


A Five-Day Devotional Journey
May 18 - 24, 2008

Acts 9:32 - 43

Small moves

1 Get up, and roll up you mat!

Read. Acts 9:32-35 NLT

Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!" And he was healed instantly. Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and they turned to the Lord.

Read. Hebrews 12:12-13 Message

So don't sit around on your hands! No more dragging your feet! Clear the path for long-distance runners so no one will trip and fall, so no one will step in a hole and sprain an ankle. Help each other out. And run for it!

Think.

- Why does Peter come to the town of Lydda? Describe the healing that took place. Why Aeneas (*eye-knee-us*)? What effect did his healing have on the surrounding area?
- Is there an ongoing place for miracles like this? Why or why not? Have you ever witnessed anything like what happened to Aeneas? If so, what happened? If not, why do you think this doesn't happen more often?
- Aeneas was "paralyzed and bedridden for eight years." Where might you have been experiencing paralysis in your life? Where in your life would you like to "get out of bed"? How can you let others help you?

Pray.

Lord Jesus, you cause the lame to walk, the blind to see, the dead to live. Breathe fresh life into the paralyzed, lame places in my life. Bring renewed strength and vigor to my steps. Deliver me from dragging feet and from pitfalls in my path. Let me run with you.

Live.

Identify one area of your life in which you would like to see fresh movement and energy — and what moves big or small you need to make towards this.

Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty...

The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice.

You won't lose out on a thing.

Matthew 10:42

A major shift...
...to small moves.

From glorious light and vision surpassing the sun, from majestic voice and whirlwind preaching, from murderous plots and daring escape...

...to a young Gazelle at her knitting.

How's that for a change of pace? From all the drama of Saul before and after his conversion, to the quiet working of one among many. She was a true Gazelle, but no doubt felt much more like a *Dorcas* — the Greek version of her name. "Full of good works" she was. Not fair or stunning or glamorous deeds for shiny magazine covers, but *agathos* — good, beneficial, helpful. In a day of handmade clothes her hands were busy, her fingers moving to the rhythm of needle and thread and fabric.

Small moves.

"Full of alms-deeds that she was always doing" she was. Garments lovingly crafted for the poor who had none. And then she died surrounded by her craft, the fruit of many hours of multiplied small stitches, now wet with the tears of broken hearts.

Enter the plodding of a great apostle's feet — almost forgotten. Peter ambles down the road for a series of seemingly random divine appointments, and strolls right back into the story.

First there is yet another lame man (why is it so many of these men we see are lame...or blind or worse?).

"Aeneas — Jesus Christ is healing you!" One act of divine kindness and a man and his town are remade.

And then the Rock stands over the dead Gazelle and echoing the Master bids her rise. Another small move in an upper room, and the whole countryside is renewed.

So we are reminded that while there's room for them, it's not always or even usually the drama queens, but the gazelles. It's the small moves hidden from our eyes here that ripple loudest to the Other Shore.

2) Always doing kind things for others

Read. Acts 9:36 NLT

There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor.

Read. Luke 11:37-41 Message

When he finished that talk, a Pharisee asked him to dinner. He entered his house and sat right down at the table. The Pharisee was shocked and somewhat offended when he saw that Jesus didn't wash up before the meal. But the Master said to him, "I know you Pharisees burnish the surface of your cups and plates so they sparkle in the sun, but I also know your insides are maggoty with greed and secret evil. Stupid Pharisees! Didn't the One who made the outside also make the inside? Turn both your pockets and your hearts inside out and give generously to the poor; then your lives will be clean, not just your dishes and your hands."

Think.

- Tabitha/Dorcas "was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor" (we learn later that she was quite the seamstress). How was she different from the Pharisees Jesus was dining with in Luke 11?
- How is God calling you now to "turn your pockets and your heart inside out and give generously to the poor"? How successfully are you going against the grain of our consumer culture?

Pray.

Lord, turn my heart inside out — help me step out of me and experience a new level of selfless living. Let me be consumed by a desire to give rather than the accumulation of more for me.

Live.

Make or do something for someone in need this week.

4) Tabitha, get up

Read. Acts 9:39-41 NLT

So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

Read. John 14:12-14 Message

The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I'll do.

Think.

- Put yourself in that upper room — what do you see and hear? Why does Peter ask everyone to leave? Describe how the miracle takes place. How did this affect the believers there?
- Raising a dead person hardly seems like a "small move" — but it seems nearly effortless here. What is the key to being more "naturally supernatural" and doing what Jesus did?

Pray.

Lord, fill me with the simplicity and confident trust of Peter; give me eyes to see and ears to hear what you are doing in my world.

Live.

Speak life into a hopeless situation.

3) She became ill and died

Read. Acts 9:37–38 NLT

About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

Read. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 Message

And regarding the question, friends, that has come up about what happens to those already dead and buried, we don't want you in the dark any longer. First off, you must not carry on over them like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word. Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back to life those who died in Jesus.

Think.

- When Tabitha dies, what do the believers do? Why do you think they are calling on Peter? Do you think they wanted Peter to do her funeral or that maybe they were expecting something more? What would you have expected?
- How would you describe your attitude towards death: (a) terrified (b) curious (c) ready (d) uncertain (e) denial or _____
- How has knowing Jesus changed your perspective on death and dying?

Pray.

Lord, thank you for breaking the fear of death over us. As we live in a world still filled with death, dying and decay, make us a sweet aroma of life. Fill me with fresh confidence in the reality that death isn't the final chapter, but only the beginning of the real story.

Live.

Meditate on the Thessalonian passage through the day.

5) News spread through the whole town

Read. Acts 9:39-43 NLT

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Think.

- Tabitha/Dorcas was literally surrounded by her legacy when the widows were weeping and showing the coats and clothes Tabitha had made. What legacy are you leaving for yourself? How do you think people will remember you? How would you like to be remembered?
- For Tabitha it was sewing. In what ways are you pouring yourself out for others? What new avenues of service and giving might you pursue?
- What was the impact of Peter's obedience in that upper room on the whole town? Whether it's sewing like Tabitha or praying like Peter, how is God calling you to impact your world?

Pray.

Lord, help me to see the small things I am doing or can do right now that will change the world around me and impact the future.

Live.

Dedicate yourself to building a legacy of small moves and simple trust.