

## WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM TABITHA'S EXAMPLE?

### Six steps for effective ministry:

#### 1. Step into the \_\_\_\_\_.

*Peter went back with them. When he came, they took him to the room. All the women whose husbands had died were standing around crying. They were showing the clothes Dorcas had made while she was with them.*

Acts 9:39 (NLV)

#### 2. Clear your setting of \_\_\_\_\_.

*Peter made them all leave the room.*

Acts 9:40 (NLV)

#### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord for \_\_\_\_\_.

*Then he got down on his knees and prayed. He turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, get up!"*

Acts 9:40 (NLV)

#### 4. Allow the person you're serving to \_\_\_\_\_ on their own.

*She opened her eyes and looked at Peter and sat up.*

Acts 9:40 (NLV)

#### 5. Walk alongside and help them \_\_\_\_\_.

*He took her by the hand and lifted her up.*

Acts 9:41 (NLV)

#### 6. \_\_\_\_\_ God's gift of \_\_\_\_\_.

*Then he called in the faithful followers and the women whose husbands had died. He gave her to them, a living person. News of this went through all Joppa. Many people put their trust in the Lord.*

Acts 9:41–42 (NLV)

Sources: *Interpretation Bible Commentary (Acts)* by Willimon and *The Communicator's Commentary (Acts)* by Ogilvie.



sermon notes

Also Starring: Tabitha

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## Raising the Dead to Life

### Acts 9:36–42 (NLV)

*A woman who was a follower lived in the city of Joppa. Her name was Tabitha, or Dorcas. She did many good things and many acts of kindness. One day she became sick and died. After they had washed her body, they laid her in a room on the second floor. The city of Lydda was near Joppa. The followers heard that Peter was at Lydda and sent two men to ask him to come at once.*

*Peter went back with them. When he came, they took him to the room. All the women whose husbands had died were standing around crying. They were showing the clothes Dorcas had made while she was with them.*

*Peter made them all leave the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. He turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes and looked at Peter and sat up. He took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then he called in the faithful followers and the women whose husbands had died. He gave her to them, a living person. News of this went through all Joppa. Many people put their trust in the Lord.*

## WIDOWS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- There was a dispute in the early church about how to fairly take care of widows.
- The 12 apostles appointed a team of 7 to oversee the needs of these widows as the church continued to grow.
- Serving widows and other disadvantaged people has always been one of God's major concerns in both Testaments.

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.* James 1:27 (NIV)

- According to James, true religion isn't defined by our external adherence to a system of thought but by our response of mercy to the needs around us.

### **A TIME OF IMMENSE SUCCESS**

- The church was acting as God's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. This led to the rapid growth of the church.
- This growth was tested by intense persecution which only led to new effectiveness and served to spread the gospel even more.

*Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.* Acts 9:31 (NIV)

- The church was being conditioned by immense success to prepare it for new possibilities.
- Tabitha's healing was part of this period of preparation for the greater restoration between Jews and Gentiles in Acts 10.

### **TABITHA AND HER MINISTRY**

- Tabitha is the Aramaic and Dorcas is the Greek form of the word *gazelle*. This speaks to Tabitha's character:

**Tabitha \_\_\_\_\_ others.**

- When Peter arrived, the widows were wearing the clothes that Dorcas made for them. The clothes represented a love relationship.
- More is at stake in this story than we suspect. When Tabitha dies, her life-giving work dies with her, leaving the fate of the widows uncertain. Tabitha was their safety net.

### **PETER'S FLASHBACK TO ANOTHER MIRACLE**

- During the earthly ministry of Jesus, Peter and the other disciples came upon a man named Jairus who asked Jesus to heal his dying daughter; she died before they arrived.

*Jesus went into the house. He let only Peter and James and John and the father and mother of the girl go in with Him. Everyone was crying and full of sorrow because of her . . . Jesus sent them all out. He took the girl by the hand and said, "Child, get up!" Her spirit came back and she got up at once. Jesus told them to bring her food.*

Luke 8:51-55 (NLV)

- Peter's command to "get up" are the same words that Jesus uses. In the context of the gospel, getting up leads to renewed service on behalf of others.
- Peter allowed himself to be used as a channel of God's grace in the healing of Tabitha.

### **THE PARALLEL BETWEEN TABITHA AND PETER**

How do we focus on an almost entirely passive member in the gospel's supporting cast when a giant like Peter is on the scene and all the action is centered on the miracle he performs?

- Despite his star status, Peter is still a supporting cast member of the gospel like he was years ago when Jesus performed a similar miracle for the daughter of Jairus.
- What Peter does for Tabitha physically (bringing her from a place of death to life), Tabitha does for the widows spiritually.
- As Peter guided Tabitha from death to life, so Tabitha guides the widows in their grief to a place of joy.

Peter serving Tabitha in the same way opens our eyes to how all of us are called to serve and to be served, depending on our season of life.