

# Dorcas Helps Others

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## **Scene Summary**

Dorcas helps others presents the warm hearted story of a kind woman who helps the poor. Scenes include: Dorcas sewing garments for the widows...Dorcas walking through the streets of Joppa to take garments to widows...Dorcas visiting the poor...Christians giving money to be used for the poor...Dorcas becomes ill...her death...mourning by friends...prayer by Peter...Dorcas is restored to life.

## **Scripture**

(Acts 9:36-42 NIV) In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas ), who was always doing good and helping the poor. {37} About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. {38} Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" {39} Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. {40} Peter 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. {41} 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. {42} This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

(Acts 6:1-3 NIV) In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. {2} So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. {3} Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them

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### ***Players***

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Dorcas** – Lead character of the story.
- **Peter** – Disciple of Jesus.
- **Widow 1, 2** – Weeping and mourning, their friend has died.
- **Person 1, 2, 3** – Friends of Dorcas; more can be added as needed.

### ***Special Props***

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- Sewing items for Dorcas, such as cloth, needle and thread.

## ***Script – Dorcas Helps Others***

**Narrator:** Dorcas happily worked sewing for others.

**Dorcas:** [singing to herself and sewing cloth, to herself] The red and blue thread looks pretty on the white cloth. [holding up the cloth showing the design she had made] The poor widow will be pleased with this tunic. [trying it on to see how it looks, then to herself] I'll take it to her now.

**Narrator:** Dorcas smiled as she hurried through the streets of Joppa.

**Dorcas:** [happily, to herself] I can hardly wait to see how happy the widow will be when she sees her new tunic.

[Coming up to the door of the widow's house, she knocks and the widow answers]

**Widow 1:** [excited] This is the loveliest tunic I have ever had! [holding it up with admiration]

**Narrator:** The tunic was really an undergarment, but she knew that the widow would wear it as a dress in hot weather. On the way home, Dorcas watched the men unloading the boats down by the sea. Sadly, she thought about many widows in her town that had no one to care for them. Every Sunday, the Christians gave a special offering of money that was used to buy food for the poor people and widows. But there was never enough money to buy everything that the people needed. When a widow needed a new coat, Dorcas made one for her.

**Dorcas:** [holding a coat for the widow] Try it on.

**Narrator:** The widow wrapped the long coat dress and put the wide cloth girdle around her waist.

**Widow 1:** This is beautiful! And it will keep me warm.

**Dorcas:** Now let's tie together these pointed ends of your sleeves and throw the ends over your shoulders. Now your arms are free to work.

**Widow 1:** [very happy] This is wonderful!

**Narrator:** Everyone knew Dorcas. As she hurried through the streets of Joppa, everyone smiled and greeted her.

**Person 1:** [to Person 2] She is a good woman.

**Person 2:** Yes, she is kind and give much to the poor.

**Narrator:** In the winter, Dorcas made heavy woolen cloaks.

**Dorcas:** [to Widow 2] This will keep you warm.

**Narrator:** Dorcas knew that the woman would wear the coat during the daytime and use the coat as a blanket at night.

[Scene change to Dorcas' house]

**Narrator:** One day later, Dorcas became ill. She stayed in bed.

**Dorcas:** [to herself] I will feel better tomorrow.

**Narrator:** But Dorcas did not get better.

**Dorcas:** [weakly] I've never been this sick before.

**Narrator:** How sad her friends were when Dorcas died.

**Person 1:** [sadly] She was so kind and good.

**Person 2:** [also sadly] I will tell the disciples that Dorcas has died.

**Narrator:** The disciples in Joppa sent to the nearby city for Peter. Quickly Peter arrived and looked at Dorcas lying on the couch, all ready for burial. Everyone was crying.

**Person 1:** [mourning] She was our friend.

**Widow 2:** [mourning] This is a coat that Dorcas made for me.

**Widow 1:** [mourning] This is a tunic Dorcas made for me.

**Peter:** Everyone please leave the room. [knelling by the side of the couch to pray. Then standing] Dorcas, get up!

**Dorcas:** [Slowly opening her eyes and sitting up]

**Peter:** [taking her hand and helping her to her feet] Come, let us go to the others.

**Person 1:** [excited and amazed] Dorcas is alive!

**Person 2:** [joyfully] It is a miracle! Our kind friend is alive!

The End

### ***Supplemental information:***

Dorcas lived in the city of Joppa, about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Joppa is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is situated on a hill and looks down on the blue Mediterranean Sea. Goods were brought by ship into Joppa's natural harbor, then taken by land to Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities.

We know very little about Dorcas and her family. In Acts 9:36, she is mentioned as a disciple. She is the only woman disciple mentioned in the scriptures. She was well known for her many good deeds and work for the poor in the city.

In Bible days, there were few places for women to work so that they could earn money. Most of the people were very poor. People worked very hard. When a husband died, he normally had little or nothing to leave to his widow. Often there were debts to pay. If the couple had children, the boys were obligated to provide for the family. If a widow had no sons, then she had no one to provide for her needs.

The Mosaic law urged the people to give to the poor and widows. (Deut 15:11) The prophets taught that alms giving was a right that the needy could justly claim. In later Old Testament days, the Jews came to believe that by giving to the poor this would blot out their sins. They also felt that God would give them special favors if they gave to the poor. (Daniel 4:27) Giving alms to the poor was one of the Jews first religious duties, especially after they stopped making animal sacrifices according to the Old Testament law.

Early Christians were exhorted to give some portion of their earning to the poor. Collections were made weekly in the synagogues. This was an important part of their worship. Perhaps Dorcas used some of this money collected to buy cloth and yarn for the poor. She may have used some of her own money also to provide for the poor widows.

### ***Extra time costumes***

Help your students learn what the garments of that day looked like by making a simple four piece outfit. The undergarment is formed from a length of material, with a hole in the middle, slit down the front, large enough for the head to go through. Sleeves were short and made by cutting a strip from the sides of the garment, up to the armpit. The garment was loose and came up to a little below the knees. The outer coat was formed in the same manner. It was open from the neck to the hem, and the hem was just above the ankles. These sleeves were long and worn over the shorter garment. It was held together with a sash. The sash was a square, folded diagonally and rolled, then wrapped around the waste. Or it could be made from a wide strip of cloth, arranged in folds and wrapped around the body.

### ***Women's Fashions in Bible Days***

How did women dress in New Testaments days? They had three basic garments that were similar to those worn by men. The tunic was a short white dress worn as undergarments. But it could be worn in the house or even outdoors in warm weather. It had a round neckline,

short sleeves, and could be worn with or without a belt. It was made of linen, cotton, or wool. Usually there was some fancy needlework in black, yellow, red or green at the neck and on the skirt above the hem.

Over this, a woman wore a coat, a longer garment, open down the front and held together by a wide sash. Sleeves were usually wide. Sometimes they were pointed on the ends. When a woman wanted her arms free, she merely tied the two sleeves points together and tossed them over her shoulders. This pulled the sleeves up and held them securely. The coat was made of wool or silk. Men's coats were often striped; women's were in plain colors.

In cold weather, a heavy woolen cloak was worn. This was made from a large square of heavy woolen. It had no sleeves, but there were openings at the sides for the hands. On winter nights the cloaks were used as blankets. Women wore head coverings even in their homes. They could remove them when alone or with servants.

Women always wore a head covering. This was usually a square of cloth, draped over the head.