

# Dorcas is Raised from the Dead

Scripture Reference: [Acts 9:36-43](#)



**Suggested Emphasis:** Help those in need.

**Memory Verse:** “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Galatians 6:10, NIV



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## Story Overview:

Tabitha (or Dorcas) was a woman who “was always doing good and helping the poor” in her city of Joppa. When she died everyone was very sad and they called Peter to come to her house. When Peter arrived, all the widows were crying and showing the clothing that Dorcas had made for them. Peter sent all of them out of the room and then, by the power of God, made Dorcas come back to life.

## Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

The last time we read about Peter in the Book of Acts was when he and John were preaching in Samaritan villages after rebuking [Simon the Sorcerer](#) and saying goodbye to Philip. Although based in Jerusalem he must have travelled to various places to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Previous to today’s story we find that Peter was visiting followers of Jesus and performing at least one miracle of healing in the town of Lydda which is just over 47 kilometres (30 miles) north-west of Jerusalem ([Acts 9:32-35](#)).

Lydda is the modern-day city of Lod.

This lesson today is a good opportunity to teach children the definitions of “disciple” and “apostle”. A disciple is someone who follows something or someone. In the book of Acts we learn about the Disciples of Jesus (those who follow Jesus).

Some disciples were also called apostles. An apostle is someone who is sent with a special mission or job. The bible sometimes uses this word in a general way but we are more likely to read specifically about the 12 Apostles of Jesus. These were chosen by Jesus during his ministry (see the story [Naming the 12 Apostles](#)). In Acts 2 we learn they were given the power to perform miracles and help people understand that the news about Jesus was true (see the story [Sermon at Pentecost](#)).

The town of Joppa (modern-day Jaffa which is part of Tel Aviv) is another 20 kilometres (just over 12 miles) north-west of Lydda and is on the coast. A church had already been established in Joppa by this time and one of the beloved disciples there was a woman named Tabitha. The Aramaic name “Tabitha” is translated “Dorcas” in the Greek language.

The church’s love for this woman is clearly seen in the way they mourned her when she became ill and subsequently died. When the church members in Joppa heard that Peter was nearby, in Lydda, two men were sent there to urge him to come back with them to Joppa. The seeming expectation that Peter might raise her from the dead speaks volumes about the understanding of these disciples that the Holy Spirit was active in the work of the apostles.

It is interesting that these two men urged Peter to “Please come at once!” ([Acts 9:38](#)). Emotions were running very high back in Joppa with all the widows weeping and mourning over Dorcas. Perhaps this was the urgency.

Or perhaps they wanted Peter to come quickly so he could arrive before the burial. It was common custom to wash a dead person’s body and place it in an upper room of a house. In Jerusalem the custom of burying a body the same day as the person died was more strictly adhered to than in these outlying regions. Even so, bodies would be buried fairly soon after death.

When Peter arrived in the upstairs room at this house in Joppa he was greeted by the touching scene of widows reminiscing about the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was alive. This is understandable and for centuries women around the world have treasured the handmade items left behind by loved ones who have passed away. On this occasion these women wanted Peter to see these and understand what a wonderful woman Dorcas had been to those around her.

There seems to be no better epitaph than to say she was “*one who was always doing good and helping the poor*” ([Acts 9:36](#)). In another place in the New Testament James speaks of the care for orphans and widows as “true religion” ([James 1:27](#)). Dorcas practiced true religion.

Peter had been with Jesus when [Jesus Raised Jairus’ Daughter](#) and he asked this crowd to leave the room in the same way Jesus had. Peter knelt to pray and then he turned to Dorcas and said, “Tabitha, get up.” It is easy to picture the scene that the bible describes when she opened her eyes and looked at him. Peter held her hand and helped her to her feet before calling everyone back into the room. What a celebration there must have been!

After raising Dorcas from the dead Peter spent some time in Joppa and stayed with a tanner named Simon who lived by the sea. According to Jewish law tanners would have been ceremonially unclean much of the time since they were working with the hides of dead animals. Staying at this man’s house was another indication that Peter was coming to terms with the fact the gospel was not simply meant for Jews. Earlier, when Peter preached the [Sermon at Pentecost](#) he spoke of salvation and the Holy Spirit and announced,

*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:39, NIV*

In the time since that sermon Peter had gone on to preach to Samaritans (see the story, [Simon the Sorcerer](#)) and then made his way out of Jerusalem all the way to this coastal town of Joppa where he was willing to stay in a house where a strict Jew would never stay. Later, Peter will be here, at Simon the tanner's house, when he has a vision that will cause him to obey the Lord and break yet another huge barrier and preach the gospel to a Gentile (see the story, [Cornelius Becomes a Christian](#)).



