

Dorcas Is a Good Helper


 Overview

Materials You'll Need

- large brown shopping paper bags
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- scraps
- glue



Bible Knowledge

Peter's Missionary Journey

After Philip had success preaching in Samaria (see Lesson 7), Peter and John traveled there to help in the ministry. Later, Peter traveled to Lydda, where Aeneas was healed (Acts 9:32-35). Then he went to Joppa, where Dorcas was brought back to life. While staying with Simon the tanner, he saw the vision of the unclean animals. Then Peter accepted Cornelius' invitation to go to Caesarea, where the gospel was spread to the gentiles (Acts 10). This sequence of events demonstrated the power of God. Everywhere Peter went, people were able to witness God at work and as a result, many came to believe.

Joppa

The story of Dorcas took place in the harbor city of Joppa. This harbor city sat 125 feet above sea level overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Joppa was the town into which the cedars of Lebanon were floated. The wood was then shipped to Jerusalem and used in the temple construction

(2 Chron 2:16; Ezra 3:7). The seaport of Joppa was located about thirty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem.

The city had been in the possession of Egypt until 197 BC. Greece claimed it until 63 BC, followed by Rome. In 47 BC, Julius Caesar returned it to the Jews, but in 37 BC, Herod the Great captured it again.

Joppa was both a gentile and a Jewish town, so it was common for people to have two names, one in Hebrew or Aramaic, and the other in Greek. Dorcas (Greek) and Tabitha (Aramaic) both mean "gazelle," a beautiful, fleet-footed animal.

Dorcas

The Bible doesn't mention the genealogy of Dorcas. Apparently, she was a woman of means, since she was able to help so many people, especially the poor. The words of Jesus had no doubt been the moving force in her soul. She was also well-known throughout Joppa. When she died, the Bible records that the room was filled with mourners, likely the people she had helped. When she was brought back to life, the news raced through the city.



Understanding Your Students

The Bible tells us that Dorcas helped others in need through her needlework. She sewed tunics and garments for people who needed them. Perhaps it may not have been difficult for her since she was good at that kind of work, but she ended up helping more people than she could have imagined.

Your students will learn from this story that there are different ways to help the needy. Take time to brainstorm ways they can offer help. Sometimes, the students don't realize the variety of things they can do. Even small things count, as long as the help means something to the person who needs it.

Share specific actions they can take. For example, in the church, they can hold the door open for the elderly. It may not seem like much to the students, but it

will certainly help the elderly who are physically slower and weaker. Often, the students just breeze through the doors. They don't even think much about the people around them. Take time to point out these small things they can do that will mean a lot to another. They can also be encouraged to pick up all the hymn books and Bibles from the chapel when service is over. This can help those who are in a rush to leave the church, or those who just forgot. Most of all, it helps to keep the house of God clean from week to week. Then the believers can enjoy a tidy chapel each time they come because no one wants to walk into a dirty or messy place.

Whenever the opportunities arise, continue to point out ways they can offer help. This will allow the students to make the connection to what they are doing to how they are doing God's work. Often they are little things in life, but they go a long way.



Vocabulary

Apostle

one of the twelve people Jesus chose as His helpers when He was on earth

Miracle

something amazing only God can do



Before You Teach

Dorcas was well known for her good works and charitable deeds. She was a true doer of God's words. As far as we know, she made clothes for widows with her own loving hands. The garments that Dorcas cut out and sewed represented Christian faith in action. She was not only willing to give financially, but she was willing to invest her time and effort in God's work.

The life of Dorcas encourages us to think about what it means to be a doer of God's words. As recorded in James 1:22, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Although our salvation is not something we can earn, James reminds us that true faith is always manifested through our actions. How can we say we love our brothers and sisters, but turn a blind eye when they are cold or hungry? How can we say we love our

parents when we constantly argue with them? How can we say we love God, and yet try our best to remove ourselves from church duties? When we hear the word of God, we must receive it and also apply it to our everyday lives. Otherwise, as James has said, we would be deceiving ourselves.

As teachers, we may know some people in need. We can be the ones to set the example for our students. For example, for those who may not have as much financially within the church, we can bake some cookies, make care packages, or even start a food drive. Outside of church, there are organizations and homes for orphans and seniors that need help. We can plan to visit these homes to offer assistance or just to spend time with the people. We can be the ones to initiate these actions to show our students what it really means to be a doer.

