

Faithful Disciples

February 18 • Bible Study Guide 12

Bible Background • ACTS 9:36–43

Printed Text • ACTS 9:36–43 | Devotional Reading • 1 PETER 1:3–9, 4:7–11

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: AGREE on key elements of active faith in the account of Tabitha's resurrection; RELATE to the feelings of loss and the faith of those who sent for Peter after Tabitha died; and ADOPT the faith of those who sent for Peter.

In Focus

Darrell and Kisha had been excited about the birth of their new baby girl. When the day arrived, Darrell was in the delivery room to witness the birth of his daughter. Kisha's parents were also on hand to welcome their new grandbaby.

Tragedy struck one month later as baby Aiesha died of congenital heart failure. A few days later, Darrell's parents came from out of town to console the bereaved couple, accompanied by the Williamses, a couple whom neither Kisha nor Darrell knew.

Darrell's parents said that when the Williamses found out about baby Aiesha, they wanted to come. The Williamses explained, "We, too, lost our baby when she was only three months old. We thought it would help you to know that others understand the pain you are feeling. It helped us with our healing, and we pray that our being here will help you." Darrell and Kisha thanked them both for coming and said they appreciated their help and support.

During times of crisis, it might be difficult to help others see how God's grace works in even the most difficult circumstances. How will you make a difference for someone who is suffering from loss?

Keep in Mind

"But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up" ([Acts 9:40](#)^L).

Focal Verse

KJV

Acts 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

The People, Places, and Times

Simon Peter. One of Jesus' initial twelve disciples, Simon Peter was positioned by Jesus as a leader among them. Jesus included him in His "inner circle" along with John and James. Jesus characterized him as a rock (thus the name Peter), yet he denied Christ three times during Jesus' trial. After the Resurrection, Jesus countered Peter's denial when He asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" Peter experienced tremendous persecution and understood loss and suffering firsthand.

Tabitha (Dorcas). An important person in Joppa, she is identified as a disciple ([Acts 9:36](#)). Her value in the community comes from her "almsdeeds" (good works and acts of charity). The widows who gathered to mourn her were among the first to see her restored to life.

Joppa. An important port city in Palestine, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Solomon used cedars from Lebanon, which had been floated into Joppa's harbor, for use in the construction of the Temple ([2 Chronicles 2:16](#)). The prophet Jonah commenced his ill-fated trip from the port of Joppa ([Jonah 1:3](#)).

Whom can you point out in your community that is making an impact on the lives of

others because of their good works?

Background

The book of Acts shows how the church fulfills Christ's mandate to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Through persecution, the church spirals from Judea, Jerusalem, and Samaria to all of the earth. As the church grows, Gentile believers are welcomed into the faith. Peter, one of the apostles, plays a leading role in spreading the Gospel. While preaching and healing, Peter traveled to the town of Lydda (near Joppa) and meets Aeneas, a bedridden paralytic man. Peter tells him that the power of the Lord has healed him, and to get up and make his bed ([Acts 9:32–34](#)^L). When Tabitha dies, disciples send two men to bring Peter immediately to the bedside of the woman described as "full of good works and almsdeeds" ([Acts 9:36](#)^L).

How did the Holy Spirit change Peter's life and ministry?

At-A-Glance

1. A Miracle is Needed ([Acts 9:36–38](#)^L)
2. Expect a Miracle (vv. 39–40)
3. A Miracle Occurs (vv. 41–43)

In Depth

1. A Miracle is Needed ([Acts 9:36–38](#)^L)

Tabitha was an important woman in the community at Joppa. The fact that she was known by both Hebrew and Greek names suggests that she made a significant impact on a number of cultural and societal levels in the Judeo-Christian community, as well as in the Greco-Roman world. When she becomes ill and dies, the disciples in Joppa recognize that a miracle is needed, and send for the miracle worker—Peter, the man who had called on the power of the Lord to heal a paralytic, and it was done. Peter was at the town of Lydda; Tabitha was approximately fourteen miles away from a miracle.

Why did the believers in Joppa decide to seek Peter instead of praying for her themselves?

2. Expect a Miracle (vv. 39–40)

When Tabitha died, her body was washed, prepared, and displayed in accordance with the standard traditions practiced by both Jews and Gentiles. When Peter arrived, the widows were deeply mourning the loss of their sister. They made sure Peter understood her kindness and usefulness by showing him their clothing, since Tabitha was known for making robes and other clothing for the poor. They likely expected Peter to perform a

miracle for the life of this good and generous woman.

This expectation is evidenced by the disciples sending for Peter to come immediately. The text doesn't say, but perhaps that urgency was based on the fact that Jews at the time believed the soul passed into the realm of the dead (Sheol) on the third day after death. Peter had performed a miracle in Lydda; they had reason to hope for a miracle in Joppa.

When we pray, can we predict whether or not God will respond to our prayers of faith the same way as before?

