

## LESSON 12

February 21, 2021

Unit III: The Call of Women

Risk Taker

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Colossians 4:7-15

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:** Acts 18:1-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

**PRINT PASSAGES:** Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4

**Key Verses**--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)

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Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. (Romans 16:3-4, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Research the lives and ministry of Priscilla and her husband, Aquila.
- Appreciate the ministry of those who explain the Way of God with accuracy.
- Seek opportunities to use your gifts or abilities to further the Gospel.

### KEY TERMS

**Commanded (Acts 18:2)**—Greek: *diatassó* (dee-at-as'-so): to have arranged thoroughly; charged; appointed; "ordered" (NIV).

**Departed (Acts 18:1)**—Greek: *chórizó* (kho-rid'-zo): to have separated; went away; "left" (NIV).

**Reasoned (Acts 18:19)**—Greek: *dialegomai* (dee-al-eg'-om-ahee): to have discussed, mingled thought with thought, addressed, preached.

**Remained (Acts 18:18, NASB)**—Greek: *prosmenó* (pros-men'-o): continued with one; "tarried" (KJV); "stayed" (NIV).

**Vow (Acts 18:18)**—Greek: *euché* (yoo-khay'): a prayer to God; promise.

**Worked (Acts 18:3)**—Greek: *ergazomai* (er-gad'-zom-ahee): worked for; labored; "wrought" (KJV).

### PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher's Edition for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week's student assignments ("Your Life" and Your World!").
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG

## **WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS**

Encounters that bring together people with similar gifts and talents can lead to greater opportunities for service in other arenas. How can shared interests and experiences lead to new possibilities for engagement? Priscilla and Aquila shared their tent-making business with Paul, and Paul shared with them his ministry of the Gospel.

## **THE LESSON IN FOCUS**

Many people tend to build close relationships with their co-workers. Positive working relationships often result from shared tasks and shared time together that allows for meaningful conversation. We are social beings, and our lives can be significantly enriched through interactions with others in our workplace, church, or community. We should be friendly and gracious to others, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because God can use our interpersonal ties and connections for godly purposes beyond our imagination. We learn and grow through relating to others. In the case of Paul, a casual connection grew into a meaningful ministry partnership. We should pray that God would order our relationships so that His purposes and intentions, rather than ours, would be accomplished. Make it your personal priority to cherish people and treat them with godliness and respect, while remaining open to whatever purpose the Lord has intended for bringing you into each other's lives. Souls were saved, churches were blessed, and God was glorified because of Paul's connection with Priscilla and Aquila.

## **THE LESSON IN CONTEXT**

Contrary to the practice of teachers in his day, Paul sometimes refused to take money from those he taught. Paul was a bi-vocational rather than full-time missionary. He received some support from the congregations in which he ministered but also earned personal income from the work of his trade—tent making. The earnings financed his preaching ministry (see 1 Corinthians 9:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10). Paul met the acquaintance of a married couple, Priscilla and Aquila, who are believed to have landed in Corinth after Jews were expelled from Rome under the leadership of Emperor Claudius. Historians record conflicts between Roman Christians and Jews that likely resulted from the imperial order to ban Jews from Rome. In Corinth, a largely pagan city known for its debauchery and idolatry, Priscilla and Aquila joined themselves to the Christian community and met the acquaintance of the apostle Paul, with whom they developed a strong, lasting friendship—and for whom they would later even risk their lives. The couple was one that God used in the churches of Corinth and Ephesus to partner with Paul in ministry and to train and mentor church leaders like Apollos, for example, who was gifted to serve, but lacking in a sound doctrinal understanding of the Gospel message.

## **OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the items below.)**

1. Do you have Christian friends who share your commitment to serving God faithfully? What projects or ministry efforts do you share with them?
2. How did your relationship develop with the people you count as your closest friends in ministry? Briefly share with the class.