As we teach this week's lesson, let us think about this important question: are we merely listeners or are we doers?



Bible Story

In our last lesson, we learned how the message about Jesus spread to different places. At first, the disciples and other helpers only told people in Jerusalem, but slowly, they traveled to more and more places. One of the places was called Samaria. Philip, one of the seven people chosen to look after the church, traveled there and told them about Jesus. Many of the people who heard him believed and got baptized. Philip also went to a desert road and talked to an Ethiopian. When he met the man, the Ethiopian was reading the words of God, but he didn't really understand everything he was reading. So Philip explained what God was saying. After the Ethiopian heard Philip speak, he believed and asked to be baptized. He probably went home, which was far away, and told others about Jesus. More and more people came to believe. The church was growing in different parts of the land.

When Philip was doing his work, the apostle Peter was also preaching the good news. He was in a city called Lydda. While he was there, he healed a man who couldn't walk and many people came to believe.

Dorcas Helps Others in Need

Around the time Peter was in Lydda, something sad happened in a nearby city. The city was called Joppa. In that city lived a good woman named Dorcas. She was a follower of Jesus. She was a loving person who showed kindness to others, especially to the poor. Do you know how she was kind to the poor? She made clothes for those who didn't have money to buy them. Dorcas liked to sew, but she didn't sew the clothes for herself to wear. When she saw children with ragged clothes, Dorcas sewed new clothes for them. Dorcas also sewed new clothes for grown-ups who looked like they needed warm clothes to wear. She didn't want them to be cold and get sick. She spent a lot of her time buying cloth, cutting it to the right sizes, and sewing them together to make the clothes. The people she helped loved her very much because she was so kind to them. Dorcas always helped them when she could.

Dorcas Becomes Sick and Dies

But one day Dorcas became very sick. Does it feel

good to be sick? (Allow students to answer.) It doesn't feel good to be sick. Our head might feel heavy. We might sneeze all the time or cough until our body hurts. But Dorcas wasn't just coughing or sneezing. She was really sick, so sick that she probably couldn't even get out of bed. Her friends and the people she helped were very worried about her. They did not want to see her so sick. They wanted her to get better. But Dorcas did not get better. In fact, she became so sick that she died. Her friends and those she helped were very sad. They cried and cried. They wished Dorcas would come back to them. Then they thought of an idea. The friends knew that Peter was in a nearby city. Maybe he could help them with God's almighty power. So they sent two men to find Peter. While they waited, they washed the body of Dorcas and laid it on a bed in a room.

Two Men Go to Find Peter

The two men rushed to find Peter. They wanted to find him as fast as they could. (Ask students to help them find Peter by sitting in their seats and make stepping sounds with their feet. How fast can the two men walk? Ask the students to stop after a minute, and continue with the story.)

Finally the two men found Peter. They told him what happened to Dorcas.

They might have said, "Peter, Dorcas is dead. She was a good woman. She was a dear friend. She made clothes for poor people, and she helped so many with her sewing. She is gone now. We don't want her to go. Please, Peter, can you come with us and show us God's mighty power?"

Peter went with them to see Dorcas. When they arrived at the house, many of her friends were still crying. Peter was taken to an upper room where Dorcas lay. Dorcas' friends showed Peter the nice clothes she had made for them.

These people probably said to Peter, "Dorcas was such a good helper, and a dear friend. See all the clothes she made for us? Now she is gone. Can you help us, Peter?"

Peter Helps Dorcas With God's Power

Peter could see that Dorcas was a kind and helpful person. Everyone he met in Joppa told him what a wonderful woman she was. So Peter sent everyone out of the room. He knew that the only way to help Dorcas was to pray to God. So he knelt

down and asked God to make Dorcas come back to life again.

After Peter prayed to God, he turned to the body and said, "Get up, Dorcas "

Do you know what happened next? Miraculously, Dorcas opened her eyes, looked at Peter, and sat up. She was alive again Peter took her hand and helped her stand up.

Isn't this amazing? Dorcas was not dead anymore. God had given her life back. This was a miracle.

As soon as Dorcas got up, Peter called everyone into the room.

"Come in, everybody " Peter called.