3. A Miracle Occurs (vv. 41–43)

When the residents of Joppa saw that Tabitha had been restored to life, many believed in the Lord. Miracles occur for this purpose. The residents of Joppa may have grieved the initial loss of their beloved Tabitha, but God's actions through Peter not only returned earthy life, but also secured eternal life for those who believed as a result.

What miraculous act of power did God perform through Jesus that should cause everyone to decide to believe in Him?

Search the Scriptures

1. What does Peter do when he arrives at the place Tabitha had been laid ([Acts 9:40](#))?
2. What happens after Tabitha is restored to life (v. 42)?

Discuss the Meaning

Mourning the loss of loved ones is an important and natural part of the healing process. Believers must have faith in God, even in times of great sorrow and suffering. Peter's prayers restored Tabitha's life. How do prayers to a faithful God bring life and renewal, even in the midst of death and grieving?

Lesson in Our Society

When well-known philanthropists die, much of the grieving and remembrances focus on the void that will follow. It is no wonder that people weep and mourn when someone with values and commitment to others dies—it impacts every life that they touched. We all know someone who has passed away yet their impact still lives on. Notable figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela come to mind. Even those in our family and local communities have a similar impact.

Death and grief can often leave the spirit bitter and empty, but the power of faith in God will result in hope for all who believe. There is life after death. Through faithful works, our impact continues after death, and we are also assured of eternal life. Jesus embodied this assurance—the miracle that believers can expect.

When someone dies, how does our faith provide encouragement and hope to others?

Make It Happen

- Call, visit, or send cards to those who have lost loved ones.

- Build up your faith through prayer and reading the stories of healing in the Bible.
- Honor those who have had a great impact in the community even after they've passed away.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Widow's Son Restored to Life

([1 Kings 17:17-24](#))

TUESDAY

Jesus Raises Widow's Son

([Luke 7:11-17](#))

WEDNESDAY

Care for Widows and Orphans

([James 1:22-27](#))

THURSDAY

Peter's Healing Ministry

([Acts 5:12-16](#))

FRIDAY

Philip's Preaching Ministry

([Acts 8:4-8](#))

SATURDAY

Aeneas Healed, Residents Turn to God

([Acts 9:32-35](#))

SUNDAY

Calling the Church to Active Service

([Acts 9:36–43](#))

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

February 25 • Bible Study Guide 13

Bible Background • 1 TIMOTHY 6:11–21

**Printed Text • 1 TIMOTHY 6:11–21 | Devotional Reading • 1 THESSALONIANS
2:17–3:10**

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson we will: EXPLORE the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace and avoid; VALUE personally the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace; and IDENTIFY personal actions and attitudes that need to be changed and commit to doing so.

In Focus

Alan professed to be a Christian and specifically sought to date women in the church. However, Alan's walk was very different from his talk. He always pursued a sexual relationship with women, and when he met one who obeyed the Word of God by living sexually pure, he would immediately end the relationship.

One day, Alan met Tracy, a beautiful young lady who loved the Lord. Alan really liked Tracy and told her that he could handle dating by her standards. After much prayer and conversation with others who knew Alan, Tracy decided that she would end the relationship because she did not feel that his intentions were genuine. Alan was devastated, and for the first time in his adult life, he turned to the Lord, sincerely asking for Jesus to come into his heart and change his life. Allowing some time to pass, rather than pursuing a romantic relationship with Tracy, Alan sought to truly be her friend and brother in Christ.

Being a Christian requires a real commitment to godly living. In today's lesson, Paul encourages Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. When did you make a real commitment to godly living?

Keep in Mind

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" ([1 Timothy 6:12, KJV](#)).

Focal Verses

KJV

1 Timothy 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

The People, Places, and Times

Timothy. Timothy met the apostle Paul during Paul's second missionary journey ([Acts 16:1–5](#)). His faith in God was largely due to the example of his mother and grandmother ([2 Timothy 1:5](#)). He was assigned the responsibility of preaching, teaching, and leading the church in Ephesus ([1 Timothy 1:3–5](#)). It is commonly believed that Timothy was a young man—probably under 30 years of age—when he was charged with leading the Ephesian church.

Ephesus. Ephesus was a thriving port city during the first century AD. It was located

along the Cayster River next to the Aegean Sea with a population of nearly 500,000 people. It was mostly revered for their unique image of the goddess Artemis (Roman: Diana) housed in a great temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city had a large Jewish population, and Paul spent two years ministering and sharing the Gospel with all who were willing to listen ([Acts 19:8–10](#)^L). This was a tough place to minister, though, and Paul faced many obstacles. The main challenges he confronted included variations of Christian doctrine circulating in the region ([Acts 19:1–7](#)^L), hostile unbelieving Jews (vv. 8–9), occult activity (vv. 18–19), and riotous crowds (vv. 29–31).