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## Way to Introduce the Story:

Collect a spool of thread, needle, and a container of straight pins. Show the spool of thread and the needle. Explain that these are used to make or mend clothes. Show the container of straight pins. Explain that people who sew usually use straight pins to hold the material together. "One company that made straight pins was called the 'Dorcas Company.' They chose this name for a very special reason. Can anyone guess why? The book of Acts tells us about a woman named Dorcas. Let's see if we can learn what her name has to do with sewing."

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## The Story:

A disciple is someone who follows something or someone. In the book of Acts we learn about the Disciples of Jesus (those who follow Jesus).

Some disciples were also called apostles. An apostle is someone who is sent with a special mission or job. In other stories we learned about the 12 Apostles of Jesus. These men were chosen by Jesus to do the special job of telling people the good news about Jesus. They were given the power to perform miracles and help people understand that the news was true. One of the Apostles was Peter and he travelled to many places teaching about Jesus and helping people learn to be disciples and follow Jesus.

While visiting disciples in the town of Lydda the Apostle Peter met a man named Aeneas, who had been unable to walk for eight years. When Peter saw him he said to Aeneas, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Everyone was amazed when Aeneas immediately got up and walked! Now they knew that the good news about Jesus was true. They wanted to be disciples of Jesus too.

Meanwhile, in the nearby town of Joppa there were more men and women who followed Jesus. One of these women was Tabitha. In the Greek language her name was Dorcas. The bible says, "Dorcas always doing good and helping the poor." Sometimes she sewed and made clothes for people.

All of the disciples in Joppa were very sad when Dorcas became sick and then died. They washed her body and put her in an upstairs room to wait until she was buried. When the disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in the nearby town of Lydda they sent two men to go and get him to come to Joppa.

When Peter arrived in Joppa he went to the upstairs room. Everyone was crying and showing him some of the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made when she was alive. All of the people missed her because they

knew that Dorcas had been a good and kind person.

Peter knew it was time to show everyone that the good news of Jesus was true. He asked everyone to leave the room and then he knelt down and prayed. After he prayed, Peter turned to the dead woman and said, "Tabitha, get up." The woman opened her eyes and when she saw Peter she set up. Peter took her hand and helped her to her feet.

When Peter called the rest of the disciples back in the room they were so happy to see Dorcas alive again. This was a miracle! God's power could heal people and even raise them from the dead.

Peter continued to stay in Joppa at the house of a man called Simon. Many more people in Joppa learned about what had happened and they became disciples too. The church became bigger every day.

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## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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## Review Questions:

1. What is another name for Dorcas? Tabitha
2. Where did Dorcas live? Joppa
3. What did Dorcas do to help the poor people in her town? Sewed clothes for them
4. When Dorcas died, what did her friends do? Called Peter to help. They also cried and showed Peter all of the clothes Dorcas had made for them.
5. What did Peter do when he saw that Dorcas was dead? He made her come alive again by the power of God

## Song Suggestions:

- [I've Got Peace Like a River Song](#)
- [Love is Something If You Give It Away Song](#)
- [L-O-V-E Song](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

*Activities:*

- If your congregation has a clothing room for benevolence the take a tour and speak to those who run it.

- Try one of these [Memory Verse Activities](#) to help the children learn a memory verse. An appropriate memory verse might be *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”* Galatians 6:10, NIV
- Arrange for children to bring clothing donations for the next week. If your church does not already have a method for donating clothes then find out about agencies who take donations in the community where you live.
- Place several items in a bag or pillow case (bible, blanket, toy, tin of food, etc.). Let the children take turns pulling one item out of the bag. When they have chosen an item they can tell the class a way in which this item can be used to help someone in need.
- Have children “make” clothing and conduct a “fashion show”. As you tell the story they use pretzel sticks, icing, and lollies or fruit to make people and clothe them as Dorcas did. This activity would work well for mixed age groups. I picked up this idea from a STAMP (Short-term Australian Missions) student in 2012. [Dorcas Raised from the Dead Lesson Plan](#)
- Sing the [Potato Chip Song](#)

#### Crafts:

- If you can arrange it have the children learn to sew something simple. Maybe you know someone who could help you with this. Perhaps even sewing on buttons in the shape of a cross would be a simple way to experience this story.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Dorcas is Raised from the Dead” printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)  
[Click here for “Dorcas is Raised from the Dead” to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Tabitha is another name for Dorcas\) at http://calvarycurriculum.org](http://calvarycurriculum.org)
- [Colouring page at http://www.raisingourkids.com](http://www.raisingourkids.com)
- [A good selection of puzzles and games to print at http://www.gardenofpraise.com](http://www.gardenofpraise.com)
- [Craft: There are many easy sewing projects online. Try this one at http://www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com)
- [Script for the story at http://kidscorner.net](http://kidscorner.net)
- [Lesson Plan at http://www.tumct.org](http://www.tumct.org)

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