

Sapphira and Dorcas.

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. Acts 9:36

NUGGET – Today we are going to compare and contrast these two women from the book of Acts in the Going Deeper section. But here, looking at just Dorcas, we see that she is called a **disciple**. The occurrence of this word at this point in the book of Acts is unique for 2 reasons.

1. It is used to indicate she is not a novice 'learner' or follower of Christ
2. It's the only time in scripture that this Greek word carries the feminine ending

Calling Dorcas a disciple is short-hand to the first readers of Luke's writing that this woman had a reputation as a believer in Jesus. It is a word that carries the idea of depth or commitment with it. Disciples, or 'learners' (which is at the root of the word) of Christ were those whose minds and lives as well as their hearts were devoted to the Lord.

Saint Chrysostom writing in the very early 5th century said of Dorcas, "*If you want to be remembered and are anxious for true repute, imitate her... displaying great generosity to your fellow human beings.*" So in addition to having the reputation of **disciple** she also had the reputation of generosity and kindness.

This second reputation was earned, not bestowed. All followers of Christ are His disciples, by the gift of the new nature that is ours in the Holy Spirit. Not all followers of Christ, though, earn the reputation for generosity toward our fellow human beings that Dorcas had. It is not something that can be assumed we are simply because we follow Jesus Christ. It takes thought and focus to be kind and generous, it doesn't happen by osmosis.

As Luke tells us in the verse today, Dorcas was '**always doing good and helping the poor.**' Those are things we would do well to imitate as Chrysostom tells us. But how and where sometimes present us with challenges. Someone once said, 'if you want to be seen as self-sacrificing; it requires *sacrifice*'. Give some prayerful thought to a form that might take for you, as it would do us well to share Dorcas' reputation.

APPLICATION –

1. Who do you know that in your estimation is like Dorcas, having '*true repute*'? Perhaps not waiting till they're dead to let them know the esteem you hold them in would be a generous thing for you to do.
2. We want to be known for being generous and kind to others. But being kind and generous is not an automatic by-product of believing in Christ, it is intentional. There is a bumper sticker that says, "***Practice random acts of kindness***". Put those words in your calendar, Day-Timer or PDA and see what God does with them through you this week. (Maybe make those words a weekly recurring appointment.)

PRAY – Ask God to open your eyes to the kindnesses you can show others today in His name.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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GOING DEEPER

As we said at the opening, we are going to compare Dorcas and Sapphira. Both of these women had encounters with Peter and both of them involved death. Read first the full account of Dorcas, also known as Tabitha in [Acts 9:36-42](#).

In this report, who are the players involved and what are their parts?

We don't know if Peter knew Dorcas or not before this encounter, but Peter came at the request of the other believers on her behalf. Notice that Peter sent those who had been mourning out of the room, and then Luke tells us that Peter knelt and prayed and then called Tabitha by name and she arose from the dead.

What information do we get from the widows and what is the significance of that to understanding the person of Tabitha / Dorcas?

Turn now and read the account of Sapphira and her husband Ananias in [Acts 5:1-11](#). Again, who are the players and their respective parts?

Notice in this sad story that Peter doesn't inform Sapphira that her husband is dead but proceeds right to the question that exposes their deceit. What is significant about that for you?

Ananias and Sapphira conspired to deceive. They seemed to want a reputation for generosity that was underserved. Looking back at the nugget section, we spoke of wanting a good reputation and how that came about for Dorcas. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, such desire without merit cost them their lives. It's important to remember that they were Christians, believers in Jesus, and yet their sin cost them their lives. What might be gleaned from this?

Now compare these two stories carefully for parallels that stand out for you.

We naturally want to focus on the story of Dorcas because of how it ends. But we also benefit from focusing on Sapphira and learning what not to do from her and her hubby. Both these women are used by God to show us the truth that when Jesus departed earth, the Holy Spirit remains active in the here and now.

God is not the Big Watchmaker in the Sky who merely winds this world up and lets it go on its merry way. God is involved and active as these women teach us. We forget that lesson to our detriment. God is in relationship with us and desires us to know that and act like we know that. Both of these women did act on that knowledge and their desires but with very differing results due to how they treated that relationship.

How we treat our relationship with others is an indicator of how we treat our relationship with God. Desiring the best for others reflects God's desire for the best for us. Look at [Romans 8:5-11](#). What light do these verses shed on the parallels between Sapphira and Dorcas?

Life and death to our spirits, in our relationship with God, is what He teaches us about through Dorcas and Sapphira. May God richly fill you with His peace, and with strength and desire to please Him and thereby enjoy now, the life He has granted to each of us in Christ. In that Peace from God, Pastor Rhodes.