

Sunday School Lesson 02.21.21

Good morning, I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for February 21, 2021, "Priscilla: Called to Minister"

Background Scripture Acts 18:1-26, Romans 16:3-4, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and 2 Timothy 4:19

Sunday School books for spring quarter are available in the church office. Spring quarter lessons start Sunday, March 7, 2021. Time change takes place Saturday night / Sunday morning, March 13, 2021.

Christian homes and solid Christian marriages remain two of the best tools for spreading the Gospel. Husband-and-wife teams can be tremendous blessings for the body of Christ. The faithfulness of people like Priscilla and Aquila makes ministry a joy for others. The effectiveness of their ministry says a lot about their personal relationship with each other and with God.

As you review this lesson and read the scripture passages, think of a husband and wife who have worked or are currently working together to serve a congregation or church. Think of the challenges and expectations that ministers / pastors and their spouses' face each day when serving a church.

In Romans chapter 16 the Apostle Paul conveys greetings to the people he knows in Rome. He wants to acknowledge the relationships that are significant to him and relevant to the message of the letter. The thirty-nine people listed in Romans 16 are fascinating. Ten people are described by Paul with the tenderness of friendship. Ten are noted as having ministry or leadership roles. At least ten are women, as some of those women are reported to be leaders or partners with Paul in laboring for the gospel.

Some of the women listed in Romans 16 are named without any additional detail, so we know very little about them. We can learn more about Priscilla, also called Prisca, from other passages in Acts, 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy.

Romans 16:3-4 says, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Priscilla and Aquila, were a biblical co-laboring couple. We first read about them in Acts chapter 18 in the city of Corinth. As Jews they had been forcibly displaced from their home in Rome by an edict from Claudius. Paul

meets Priscilla and Aquila, and quickly learns of their shared trade. A friendship is formed. Paul stays with the couple for 18 months where they minister together and spread the gospel.

Whenever Paul addresses them, he does so as a couple without any sense of gendered hierarchy. Sometimes Paul says Aquila and Priscilla and other times it is Priscilla then Aquila. It is clear that they are a team, equal partners. It's also clear Paul isn't deterred by Priscilla's gender, he instead praises them both as helpers in Jesus Christ. She and her husband together teach the early church evangelist and preacher Apollos; they help deepen his understanding of Jesus Christ. They work and witness together in the name of God.

Here are facts that about Priscilla and Aquila.

Their names always appear together. Acts 18:1-2 is the first of six mentions: "After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla." (see Acts 18:18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19)

They experienced difficult circumstances together. The reason they left Rome to come to Corinth was "because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2). We do not know if they were already believers when they were forced out of Rome, or if they became Christians through their relationship with Paul. Either way, life was sometimes hard for this couple.

They worked together. "They were tentmakers by trade" (Acts 18:3).

They became life-long friends and ministry partners of Paul. When Paul came to Corinth, he met Priscilla and Aquila and joined them in their tent making business. Fifteen and sixteen years later, when Paul is near death and writing his final letter to Timothy in Ephesus, he urges Timothy, "Greet Prisca and Aquila" (2 Timothy 4:19).

They traveled with Paul. Once Paul's ministry was complete the first time he went to Corinth, he "set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila... And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. "

They taught Apollos "the way of God more accurately". After Paul left them in Ephesus, they heard Apollos speaking in the synagogue, but his knowledge of the truth was deficient. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside in a private setting and shared vital insights.

They learned the Scriptures together. This is not explicitly revealed, but it is assumed that the year and a half they had with Paul in Corinth must have been full of learning, especially since he lived with them.

They “risked their necks” for Paul (Romans 16:3-4). We do not know when this occurred (perhaps during the riot in Ephesus, Acts 19:23-41?), but Paul was extremely thankful.

They used their homes for church meetings. A church met in their house in Ephesus, and a church also met in their home in Rome once they came back.

Tenth, they may have had children. Children are not mentioned, so why even mention this? If they did have kids, it appears their lives were not centered on their children, but Christ. If they didn't have kids, it may have been sad for them, but they still maximized their days for the Lord.

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35). What does it look like to lose your life for Christ? Does it always mean taking the gospel to a dangerous land and literally dying there? Priscilla and Aquila lived this idea out and call us to similar discipleship. Losing your life for Jesus involves:

- supporting those who proclaim the gospel and plant churches.
- devoting your time and energies to a local church.
- growing in your knowledge of the Bible.
- discussing God's word with others, and even correcting them.
- going anywhere the Lord says to go, whenever He says to go.
- using your resources for the advance of God's kingdom.
- being willing to die for fellow believers.

Ephesus a principal Roman city of Asia, was both a strategic commercial city and a major religious center. The city was famous for its magnificent temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The practice of magic and a large part of the local economy were intertwined with this temple. Paul's ministry hurt the sale of magical items and images, leading to

an actual riot. Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesian church while imprisoned in Rome.

Apollos an Alexandrian Jew who came to Ephesus in AD 52 (Acts 18:24). He had an accurate understanding of the story of Jesus and a profound understanding of the Old Testament. He was eloquent, articulate, and enthusiastic as he preached the truth as he knew it (Acts 18:24- 25). Priscilla and Aquila patiently instructed Apollos, filling in the gaps in his knowledge (Acts 18:26). Apollos went on to become a powerful proclaimer and defender of the Christian faith.

Luke, the Gospel writer and author of the Acts of the Apostles, portrays the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla as an ideal model of Christianity. The Bible does not say how Paul met this couple, but it is clear that the apostle formed a friendship with Aquila and Priscilla. Through their influence and friendship, Paul was able to continue his missionary journey while leaving a faithful ministry team in Ephesus to preach the Gospel on his, and Jesus' behalf.

After Athens, Paul's next stop is Corinth, approximately fifty miles to the west. While there, Paul meets a Jewish-Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila. The Scriptures affirm that Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul were all tentmakers. Paul engaged in ministry on the Sabbath, preaching to both Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue.

Paul and his companions' minister for a year and a half among the Corinthians before the stirring of the Holy Spirit prompts them to travel to Syria to further the ministry. Paul leaves accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila and sailed back across the Aegean Sea. Paul desires to return to Jerusalem in time for one of the Jewish festivals and is unable to stay. He also leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus to carry on what he has begun. Priscilla and Aquila remain in Ephesus for several years and permit their home to be used as the meeting place for the Christians.

Apollos, a Jew who was born in Alexandria, comes to Ephesus. Apollos possesses great biblical skills, having the ability to teach the Word diligently, even though he only knows about the baptism of John. Apollos' ministry catches the attention of Priscilla and Aquila. They are impressed with his teaching and his boldness as he speaks in the synagogue, but they realize that Apollos lacks a fuller understanding of Jesus.

At the close of his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to the couple as "my helpers in Christ Jesus." The apostle says that the couple "laid down their own necks," or risked their lives on his behalf. Scripture does not record the

incident when this took place, but at some point the couple was willing to sacrifice their own lives for the Gospel. Paul affirms his gratitude for this couple's work, adding that "also all the churches of the Gentiles" thank them.

Priscilla's faithfulness and hard work should encourage and challenge all of us, both women and men.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Sunday school books for the spring quarter are available in the church office. Spring quarter lessons start Sunday, March 7, 2021.

Next week's lesson February 28, 2021, "Lydia: Called to Serve"

Background Scripture Acts 16:11-15, 40, 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, The Teacher's Bible Commentary, H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs, Editors, Steve Burchett, Ministry of Christian Communicators Worldwide, and The Present Word Adult Bible Studies.