

## LEADING LADIES

### "TABITHA: LIVING YOUR EULOGY"

#### ACTS 9:36-43

It's better to go to a funeral than a party. Sounds strange when you put it that way, but that's what the Bible says. According to Solomon, aka Qoheleth and the Preacher, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart . . . The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure" (Ecc 7:2, 4). Who doesn't think about their own mortality at a funeral? It's not a bad thing, seeing none of us is going to cheat death—unless Jesus comes first.

Common questions people ask themselves at a funeral are: "What if I die and nobody comes to my funeral?" Worse yet, "what if I die and nobody even knows?" And "what will people say about me when I'm gone?" Like we add to our LinkedIn profile over time, we add to our future eulogy over time. Eulogies aren't built in a day. The untimely death of Dorcas, aka Tabitha, did not go unnoticed and did not go looking for mourners—no doubt because she was a woman "who was always doing good and helping the poor," making clothing for needy widows. The fact that she was known for helping the needy should prompt us all to ask: "What am I known for?" The rest of her miraculous story is found in Acts 9:36-43.

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*Tabitha was always doing good  
and helping the poor.*

— Acts 9:36

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### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Giving Away My Life** – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

People don't "give away" their lives directly. They translate their lives into tangible products and services, and real displays of empathy and compassion, and give these away. Giving away one's life, Paul says, amounts to offering your body as a living sacrifice; it amounts to actually doing something for God and others. Dorcas gave her life away by making clothing and giving it to widows.

People at Pantego Bible Church give away their lives going Beyond by volunteering in various ministries in their church and in their community. Susan Jiura is one of them. She and her husband, Charles, have been members of Pantego Bible Church for more than 28 years and belong to the North Star Community. When Susan tells her story, she says she would never have gotten involved in a ministry to kids had she continued working, but when she lost her job, God used an unfortunate turn of events to introduce her to a future she otherwise would not have had. Looking for an opportunity to serve the Lord, she accepted an invitation from a friend to volunteer in a new church-sponsored ministry at Sherrod Elementary School in North Arlington and has never looked back. She has been touching children's lives ever since—countless numbers of them, in fact, over more than 15 years of Beach Club ministry, teaching them the Bible, loving on them, and leading other volunteers.

Susan recently passed the baton to her successor

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and started looking for a new ministry opportunity. She called Lamar High School, where her children attended and grandchildren now attend, and offered to volunteer for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, only to find that the program had been discontinued due to a lack of interest. When told that all but two or three students had stopped attending, she said, "I know I can get more than two or three there." Now after securing the support of the FCA area director, the program is going strong with 60 students in attendance—some of whom were Susan's Sherrod Beach Club kids. She keeps in touch with as many students as possible. She has followed the faith-walk of several students from elementary to college, always keeping God at the center of the conversation. Thursday remains her favorite day of the week.

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Acts 9:36-43

36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she 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 for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. 42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. 43 Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

### Cf., a complementary passage

#### Mark 5:35-43

35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40 But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Circle Joppa in v. 36.
- \* Circle "disciple" in v. 36.
- \* Bracket vv. 36b, 39b.
- \* Underline "washed and placed" in v. 37.
- \* Double underline "Please come at once!" in v. 38.

- \* Circle "showing" in v. 39.
- \* Circle "Tabitha, get up" in v. 40.
- \* Bracket "especially the widows" in v. 41.
- \* Highlight v. 42.

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day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The story about Tabitha (vv. 36-43) is related to the previous story about Aeneas (vv. 32-35). How so?
2. Tabitha had a *reputation*. Describe what she was known for.
3. What makes you think Tabitha *really* died and was *really* dead?
4. "So" indicates *result*. Explain the use of *result* in verse 38.
5. Two men sent to fetch Peter from Lydda urge him to come to Joppa "at once." Why the urgency?
6. Describe the *atmosphere* or *mood* in the upstairs room when Peter arrived.
7. *Compare* and *contrast* the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:35-43) and raising of Tabitha.
8. The story isn't about the "widows," but they play an important role in it. Explain.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what you would like to be known for by people.

