

Episode: Acts Series No. 15

Narrators: Tabitha, Lydia, Priscilla

Primary Scriptures: Acts 9, 16, 18

Story Summary: The stories of Tabitha, Lydia, and Priscilla

Location: Roman Empire; Joppa, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus

Time: 30 AD Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives

46 AD First Missionary Journey starts

48 AD Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 9:36, 39, 42; 16:14-15; 18:2, 26

The book of Acts is primarily written about the male leaders of the early church. As you watch this episode, think of the different cultures of these prominent women and the different times they appear in the history of the Church.

The first story is about Tabitha, also known as Dorcas. She was probably an Israeli Jew before becoming a Christian, and we don't know if she had ever been married. Her story takes place between Saul's conversion and the conversion of Cornelius, which is between about 33 AD and 40 AD, and probably closer to 40 AD. The story is found in Acts 9:36-43.

Tabitha gives us an example of the Christian life as one of servanthood. She voluntarily served the poor people of her town, and her actions were so powerful that people were sent to Peter for him to do something upon her sudden and untimely death. We don't know that they asked him to raise Tabitha from the dead, but he apparently thought that was the best solution.

The second story is about Lydia. Lydia lived in the city of Philippi in the country of Macedonia, now the northern part of Greece, and her story coincides with the Second Missionary Journey of Paul, approximately in 49-50 AD, about twenty years after the death of Jesus. Her conversion story is found in Acts 16:11-15, 40. She very likely was a God-fearer prior to meeting Paul, although she may have not known anything about God. Like Tabitha, we don't know if Lydia had ever been married.

Lydia is known for responding to the Gospel immediately, bringing her family and servants to faith, and for being an influential church member. With her business background, she was probably very valuable in helping to tend a growing church.

The third story is about Priscilla, the wife of Aquila. Paul met the couple in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey. Her story can be read in Acts 18:1-4 in Corinth, in Acts 18:18 in Ephesus where Paul leaves them, and Acts 18:24-26. Priscilla and Aquila are always mentioned together. Paul obviously trusted them to lead their churches through their teaching and their behavior.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one reason that Joppa may have had poor people during the time of Tabitha/Dorcas?
 2. Who raised Tabitha from the dead?
 3. Why was Priscilla living in Corinth when Paul went there on his second missionary journey?
 4. Where did Paul leave Priscilla and Aquila to start a new church?
 5. Why was Lydia wealthy? What advantages and what disadvantages would she have had as a new Christian?
 6. How did the three different cultures of these three women affect their actions and thoughts?
 7. Sometimes Aquila is mentioned first, and sometimes Priscilla is. Do you think that has any relevance?
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1. Caesarea had displaced Joppa as the main sea port.
 2. Peter.
 3. Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome.
 4. Ephesus.
 5. Purple cloth was a very expensive luxury item that she sold.
 7. Possibly, the more important person was often mentioned first.

Application Questions:

1. Tabitha was known to be a great servant to the people in her life. If you died tomorrow, would you be remembered that way? If not, how would you be remembered?
2. Lydia and her coworkers took immediate action to follow Christ upon hearing the Gospel. What was your conversion experience like? Do you still have that level of zeal and joy today? If not, what can you do to reclaim it?
3. What traits can you insinuate that Priscilla and Aquila had that helped them have a successful marriage?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Tabitha served her friends but became the center of attention. Which would you rather be, a servant or the center of attention?
2. Lydia upended her entire lifestyle to follow Christ. What aspects of your lifestyle need to be upended in the name of Jesus? Are you willing to follow him to those lengths?
3. What do you suppose others say and think about you? Do others say you are generous and a servant of the Lord, or do they say that you are self-serving?