3. In what ways do we risk or jeopardize relationships that God may have intended for a godly purpose?

## **INSIGHTS**

As Christians, we must appreciate the shared faith and mutual support we find within the comfort of a Christian community. We understand the need for encouragement and stability not only while serving Christ and working in the ministry but also as we live out our Christian witness and calling in a fallen world. It is so important for Christians to connect with each other and serve a church community in Jesus' name. Some people go beyond the walls of their local church to serve long- and short-term mission efforts in their communities, in other cities, and abroad, especially in the aftermath of crises and natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, or hurricanes. Those who are unable to travel abroad can provide administrative, financial, in-kind prayer or other support to assist efforts to spread the Gospel.

## **EXPLORATION**

As followers and servants of Jesus, we are committed to theological accuracy. We sincerely must desire to rightly divide God's Word when sharing with others. Additionally, we must learn to be wise, loving, and very tactful when correcting false teaching. We cannot allow room for open debates that could lead to unhelpful arguments, hostility, or division in the body of Christ. To be fully effective for the Lord, men and women must work in partnership with other believers wherever we find ourselves—in the community, in the workplace, and in the church.

## **ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER COMMENTARY**

Acts 18:1-3,18

KJV

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

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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.

NIV

AFTER THIS, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

2 There 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 Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,

3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

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18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken.

The apostle Paul left Athens for Corinth, where he awaited the arrival of Timothy and Silas from Macedonia. Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. It was situated on an isthmus or cape, allowing great access to sea routes to the east and west, along with land routes to the north and south. This perfect situation allowed it to be a prosperous commercial center. Corinth, while a prosperous city economically, socially, artistically, and intellectually, was also notoriously known for its immorality. Apparently, the preaching of the Gospel in Jewish synagogues in Rome met with such strong resistance and hostility that the emperor, Claudius, ordered all Jews to leave the city. It is not clear if Aquila and Priscilla (also called Prisca) were believers before they left Rome. But since nothing is said of Paul's preaching the Gospel to them or their becoming converts, scholars assume them to have been Christians in Rome. The couple came to Corinth and set up their tent-making business. Tent makers manufactured heavy cloth (a type of leather) from goat skin. Paul shared his Christian faith and vocation with this godly couple, Priscilla and Aquila. When they met, Paul was in Corinth for an unspecified length of time, approximately at least a year and a half by some estimates. Before leaving Corinth, Paul assumed the Nazarite vow, which is an Old Testament act of consecration and dedication to God (see Numbers 6:1-21). During the period of the vow, Paul was not to cut his hair or drink wine. While Paul strongly refused to impose the restrictions of Judaism on Gentiles and preached it as a burden and yoke upon the people, he was willing to do whatever was necessary or expedient to consecrate himself fully to the Lord's service and reach others with the message of the Gospel—even if it meant not eating or doing things that others found offensive.

## **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- Adult Question: What possible benefits or hindrances do you see in partnering with others in ministry work?
- Young Adult Question: Share with the group a time when God intervened in what seemed to be a bad turn of events and worked it for your good.

## **COMMENTARY**

Acts 18:19-21, 24-26

KJV

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

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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.

NIV

19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined.

21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus

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24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

25 He 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.

26 He 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.

Aquila and Priscilla separated from Paul at Ephesus and took up residence there. Paul engaged in a short ministry in the synagogue; and though the congregation desired him to stay longer, Paul chose to leave and attend an unspecified feast observance in Jerusalem—likely the Passover. Paul's willingness to continue observing the Passover was probably based on a desire to reunite with his countrymen and share the Gospel with those who had not yet accepted Jesus as Savior. In Ephesus, Jewish pilgrims likely heard the message of John the Baptist preaching that the Messiah had come. It is possible to be correct in what you know, believing in God without having a full grasp of the truth of the Gospel message—such as it was with Apollos. He was strong in faith and devotion, thorough in understanding the Old Testament Scriptures, and eloquent in speech. He had the ability to present Jesus as the Messiah effectively to Jews, but God allowed Priscilla and Aquila to share with him the completeness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- Adult Question: When you feel that the Gospel is being misrepresented, how do you respond? Describe a healthy, Christ-focused response to misguided or mistaken teachers of the Gospel.
- Young Adult Question: God used an ordinary couple to do extraordinary things for Him. Share areas of your life where you are living out God's plan.

