

Together  
October 20, 2024  
Allen Power

Acts 18:1-11,18-21

Opening: Let's talk about "only children." How do you think being an only child shapes the personality? What strengths might be developed? How might being an only child cause some weaknesses?

Sometimes being an only child might make a person gravitate toward working alone rather than with partners or on a team. We might call a person like that a "Lone Ranger." Technically even the Lone Ranger wasn't a loner, right?

The Apostle Paul was not an only child. Acts 23:16 tells us he had a sister and a nephew. The Apostle Paul was also not a loner when it came to ministry. As we've already seen, he did ministry with partners like Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and a married couple we will meet in today's text.

The point: In the family of faith there are no only children. Following Christ is sweeter and working for Him is more effective when we do it with our spiritual siblings. We will see great examples of that from Paul and his friends Aquila and Priscilla.

**(NLT)** — **1** Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. **2** There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. **3** Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was. **4** Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. **5** And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. **6** But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles." **7** Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. **8** Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized. **9** One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! **10** For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me." **11** So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God. **Acts 18:18–21 (NLT)** — **18** Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him. **19** They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. **20** They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. **21** As he left, however, he said, "I will come back later, God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

- Corinth, like Athens, was a major city in Greece and very multicultural. There was a large Jewish population, but verse six indicates the Jews in Corinth rejected Paul's teaching so he focused on the Gentiles.
- Verse two introduces us to a Jewish couple, Aquilla and his wife Priscilla.
- Scripture doesn't tell us if they were Christ-followers before meeting Paul, but they are a great example of lay-leaders who supported ministry in practical ways.
- They were successful business partners who invited Paul to join the business.
- Sometimes we hear missionaries or bi-vocational pastors use the term "tent-making" based on this passage. What does that term mean?
- In 1 Corinthians 9:7–10 Paul advocated for churches to pay those who minister. However, in most of Paul's ministry his tent-making covered his expenses and raised support for the churches he planted. (1 Cor. 4:12, Acts 20:33-34, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:7-8)
- Paul had lots of partners in Corinth. Silas and Timothy arrived and Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God offered his home as Paul's headquarters.
- With all these partners it's no wonder Paul stayed eighteen months in Corinth.
- Paul's ministry there was also affirmed directly by the Lord Who came in a vision (vv 9-10) to reassure him of protection and to encourage him to keep preaching.
- The end of verse 10 is interesting. The Lord told Paul: *"I have many in this city who are my people."* Was He speaking of those who had already trusted Christ, or a "harvest of souls" yet to come (John 10:16)? We don't know, but we see God promising that He would surround Paul with more brothers and sisters in Christ.
- It's clear the Apostle Paul valued teamwork in ministry.
- What are the advantages of teamwork instead of doing things on your own?
- Let's focus on this tent-making couple, Aquila and Priscilla.
- In Scripture, they are always mentioned together though, in most cases, Priscilla's name is listed first. In a patriarchal society, the wife being mentioned first is significant and scholars have speculated on what is inferred.
- Some speculate that Priscilla played a prominent leadership role in their ministry work. She may have been the more active or visible of the two in their religious activities. Some suggest she had a stronger personality. Some even speculate Priscilla may have been the leader of the house church that met in their home.<sup>ii</sup>
- Some speculate her name came first because "[she] had a higher social status (perhaps through inherited wealth) than her husband and that this was the source of their means."<sup>iii</sup> Did Aquila marry money? We don't know.
- Scripture does tell us that she was a capable Bible scholar and spiritual mentor.

**Acts 18:24–26 (NLT)** — **24** Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. **25** He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism. **26** When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

- I doubt that Luke was sloppy in his writing when he mentioned Priscilla first. I think Priscilla represents a strong role model as a Christian businesswoman.
- If that was the case, then I think we can assume her husband and business partner Aquila was comfortable and secure in being the husband of a strong wife.
- This couple models some things Christian couples could aspire to today:
  - They demonstrated how businesspeople can be involved in ministry.
  - They opened their home for ministry. (1 Cor. 16:19)
  - They used their resources to support God's servants. (Acts 18:3)
  - They were willing to take risks to support the church. (Rom. 16:3)
  - They were willing to change locations to follow God's will. (Acts 18:18)
  - We've already seen they were serious Bible students. (Acts 18:24-26)
  - They were a team! Each one brought unique gifts to the partnership.
- Warren Wiersbe writes: *"Aquila and Priscilla were an important part of Paul's 'team' and he thanked God for them. They are a good example of how 'lay ministers' can help to further the work of the Lord. Every pastor and missionary thanks God for people like Aquila and Priscilla, people with hands, hearts, and homes dedicated to the work of the Lord."*<sup>iv</sup>
- Back to our main point from this text: In the family of faith there are no only children. Following Christ is sweeter and working for Him is more effective when we do it with our spiritual siblings.
- What are some practical ways we can embrace that? How does being in a group like ours help us do that?

#### So, What's the Takeaway?

- We should not try to live the Christian life as loners (the Lone Ranger had Tonto!)
- Have you seen the "cord of three strands" object lesson at a wedding?
- It's based on the words of Solomon (the wisest man to ever live) from Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. **(NLT)** — **9** *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. 11 Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*
- At the wedding three strands are woven into one cord to illustrate the strength of a marriage where the husband and wife are woven together with God at the center of their home. That sounds like Priscilla and Aquila!
- That text also speaks to partnership between Christ-followers partnering with our brothers and sisters in Christ with Him in the center of those relationships.
- Christ-followers should seek to build relationships with our spiritual siblings.
- We should look for ways we can partner with others in ministry.
- As married couples, we should reflect on the example of Aquila and Priscilla.
- We can be successful in both the marketplace and in ministry. We can use our resources, our gifts, and our hospitality to support God's fulltime ministers.
- Remember, in the family of faith there are no only children.

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<sup>i</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Ac 18:10). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/16-3.htm>

<https://www.bereaninsights.org/bible-gem-1737-priscilla-is-placed-before-aquila-for-a-reason-acts-181-4/>

<sup>iii</sup> Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In [\*Harper's Bible dictionary\*](#) (1st ed., p. 824). Harper & Row.

<sup>iv</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 475). Victor Books.