

Priscilla: Called to Minister

**Bible Background • ACTS 18:1-26; ROMANS 16:3-4; 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19;
2 TIMOTHY 4:19 | Printed Text • ACTS 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; ROMANS 16:3-4 |
Devotional Reading • COLOSSIANS 4:7-15**

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will RESEARCH the life and ministry of Priscilla and her husband Aquila, APPRECIATE the ministry of those who explain the Way of God with accuracy, and SEEK opportunities to use our gifts or abilities to further the Gospel.

In Focus

Gloria and Raoul had come to the United States five years ago as refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They had to leave their home because regional infighting was making it dangerous for them. The U.S. would provide a safe place where they could start a family. Even though Gloria and Raoul only knew a few people who had immigrated, they trusted that God would provide for them as they journeyed to this new land. The couple was grateful to be welcomed into a local church. The church included them in their ministries, and Gloria and Raoul offering their skills at the church's after-school program. Raoul had actually taught algebra before they fled, and Gloria loved looking after little ones.

One day, a new face showed up in the congregation. He was an immigrant from Costa Rica named Julio. Even though he spoke only a little English, he loved the Lord and loved to share that love on the field. He told stories about his time coaching fútbol back in his hometown. Gloria insisted Julio come to their house for lunch, and they recruited him to join them at the after-school program, teaching soccer. Julio quickly became invaluable to the ministry. Many students were excited to learn new soccer tricks, but they also learned about Jesus' love for them.

What skills do you have that can be used to directly further the Gospel? How can you use your skills in ways that help others share the Gospel too?

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:3-4, KJV).

KJV

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

People, Places, and Times

Ephesus. A principal Roman city of Asia, Ephesus was both a strategic commercial city and a major religious center. The city was famous for its magnificent temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The practice of magic and a large part of the local economy were intertwined with this temple. Paul remained in Ephesus for three years on his third missionary journey. The Word spread throughout that region. Paul's ministry hurt the sale of magical items and images, leading to an actual riot. After this, Paul left and went to Macedonia and returned only for a brief visit with the elders, several miles outside the city. Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesian church while imprisoned in Rome.

Apollos. An Alexandrian Jew who came to Ephesus in AD 52 (Acts 18:24). He had an accurate understanding of the story of Jesus and a profound understanding of the Old Testament. He was eloquent, articulate, and enthusiastic as he preached the truth as he knew it (Acts 18:24-25). However, he lacked knowledge about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and baptism. Priscilla and Aquila patiently instructed Apollos, filling in the gaps in his knowledge (Acts 18:26). As a result, Apollos went on to become a powerful proclaimer and defender of the Christian faith (Acts 18:27-28).

NLT

Acts 18:1 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

2 There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome.

3 Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was.

Acts 18:18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

19 They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews.

20 They asked him to stay longer, but he declined.

21 As he left, however, he said, "I will come back later, God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

24 Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt.

25 He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism.

26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

Romans 16:3 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus.

4 In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches.

Do you make yourself open to receiving correction as Apollos did?

Background

Luke, the Gospel writer and author of the Acts of the Apostles, portrays the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla as an ideal model of Christianity. They are friendly, hospitable, and generous. Aquila was a tentmaker who traveled extensively throughout the New Testament world with his wife Priscilla (see Acts 18:2-28; 1 Corinthians 16:19). Some scholars suggest that Priscilla inherited wealth and held tremendous influence in her community. They count this as one possible reason she is often mentioned before her husband in Scripture.

The Bible does not say how Paul met this couple, but it is clear that the apostle formed a friendship with Aquila and Priscilla. Through their influence and friendship, Paul was able to continue his missionary journey while leaving a faithful ministry team in Ephesus to preach the Gospel on his—and Jesus’—behalf.

How has a friendship with another Christian family or friend helped your faith journey?

At-A-Glance

1. Paul Meets Priscilla and Aquila
(Acts 18:1-3)
2. Expanding the Ministry to Ephesus
(vv. 18-21)
3. Apollos Meets Priscilla and Aquila
(vv. 24-26)
4. Paul Salutes Priscilla and Aquila
(Romans 16:3-4)

In Depth

1. Paul Meets Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3) After Athens, Paul’s next stop is Corinth, approximately fifty miles to the west. While there, Paul meets a Jewish-Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila. Even though Aquila was born among the large Jewish population of Pontus, he and his wife had most recently lived in Italy. When Emperor Claudius commanded all Jews to be expelled from Rome, however, the couple left and eventually arrived in Corinth. The Scriptures affirm that Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul were all tentmakers, so the three of them worked at their tentmaking trade, and Paul engaged in ministry on the Sabbath, preaching to both Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue.

