

# WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

## TABITHA: INTRODUCTION

by Sandy Harber

This series of lessons should properly be named "Tabitha and the Widows," since "Widows of the Bible" is our theme. Was Tabitha (in the Greek, Dorcas) a widow? We don't know. The Bible doesn't say one way or the other. She must have been either a spinster or a widow since no husband or children are mentioned in her history.

We cannot be dogmatic about it but it seems likely that Tabitha was a widow herself since she chose to minister to women who had lost their husbands. It appears that she was well-off financially and a skilled seamstress. She, therefore, put her resources to work turning the raw materials into beautiful and useful garments. These garments were provided freely to the poor widows for themselves and their children.

When I lost my husband three years ago I was introduced to another lady in similar circumstances. We even shared the same first name: Sandy. Sandy and I shared our grief and our faith, encouraging one another through a difficult time for both of us. Sandy had a vision to minister to other widows. She connected ladies into groups where they could share their burdens, insights, and victories via email. I contributed to Sandy's vision by writing devotional lessons on the Book of Ruth geared toward women in our situation. Sandy's vision of a ministry for widows expanded to include anyone facing difficult times. Those Ruth lessons are now posted on our Church's website. It is Sandy's natural inclination to help others experiencing the same loss she had that makes me think Tabitha may have been a widow herself. Just as Sandy and I pooled our resources, Tabitha used the resources available to her to minister to the poor widows of her church and, probably, her community, as well.

The resurrection of Tabitha was the first resurrection recorded in the early Church. It occurred at a time when Jesus' disciples were evangelizing, establishing local churches, and generally learning to understand their role as the leaders of a new movement. It was a time of transition from Judaism to Christianity. There was persecution from Jewish religious leaders and from the Roman government, as well. But it was also a time of unity and fellowship within the Body of Christ. The eight verses in Acts that give us Tabitha's story illustrates the faith and unity of the early Christians. God rewarded their faith by raising Tabitha from the dead and returning her to the widows and saints who loved her. Tabitha's resurrection gave credence to the preaching of the apostles and produced a multitude of new believers. Tabitha's life blessed the believers that she ministered to. Her death (and resurrection) blessed the unbelievers who heard and believed because of her.

*"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27*