

## LIFE GROUP GUIDE

**VENTURE CHURCH**  
REACH  
THE POWER OF GOD  
ACTS 9:32-43  
11/12/2017



### MAIN POINT

The message of the gospel is confirmed through the power of God.

### GETTING STARTED

Imagine a hurricane or other natural disaster hit your city. How would losing electricity wreak havoc on your life? What would you miss the most about losing electricity?

If we didn't have any of our utilities—power, water, gas—what would our lives be like? What would frustrate you the most?

### DIGGING DEEPER

**READ ACTS 9:32-35.**

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What is significant about Peter's attributing Aeneas's healing to Jesus Christ?

What do the circumstances of this miracle tell us about Peter?

**READ ACTS 9:36-38.**

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Tabitha was known for always doing good works and acts of charity. What would you like to be known for?

Why do you think the disciples in Joppa sent for Peter to come after Tabitha died?

**What must they have believed about Peter to have sent for him?**

**READ ACTS 9:39-42.**

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**What do you think Peter prayed about?**

**If you were one of the disciples in Joppa, what would have been your reaction to Peter's presenting Tabitha alive?**

**Why would this miracle have turned many to the Lord? How can our stories of God at work in our lives have a similar effect?**

## **LIVING IT OUT**

**What are some opportunities you have to display the power of God in your life (see 1 Pet. 4:11)?**

**What are some ways your group can encourage one another to live and serve by the power of God throughout the week?**

**How can you make sure your good works point people to believe in Jesus and to give Him all the glory?**

## **PRAY**

Share needs and pray for each other.

Pray that the work of God in our lives will affect people around us.

Pray for the upcoming Block Party in Sundance, November 12.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ACTS 9:32-43**

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9:32. Here we have another one of Luke's "meanwhile" passages. Did we think he had forgotten Peter now that he had begun the Pauline narrative? Certainly not. He depicts that faithful Christian as a traveling minister visiting Christians in the town of Lydda, about twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. Geography is very important to Luke and very important in the study of Acts. We have already seen the gospel travel by chariot to Ethiopia and by persecutor to Damascus, so two other "foreign countries" are already involved. Furthermore, all three provinces of Palestine have congregations (v. 31), so the great commission began to move well beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and its suburbs.

Today the international airport of Israel in Lod sits on a site very close to this ancient town. Here again we find the word *saints* which we encountered in 9:13. Paul will use it again in 26:10, but it is not a common word for Luke.

How had the gospel come to Lydda? Certainly we could assume that the persecuted Christians described at the beginning of Acts 8 took the gospel to any place we shall find it for the rest of Acts. More likely, however, this group of believers bears the fingerprint of Philip, that coastal evangelist who made his way from Gaza in the south to Caesarea in the north and therefore could very well have included Lydda when he passed through Joppa just a few miles away.

9:33. Most scholars assume Aeneas was a member of the Christian community, and the context would support that. Finding a lame man who needed healing was no novel experience for Peter, and one would guess he felt considerably more comfortable than he did back in chapter 3. This man was not only lame, however, but paralyzed.

9:34. We find no evidence that Aeneas made any request at all. Peter, acting upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit, simply says, Jesus Christ heals you. This verb could be rendered, "This moment, even as we speak, Jesus Christ is healing you." The additional command, Get up and arrange your things could refer to preparing a meal or just gathering his mat. Likely, Luke intends the latter, especially when we remember similar situations in Jesus' ministry where comparable terminology appears (Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24).

9:35. The report of this miracle spread widely. Luke tells us virtually everyone learned about it. We want to come back to Luke's use of *all*, but here we simply assume a wide report including not only the immediate city of Lydda, but on across the plain of Sharon which stretched from Joppa to Carmel and centered in Caesarea.

9:36. "Meanwhile," in a city nearby lived a female disciple. This bears emphasis because here we find the only New Testament use of *mathetria* (disciple), the feminine form of the word *mathetras*. Obviously, she was not the only female disciple, but this is the only time Luke so designates a woman. Luke translated her Aramaic name (Tabitha) into Greek (Dorcas) for Theophilus. Both names mean "gazelle."

This is certainly not a passage on spiritual gifts to parallel Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; or 1 Peter 4; but one hardly needs to stretch to see this woman utilizing her spiritual gift. Barnabas certainly had the gift of exhortation; Philip, the gift of evangelism; Saul, the gift of teaching; and here we see Dorcas practicing the gift of helps or service (Rom. 12:7). She was a "do-gooder" in the very best sense of that word, especially since she focused her ministry on the poor. If Dorcas was a single woman (the text does not tell us), we have a wonderful demonstration of a life given to service. It certainly would appear that she had special standing with the widows (v. 39) and, therefore, may well have been a widow herself.

9:37. Luke simply tells the story as it happened— she became sick and died. Rather than anointing her body for burial, the believers washed it and placed it in a room. Normally, no corpse would lay overnight between death and burial, but plans to call Peter may have already been in mind.

9:38. Peter was only three hours away by foot, the miracle at Lydda certainly well-known in Joppa, so why not ask that great apostle to make the trip— at once. We find no certainty of their expectation, but Luke's description of the appeal certainly makes it sound as though they anticipated a resurrection.

9:39. The idea of expected resurrection takes on further strength in this verse as we see Peter standing by the body, surrounded by widows weeping in their grief and holding up the garments Dorcas had made for them. The text seems to imply they simply could not let a good woman like this depart from their Christian community. She had so demonstrated godliness and servanthood, they desperately wanted her back.

Notice that this woman, so generous in life, was also devout in death. Here as always that enemy brought grief, fear, and regret. It also provided an opportunity for Dorcas to model Christian dignity, for the widows to show their love and faith, and for Peter to demonstrate God's power. Let's assume these dear ladies had also told Dorcas how much they loved her while she still lived. Whether they had or had not, that surely should be a significant lesson for us.

9:40. Raising people from the dead was hardly a common feature of any ministry, including that of Jesus. In three and a half years Jesus had only raised three people from the dead, but Peter had seen all three. Perhaps here he remembered the incident with Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-24,35-43). There

Jesus had sent mourners out of the room and prayed. There Jesus had spoken a phrase which varied in only one letter from the Aramaic command Peter uttered here to Dorcas—Jesus' "talitha kumi" now becomes Peter's "Tabitha kumi."

As in the three resurrections Jesus performed, the raising of Dorcas was not resurrection in the technical sense of immortality. Yet our English word resuscitation, used commonly to describe bringing people back to consciousness, hardly seems strong enough. Dorcas died, and she would die again. Peter provided a temporary restoration to life for this lovely Christian woman at Joppa.

9:41-42. The results of this miracle? Believers rejoiced, and the unsaved believed. Every resurrection described in the Bible pictures our future. Just as Jesus' resurrection represented the final seal of God's approval on his life and work, so the resurrection of Christians whether past or future is God's ultimate approval of their faith. Like Jesus' gift of her son's life to the widow of Nain (Luke 7:15), so here Peter gave the widows back their friend and helper. Word of the risen Dorcas led many to faith in the risen Lord.

9:43. This hinge verse connects Peter on the maritime plain and Cornelius at Caesarea. Peter moves ever closer to that next episode which Luke will describe in chapter 10. A tanner's house, of course, would have been unclean to rabbis, but Peter was not over-zealous to maintain strict Jewish ritual, despite his protestation in the vision of chapter 10. Of significant importance here is the precise location, a house to which the messengers of Cornelius could be sent with some precision.

A quick glance at the map of first-century Palestine will show how God is moving Peter out of Jerusalem ever closer to Caesarea where he, not Paul, will be the first to take the gospel directly to a Gentile.