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## Needed: More Fellow Workers In Christ

### **Acts 18:2-3, 24-26**

#### **Introduction**

1. The majority of you here this morning have grown up here in Waverly.
2. You have been a part of the Lord's church for many years.
3. During that time, you have also, no doubt, come to know many of the couples, those husbands and wives who worshiped and served the Lord here in this congregation.
4. You can't speak the name of one without also mentioning the other.
5. Godly couples are that way. You always tend to think of them together.
  - a. You think of where they sat in this auditorium.
  - b. You think of the service they rendered as husband and wife here in the Lord's body.
  - c. You think of the example they set, the lives they touched and the legacy they left.
6. Whether this congregation will be strong in years to come depends upon husbands and wives who are present now and will be present in the years to come.
  - a. Are we who are married committed to each other and to the gospel?
  - b. Are busy at work in our Lord's kingdom, using our talents to serve the Lord and one another?
  - c. Are we using the wisdom which God has allowed us to gain in mentoring the younger families and single individuals coming along behind us?
4. Today, I would like to call your attention to a husband and wife team who were faithful to God and His church regardless of where their travels took them.
5. Their names are Aquila & Priscilla, and the apostle Paul depended upon them throughout the latter part of his ministry.

6. As a matter of fact, in his letter to the church in Rome, Paul called them his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3).
7. Their names are only found six times in all of the New Testament, but within these verses we are given a beautiful portrait of two committed Christians.

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## I. Their History Together

### A. ROME (ACTS 18:2; PRIOR TO A.D. 49)

"And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them," (Acts 18:2, NASB95)

1. Aquila and Priscilla worked together as husband and wife in their own family business.
2. They were tent-makers a trade of great importance in their day.
  - a. Tents were needed by soldiers while out in the field.
  - b. Travelers utilized tents since inns were far and few between.
3. Luke tells us that initially, the couple had plied their trade in Rome.
4. However, in A.D. 49, the Roman emperor Claudius issued an edict ordering all Jews to leave Rome.
  - a. It seems as the gospel continued to infiltrate Rome, those Jews who chose not to believe in Jesus as the Christ, stirred up much opposition to the preaching of the Gospel.
  - b. As had happened to Paul throughout Asia Minor and now in Macedonia so it had happened in and around Rome.
  - c. To deal with the problem, Claudius expelled all the Jews.
5. Since Aquila was a Jew he left Rome; his wife Priscilla followed him to Corinth.

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### B. CORINTH (ACTS 18: 2-3, 11; A.D. 49-52)

"And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come

from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers." (Acts 18:2-3, NASB95)

1. Here, in the city Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla were able to re-establish their business.
2. Because the Aegean Sea was to the west of Corinth and the Baltic Sea was to the west, many sailors passed through the city.
3. It is very likely that Aquila and Priscilla met the needs of many sailors and travelers who slept outdoors when their ships were in harbor.
4. It is here that they encountered Paul who had come to Corinth after leaving Athens.
5. Paul joined them in their work in order to support himself while he continued to preach the gospel.
5. It is also very likely that they provided Paul a place to stay while he awaited the arrival of Silas and Timothy.
5. In all, Paul spent 18 months here "teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11).

**Slide 4****C. EPHESUS (ACTS 18:18-19; 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19; A.D. 53-55)**

"Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila . . . They came to Ephesus, and he left them there." (Acts 18:18-19, NASB95)

"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." (1 Corinthians 16:19, NASB95)

1. When Paul left Corinth to head back toward Jerusalem, he sailed to Ephesus.
2. Aquila and Priscilla traveled with him and established their trade in this city as well.
3. After Paul taught briefly in the synagogue, he said his goodbyes.

4. However, Aquila and Priscilla apparently stayed and provided a place in their own home for these new Christians to meet.
5. Paul returned there during his third missionary journey.
  - a. For three months he taught in the synagogue.
  - b. Later, he moved to the school of Tyrannus and continued to teach for two more years.
5. During this time he wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth.
7. He informed the brethren there that “Aquilla and Prisca greet your heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Corinthians 16:19).
6. Aquila and Priscilla continued to help Paul before eventually moving back to Rome.

**Slide 5****D. ROME (ROMANS 16:3-4; A.D. 55 - ?)**

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;” (Romans 16:3-4, NASB95)

1. It was some time after the death of the Roman Emperor Claudius (A.D. 54) that Jews were apparently allowed back into Rome.
2. Aquila and Priscilla traveled there, perhaps to check on their business and also to aid the church in Rome.
3. As they had done in Corinth and Ephesus, they again opened their house to the Christians in Rome and a congregation of the Lord’s people meet with them.
4. Paul wrote to them from Corinth asking his readers to greet them and “the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:3,5).

**Slide 6****E. EPHESUS (2 TIMOTHY 4:19; A.D. 66 - 67)**

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.” (2 Timothy 4:19, NASB95)

1. The last time we read of Aquila and Priscilla was at least ten years later.
2. Aquila and Priscilla had travel back to Ephesus and were assisting Timothy who was working with the church there.
3. In his letter to Timothy, Paul asked him to “greet Prisca and Aquilla” on his behalf (2 Timothy 4:19).

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## II. Why Was Paul So Fond Of This Couple?

