

The Book of Acts, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 15: Peter, Aeneas, and Dorcas

Acts 9:32-43

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Acts 9:32-43 records two miracles through Peter, the healing of Aeneas and the raising of Dorcas, framing a beautiful portrait of a life of humble good works. What is doctrinally at stake includes the proper source and purpose of miracles (Christ's power working to confirm the message and lead people to faith, not to exalt the worker or model present-day sign-working), the place of good works as the fruit of genuine faith, the value of quiet service to the vulnerable, and Christ's power over death as a sign pointing to the resurrection hope.

The heaviest doctrinal weight falls on the raising of Dorcas as a demonstration of Christ's power over death and a foretaste of the resurrection. Teach that this apostolic sign confirmed the message and pointed to the believer's hope, while distinguishing it from modern claims, and present good works rightly as the fruit of faith, not its ground.

Yet aim at the heart. This passage honors a seamstress and her quiet love, reminding us that faithfulness in hidden, practical service is precious to God. Help students give glory to Christ for every good, turn fully to the Lord, fill their lives with good works, serve the vulnerable, and rest their hope in the Christ who raises the dead.

Question 1

Student Question:

When Peter healed Aeneas, he said, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you (v. 34), crediting the Lord rather than himself. What does this teach about the source of the miracle, and why is it important that Peter pointed away from himself to Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter's words are carefully chosen: not I heal you, but Jesus Christ heals you. Peter is only the instrument; the power belongs entirely to the risen Christ. The apostle takes no credit and draws no attention to himself.

This is consistent with everything we have seen in Acts. When the lame man was healed, Peter asked why the crowd stared at him as though by his own power he had done it (Acts 3:12). The apostles never present themselves as the source of power; they point relentlessly to Jesus.

Why does this matter? Because the purpose of the miracle was to glorify Christ and lead people to Him, not to exalt Peter. If Peter had taken the credit, attention would have stopped at him. By

pointing to Jesus, he directed the glory and the faith of the people to the One who actually saves.

Help students apply this posture. Whatever good is done through us, in service, in ministry, in helping others, the power and the glory belong to Christ. We are instruments in His hands. To point away from ourselves to Him is both honest and life-giving, for it leads people not to admire us but to trust the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the true source of the miracle, Peter only the instrument (v. 34)
- The apostles consistently pointing away from themselves to Christ (Acts 3:12)
- The purpose of the miracle to glorify Christ and lead people to faith
- Glory for every good belonging to the Lord

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Peter say Jesus Christ heals you rather than taking credit?
- What would have been lost if Peter had drawn attention to himself?
- How can you point others to Christ rather than yourself in the good you do?

Question 2

Student Question:

Peter gave all the credit for the healing to Jesus Christ (v. 34). When good things happen through you, your gifts, your service, your successes, do you point others to Christ or quietly take the credit yourself? How can you cultivate a heart that gives God the glory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter's instinct to credit Christ exposes our own instinct to credit ourselves. When something good comes through us, our gifts, our work, our service, our achievements, the temptation is to absorb the praise rather than redirect it to God.

Invite honest reflection. When I am complimented, do I deflect glory to God or quietly enjoy it as my own? Do I see my abilities and successes as gifts from God to be used for His glory, or as my own accomplishments to be admired? The heart's default is self-credit.

Scripture calls us to a different posture. What do you have that you did not receive? (1 Corinthians 4:7). Every good gift comes from God (James 1:17), and we are stewards, not owners, of our abilities. Giving God the glory is simply telling the truth about where our gifts come from.

Encourage a concrete practice. When good comes through you, consciously thank God and, where fitting, point others to Him. Cultivating gratitude and humility over time reshapes the

heart, so that giving God the glory becomes natural rather than forced. Let your light shine, Jesus said, so that others may glorify your Father (Matthew 5:16).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to take credit for what God enables
- Every good gift and ability received from God (1 Corinthians 4:7; James 1:17)
- Stewardship rather than ownership of our gifts
- Good works done so that God is glorified (Matthew 5:16)

Discussion Prompts

- When good comes through you, do you point to Christ or take the credit?
- Do you see your gifts as your own or as received from God?
- How can you cultivate a heart that gives God the glory?

