

Priscilla, Aquila & Apollos



Ice-Breaker

1. What do you like best about returning home after a long trip? What do you dread the most?
2. What is the worst haircut you ever had?



Scripture Passage

Acts 18:18-28

¹⁸Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²²When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

²³After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

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^a 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.

a [25] Or with fervor in the Spirit



Bible Study

1. What do you make of his companions Priscilla and Aquila? What type of person was Apollos (vv. 24-26)?
2. What influence did Apollos have in Achaia, specifically Corinth (vv. 27-28; see 1 Corinthians 3:4-6)? How did Priscilla and Aquila assist him? What does this tell you about the role of women in the New Testament?



Reference Notes

18:18-22 Luke compresses a journey of nearly 1500 miles into these four verses. After a year and a half at Corinth (v. 11), Paul departed for Antioch, sailing by way of Ephesus which, from Acts 19:1-20:38, is the dominant area of Paul's missionary work. Since Silas does not appear again in Acts, he and Timothy apparently stayed behind in Corinth. Later on, perhaps when Paul visited Corinth again, Timothy joined him once more in his travels (Acts 20:1-4).

18:18 accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. It is significant that Priscilla's name is listed first, ahead of her husband. This was hardly ever done, and probably indicates that Priscilla was the more influential leader of the two. **he had his hair cut off ... because of a vow.** Pious Jews would take vows, based on the pattern of the Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-21), as an indication of their devotion to God. Since the cutting of one's hair indicated the termination of the vow, Paul may have made a vow of dedication to God for as long as he was in Corinth, in gratefulness to God's promise of protection (v. 10). While normally vows would be terminated by shaving one's head and offering a sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem, people far from the city could shave their heads where they were and carry the trimmings to the temple to be presented along with a sacrifice at that time. Luke may have included this incident as evidence that Paul did not abandon the traditions of his people. Cenchrea. A port city near Corinth (see Romans 16:1).

18:19-21 The positive response to Paul among the Jews at Ephesus sets the stage for his return to that city in Acts 19:1. Priscilla and Aquila stayed on at Ephesus and established the new church there.

18:22-23 Because of his vow, Paul undoubtedly went to Jerusalem to offer a thank offering. Then he proceeded to Antioch, the church that had spawned his missionary work in the first place (Acts 13:1-3). He may have stayed there until the spring (A.D. 52 or 53), when traveling would again be possible. From there he visited the churches throughout the area where he had established churches on his first trip (Acts 13:13-14:20).

18:23 strengthening all the disciples. Paul was not the kind of evangelist who was only interested in saving souls in order to "put notches on his spiritual belt." He was also very careful to come back to them to nurture them along the way (see also Acts 14:21-22).

18:24-28 During Paul's journey, Apollos visited Ephesus. While Apollos is a minor figure in Acts (nothing more is said of him after 19:1), he was a significant figure in the church at Corinth and became a valued associate of Paul's (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-23; 4:6; 16:12; perhaps 2 Corinthians 8:22). Some modern scholars, following Luther, wonder if he might have authored Hebrews. This incident, as well as that in 19:1-7, shows that Acts records only a small part of the story of how the Gospel was spread throughout the known world. While unfortunately their stories are not recorded, the other apostles, as well as many unknown believers, played important roles in spreading the story of Jesus far beyond Judea.

18:24 Alexandria. A major cultural center on the northern coast of Egypt. Jews from this area were present at Pentecost and undoubtedly carried the message back home (Acts 2:10).

18:25 While Apollos was an earnest, articulate believer in Jesus, he had not received the whole story of the Gospel. Just what he was lacking is unclear, but, as the story in Acts 19:1-7 indicates, he may not have heard of the coming of the Spirit promised to those who are baptized in the name of Jesus. Williams suggests that Apollos believed Jesus was the Messiah without knowing that the messianic blessings of life in the Spirit had been won by Jesus; he may not have known of the Resurrection.

18:26 Priscilla and Aquila. Once again Priscilla's name is mentioned first, indicating her primacy. Here it is especially significant because she is taking it on herself to instruct an educated man. That her husband was with her probably made this more socially acceptable, but it appears she was an active part of the instruction, a radical step for the time. **the way of God.** The various sermons in Acts record what Luke considered essential for the understanding of "the way."

18:27-28 Whether the church at Ephesus encouraged Apollos to go to Corinth or if they encouraged

the Corinthians to receive Apollos is uncertain from the Greek, and either is possible. Because of Apollos' zeal, scriptural understanding, classical education and ability to communicate, they may have felt he would be perfect for the sophisticated, worldly atmosphere at Corinth. At a later date Paul likewise encouraged Apollos to return to Corinth, but he refused to do so (1 Corinthians 16:12), perhaps because he wanted nothing to do with the faction in the Corinthian church that favored him over Paul.

18:27 he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. Literally, "he contributed much to the ones having believed through grace." Two readings are possible. The NIV lays the emphasis on God's grace to the Corinthians which caused them to believe. It can also be translated as "he contributed much through grace to the believers," putting the emphasis on Apollos' ability as a gift from God useful for helping the believers.

Caring Time

1. Who was very helpful to you when you were young and enthusiastic about the faith? How did this person help? Who could you help now? How?
2. Where do you sense God has equipped you to serve?
3. What role do women have in your church? How do you feel about that?
4. How does your church balance evangelism with the strengthening and equipping of believers?