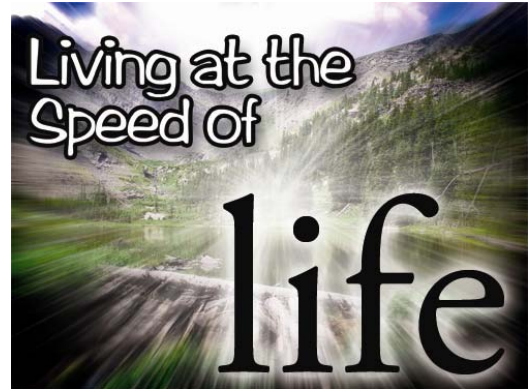


# RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum

## June 21, 2009 Analysis of a Great Marriage Acts 18



### MINISTERING HELPS

#### Group Prayer Time

We have been praying for a great VBS. We want to match those prayers with being available to serve in various ways. Make sure you group prayer time includes testimonies of ways folks were blessed by serving or a life that was changed during VBS. Make sure your group takes time to thank God for His power and presence this week, and for Him to continue to be active in the lives of these kids and their families.

#### STAYING CONNECTED

Don't let "summer slumpers" get in the habit of being away. Assign all absentees to present class members to make calls to this week telling them they were missed.

### REACHING HELPS

Is there a community event your class could attend together where you would have the opportunity to minister to folks, ask them about the Lord and invite them to church.

Summer is filled with many community events where people gather and could be ministered to with bottled water, free sunscreen, or some other tangible way of showing Jesus cares and so does your group.

Take a risk by putting together an effort to reach out to others. Who knows how God will use it to impact someone for His glory.

### TEACHING HELPS

We continue our sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE.

Today we are focusing on the topic of marriage. When the pace of our lives gets too fast, many married couples can begin to draw apart from each other rather than draw closer.

Today's lesson is from Acts 18, and gives us a look at a great married couple who allowed God to do great things through them. They give us a great picture of what a married couple can be when their hearts are together and focused on honoring Christ in their marriage.

# Analysis of a Great Marriage

## Acts 18

### Introduction

What makes a great marriage?

The story of Aquila and Priscilla represent an analysis of a great marriage in the Bible. Although their story is short, there are four areas of commonality that prove to give them a great marriage. Aquila and Priscilla shared common friends, goals, faith and ministry.

In Paul's day Corinth had replaced Athens as the leading political and commercial center in Greece. Corinth enjoyed a strategic location on the Isthmus of Corinth, which connected the Peloponnesian Peninsula with the rest of Greece. Nearly all traffic between northern and southern Greece passed through the city. Because it was a 200-mile sail around the peninsula, some ships were put on rollers and pulled across the 4-mile bridge of land. In 67 AD, Nero began work on a canal, but one was not completed until 1893.

Corinth was a wicked city. The very term "Corinthian" came to mean a profligate. It meant to practice whoredom. Towering some 1,500 feet above Corinth was the Acropolis, on top of which was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Each evening the temple's 1000 priestesses, who were ritual prostitutes, would descend into the city to practice their pagan traditions.

It is in this wicked city that we meet a couple whose marriage was incredibly godly and biblical. Let's look at what Aquila and Priscilla had in common...

### **Acts 18:1-4**

*1After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

### Introduction...

Throughout the years of television, there have been several families that television watchers have come to know and love...

- List some of the worst families that were depicted on television. List why they were not good models.
- List some of the best families that were depicted on television. List reasons why they were good models.

Today we will meet a couple who model a great marriage in many ways. They lived in a city called Corinth. Share from the commentary that Corinth was a very vile city and full of ungodliness.

Aquila and Priscilla had a great marriage despite some of the difficulties they had faced. Today's passage points out four things they shared in common, that enabled them to honor God in their marriage...

Read the entire focal passage to begin the lesson.

## 1. Common Friends: A joint work in befriending Paul

In Corinth Paul met Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Aquila was a Jew, originally from Pontus, a province in northeast Asia Minor south of the Black Sea. Displaced from Rome because of an edict in AD 49 or 50 from Claudius for all the Jews to leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla had come to Corinth to sell their trade to the many travelers of the area. God knew Paul needed someone else to help him shoulder the formidable burdens he carried. Paul found his much needed companionship with Aquila and his wife Priscilla.

Their joint friendship led them to become two of his closest friends. Later in the chapter, the couple accompanied Paul to the region of Galatia. Eventually they even risk their lives for him as he told in Romans 16. Whether Aquila and Priscilla were Christians before they met Paul is not known. Nor does the Bible record the conversions of Aquila and Priscilla, but they were probably already Christians when Paul met them. They had come from Rome, where a church already existed ([Rom. 1:7-8](#)), and they are not listed among the Corinthian converts, either in this chapter or anywhere else in the New Testament. Regardless, Paul found this companionship comforting as he shared not only their passion for tent making but also Jesus Christ.

## 2. Common Goals: A joint work in tent making

Having been forced to leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla moved their business to Corinth. Paul was looking for work to support himself when he met them there. The Greek word for tent maker could also refer to leather workers, a trade that included the making of tents, which were often made out of leather. It was customary for all Jewish boys, even rabbis' sons, to learn their father's trade. Paul had no doubt learned from his father to work with this skill and Aquila in like manner. However, tradition says that Priscilla may have come from nobility since her name is held in such high regard. Her work was probably learned from spending hours and hours with her husband as he worked.

