

## Sewing Devotion 1

We want to start offering a little devotional at our Threads of Hope meetings. I think looking at God's Word is, first, always appropriate, and second, like tucking a little something in your pocket. We make our dresses and shorts with a pocket because everyone likes to have a pocket for extra things. We've even been tucking some notes or a picture in those dresses for Tanzania. I know our girls take those notes out to look at again and again. God's Word is like that—we can think on it again and again. That's why God tells us his Word is "living".

The Scripture actually mentions sewing more than you would think. Of course, there is one Bible sewing story that most people think about and that's our focus today. Who is the most famous seamstress in the Bible? Dorcas. I've taught many children's Sunday School classes and when I start telling about Dorcas, kids always laugh. I think because they associate her name with being DORKY. Dorcas is one of those good old-fashioned Bible names that was never a popular name in modern times. It reached its peak at #664 of popular baby names in the 1920's. It doesn't even rank anymore. Dorcas is a Greek name and it means "gazelle" so it's actually very pretty. The Aramaic translation is Tabitha. (Tabitha reached its peak in the 1980's). How many of you know someone named Dorcas or Tabitha?

Dorcas's story is found in Acts chapter nine. Here's what it says starting in verse 36:

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.

Think about Dorcas. The Scripture calls her a disciple. That is a powerful description for a woman in those times. She also has a reputation for ALWAYS doing good and helping the poor. ALWAYS. Wow! We don't know her age, her family situation or how she died, but in the custom of the time, her body was washed, dressed and laid out on a bed for a mourning period. The other disciples send for Peter, who is in a town 15 miles away. It would take Peter about 5 hours to walk to Joppa and upon his arrival, he is surrounded by the mourners, specifically widows who show Peter garments made for them by Dorcas.

I like to try to unpack Bible stories and think about the contrasts to us today. Think about sewing in Bible times. Every woman would be a seamstress. The skill of sewing would be something learned from your own mother or grandmother simply out of necessity. Women clothed the family. There was no ready-made. So why would Dorcas be making garments for women who obviously would have their own sewing skills?

I would venture that it is because these widows were either too poor to buy fabric, or too feeble to do their own sewing. Imagine crippled, arthritic hands. Poor eyesight with no glasses. Many people think that Dorcas herself was a widow, but the Scripture doesn't say that and I would guess that she is a younger woman in order to accomplish the hours it would take to hand-sew many garments to give away. Dorcas was doing for these widows what they could not do for themselves.

What are we doing at Threads of Hope? I'd like to think it's the same thing—providing for others who cannot afford a garment. Doing for these children what they cannot do for themselves.

Someday in heaven, we will run across Dorcas. I'd like to imagine that when I meet her, she is sitting conversing with a little girl, swapping stories about

dresses. Dorcas is describing all the garments she made and the girl is telling Dorcas about a dress she received from Threads of Hope.

Tuck Dorcas, Tabitha, into your pocket as you sew. If you stopped sewing, or giving, or serving, would someone be mourning that loss? Will someone bring out the shorts and dresses that you made to show as a testimony of your life?

I pray that God looks at each of us as a modern-day Dorcas. First, a disciple. Second, a reputation for always doing good. And third, helping the poor. By sewing with Threads of Hope, doing for others what they cannot do for themselves.