Question 3

Student Question:

After Aeneas was healed, all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord (v. 35). What does this show about the purpose of the miracles in Acts, and what does it mean to truly turn to the Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Notice the result Luke records: not amazement at Peter, but that the people turned to the Lord. The miracle accomplished its purpose, confirming the message and drawing people to faith in Christ. This is the consistent pattern in Acts: signs led to salvation.

This underscores the purpose of the miracles. They were never ends in themselves or mere displays of power; they authenticated the apostolic message and pointed people to the Lord. God bore witness to the gospel by signs and wonders in this foundational age (Hebrews 2:3-4), so that people would believe and turn to Christ.

The phrase turned to the Lord describes genuine conversion, a decisive turning of the whole life from the old way to Christ. To turn to the Lord is more than admiring Him or being impressed by a miracle; it is repenting, believing, and giving oneself to Him as Lord.

Help students see both the purpose of the signs and the meaning of conversion. The miracles served the gospel; the goal was always that people would turn to the Lord. And turning to the Lord is the response God still seeks from every heart, a full turning of life and allegiance to Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Miracles serving to confirm the message and lead to faith (Hebrews 2:3-4)
- Signs as means to conversion, not ends in themselves
- Turning to the Lord as genuine, decisive conversion
- The goal of the miraculous as people coming to Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What was the purpose of the healing, judging by its result?
- What does it mean to truly turn to the Lord?
- How is turning to the Lord more than being impressed by Him?

Question 4

Student Question:

The people of Lydda and Sharon turned fully to the Lord (v. 35). Conversion is a complete turning, not a half-hearted interest. Are there areas of your life where you are only half-turned to the Lord, still facing the old direction? What would a fuller turning look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

To turn to the Lord is to reorient the whole life toward Him. Yet many of us are only half-turned, having given Christ our religious life while keeping parts of ourselves still facing the old direction, old habits, old loyalties, old priorities.

Invite honest reflection. Where am I still half-turned? Are there areas, my finances, my relationships, my private habits, my ambitions, where I have not fully turned to the Lord, where the old direction still has my heart? A partial turning leaves us divided and unstable.

The call of the gospel is a complete turning. Conversion is not adding Jesus to a life still oriented toward self, but turning the whole person toward Him. And this turning continues throughout the Christian life as the Lord exposes areas still facing the wrong way.

Encourage students to identify one area of incomplete turning and to turn more fully there, surrendering it consciously to Christ. A fuller turning means letting His lordship reach the places we have kept facing the old way. The goal is a life wholly turned toward the Lord, undivided in its allegiance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Conversion as a complete turning of the whole life
- The danger of being only half-turned to the Lord
- Ongoing turning as the Lord exposes divided areas
- Undivided allegiance to Christ as the goal

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you only half-turned to the Lord?
- What old direction still has part of your heart?
- What would a fuller turning look like in that area?

Question 5

Student Question:

Dorcas was described as full of good works and acts of charity (v. 36), and her life of practical love was treasured by all. What place do good works have in the Christian life, and how do we understand them rightly as the fruit of genuine faith rather than the means of earning salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Luke honors Dorcas with a beautiful summary: she was full of good works and acts of charity. Her faith was not theoretical; it overflowed into tangible love, sewing garments for widows, meeting real needs. This is what genuine faith looks like in action.

Good works have an essential place in the Christian life. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). Faith without works is dead; genuine faith inevitably produces a life of love and good deeds (James 2:14-17). Jesus said we are to let our light shine through good works so that others glorify the Father (Matthew 5:16).

But we must understand their place rightly. Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the means of earning it. We are not saved by accumulating good deeds to put God in our debt; salvation is by grace, received through an obedient faith, resting on the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Dorcas's good works did not purchase her standing with God; they flowed from a heart already devoted to the Lord.

Help students avoid two errors. One error treats good works as the way to earn salvation, turning grace into a wage. The opposite error dismisses good works as unimportant, as though faith could be real while bearing no fruit. The truth is that we are saved by grace through faith, and that saving faith always works through love (Galatians 5:6). Dorcas shows us a faith full of good works, the kind God honors.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Good works as the fruit of genuine faith (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-17)
- Faith working through love (Galatians 5:6)
- Good works as the fruit, not the means, of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Letting light shine through good works for God's glory (Matthew 5:16)
- Avoiding both works-salvation and a fruitless faith

Discussion Prompts

- What place do good works have in the Christian life?
- How do we hold good works and salvation by grace together rightly?
- What two errors must we avoid regarding good works?

