



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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JUMP START #518

Acts 9:36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

Dorcas finds her place in our Bibles for one main reason-she died and Peter resurrected her. She made an impression upon the Christians where she lived. Her death caused them to send for Peter. When Peter arrived, they showed the apostle the tunics that Dorcas had made.

I used this passage recently in a class I was teaching on love. One of the definitions of love, as given in 1 Corinthians 13, is that 'love is kind.' Kind hearts are the fountain of kind words, kind thoughts and kind deeds. Such was Dorcas. I don't know of any Bible classes that she taught. She may have, the Bible doesn't say. I don't know that she fed any of the apostles. Might have, but the Bible doesn't say. I don't know if she ever met the Lord-I rather doubt it. What she could do was sew. She made tunics and garments and she gave them to others. Now that's nice, but in the big picture of things we often put little value in such things. God didn't. He allowed Peter to go and raise her from the dead. The disciples didn't. They sent for Peter to come.

Dorcas is a classic example that kind deeds do not have to be big, involve many people or even be known by many. She made tunics and shared them with others. Inspiration tells us that she "abounded in deeds of kinds."

There are two great lessons here. First, what she did made a difference to the lives of others. She helped. Her gifts encouraged. She was thinking of others as she made those tunics. Abound in kindness by making a difference to others. I know some modern Dorcas' today. They don't make tunics, they make other things. They are always eager to share. Sometimes it's a gift, sometimes it's food. It may be inviting someone to a college basketball game. It may be giving books to a young preacher. It may be a check to help with a preacher's trip overseas. It may be groceries brought over to someone who is new to the neighborhood. It

may be loaning someone a car when their car is in the shop. Kindness. Thinking of others. Generous. Helpful. Encouraging. That's this Dorcas.

The other thought here is that Dorcas had died. The disciples still had her tunics. Her work outlasted her. After she was gone, people were remembering what she had done. In Revelation we read, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...for their works follow them (14:13). What they did outlasted them.

Someday you and I will be gone. Some will remember us. Our families will. Our dear friends will. Others might. What will they remember? What outlasts us? What will follow us? Will it be deeds of kindness? Will it be a generous and thoughtful heart that we are remembered for? Will it be compassion and love or will it be a cranky, mean spirit that always fussed and had to have his way?

Dorcas was loved because she touched the lives of others. What a different story this would be had Dorcas made tunics but kept them all. Trunks and trunks full of tunics all over her house. Dozens and dozens of them. Many never worn. All folded and put away but never used, never shared, never benefiting anyone. Some are like that. Dorcas wasn't. She gave away her tunics. She shared. Others benefited by her labor. They had her tunics to show Peter.

Do you see a lesson for us in all of this? We can be busy with making our tunics, but what do we do with them? Sell them to make a profit? Store them away? Keep them to ourselves or share them with others. I expect all of us have our own form of tunics, something we are good at. It may be cooking. It may be in wood working. It may be playing an instrument. It may be sewing like Dorcas. It may be in lifting spirits. What do we do with those tunics?

Dorcas abounded in deeds of kindness. People remembered. We, having never met Dorcas, are told her story all these years later. I have no idea what Dorcas looked like. I tend to think of her as a sweet grandmother type, but couldn't prove that. I do know one thing, I expect if I lived near her, she would have made me a tunic. That's just the way Dorcas is. Sweet, kind and generous. She may have always been that way, but much of it came from being a disciple of Jesus. Jesus was just that-kind, generous and thoughtful. It's hard not becoming that way when you spend time reading the Gospels. The goodness of Jesus tends to rub off the pages and into our lives. Folks that are bitter and sour in spirit simply do not know Jesus. Some are so engaged in fighting that they run out of real battles and start fighting imaginary ones-with anyone. Often it's family members, or church members, but after awhile it's with just about anyone that will give them an ear. How sad. When they are gone, what will they be remembered for? Causing heartache and pain in the lives of other?

I like Dorcas. I want to be like her. I want to share with others and try to make a difference in their lives. I want to abound in kindness. Maybe these Jump Starts are my tunics, I don't know. I expect you have some tunics that you could share with others.

Abound in kindness...that has a neat expression. The world would be a better place if everyone abounded in kindness-it starts with us. It starts with me. It starts with my tunics. It starts today.

Roger Shouse

