

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-20 Christian Character: Service

When we think about what Jesus did while here on earth, we remember his miracles. Even Paul preached about the way “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38). Jesus healed people, but also did other good works. Jesus listened to people’s fears and confusion about life and provided encouragement and direction for them. Whatever need he encountered, he tried to meet. He encouraged us to do the same. In fact, he admonished his disciples, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first, must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45).

Joppa was a bustling harbor city overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. This story took place in the city, while the apostle Peter was traveling in the area visiting believers. The account starts on a sad day for one neighborhood. A large number of people were mourning the death of a disciple who had just died. How would they get along without Tabitha? She had been such a servant to all who had known her, helping the poor, doing good every chance she got.

Tabitha, which when translated into Greek is ‘Dorcas,’ had a servant heart. Before her death, she looked for ways to help in the church. She showed the love of Jesus through sewing robes and other clothing for widows and orphans in need. It seemed that God himself was smiling on her as she ministered to them. Full of compassion, she served so many of the poor. As a disciple, she grew in faith in the One who had called her. She was actively involved in full-time service.

She became well known in the city because of her servant heart and her loving spirit. Dorcas knew what it was to have a renewed and forgiven heart, regenerated by Jesus. It was the source of her unselfish life. Behind all her charity was a saved and thankful soul. She gave alms and made clothes, doing what she could for the church. Dorcas was a genuine pure-hearted servant of God. He saw and was delighted in his servant because of her love, not because of her talent. “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). The church was truly sad because she had become sick and died. They washed her body in preparation for burial and placed it in an upstairs room of her house.

The amazing thing was this; God had arranged for the apostle Peter to be close by when she died. He had been traveling in the area, visiting the believers and spreading the good news of Jesus’ forgiveness. Then he had found himself visiting the saints in Lydda, about ten miles from Joppa. The believers had followed Peter’s ministry and some knew where he was staying. These believers also knew that Dorcas was loved by the church at Joppa. She was a pillar, a living example of the good news. Since Peter was close by; two disciples were sent to Lydda. They urged Peter, “Come at once!” Whether to comfort the mourners in the church or for a miracle, Peter was urged to hurry to get there before the burial.

Just hours later, Peter arrived in Joppa. The preparations were well underway for Tabitha's burial. As Peter approached her home, he could hear the weeping. He was moved by the love that he saw and heard. All the widows stood around him, showing him the robes and other clothing that she had made while she was still with them. They cried and said, "What shall we do now without our dear sister?" It was a sad day for the church in Joppa.

Peter was taken upstairs to the room where the body lay. He had been present on three occasions recorded in scripture, when Christ had raised individuals from the dead. When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, the crowd in the room was told to leave. So Peter, prompted by God's Spirit and knowing God's will, sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord (Acts 9:36-42).

What a great day in the life of the church as Dorcas greeted the people again, now alive and well! This miracle sent shock waves, not only through the church, but also into the community. Many believed as a result of this miracle, which strengthened Dorcas' faith also. Yes, God was very much involved in her service and very honored by the church in Joppa. Dorcas would pick up the needle and go back to work with a heart that was now reenergized. This revival was caused by Dorcas' willingness to serve Jesus and others.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches that it is God's will to serve those in need and that God is honored by such service.

The **main point** of this lesson is that we should be generous in helping those who are in need. God sees and is pleased by what we do to help the "widow and orphan." Our acts of love are never lost nor forgotten in heaven.

Your **review** questions are:

1. Why was Dorcas so well known in her community? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "Dorcas was well known because she was active in helping the widows and orphans," you have answered correctly.
2. What was her motive for serving the widows and orphans? [Pause]
(A) If you answered, "Dorcas served her community out of a pure heart without thought of reward or recognition, because she loved Jesus," you are correct.
3. How did God show his approval with Dorcas' service to the church?
A. If you answered that God brought the apostle Peter and answered prayer by raising Dorcas from the dead, you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson as many times as it takes to clearly understand it. Then practice telling the story to another believer, making sure that you tell it correctly.

Please memorize these verses from Mark 10:43-45: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

May his grace be ours to do whatever our hands find to do, as unto the Lord!