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

On the story of Tabitha, Dorcas in Greek, one commentator writes: "The story of Dorcas is reminiscent of earlier raising of the dead, such as Elijah's raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17-24) and the raising of the Shunammite woman's son by Elisha (2 Kgs 4:32-37), both of which are in turn echoed in the story of the widow's son, who was raised by Jesus (Luke 7:11-17). The closest correspondence of all, however, is to be found in Jesus' raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:49-56; Mark 5:35-43)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 247).

Every story has a *setting*, *characters*, and a *plot*. Put differently, in every story something happens to someone somewhere. The story of Tabitha told in Acts 9:36-43 is no different. First, the *setting*—*geographically*, events in the story take place in Joppa, a port city on the Mediterranean coast about 38 miles from Jerusalem, now modern Yafo, a suburb of Tel Aviv. *Chronologically*, the events occur *after* Saul's conversion (vv. 1-19a), his initial preaching in Damascus (vv. 19b-25), and his introduction to the disciples in Jerusalem (vv. 26-31), but *before* he, Paul, supersedes Peter as the central figure in the book. Acts revolves around these two key figures: Peter in chapters 1-12 and Paul chapters in 13-28. By the way, there is a community of believing Jews in Joppa; how it got there no one knows for sure. Some suggest the gospel was brought to the area by Philip (cf., 8:40).

Second, the *characters*—the story about Tabitha is also a story about Peter, who is traveling about the country, preaching that Jesus is the resurrected Christ. When in Lydda, a town about 12 miles southeast of Joppa, Peter heals a paralyzed man named Aeneas, who has been bedridden for eight years. As a result of this miracle, many people in the city turn to the Lord (9:32-35). No doubt, word of what happened spread to Joppa, which explains why the disciples send for him, immediately after Tabitha dies (vv. 37-38). As soon as Peter arrives, they take him to the upstairs room where she is lying.

Tabitha is a virtuous woman with a marvelous reputation. In verse 36, Luke describes her as "full of good works and acts of charity" (ESV), suggesting she is a talented woman of independent means

and exceptional generosity—an inference supported by the widows' show of affection for her in verse 39. Standing next to Peter by Tabitha's bedside, they are seen "crying and showing him the robes and other clothing" that they were wearing, which she made for them while alive.

Third, the *plot*—when a beloved woman in the community dies, the disciples send for Peter, believing he may be able to restore her. By the time he arrives, she has been dead for hours. With no time to waste, he clears the room, gets down on his knees and prays, no doubt asking the Lord to restore her life as he did the life of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:41; cf., Lk 8:54). To Tabitha, Peter says nearly the same thing Jesus said to Jairus' daughter. There is only one letter difference in what Peter says (*Tabitha qumi*) and what Jesus said (*Talitha qumi*, lit. "Little girl, get up"). Tabitha responds by opening her eyes and sitting up. Then Peter takes her by the hand, helps her to her feet, and presents her to the widows and the rest of the believers—but especially to the widows. In the same way word of the healing of the paralyzed man spread throughout Lydda, word of the raising of Tabitha spreads throughout Joppa. And in both cases, the result is the same. Many people believe in the Lord.

The *upper* story of this narrative is about the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth through the continuing ministry of Christ through his witnesses. By this time, there is a Christian community in Joppa, nearly 40 miles from Jerusalem.

The *lower* story is about Tabitha, a virtuous woman who was known for her good works and charity to needy widows. She wasn't restored to life because of her good deeds, but her good deeds did prompt disciples to send for Peter when she died. After her resuscitation, ironically, she lived again, perhaps to learn how people had responded to her untimely death.

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day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

*The Message of the Passage*

*Tabitha is an amazing example of a disciple known for doing good and helping others, whom you can follow so that others will truly miss you when you're gone.*

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

What was Tabitha known for in the community?

What are you known for in your community?

What do you want people to say about you when you're gone?