Dorcas' friends went into the room. They couldn't believe what they saw. Dorcas was alive They hugged and kissed her with great joy. Then they praised God. Dorcas' friends were thankful to God for bringing Dorcas back to life.

The good news spread quickly, and many people believed in Jesus because Dorcas was raised from the dead.

We learned that Dorcas was a kind and generous woman. She helped the poor by making them clothes to wear. That is why when she died, many people were sad because she was such a nice person. They missed her a lot. But the power of God raised her from the dead and she came back to life. That is God's amazing grace

Today, maybe we cannot sew or make clothes. But there are other ways we can help people in need. Let's take a moment and think about the people around us. Whom can we help? How can we help? (Brainstorm this topic with the students.) Let's pick something from our list that we can do this week. Let's also remember to pray to God for power so that we can be like Dorcas and help the people around us.



Check For Understanding

1. **How was Dorcas kind to others?** (She made clothes for people who didn't have money to buy or make their own.)
2. **What happened to Dorcas that made her friends sad?** (She became sick and died.)
3. **Why did Dorcas' friends ask two men to go and find Peter in a nearby city?** (They wanted to ask for his help after Dorcas died.)
4. **Who made Dorcas come back to life?** (God

gave Peter the power to make Dorcas come back to life.)

5. **What happened after people heard about the miracle?** (Many people came to believe in Christ after they learned about Dorcas coming back to life.)
6. **People can see if we are Christians by what we do or say. What can we do or say to show others we believe in Jesus?** (Students' responses may vary. Suggested answers: we can help others, show kindness, use good manners, use gentle words and not argue, follow God's commands, etc.)



Life Application Story

Glad to Help

The Manners family were neighbors of the Lewis family. But lately, the family was going through a difficult time because Mr. Manners had just lost his

job. There are two girls and two boys plus Mr. and Mrs. Manners in the family. Mr. Manners was worried about how he would be able to buy enough food to feed the whole family as well as pay for other things if he didn't find a job soon.

Mrs. Lewis learned the news while visiting the Manners family one day. Moved by what she heard, Mrs. Lewis came up with an idea. The idea also involved her eight-year-old daughter Julie. Julie

was just getting to the age where she was starting to be able to help out around the house. She was a cheerful young girl who loved to worship and serve God.

"Julie, would you like to be God's helper and my good helper?" asked Mrs. Lewis one day.

"Sure, Mom, what do you need help with?" Julie asked.

"Oh, it's not me who needs help but our neighbors, the Mannenses. You see, Mr. Mannenses lost his job a month ago. He is worried that he will not have enough money to buy all the things they need. I thought we could help them, even if it's just a little bit. So, I am going to the supermarket to buy some food and give it to them as a gift. Would you like to help me pick out what you think the Mannenses children would like?" Mrs. Lewis asked.

Julie thought that this was a great idea.

Julie smiled and said, "I would be happy to come with you, Mom. I hope the kids will like the food and drinks I pick out for them."

Mrs. Lewis and Julie had fun at the supermarket, picking out all kinds of tasty and nutritious food for their neighbors.

As they headed to the checkout, Julie said, "You know, Mom, this is like when we collect all the canned foods and donate them to the food bank during Thanksgiving."

"Yes, a little. Except this time, we know who the food is going to," Mrs. Lewis answered.

After Mrs. Lewis and Julie got home from shopping, Julie put the groceries down in the kitchen and ran upstairs to get something. Mrs. Lewis wondered why Julie ran away so quickly.

Before she could ask, Julie had already returned. She was holding a big box full of games her grandparents had given her for holidays.

"What's in the box?" asked Mrs. Lewis.

"Oh, it's the box of games Grandma and Grandpa sent me. Don't you remember, Mom?" Julie explained.

"Yes, I remember now, but what are you going to do with those games?" Mrs. Lewis asked.

"I want to give our neighbors something I like so that when they play, they can be as happy as our family," Julie said.

"I'm so proud of you. Our heavenly Father will be very happy to see what you have done," Mrs. Lewis said with a big smile on her face.

"Mom, let's pack all these goodies up. I can't wait to bring them to Mr. and Mrs. Mannenses. I hope they will like what we got," Julie said as she put things neatly in the empty box her mom had taken out.

"I am sure they will," Mrs. Lewis answered. "I hope they will feel the love of God. Even though they are going through some hard times now, God still loves them very much, and He will take care of them."