Question 6

Student Question:

Dorcas filled her life with practical acts of love for those around her (vv. 36, 39). What good works characterize your life right now? Where is God inviting you to express your faith in tangible love toward specific people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Dorcas's example moves the question of good works from theory to practice. Her faith showed itself in concrete, practical love, garments sewn, widows cared for, needs met. The question for us is what tangible good our own faith is producing.

Invite honest reflection. If someone summarized my life as Luke summarized Dorcas's, what would they say it was full of? Is my faith overflowing into practical love for real people, or is it largely internal and invisible? Good intentions are not good works; love must take action.

Help students think concretely. Practical love looks like meeting a specific need, serving a particular person, using our hands and resources for others, the meal cooked, the visit made, the help given, the burden shared. Dorcas's love had a needle and thread; ours will take whatever form our gifts and circumstances allow.

Encourage one tangible step. Who around me has a need I could meet this week? What good work could I do, not in general but for a specific person? A faith full of good works is not built in a day but in a thousand small acts of love. The invitation is to begin, or continue, filling our lives with the kind of love that clothed the widows of Joppa.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith expressed in concrete, practical love
- Good intentions distinguished from good works
- Love taking tangible action for specific people
- A life filled with good works built through small acts

Discussion Prompts

- What good works characterize your life right now?
- Is your faith overflowing into tangible love, or mostly internal?
- Whose need could you meet this week, specifically?

Question 7

Student Question:

Dorcas served quietly, behind the scenes, and the widows she helped were the ones who treasured her most (v. 39). What does this teach about the value of humble, unseen service, and about caring for the vulnerable and overlooked?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Dorcas was not a public figure. She held no office and made no speeches. She sewed clothes for widows, some of the most vulnerable and overlooked people in her society. Yet her quiet service was so valued that her death brought a town to grief and her life is honored in Scripture forever.

This teaches the great worth of humble, unseen service. God does not measure significance the way the world does. The hidden faithfulness of a servant like Dorcas is precious in His sight, even when it never receives public recognition. The widows knew what the wider world did not: that her quiet love had clothed and cared for them.

It also highlights God's special concern for the vulnerable. Throughout Scripture, God shows particular care for widows, orphans, and the needy, and He calls His people to do the same. Pure religion is to visit orphans and widows in their affliction (James 1:27). Dorcas embodied this religion with her needle and her generosity.

Help students value and pursue such service. Much of the most important work in the kingdom is hidden and humble, done for those who can offer nothing in return. To care for the overlooked, as Dorcas did, is to reflect the heart of God and to lay up treasure that the world cannot see but God will never forget.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The great worth of humble, unseen service
- God's measure of significance differing from the world's
- God's special concern for the vulnerable (James 1:27)
- Caring for the overlooked as reflecting God's heart

Discussion Prompts

- Why was Dorcas's quiet service so treasured?
- What does this teach about the value of unseen, humble work?
- Who are the vulnerable or overlooked people you could serve?

Question 8**Student Question:**

Dorcas served the widows of her town with her own hands, meeting their needs personally (v. 39). Who are the vulnerable or overlooked people in your community or congregation, and how might God be calling you to serve them this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Dorcas did not serve the vulnerable in the abstract; she served particular widows in her own town, with her own hands. Her love had names and faces attached to it. This personal, local care is the kind God calls each of us to.

Invite students to look around with open eyes. Who are the vulnerable and overlooked in my community and congregation, the elderly, the widowed, the sick, the lonely, the struggling, the poor, the forgotten? They are often nearby, sometimes hidden in plain sight, waiting for someone to notice and care.

Help students move from awareness to action. It is easy to feel general compassion and never act. Dorcas teaches us to serve specific people in concrete ways, a meal, a visit, a ride, a listening ear, practical help, the supply of a real need.

