

Acts 18

A GROWING MOVEMENT

Invest in Faithful Men/Women

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 18:1-17

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 18:1-4

In Paul's missionary journeys, God continually provided faithful men and women to aid Paul in his ministry. Often times, Paul had little to no connection with the city to which he was traveling, yet God provided open doors and hungry people that would be catalysts for the ministry.

Aquila and Priscilla were this open door in Corinth. Initially, Paul was connected with them through his occupation. At times, Paul raised financial support from the churches. Other times while church planting, he worked to be able to provide for himself and even help provide for his missionary team. Aquila and Priscilla end up being vital leaders in the early church and would even end up traveling with Paul and amongst the churches.

! As always, Paul began his ministry reasoning with the Jews. He was always finding the places of "religion" to go fishing for men.

? **Question: Relationships are a fundamental part of life, especially the Christian life. Often times as we follow God's will He appoints ordained relationships that not only encourage us but further the Gospel. Have you experienced God leading you to specific relationships for the purpose of His glory?**

Acts 18:5-6

Paul was hard at work sharing the Gospel and reasoning from the Scriptures. However, the Jews were hard-hearted and did not heed the things spoken by Paul. Therefore, Paul had to move on from them. He did his part: he shared the truth and had to leave the rest to God.

In Ezekiel 33:6-7, God warns Ezekiel that as His prophet he was responsible for warning the people of God's coming judgment. If he did not warn them, he bore responsibility in their judgment. In Acts, Paul says multiple times that he is innocent of the blood of men because he did not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

! We are not all called to be apostles and prophets, yet in another sense we are. Jesus says that He sends us into the world to be the salt of the earth and a light in a dark place. Jesus calls us all to proclaim the Word of God, to be His ambassadors, which is the essence of prophesying. The salvation of others is not in our hands, yet we play a role in God's plan for salvation.

? **Question: Could you stand before your circle of influence and say that you are innocent of the blood of all men because you have not shrunk back from sharing with them the whole counsel of God?**

Acts 18:7-11

After turning away from the hard-hearted Jews, Paul went to other people who were open and hungry for the Word. Immediately, he saw fruit and the church at Corinth began to expand.

- A** Perhaps this is why the Holy Spirit led Paul to write what he did in 2 Timothy 2:2. It is easy to get caught up in arguing with hard hearts, while the faithful hungry hearts go starving.
- B** Paul was used to the resistance following him. He was always ready for beatings, imprisonments, threats, and stonings. However, there were other seasons in which God gave him rest with more peaceful seasons of ministry. Corinth ended up being a hub for the early church, and Paul spent a good portion of his ministry journey making disciples there.

Acts 18:12-17

Despite a peaceful and successful season of ministry, the hard times were right around the corner. The church experienced persecution from the Jews once again.

Gallio was the proconsul, or governor, of the region. He was not interested in meddling in the Jews and the church's business. He did not condemn the church but did not help them either. Ultimately, the church had to trust God in the midst of suffering. Even their own lives were at stake as the ruler of the Synagogue, now a disciple, was beaten in front of the court of justice (tribunal).

Read Aloud Acts 18:18-28

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 18:18-23

1 This is an interesting passage that gets to the reality of Paul's life and ministry. Paul had grown up a Jew, and a devoted one at that. Philippians 3:2-6 speaks on Paul's Israelite heritage.

A The Scripture does not explicitly say what type of vow this was, but most likely it was a Nazarite vow found in Numbers chapter 6. This was a vow of complete devotion to God. Those who took this vow were sanctifying themselves beyond the necessities of the law by completely abstaining from any form of impurity for the sake of nearness to God. Paul most likely took this vow in the midst of his persecution and hardship as he left the world behind him. As stated in Galatians 2:20, he had been crucified with Christ. So why the vow?

B Paul was still in a period of transition. Sometimes we can get the idea that Paul was perfect, but he was a man just like us. What the Bible inspired Paul to write in his letters is the Word of God, but Paul's day-to-day life was not without error. Perhaps this is an example of Paul still clinging to elements of the law and the rigid discipline he had as a Pharisee. Not that this would have been sinful, but we know that religious rituals is not what brings us closer to God. However, at the same time partaking in a Nazarite vow could have been a good reminder to Paul of what his sacrifice was for. Either way, this is a great example of the humanity of Paul and the early church. They were in the midst of navigating the Old and New Covenant.

! This also speaks to why Paul had such an urgency to make the feast in Jerusalem. He still felt a conviction to keep the feasts, and perhaps this was tied into his vow.

2

We get insight into the teamwork of the early church. Paul was utilizing Priscilla and Aquila as leaders in the early church to help disciple new believers. He was able to leave them in places so that he could continue on doing the work of an Apostle. As Paul's teammates were able to help shepherd the church, he was able to start new churches and strengthen the disciples and leaders in churches he had started.

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Question: When we are first saved, we most likely have a past view of God. Bringing that past view into our current relationship with Christ is easy. This could be legalism, sensuality, or even fear. Is there anything from your past life or religion that still can be a battle for you as you establish a relationship with God according to the New Covenant?

Acts 18:24-28

This is a great lesson in humility! Apollos was a great teacher, yet he was not fully established in his understanding of the Gospel. He was preaching the "baptism of John." This is in reference to the message of repentance that John preached in preparing Israel for the Messiah. Apollos was most likely preaching a message of repentance and that the Messiah was near. This was a good message, except for the fact that the Messiah had come and salvation was now available!

Priscilla and Aquila did not condemn Apollos but rather explained to him the way of God more accurately. They explained that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, but here is the key: they convinced him through the Scriptures! This is discipleship. Paul led this couple to Christ and then equipped them with the Scriptures. He did not just leave them with a surface-level faith. In turn, they were able to equip Apollos in the Scriptures who ended up being one of the most powerful teachers of the early church. Our testimony in Christ is powerful, but it is the Scripture that leads to long-lasting change and discipleship.

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Question: How confident are you in your ability to help someone understand that Jesus is the Messiah according to the Scriptures? Why do you give that answer?

Weekly Challenge

Being convinced that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, that He lived a perfect life, died on a cross, and rose from the dead is the foundation of our faith. Take some time this week to ask one of the Pastors or do your own study on proving that Christ is the Messiah according to Scripture. This is an essential part of discipleship. We can not just believe in Jesus because we feel something or enjoy going to Christian groups. We have placed our faith completely in the Gospel and have been convinced by the promises of God found in the Scriptures.

Memory Verse

Acts 14:21-23 ESV

²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.