### A. THEY WERE FAITHFUL FRIENDS

“Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.” (Acts 18:18a, NASB95)

1. When Paul first came to Corinth he was afraid.
  - a. In Philippi, he and Silas had been beaten and imprisoned.
  - b. He had to abruptly leave Thessalonica because a mob had set the city in an uproar.
  - c. Even though those in Berea eagerly received the word and many of them had believed, the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica had followed him there and again worked to stir up the crowds so that Paul had to leave.
  - d. In Athens, he had some men who “joined him and believed” (Acts 17:34) but the work continued to prove difficult.
2. As Paul would later write in his first letter to the brethren in Corinth, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3).
3. Thankfully, it was in Corinth that he met Aquila & Priscilla, a couple with whom he had much in common.
  - a. Not only were they tent-makers, as was he.
  - b. They were Christians with a passion similar to his own.
4. A bond formed between the three of them there in Corinth which would last

until the end of Paul's life.

5. When Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus on his way back home, Aquila and Priscilla were with him.
5. Some six or seven years after this he would write to the church in Rome and call them "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3).
6. Like Paul, we all need someone to shore us up from time to time.
  - a. Someone who will welcome us into the fellowship and make us feel at home.
  - b. A brother or sister in Christ with whom we can share our passion for the gospel.

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### **B. THEY WERE MOTIVATED MENTORS**

"But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." (Acts 18:26, NASB95)

1. As we read later here in Acts 18, Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus as he made his way back to Jerusalem.
2. While Aquila and Priscilla were still in Ephesus, a powerful preacher by the name of Apollos came to town.
2. Apollos was "an eloquent man" who was "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).
3. He was "fervent in spirit" and accurately taught the things concerning Jesus (Acts 18:25).
4. But there was a problem with his teaching; he only knew about the baptism which John had taught and not the baptism that those wanting to become Christians were to undergo.
  - a. John's teaching belonged to the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:16a).
  - b. The baptism which Jesus had instructed His apostles to preach belonged to the kingdom of God (Luke 16:16b).
5. Aquila & Priscilla, after hearing him, did not correct him publicly or embarrass him in front of others.

6. They took him aside and privately, perhaps in their own home after a meal, “explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).
7. To Apollos’ credit, he apparently listened humbly to their instruction.
8. Later when he wanted to go to Achaia (Corinth), possibly to help with the unbelieving Jews Paul had encountered there, they along with other members of the church sent a letter to the Christians there asking them to welcome him.
8. How much we need godly couples and singles in this church who will help mentor our young Christians and new converts.
  - a. Like the Ethiopian eunuch of whom Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30), and who responded, “how could I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31)
  - b. So we have people who need faithful, mature Christians to explain to them the Word of God more accurately.
9. Invite them to your house for coffee or a meal — you and your wife sit down with them and teach — how the church will grow when God’s people do this.

**Slide 9****C. THEY WERE HOSPITABLE HOSTS**

“Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” (1 Corinthians 16:19, NASB95)

1. Not only is it likely that Aquila and Priscilla hosted the apostle Paul in their home on many occasions.
2. Not only did they take in an eloquent speaker such as Apollos and teach him more about the Word of God.
3. They also practiced their hospitality in another way — they providing a place for their brothers and sisters in Christ to worship.
4. Church buildings didn’t exist in those days, so Christians either met outdoors or in someone’s home.
5. Perhaps this is one reason we are called upon to be hospitable.
  - a. “Practice (“given to,” NKJV; lit. “pursue”) hospitality” (Romans 12:13)

- b. A qualification of elders (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- c. “Be hospitable to one another without complaint” (1 Peter 4:9).
- 6. For some of you here today, having others into your home is second nature.
- 7. For others it is difficult.
- 8. I want to encourage you to make it your goal this year to invite other Christians into your home.
- 9. It is only as we come to know each other that we learn how to encourage one another in the faith.

**Slide 10****D. THEY WERE COMMITTED COMPANIONS**

- 1. To each other
  - a. Notice that you never read Aquila’s name without Priscilla’s or vice versa.
  - b. They were a team, a husband and wife who were committed to each other.
  - c. Too often we hear of couples who are each doing their own thing — possibly because they can’t work together for an extended period of time.
  - d. Here are two people who are comfortable being together.
  - e. What about you, do you enjoy working side-by-side.
- 2. To Paul
  - a. They gave Paul a means to support himself while he preached the gospel in Corinth.
  - b. They followed him to Ephesus and supported the work there after he left.
  - c. At some point, according to his own words, they “risked their own necks” for his life (Romans 16:4).
- 3. To the gospel
  - a. Wherever they went the Gospel went with them.

- b. Whether it was teaching a person individually or hosting the church in their own home, the Gospel was a priority in their lives.
- c. Tent-making was simply a vocation — sharing the Gospel was their life's passion — and they did it together.

## Conclusion

- 1. The Bible never indicates anything about Paul's ministry to Aquila and Priscilla, only about their ministry to him.
- 2. In three different cities over some sixteen years Paul depended upon them, not they upon him.
- 3. Aquila and Priscilla are certainly a couple worthy of our emulation.
  - a. Faithful friends of Paul until the end.
  - b. Motivated Mentors to gospel preachers like Apollos.
  - c. Hospitable Hosts who provided a place in their own home where the church could meet and worship.
  - d. Committed Companions to each other, to Paul and to the Gospel
- 4. If you are worshiping here today as a husband and wife, can these things be said about you.
- 5. This church will only be as strong as the families of which it is composed.
- 6. If your husband or wife is having to serve Christ alone, don't let them continue to do this any longer.
- 7. Today, turn from your sin, confess Christ as your Lord and Savior and put Him on in baptism.