

## **Peter Performed Miracles**

(Acts 9)

Peter's miracles in Acts 9 showcase the power of the Holy Spirit at work within the early church. Though the people who witnessed and heard of these healings and resurrections were amazed and intrigued, Peter did not perform them to wow the crowd or to even illustrate his own strength. Rather, he met people's needs as a means of demonstrating God's power at work, that more may come to saving faith in Jesus and truly believe Him to be Messiah and Lord.

What was the significance of the restoration of Aeneas and the revival of Dorcas? What did these events reveal about Christ's saving power through the faith of Peter?

Both instances of Peter's miraculous acts were evidence of Christ's power to heal despite the impossible circumstances. While Christ's power through Peter brought physical healing to the man in Lydda, it also brought spiritual healing to the people in Lydda and Sharon as they turned to the Lord. Similarly, Dorcas' resurrection was used by God to draw many people to faith in Christ—the One who holds power over the grave.

These miracles performed by Peter point to the reality of Jesus' power and to the proof that He is still alive within His followers. The usual patterns of sickness and death were not the final endings for Aeneas and Dorcas; rather, they were the work of the Lord's restoration and redemption—pointing to the reality that everlasting life is ours through the power of Jesus. And through these events, we are encouraged to remember the hope we have in Christ, who is making all things new.

As you talk with your kids this week, remember that you, too, get to share the good news of hope and healing to the next generation of young disciples. Just as Peter "called the saints and widows and presented [Dorcas] alive," so, too, are you proclaiming the gift of everlasting life you have in Jesus.

## **Peter Learned That Jesus Is for All**

(Acts 10)

The story of Peter's revelation in Acts 10 reveals a core tenet in the gospel of Jesus Christ: God saves all who come to faith in His Son, regardless of their past, cultural differences, or their upbringing. The gospel is for all people, and it took Peter—just as it will require us today—great humility to see that God shows no favoritism. The ones whom God calls clean are clean; the ones He brings into His family are in His family forever.

What did these visions reveal to both Cornelius and Peter? How did these animals in the vision correlate to a deeper truth about God's gift of salvation and invitation for all?

God prepared both Cornelius and Peter for the invitation that would change the makeup of Jesus' church forever. Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile centurion, was not welcome within Jewish social circles nor was he accepted in any way as clean according to Jewish beliefs. Even still, God used him to open Peter's eyes to the reality that the gospel builds bridges between people groups rather than divide them even further.

Peter's vision seemed to be much less direct than Cornelius; yet God was patiently repetitive in instilling the greater message that the ones whom He purifies through faith are brought into the family of God—with no stipulations due to custom or culture. This revelation was contrary to the Jewish traditions and defied favoritism, which later caused tension within the early church. (Acts 11:1-18) Still, as Peter preached the good news and declared that Jesus is Lord of all, the Holy Spirit fell on all who believed the gospel—confirming God's desire to save anyone who trusts in Jesus.

Explain to your kids that the good news of Jesus Christ is for all people, and we are all called to faithfully invite others to believe the good news of Jesus Christ. May this reality be as true in our churches and social circles today as it was in Cornelius' home all those centuries ago.

## **Gentiles Became Part of the Church**

(Acts 11)

Acts 11 recounts the first time people were called “Christians” because they were recognized as followers of Jesus. In this passage, Peter was criticized by some of the believing Jews for going into the house of Cornelius and eating with Gentiles; however, these same critics later realized that God's power was at work even among the Gentiles.

How did the church in Antioch demonstrate God's plan for all people to be saved through the gospel? What is the proper response of Christ followers upon hearing that the lost have been found through coming to faith in Jesus?

The church in Antioch displayed the power of the gospel as Gentile believers and Jewish believers became one body under the headship of Christ. It was the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that held these brothers and sisters together, allowing for differing customs and backgrounds to be overcome. In fact, when Peter defended the Gentile salvation to the church in Jerusalem, he recited Jesus' words from Acts 1:5 on the baptism of the Spirit. He reminded the naysayers among them that if the Gentiles truly received the Spirit, why should the rest of them get in the way of God's salvation at work? The evidence of the Holy Spirit among them, leading them to live in holy fellowship and bold proclamation, proved that God's hand was working in the lives of those who were previously outside the faith.