Encourage one concrete step toward a specific person this week. The kingdom of God advances through countless small, personal acts of love toward the overlooked. To follow Dorcas is to ask not only how can I serve in general, but whom can I serve, by name, today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal, local care for specific vulnerable people
- Moving from general compassion to concrete action
- Serving the overlooked in the congregation and community
- The kingdom advanced through small acts of personal love

Discussion Prompts

- Who are the vulnerable or overlooked people near you?
- What keeps general compassion from becoming concrete service?
- Whom could you serve, by name, this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Peter knelt, prayed, and said, Tabitha, arise, and God raised her from the dead (vv. 40-41). What does this miracle reveal about Christ's power over death, how does it point to the resurrection hope of believers, and how should we understand such a sign in light of the whole New Testament?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it lifts our eyes to the greatest of hopes. Through Peter, in the power of Christ, a dead woman was raised to life. This astonishing sign reveals that the power of God in Christ reaches even into the realm of death.

First, it reveals Christ's power over death. Death is the last and greatest enemy, the one foe no human power can overcome. Yet here, at the word spoken in Jesus' name, death yields. This is the power of the One who declared, I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (John 11:25-26). The same Lord who raised Dorcas had Himself conquered death by His own resurrection.

Second, it points to the resurrection hope of believers. The raising of Dorcas, like the raisings Jesus performed, was a restoration to this earthly life; she would one day die again. But it was a sign and foretaste of something greater: the final resurrection, when Christ returns and raises all His people to immortal, glorified life, never to die again (1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Every such sign is a window onto that great day, a pledge that death does not have the final word for those who belong to Christ.

Third, we should understand this sign in light of the whole New Testament. Like the other miracles in Acts, it confirmed the apostolic message and led many to believe (v. 42). It was done in the foundational age of the church, through an apostle, by the power of Christ, to authenticate the gospel and point to the resurrection. We should not read it as a promise that believers today will raise the dead, nor as a model for present-day sign-working; the miracles served their confirming purpose in that age (Hebrews 2:3-4). What endures is the hope they pointed to: the certain resurrection of the dead at Christ's coming.

Pastorally, let this passage comfort and steady us. We grieve at death, as the widows of Joppa grieved, but not as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The Christ who raised Dorcas holds the keys of death (Revelation 1:18), and He will raise all who are His. For the believer, death is not the end but a sleep from which Christ will surely wake us. Help students rest their deepest hope here, in the resurrection power of the living Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ's power over death, the last enemy (John 11:25-26)
- The raising of Dorcas as a sign and foretaste of the final resurrection
- The bodily resurrection of believers at Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 51-57)
- Grieving with hope rather than as those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- The miracle confirming the message and leading to faith (v. 42; Hebrews 2:3-4)
- The sign understood as apostolic and confirming, not a model for today
- Christ holding the keys of death (Revelation 1:18)

Discussion Prompts

- What does the raising of Dorcas reveal about Christ's power over death?

- How does this sign point forward to the resurrection hope of believers?
- How should we understand such a miracle in light of the whole New Testament?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over this passage, the power of Christ at work, the people turning to the Lord, and the beautiful life of Dorcas, name one specific way the Lord is calling you to grow, in giving Him glory, in good works, or in resurrection hope, and what is one step you will take this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone draws the lesson to a personal response. The passage calls us to credit Christ for every good, to turn fully to the Lord, to fill our lives with practical love, to serve the vulnerable, and to rest our hope in the Christ who conquers death.

Invite each person to name one concrete step. Perhaps it is to give God the glory rather than taking credit, to turn more fully to the Lord in some area, to take up a specific act of service for someone in need, or to anchor their hope more firmly in the resurrection.

Keep the focus on a life like Dorcas's, faith overflowing into love, and on the Lord whose power raised her. Transformation looks like a life increasingly full of good works and increasingly secure in the hope of resurrection.

Close by reminding students that the same Christ whose power healed Aeneas and raised Dorcas is at work in them, able to fill their lives with love, and certain to raise them at the last day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal response to the power and call of Christ
- A life of good works as the fruit of faith
- Service to the vulnerable as reflecting God's heart
- Resurrection hope grounding the believer's life

Discussion Prompts

- What most challenged or moved you in this passage?
- What specific step toward glory-giving, good works, or hope will you take?
- How can this group encourage and pray for you?