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 36 **Joppa** Cf., Jnh 1:3. "The story takes place in Joppa, the main port city of Judea, located on the Philistine coast some ten or eleven miles northwest of Lydda" (Polhill, 247). Joppa is approximately 38 miles from Jerusalem.

v. 36 **disciple** "A woman, Tabitha, is introduced in a manner that underscores her character: She is 'full of good works and acts of mercy.' This is the only reference to a female 'disciple' with the term [mathetria] in the NT" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 377). Cf., "She was full of good works and acts of charity" (ESV); "This woman was full of good works and almsgiving" (MEV); "This woman was full of good works and acts of mercy which she did" (WEB).

v. 37 **washed and placed** "Dorcas becomes sick and dies. The care for her includes washing her body in preparation for burial (*m. Sabb.* 23.5; *Semahot* 11.2; *Homer, Il.* 18.350), but placing of her body in an upper room is unusual. This action may well express the faith and hope that she can be raised from the dead, as usually burial took place before sunset in Judaism" (Bock, 377-78). "Tabitha became sick and died. According to custom, her body was washed for burial. It was then placed in an upper room, which was not particularly the custom. Perhaps this was the most available room. It could also be that the Christians of Joppa were performing, as it were, a symbolic act, indicating their faith that she would rise" (Polhill, 247).

v. 38 **Please come at once!** Hearing, perhaps, about the miracle in Lydda, the disciples sent for Peter, telling him to come "at once," since it was a three hour journey by foot. "When 'she ... died,' the believers sent word to Peter in nearby 'Joppa,' asking him to come. Apparently, they expected him to raise her back to life, just as Jesus had done, since they 'washed her body,' and 'laid it in an upper room'" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2019 ed., 222, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)).

v. 39 **showing** "The 'widows' were evidently wearing the clothing Tabitha had made for them. The middle voice of the Greek verb translated 'showing' in verse 39 suggests this. She had made these clothes [i.e., the very clothes they were wearing] for the poor widows" (Constable, 222).

v. 40 **Tabitha, get up** "Peter's procedure here was almost identical to Jesus' when He raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41; Luke 8:51-56). Peter's praying shows that he was relying on Jesus for his power, just as his previous announcement, 'Jesus Christ heals you,' had manifested that attitude when he healed Aeneas (v. 34). There is only one letter difference in what Peter said (*Tabitha qumi*) and what Jesus had said (*Talitha qumi*, lit. "Little girl, get up"). This miracle is yet another evidence of Jesus' working powerfully through His witnesses in word and deed (1:1-2; cf. John 14:12). Tannehill pointed out many similarities between this story and the stories of Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus raising dead people. Jesus had given the Twelve the power to raise the dead (Matt. 10:8)" (Constable, 223).

### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Do you know your child's spiritual gifts? What skill has God blessed them with to reflect His glory? Do you actively encourage that gift? Sometimes as parents we get caught up in what we think our child needs to be or do as opposed to how God has truly gifted them. One of my kids was always the tallest and biggest in his class. Because of his build we were often asked if he was a football player. The men generally had a twinkle in their eye with a little drool as if they were planning his college career right in front of us. The funny thing is, this particular child has always had a love for the arts. In his preschool years we would find him dressed in a Power Ranger costume drawing the most beautiful pictures. He is incredibly gifted musically and plays virtually any instrument by ear. His path is different and far better than the one I had in mind. His gift is leading people in worship, telling God's story and sharing why He is important through music. When we release our perception of our child to God's will and plan, we begin to cultivate spiritual growth in our kids. I'll get up crazy early on Sunday and drive back and forth to church on Wednesdays to foster this gift that brings God glory. Parents, I'm praying God reveals your child's spiritual gift and you are able to foster this gift to the glory of God.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Acts 9:36-43

1. What do you know about Tabitha from the passage?
2. What did Peter do when he saw that Tabitha was dead?
3. How did people respond to Tabitha being raised from the dead?

#### What Do You Think

Why were people sad when Tabitha died?

#### What R U Going To Do

Tabitha used her gifts to glorify God. Use your gifts to encourage someone and glorify God today (color a picture, write a letter, or do a chore for a friend or family member).

#### Core Comp

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to help with God's work.

#### Memory Verse

2 Timothy 1:7 - *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.*

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A. University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James, and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella, and Simon. She and James are Shepherds of the Bailey Community Group. She has attended Pantego Bible Church for more than twenty years and has been on staff for more than five years.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).