Reflections 11 - 17 May 2025 - [Called to live](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2025/137-may-june-2025-c/easter-4)

**Bible study on Acts 9.36-43**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Creator God, thank you for giving us life.
We ask that you equip and inspire us today;
be our strength and our guide.
Help us see where we have gone wrong,
and the places and people that need the life
that only you can bring.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

 **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.

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**Dorcas is identified as ‘a disciple’, one of only three individuals so described in Acts. The others are Ananias, whose ministry filled Paul with the Holy Spirit (9:17), and Timothy, Paul’s missionary companion, whose mother was also ‘a believer’ (16:1). This emphasis on the inclusion of both women and men is characteristic of Luke–Acts, where we find paired stories, male and female (e.g. Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38; the centurion with the sick servant and the widow with the dead son in Luke 7:1-17). So, in Acts, Peter heals paralysed Aeneas in Lydda (9:32-35) and is urged there to travel to Joppa where his prayerful ministry raises Dorcas. This pairing reinforces the connection between Jesus’ miracles and those of his witness, Peter. Jesus (Luke 5:18-26) and Peter tell a paralysed man to arise. Jesus keeps the crowd outside and addresses Jairus’ dead daughter, ‘Child, get up!’ (Luke 8:49-56); Peter, praying alone with the dead Dorcas, addresses her, ‘Tabitha, get up’. (‘Tabitha’ is her Aramaic name, ‘Dorcas’ her Greek name.) Peter continues Jesus’ ministry, as does Dorcas. She follows Jesus in bringing good news to the poor, recognising distress and responding with compassion and extending Jesus’ ministry to fulfil the Scriptures (Luke 4:16-21). She supports widows in her community, whose grief and shock at her death is touchingly described. Perhaps she made garments for them or worked with them in a charitable enterprise that was their means of supporting themselves and being generous to others.

It seems that as Peter ministers to Dorcas, so she ministers to him. Inviting her to get up, he also takes her hand. As he helps her up, they seem to rise to new life together. He stays in Joppa for some time, doubtless learning more about her faith lived out in good works as she learns more of his faith expressed in prayer and preaching. It is significant that Peter stays with Simon, a Jewish tanner whose work with animal carcasses would regularly have rendered him ritually unclean (Leviticus 11:39-40). This takes us towards Peter’s recognition that the Holy Spirit could fall ‘even on the Gentiles’ (10:45).

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Here we have an interesting interplay between human life and eternal life. Dorcas put her faith into action, devoting her time to doing good works serving others. People were devastated when she died. What impact will our lives have on others? How can we use our lives to give life/worth to people? Why was Dorcas raised back to life? Was it to do more work as there was no one else who could? Was it to show Peter’s apostolic succession? This is the start of Christian Aid Week, and they are known for their slogan ‘we believe in life before death’. Where is real life to be found? How can we play a part in that?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What does ‘life in all its fullness’ mean to you?
* What hobbies and activities are life-giving to you?
* How does your church minister to widows and widowers?

**Prayer**

Dorcas, your faithful servant,
worked willingly for you and her friends.
We thank you that you called her to live.
Thank you for the friends who care for us.
May we seek opportunities to make our lives really count.
Thank you that you call us to live.
**Amen.**