## COMMENTARY

Romans 16:3-4

KJV

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.

NIV

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus.

4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

Paul closed the letter to the Romans with greetings to individuals and groups. After a recommendation for Rome to accept a sister named Phoebe, he starts with his two dearest friends, Priscilla and Aquila. Since meeting Paul at Corinth, on his second missionary journey, the couple had been hard at work in the service of God (see Acts 18:2, 18, 26). Paul also mentions them when he salutes the Corinthian church (see 1 Corinthians 16:19) and the young minister and pastor, Timothy (see 2 Timothy 4:19). Paul does not give details of what Priscilla and Aquila did to risk their lives for him, but his gratitude is apparent. Paul notes that not only he but also all the churches of the Gentiles were grateful to Priscilla and Aquila for their significant ministry efforts for Jesus Christ. It is possible that he is making a specific reference to an incident in Corinth in which Paul was dragged in for judgment at the seat of Galileo (see Acts 18:17), or possibly the riot in Ephesus around AD 53 (see Acts 19:23-41). Paul is probably back in Corinth around the year of AD 57. The decree banishing Jews from Rome was lifted after the death of Emperor Claudius in AD 54 (see Acts 18:2). This allowed an opportunity for Priscilla and Aquila to return to Rome.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- Adult Question: Do people still risk their lives for Christianity and the cause of Christ? Share examples to support your answer.
- Young Adult Question: How should the church handle believers who are gifted and eager to serve but lack the training to be effective? Discuss Priscilla and Aquila's private approach to dealing with Apollos.

## LIFE APPLICATION

- Refer to Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

— Consider some of the unsung heroes of your church. Find a way to thank them for their work to serve the Lord by ministering to others.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.) — Partnering with at least one other person, analyze your community's spiritual, social, and other needs. Identify areas in which evangelism is needed. Assess the risk, keeping in mind that the risk is not always life threatening but could pose a considerable threat to your time, treasures, and even talents as you seek to share the Gospel in new territory.

- Refer to Young Adult Book (See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

— Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for the sake of ministry. There will be times when you may have to risk something for your faith in Jesus. It may be your reputation, popularity, habits, relationships, or something else. Are you willing to take a stand that may cost you something?

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

— Like Priscilla and Aquila, you may encounter people who have enthusiasm for God but a limited understanding of the Scriptures. Be willing to gently guide them to the truth, passing on what you know or directing them to someone else who can help them.

## **NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

The lesson topic for Sunday, February 28, 2021, is "Showing Generous Hospitality." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 33:1-12, and both the Background Scriptures and Printed Texts are Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord, open our eyes to new opportunities to witness for You—at work, in our community, and through the ministry of the church. Connect us to people with whom we can grow in faith and Christian service. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**(February 22-28, 2021)**

**Lydia: Called to Serve**

**MONDAY**, February 22: "Don't Complain but Serve One Another" (1 Peter 4:7-11)

**TUESDAY**, February 23: "Everyday Expressions of Hospitality" (Romans 12:9-19)

**WEDNESDAY**, February 24: "Hospitality Practiced in Jail and Home" (Acts 16:35-40)

**THURSDAY**, February 25: "Hospitality Practiced by Widow and Bishop" (1 Timothy 5:9-10; 3:2)

**FRIDAY**, February 26: "Christ, God's Power and Wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

**SATURDAY**, February 27: "Know Jesus Christ Crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

**SUNDAY**, February 28: "Lydia, Model of Hospitality Practice" (Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30)