The work of tent making was tedious and labor-some. However, their exact work is uncertain. The point is clear though, both Paul, and his companions used their skills to enhance ministry needs in the community. Paul mentions several times that he is above reproach in his conduct for not taking monies and gifts from those he ministered too. Aquila and Priscilla could argue the same, they joined together in their "occupation," for the purpose of furthering the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 1. Common Friends...

Verses 1-4 - Tells us about how Paul became friends with Aquila and Priscilla.

- Paul was on a missionary journey, but why were Aquila and Priscilla there?
- What did these three people share in common, besides their faith in Jesus.

Why is it important to have friends that are friends to both you and your spouse?

What is the danger of having all of your friends separate from a spouse?

How does BFG play a role in helping couples find other couple friends? What is the difference between looking for friends in a BFG, and being willing to be a friend to someone in your BFG? How open is your BFG to reaching out and making new friends? Is it important to develop this?

### 2. Common Goals...

Verses 1-4 also tell us that Aquila and Priscilla worked together as tent makers. This working together brought them together as they tried to make their family business productive.

Could you work at the same job with your spouse? What would the upside be and/or the downside be?

How important is it for spouses to support each other, even if they don't work at the same job? How can the principle of having common goals through your vocations still be applied if you work in different places? What are ways you can support your spouse in their vocation?

## Acts 18:18-28

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. ... 19They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ... 24Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. 27When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

### 3. Common Faith: A joint work in going on mission

Ephesus at the time in which Paul visited was one of the most flourishing cities of Asia Minor. It was situated in that part anciently called Ionia. It abounded with the most eminent orators, philosophers, etc., in the world; and was adorned with the most splendid buildings. The famous temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, was located in the city. It had a great harbor which allowed for trade and business to flourish.

Paul, did not neglect his ministry and after establishing a church and training leaders, he set out for Syria. He took with him Priscilla and Aquila. Other leaders had already emerged within the Corinthian church and so he felt freedom to invite them to accompany him on his mission. The fact that Priscilla and Aquila would move their business to go with Paul indicates their loyalty and devotion to him and his calling.

Having gone as far as Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla begin to rebuild their business while Paul expanded the gospel of Christ. They apparently remained in Ephesus for a few years, had a church meet in their home ([1 Cor. 16:19](#)) and eventually returned to Rome ([Rom. 16:3-5](#)). Their faith, together, was a great asset to Paul's work and their marriage. They were on the same spiritual page as they spent much time with Paul conversing about Jesus' work on earth and the meaning it had to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul's passion for his calling no doubt impacted their desire to go with him and assist him as he sought to minister.

### 3. Common Faith...

Verses 18-28 point us to the common faith that this couple had.

- What is the difference between the faith is for salvation and the faith that it takes for a next step God is calling you, as a couple, toward? Aquila and Priscilla obviously believed in the same Jesus, but God was calling them to go on mission with Paul.
- How important is it that couples be on the same page about next steps? What is the benefit if both of you are supporting a next step? What are the hard issues when one of you wants to take a next step but the other does not? Should one person take a next step if their spouse is not for it?
- What are ways couples can get on the same page about their faith and what they believe about God?

#### 4. Common Ministry: A joint work in discipling others

After Paul left Ephesus and before he returned, Aquila and Priscilla were introduced to Apollos. During this interval a church had been started, probably under the influence of Aquila and Priscilla. To this church came the gifted Apollos from Alexandria in northern Africa. As a Jew, he knew the Scriptures, that is, the Old Testament, well and its doctrine regarding Jesus was accurate but deficient. John's baptism symbolized cleansing by God because of repentance toward God. Christian baptism pictures the union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection by means of Spirit baptism ([Rom. 6:3-10](#); [1 Cor. 12:13](#); [Gal. 3:27](#); [Col. 2:12](#)). Rather than correct Apollos publicly, Priscilla and Aquila invited him to their home and explained to him more adequately Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Paul's teaching they had learned through their travels and ministry.

This mutual training continued in Aquila and Priscilla's home. Apollos continued to learn under Aquila and Priscilla. In fact, because of his lack of understanding his own conversion was most likely in their home. This joint work of discipleship led Apollos to tell others and bear the testimony Christ.

By sharing these things in common, Aquila and Priscilla had a very uncommon marriage that glorified God.

#### 4. Common Ministry...

Verses 18-28 also talk about a situation that came up for this couple, as they met a man named Apollos.

- What was the issue with Apollos?
- How did Aquila and Priscilla handle the situation? How did they let Apollos know they really loved him and wanted to support him before they corrected him?
- If Apollos showed up preaching a half-right version of Jesus in your group, how would your group respond? Would you encourage him or would you probably throw him out? What do we learn from this couple here?
- Why is it important for couples to be on the same page about people they meet and choose to help through their problems?

#### Applications...

1. The phrase "two become one" is not just about sex or living under the same roof. For a marriage to honor Christ, a Christian marriage needs "two to become one" under God in every area.
2. Friends can influence you toward good or bad. Couples should strive to have some friends together who love the Lord and inspire them to grow in their walk with Christ. If you have a friend who hates your spouse, you probably need to re-think that relationship.
3. It is important that couples support each other in their vocations. Challenge couples to talk about ways they can be more supportive of the other's job.
4. It is essential that couples share the same faith, both for salvation and for next steps of faith that God calls them to take. Challenge couples to add things to their relationship that will get them on the same page Biblically (couples devotions, praying together and reading the same Christian growth books and discussing it).
5. Taking a common interest in the lives of others can really help a couple get focused on the Lord. Challenge couples to take on a ministry together that will allow them to serve and converse side by side about the spiritual growth of another person.