Background

The book of 1 Timothy can rightly be divided into two intersecting themes: right faith and right action. Timothy's main mission in Ephesus was to stop certain people from teaching false doctrine ([1 Timothy 1:3–4](#)^L). Some people believed that they had superior knowledge and thus a superior faith. This type of faith had little to do with living righteously in everyday life. The false teachers were spreading this message throughout the churches. There is little doubt that Timothy would have preferred to be elsewhere, as this assignment was a daunting task for a young man of his age. To ensure success, Timothy needed to serve the Lord in the power of the Spirit and remember the example Paul had left him.

At-A-Glance

1. Right Faith and Right Action ([1 Timothy 6:11–16](#)^L)
2. Instructions for the Rich (vv. 17–19)
3. Guarding the Deposit of Faith (vv. 20–21)

In Depth

1. Right Faith and Right Action ([1 Timothy 6:11–16](#)^L)

Biblically speaking, faith never refers to one's opinion, as the word is popularly used today. Rather, the basic meaning refers to a firm persuasion. A more precise understanding of its use in 1 Timothy involves trusting someone and placing confidence in what they say. With this in mind, Timothy was encouraged to stand firm in faith. He was to avoid the teachings and negative attitudes propagated by the false teachers, and instead embrace the sound teachings and godly virtues Paul taught (v. 11).

This was sure to be a difficult task, and therefore, Timothy needed to "fight the good fight of faith" in order to succeed (v. 12). This phrase was originally used in reference to athletes in ancient Greece and here conveys the idea that Timothy's assignment would require agonizing effort. This is because Timothy would have to explain his actions to God at the time of Jesus' return (v. 14). However, Timothy need not fear anything, since

God has all power, including power over life and death (vv. 15–16). He was fully equipped for the task.

2. Instructions for the Rich (vv. 17–19)

The problems in the Ephesian church were multifaceted. All of them, however, stemmed from some wrong attitude and doctrine. Just as Timothy had to correct and rebuke the false teachers, so he also had to rebuke and correct those who had misguided beliefs about money (vv. 17–19). Timothy was warned of the dangers of embracing this version of prosperity and was commanded to flee from it (vv. 10–11). He was to instruct the wealthy to trust in God instead of money and to invest in the life to come (vv. 18–19).

3. Guarding the Deposit of Faith (vv. 20–21)

The phrase “that which is committed to thy trust” (v. 20) appears a total of three times in 1 and 2 Timothy ([1 Timothy 6:20](#); [2 Timothy 1:13–14](#)), and refers to the truth of the Gospel. Sound doctrine, faith, and truth are repeated themes throughout these epistles, and the church was created to promote and defend them all ([1 Timothy 3:15](#)). Some in the Ephesian church believed they had superior knowledge to that of Timothy’s, but Paul calls their knowledge false (v. 20). The KJV’s use of the word “science” here does not convey the modern meaning, but could be translated more generally as “knowledge”; Paul is not anti-science, but wants Timothy to avoid false doctrine. Timothy had to guard the Gospel and persist in its truths no matter how inconvenient it became to do so. The reward was sure to be great.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why was it essential for Timothy to successfully guard what was entrusted to him ([1 Timothy 6:20](#))?
2. Why did Paul repeatedly remind Timothy of his calling (v. 12)?

Discuss the Meaning

Many Christians greatly misunderstand what faith actually is. Many view it as something that exists solely between themselves and God with little to no public expression and objective content. What kind of faith does 1 Timothy describe?

Lesson in Our Society

We live in exciting times. Many African American pastors are seeking additional resources and sharing teachings to help their congregations take advantage of the wealth of information and opportunities available in their communities. They are also teaching to keep true to faith in Jesus Christ in a complex world. This is not just for the sake of head knowledge. We need leaders who can encourage us to stay on course when it comes to aligning our faith with action. We need leaders who can not only recite Greek and Hebrew, but also make the Word practical in our lives. This will give us a

vibrant faith that can transform our lives and communities.

Make It Happen

- Decide to mentor a new believer in living out their faith. If you are a new believer, seek out a mentor to help you live out your faith.
- List out the ways that you have incorporated your faith into your everyday life.
- Create a spiritual genealogy chart and track how your faith has been handed down to you.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Timothy Joins Paul's Team
([Acts 16:1-5](#))

TUESDAY

Timothy, an Active Teacher with Paul
([1 Corinthians 4:14-21](#))

WEDNESDAY

Epaphroditus, Paul's Coworker and Minister
([Philippians 2:25-30](#))

THURSDAY

Timothy, Paul's Envoy to the Churches
([1 Thessalonians 3:1-10](#))

FRIDAY

Teach the Sound Words of Christ
([1 Timothy 6:2-8](#))

SATURDAY

Love of Money, Root of Many Evils
([1 Timothy 6:9-10](#))

SUNDAY

The Good Fight of Faith
([1 Timothy 6:11-21](#))

