who retold the story left out or added to the story.