Most would agree that Paul was a great apostle and evangelist, but dedicated friends helped Paul achieve many of his accomplishments. Christian friends, like Priscilla and Aquila, are vitally important to ministry and evangelism. God’s church is not made of brick and mortar; it is made of people who are codependent on one another and Christ.

2. Expanding the Ministry to Ephesus (vv. 18-21) Paul and his companions minister for a year and a half among the Corinthians before the stirring of the Holy Spirit prompts them to travel to Syria to further the ministry. Paul leaves accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila and sailed back across the Aegean Sea.

The ship upon which the trio has traveling stops in Ephesus for a short time and Paul takes advantage of the stopover to teach in the local Jewish synagogue. His preaching stirs interest among the Jewish inhabitants of Ephesus, who entreat Paul to stay with them longer. However, Paul desires to return to Jerusalem in time for one of the Jewish festivals and is unable to stay. He promises, however, to return if God will permit it. He also leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus to carry on what he has begun. Priscilla and Aquila remain in Ephesus for several years and permit their home to be used as the meeting place for the Christian church they help to plant.

3. Apollos Meets Priscilla and Aquila (vv. 24-26) Sometime later, Apollos, a Jew who was born in Alexandria, comes to Ephesus. Apollos was excited about the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and described as “an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures” (v. 24).

Apollos possesses great biblical skills, having the ability to teach the Word diligently, even though he only knows about the baptism of John. However, Apollos’ ministry catches the attention of Priscilla and Aquila. They are impressed with his teaching and his boldness as he speaks in the synagogue, but they realize that Apollos lacks a fuller understanding of Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila become his mentors in the things of the Spirit. We all need spiritual mentors who can help us expound the Word of God in a more complete way. We should not be afraid to ask others who may be more spiritually mature to help us get a better understanding of the Scriptures.

4. Paul Salutes Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3-4) At the close of his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul greets 26 people by name. At the top of this list is the ministry team, Priscilla and Aquila. He refers to the couple as “my helpers in Christ Jesus.” The word “helper” means “fellow worker” and looks back to their love and aid when Paul arrived in Corinth. The apostle says that the couple “laid down their own necks,” or risked their lives on his behalf. Scripture does not record the incident when this took place, but at some point the couple was willing to sacrifice their own lives for the Gospel. Paul affirms his gratitude for this couple’s work, adding that “also all the churches of the Gentiles” thank them. This shows that Paul considers Priscilla and Aquila’s work so influential that every church started by non-Jews owes gratitude to them.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why had Priscilla and Aquila left their home in Rome and relocated to Corinth? (Acts 18:2)
2. What activity helped cement the partnership between Paul and the couple? (v. 3)
3. What phrase did Paul use to describe the couple’s ministry with him? (Romans 16:3)

Discuss the Meaning

1. Many people believe that working with one’s spouse professionally or in ministry can cause problems in the home because work problems or ministry disagreements follow the couple home and cause friction. Do you believe this? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What are some of the reasons people do not mentor younger people? How should these issues be resolved?

Liberating Lesson

Christian homes and solid Christian marriages remain two of the best tools for spreading the Gospel. Husband-and-wife teams can be tremendous blessings for the body of Christ. The faithfulness of people like Priscilla and Aquila makes ministry a joy for others. The effectiveness of their ministry says a lot about their personal relationship with each other and with God. Their hospitality became the doorway of salvation for many.

This is why the enemy fights so hard against marriage. More than half the marriages in the United States end in divorce. List some of the positive features and negative hindrances that can affect husband-and-wife businesses/partnerships (and marriages). Report on your list next week.

Application for Activation

In today’s lesson, Priscilla and Aquila took young Apollos under their wing and mentored him in the Gospel. Examine your life to see who you are influencing in the body of Christ. If you can’t think of anyone, ask God to help you make a specific contribution to someone’s life this week. Perhaps making a phone call or writing a letter to lift someone’s spirit is a good place to start. Before the class is over today, commit to find someone this week.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do?

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly

Cenchrae. kenn-**KRAY**-ah.

Sosthenes. **SOSS**-theh-neeZ.

Aquila. ah-**QUILL**-ah.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Paul Reflects on His Ministry
(2 Timothy 4:9–18)

TUESDAY

Greetings to Saints in Jesus Christ
(Colossians 4:7–15)

WEDNESDAY

The Holy Kiss Strengthens
Ministry Bond
(2 Corinthians 13:11–13;
1 Thessalonians 5:23–28)

THURSDAY

Ministry Shifts from Jews to Gentiles
(Acts 18:4–11)

FRIDAY

Roman Official Refuses to Settle Dispute
(Acts 18:12–17)

SATURDAY

Greetings to All Sisters in Ministry
(Romans 16:1–2, 6–7, 12–13, 16)

SUNDAY

Priscilla, Key Outreach Minister
(Acts 18:1–3, 18–21, 24–26;
Romans 16:3–4)