"Maybe they will come to church with us after we bring them these things," Julie said excitedly.

"I hope you are right. That will make God very happy," Mrs. Lewis said.

Questions to Think About:

1. **How did Mrs. Lewis want to help the Mannenses family?** (She wanted to buy some food to bring to them.)
2. **How did Julie help the Mannenses family?** (Julie went to the supermarket with her mom to pick out some food that the Mannenses children might like. She also wanted to give them a box of games that her grandparents gave her as a present.)
3. **If you were Mrs. Lewis and Julie, what else could you do to help the Mannenses family?** (Students' responses may vary.)
4. **Have you shared and helped others? What did you do?** (Students' responses may vary.)
5. **How does God feel when we look for ways to help people?** (It makes God happy because we are following His command to love others.)



Activity 1

Dorcas Helps Others

How many pieces of clothing can you find? Circle them. (There should be ten items.)



Activity 2

Being Helpful Pantomime

As teachers, we should encourage our students to love others by looking for opportunities to help. While the

students are working on Activity 1, call them to your work area one by one. Ask each student to tell you about a time he or she helped another person. Write this on a strip of paper with that child's name, and place it onto a container. Do this with the rest of the students. Then after the students have completed Activity 1, explain that to them that they will be acting out what they just told the teacher. Ask one student to come to the front of the room and act out how they helped out. Let the other students guess what is being acted out. After each guess, talk about how the students are being helpful and reinforce that God sees everything and is very pleased.



Activity 3

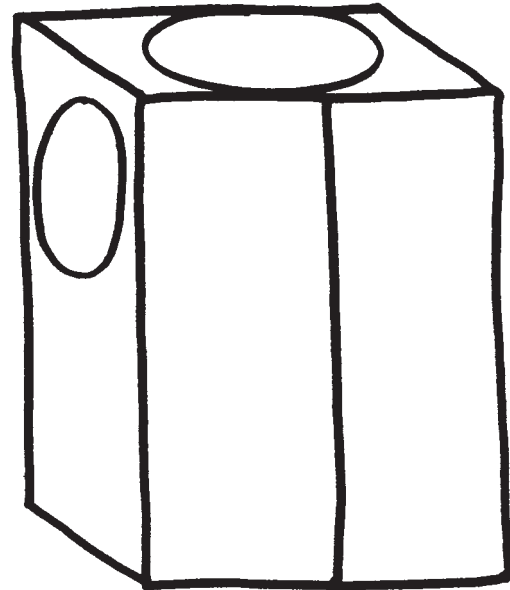
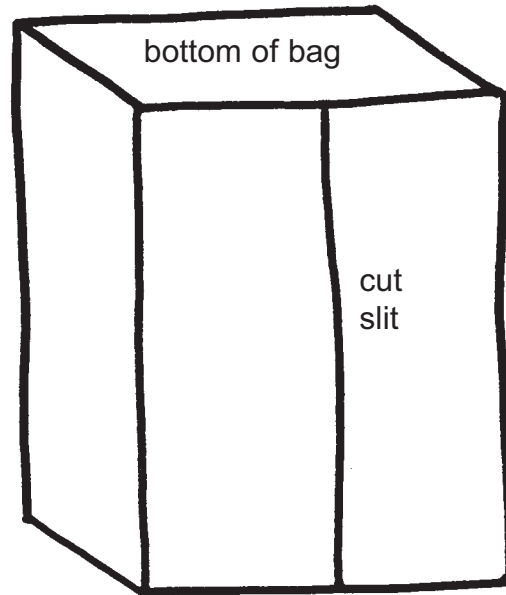
Paper Bag Vests

Materials:

1. large brown paper shopping bags (one per student)
2. markers or crayon
3. scissors
4. scraps for decorating the vest
5. glue

Directions:

1. Before the class: cut a slit down the middle of one side of the bag. Cut holes for the arms and head in the paper bag (see diagrams).
2. Encourage the students to decorate their vests with markers and other scraps they can glue on. Remind them that Dorcas made clothes for people because she was full of love and wanted to help others. This vest can help them remember Dorcas' great work.
3. On the back of their vests, write down the memory verse for today's lesson.
4. Encourage the students to share their vests and what they learned about Dorcas with their family.



Activity 8:1

Dorcas Helps Others

How many pieces of clothing can you find? Circle them.

