

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 18:1-28 | REAL-TIME DISCIPLESHIP

KEY TERMS

Corinth - A prominent Greek city approximately 40 miles west of Athens. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half and wrote two NT letters (1 & 2 Corinthians) to the church there.

Aquila and Priscilla - Aquila was a Jewish man from Asia Minor and Priscilla was a Gentile woman from Italy. They ended up in Corinth when Suetonius expelled Jews from Rome around 49 AD and appear to have already become Christians when Paul met them. They join Paul and are mentioned in his letters (see 1 Cor 16:19 & 2 Tim 4:19).

A vow - Jews often made vows as expressions of thankfulness for God's blessing or as petition for further blessing, and Paul's vow is likely connected to God's protection during his travels. This vow is an example of Paul continuing to live as a pious Jew, but one who believes that Jesus is the Messiah.

Apollos - Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria in Egypt who is described as *eloquent* and *competent in the Scriptures* (v. 24). It appears that he traveled to Ephesus to preach the gospel, but Luke says he *knew only the baptism of John* (v. 25). This likely means that Apollos believed that repentance and faith in the Messiah was needed for salvation (see Matt 3:1-12), and he may have heard that Jesus was the Messiah, but he lacked a full understanding of who Jesus was and what he accomplished.

BACKGROUND

Leaving Athens, Paul travelled to Corinth where he met a Christian couple named Aquila and Priscilla (vv. 1-2). As was his custom, Paul primarily spent time in the synagogues encouraging Jews to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, before moving on to focus on the Gentiles when the Jews rejected his message (vv. 4-6). However, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed, as did many Jews and Gentiles (v. 8). While in Corinth, Paul received a vision from God reassuring him that God would protect him, and he stayed in Corinth a year and a half (vv. 9-11). After being attacked and brought before the town leaders as in other towns, Paul finally left Corinth and began heading back towards his home base in Antioch, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him and *strengthening all the disciples* as he went (vv. 12-23). In Ephesus, Paul met Apollos and, after Aquila and Priscilla taught him the gospel more fully, Apollos went into Achaia and *greatly helped those who through grace had believed...[because he] powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus* (vv. 24-28).

GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Timothy 4:16 and Galatians 1:6-9. What do these verses teach about the importance of right belief based on Scripture? Read Matthew 7:12-27. What connections do you see between belief and salvation and belief and a life of flourishing? How does this passage encourage you to grow?

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul and Luke often put Priscilla's name before her husband's (see Acts 18:18, Ro 16:3, & 2 Tim 4:19), which is unconventional and could mean Priscilla was of higher standing than Aquila, possibly even from a noble family.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 18:1-18. Paul and the church in Corinth go through several changes in the way they operate. What circumstances and obstacles drive these changes?
2. When you consider these events in the Corinthian church, are you surprised at the messiness of how the Lord works in the life of His church?
3. In verses 9-10, God seems to give Paul his own personal counseling session. What can we infer about how Paul is feeling from these verses? What three biblical promises does God give Paul as reminders that he can depend on? How does Paul respond in verse 11?
4. Read Acts 18:18-28. Here we see a great example of how spiritual growth often happens through the life of a church in Apollos and his relationship with Priscilla and Aquila. What can we learn from Apollos? What can we learn from how Priscilla and Aquila engage with Apollos?

LIVING THE WORD

5. When you consider how Apollos grows, how does this compare with your own experience? Why is humility so critical to learning the way of God more accurately?
6. One important pathway to spiritual growth is deepening our doctrinal understanding. We see this theme repeatedly in Acts 18: "teaching the word of God among them" (verse 11), "strengthening all the disciples" (verse 23), "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (verse 26), "showing by the Scriptures" (verse 28). Why is learning doctrine *within* the relationships of biblical community essential to our personal growth?
7. As you consider this lesson, what is one lesson you want to apply to your own life?