

Incomplete Picture
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Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7

Big Idea: God uses believers to help other believers better understand the gospel.

Acts 18:24–28 (ESV)

Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.

[Where Paul had established a church with his co-workers Priscilla and Aquila.]

He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

In the brief time we have let's consider some key points:

- Apollos was from Alexandria in Egypt. The second most important city in the Roman empire; the location of a great university.
- Apollos was clearly very gifted as a persuader of people (eloquent.)
- Apollos was an enthusiastic Bible student who wanted to teach others (competent in the Scriptures; “had been instructed in the way of the Lord.”)
- Apollos was “fervent in spirit.” The word **zeō** means *to boil, be hot*
- Apollos was not afraid to speak to groups and to debate boldly.

- Apollos was accurate in teaching about Jesus --- up to a point!
- Scholars debate his specific deficiency,ⁱⁱ but we won't dive deeply into that debate. *"He certainly knew about Jesus' life and teachings, but he may not have known about Jesus' death and resurrection, or about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost."*ⁱⁱⁱ His message wasn't inaccurate, but it was incomplete. Some scholars believe Apollos was gifted, zealous, well trained but not yet saved until his experience with Priscilla and Aquila.^{iv}
- So, these two mature believers saw the need to take him "aside and explain "the way of God" more accurately." **What does "take him aside" indicate about the wisdom of Priscilla and Aquila in how they handled this? Why might they have been intimidated to approach Apollos? What does this indicate about THEIR scriptural learning?**
- Note a "fun fact": The female disciple-maker is mentioned as an equal.^v
- Verses 27 and 28 indicate that Apollos traveled to the church Paul had established in Corinth and was very effective in making and growing disciples. **What happened later regarding Apollos? (1 Cor. 1:12-13)**
- **What can we admire and even emulate about Apollos as a follower of Christ? How can being naturally "gifted" as a communicator, actually lead to "blind spots" in teaching and disciple-making? How can we prevent that?**
- By the way, some believe Apollos was the author of Hebrews. We can only speculate, no one really knows.
- **What can we learn and emulate from Priscilla and Aquilla?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- These verses give us examples of three believers who were "on fire" and excited to use their gifts to make disciples. One, Apollos, had natural communication skills, but an incomplete message.
- Chuck Swindoll writes:

I would love to have heard Apollos, especially after his theology fell into place. Once he got that part of his theology honed to perfection he delivered the goods!

for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (v. 28).

Because he mixed his knowledge with discernment, he was even better equipped. No one could refute him!

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- Then, we see Priscilla and Aquilla, two students of scripture with the discernment and wisdom to disciple Apollos. They did it correctly, lovingly, and in private. This great, gifted speaker did not intimidate them; instead they saw that God could only use him if he understood the full picture of salvation through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.
- Quoting Swindoll again:

I don't care how gifted, how capable, how eloquent you may be, how widely used in your ministry; you can always benefit from the help of someone else—to hone, to sharpen you. Leadership requires accountability. You never get too old to be taught a new truth. Discernment says, "I know that my knowledge is limited. Others can help me. I am open and ready to learn."

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- We can learn from all three of these examples to commit to greater study of God's word. As Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:18 a (ESV) ¹⁸ *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*
- Then we need to share that knowledge with others so they too can know Christ and then GROW in Christ! That's DISCIPLE MAKING!

ⁱ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek*

ⁱⁱ "...it is best to leave the matter with Luke's description and not try to go beyond it. The one matter of deficiency given is that Apollos knew only the baptism of John. His understanding of Christian baptism was inadequate. ¹⁰ Evidently it was not such that he needed further baptism. Luke did not relate his being rebaptized as were the disciples of John (19:5), only of his being further instructed by Priscilla and Aquilla." Polhill, John B.. *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: 26* (The New American Commentary) (p. 397). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Crossway Bibles. *ESV Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 136173-136174). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} MacArthur: "I believe that Apollos was not a Christian but that he was a student of John the Baptist. And if that's difficult for you to handle just from that phrase, look at the end of verse 25. [Act 18:25](#). It says that he was "knowing only the baptism of John." Now, Apollos then was the truest Old Testament saint. He accepted the whole Old Testament all the way down to the fulfillment of it and John the Baptist. He accepted the message of John the Baptist that the Messiah was coming. He even accepted the fact that the Messiah was Jesus. How do you know that? The verse says, "He was instructed in the way of the Lord, being fervent in the Spirit. He spoke and taught diligently the things of Jesus." The best manuscripts, the things of Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John." <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1769/from-judaism-to-jesus-part-2-apollos-in-transition>

^v "As an example of the Holy Spirit's work in bringing about the growth of the church in Acts, this verse provides positive support for the idea that both men and women can explain God's Word to each other in private or informal settings (such as personal conversation or a small group Bible study) without violating the prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12 against women teaching an assembled group of men." Crossway Bibles. ESV Study Bible (Kindle Locations 136182-136185). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Swindoll, Charles R. *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Essential Truths for Becoming Strong in the Faith*. Zondervan, 1995.

^{vii} *ibid*