Turning away from their disapproval, the members of the circumcision party first became stunned into silence and then glorified God for the repentance of these new Gentile followers. May we, too, be quick to move to celebration and praise when anyone trusts in Jesus for salvation, rather than be unsure or prone to criticism. Let our own hearts seek to pray that the Spirit produces good fruit in the lives of those who proclaim His truth, encouraging and lifting them up as they seek and serve His name alongside us.

Highlight God's goodness in bringing these new followers to Himself. Encourage your kids to share the gospel with those who may be different from themselves, trusting that the good news of Jesus brings us together for the good of His church and the glory of God.

## **Peter Was Rescued from Prison**

(Acts 12)

Acts 12 tells the story of God's divine and miraculous rescue of His apostle Peter. While King Herod sought to make an example of Peter, it was God alone who was able to showcase His power and might amidst the persecution of the church. This passage highlights the power of prayer amidst hardship and how God's purposes for His church will prevail despite the futile attempts of the enemy.

What can we learn about God's plans despite persecution and suffering? What can we learn about living on mission even during our most difficult circumstances?

God's plans for the good of His church, even during persecution, include the fervent prayers of the saints. The intercession of these faithful believers revealed that their only hope was in the Lord, and it was their prayers that were used by God to rescue Peter from prison. As God answered their prayers, He showcased His power to thwart the evil plans of those who wish to harm His church. Peter's incredible escape from prison reflects the same hope that we who have trusted in Jesus receive as the chains of sin fall off, and we are set free from condemnation. God's purpose for His church was by no means coming to an end in that prison cell; rather the word of God spread and multiplied. (Acts 12:24)

The consequence of declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ was costly for Peter and for James, who was executed by Herod. Though Herod's sentence for James was death, to die would mean this disciple's gain. Peter knew the consequences of sharing the gospel, yet he also believed that Jesus was worth giving his life to, trusting that the salvation of others was worth the risk as well. Even still, God granted Peter salvation from this prison cell so that he could continue living on mission for Him.

May we be aware that God has done more than send an angel to rescue us from earthly hardship. He sent His very Son to rescue us from the eternal consequence of our sins. Christ's sacrifice on our behalf offers the hope we need to endure difficulties and the boldness we need to share His divine hope with others.

## **We Are Part of One Church**

(1 Corinthians 12)

The twelfth chapter of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth is known for its role in encouraging the church body toward unity. Steering us away from division and partiality, this passage reminds us that we each have a role to play in Christ's mission of sharing the gospel. Our differences can serve to strengthen us, if only we walk together in obedience to Jesus' mission through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can we best determine how to serve within the body of Christ? What does unity look like in the modern-day church?

It can often be difficult to determine how we can serve within the church. We might even feel like the service we have to offer is unimportant. Yet, Paul wrote to encourage the Corinthian church to remember that all roles within the body of Christ are indispensable. As we seek to serve within the church, we can consider our interests, passions, and giftings, which are given to us by God for His glory. Like Paul wrote in verse 17, if we all try to take on the same role within the church, we do not function in the ways God designed us. Therefore, we can trust that the gifts and interests God has given us play an important role in the purpose of His church and in the edification of the saints toward gospel-centered unity.

Though we may not all be called to be pastors, we might be given the roles of Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, camera operators, sound engineers, bakers, meal deliverers, and so on for our churches. Paul calls us to pursue unity in the body, even amidst our diverse giftings in the church. He reminds us that the same Spirit is active within all believers yet working uniquely within each of us as He calls us to serve for our common good. We can rejoice that God uses diverse people with various giftings to demonstrate how the Spirit unites us all to one another through Christ.

As you discuss the story with your kids, remember that every member of the body of Christ, including you and any of your kids who have trusted in Jesus, have an essential role to play in building up God's church! As you boldly proclaim these truths of the gospel, pray that your family will pursue unity and seek how they can serve within the body of Christ.