

Acts 18:18-28

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[0:00] Well, good morning, everyone. We are continuing on in the book of Acts. So if you have your Bible, the Church Bible, it's page 1114.

And we are actually going to start reading the first three verses of chapter 18, and then I'll go from verse 18 then down to verse 28.

So the first three verses first, and then down to verse 18. Okay, so after this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

And there he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

[1:06] Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Centuria because of a vow he had taken. They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila.

He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, I will come back if it is God's will. Then he set sail from Ephesus. When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures.

He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue.

[2:16] When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him.

When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed, for he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Father, just as we come to your word now, help us and encourage our hearts. Help me as I speak your word, and help our hearts as we hear your word being spoken.

Help us to receive it, and would your Holy Spirit work in each one of us, God, I pray. Amen. In the 11 years myself and Stephanie have been married, we've had, I counted up the other night, over seven different cars over that time frame.

And the amount of different light bulbs I've had to change over that time span has been ridiculous. I don't know how our car seems to always run out of light bulbs, or they always seem to give up, but when I'm going to change the light bulb, every single different car has a different way of how you're to do it.

[3:39] And it, you know, usually I'll, when I'm changing the light bulb, I'll try to do it myself for maybe 15 or 20 minutes, and usually I give up and go onto YouTube and find some video of some guy working on that particular car, and he has a two-minute video of how to do it.

And do you know what? Nine times out, ten, in five minutes, I have the thing changed and fixed. And I remember also we were, when we were building the house, we were putting in the kitchen, and we got an Ikea kitchen, so it all came flat-packed.

So we had to, you know, put together all the cabinets and everything else. And most of them were fine. Most of them I could get the instruction booklet and work away steps one, two, three, four, all the way up to 50 or 60 or however much it was.

But there was a couple of things where no matter what way I turned the booklet, I could not figure it out. And I ended up, same thing, going onto YouTube, looking up a video of how to actually put it together.

And I think, you know, oftentimes it could be a cookery demonstration or sewing or a craft or anything like that, where we have the instructions and they're the right instructions, but sometimes we just need to see an example of how it's actually done.

[4 : 57] And similarly in the church, you know, God has given us instructions. He's given us his word of how we're to live and everything, but he hasn't just left it at that. He's placed people in the church, all of us, to be examples to others.

He has given each one of us an opportunity to be an example to others and to disciple others in the church. And a German theologian during World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he once said that Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

And so discipleship and being a follower of Christ and leading other people towards Christ is an essential part of each one of us of being a Christian.

To be disciplined by another Christian and then in turn to disciple others is crucial and so, so valuable to the church as a whole.

And this is what you see in these verses in this chapter 18. You know, we get this picture of what discipleship looks like in the church and how it can be a model for us as a church as we all seek to be disciplined and to be disciplers.

[6 : 21] And, you know, we see Paul at the start of this chapter 18 and he comes to Corinth and he meets this couple Priscilla and Aquila and they're tent makers just as he is.

And so Paul, he spends the next year and a half, he spends the next 18 months working with them, making and selling tents. And you can imagine what Priscilla and Aquila must have learned during that time from Paul.

You know, working together with him day after day and talking to him and learning from him. And then even, you know, seeing him reason, as it says here in the synagogue each Sabbath day.

And we see him cutting off his hair and taking a vow. We see him being rejected by so many of the Jews. And then we see also the ruler of the synagogue become a believer.

You know, can you imagine what they would have learned over those 18 months from him? But what you also see as you read the rest of these verses is that Priscilla and Aquila, they don't simply stop at taking all these things from Paul and leaving at that.

[7 : 31] They then in turn start to disciple others themselves. And you see in verse 24, this man, Apollos, comes on the scene. He comes to Ephesus and it says a learned man and he's eloquent.

And he starts to teach people about Jesus. And he says he teaches people about Jesus accurately. But he only knew about John's baptism for repentance.

He didn't know about Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. And so he was, in a sense, right in what he was saying. It says that he taught accurately, but he just didn't have the full picture.

And what you see is that the disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, had been disciplined by Paul. And now they in turn become the disciplers. Priscilla and Aquila had learned so much from Paul over the last 18 months that as they saw Apollos teaching, they realized that he hasn't quite got the full picture. And so what you see in verse 26 is they take him aside to their home and they explain to him the way of God more clearly. And they didn't let the discipleship that they received from Paul go to waste.

[8 : 52] They used that time then to correct Apollos. And, you know, we read about Priscilla and Aquila a couple of different times. And one of the times we read is at the very end of Paul's letter to the Romans.

In Romans chapter 16, he says to the Romans, he says, Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me.

Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. And so you see this, in a sense, this chain effect of discipleship continuing on and on.

From, you know, Paul as he disciplines Priscilla and Aquila and how then they pass on their knowledge to Apollos. They start up their own church in their own home.

And so we see these links in the chain continuing on and on and on. But I suppose one thing that sticks out to me in particular is you see Paul here is happy to disciple whoever comes across his path.

[9 : 57] You know, he's not picky and choosy. And for these 18 months, you know, he needs to earn some money to be able to live. And so he works in his trade as a tent maker. And he just happens to be with Priscilla and Aquila because they're tent makers also.

You know, he doesn't go about trying to find the perfect person to disciple. He just discipled whoever God has brought along his path in life.

And I suppose one simple question that came to my mind as I was looking at these verses was really for myself, like looking around me and seeing, you know, who do I come in contact with regularly?

Who has been put in my path? And if you're a Christian who loves Jesus, is there someone in your life that I could be, that you could be pouring into?

And, you know, and you might say to yourself, you know, I don't feel like I can disciple anyone because I just, I don't know enough or I'm not smart enough or I'm not very good with people. But at its very simplest, a disciple is someone who is a follower of something or someone.

[11 : 08] And as Christians, we are all disciples or followers of Jesus Christ. And so at the very most basic level for you to disciple others is to help them on their way as they seek to follow after Jesus.

And, you know, that can happen as simply as right after this service. You know, it doesn't have to be a specially arranged sit down with someone on a Tuesday evening somewhere.

You know, it can happen as you're enjoying a cup of tea, chatting to someone after the service today. It can happen at a Bible study. It can happen as you meet someone for a cup of coffee.

And, you know, the biggest question in your mind is, or should be, is as I'm chatting to this person, is it pushing them away from Christ?

Or as we're chatting, is it helping to draw them closer to Christ? And so don't ever think that you're not enough of a Christian or that you don't know enough to disciple others.

[12 : 09] But then on the flip side of that, don't ever think that you know enough that you feel you don't need to be discipled anymore. You know, we all need to be discipled. None of us have made it yet.

We're all on a journey together, and we're all at different points along that journey. But we all need to be discipled, and we all need to pass along what we've learned to others then in turn.

So that's the big picture. We see that chain effect of discipleship, of how it moves along from one person to the next and from one church to another.

But then the question is, why should we do it? Why should there be such an importance placed on discipleship? And I suppose, number one, very simply, we're commanded to.

You know, Jesus' last words to his disciples as he goes up into heaven is, to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations.

[13 : 09] You know, Jesus has commanded each one of us in our own way to go and to make disciples. And that means bringing people to Jesus. You know, we're to bring people who have no belief in the gospel message that Jesus has died for their sins.

We're to bring them to Jesus and show them the love of God, to show them all that Jesus has accomplished for us, to show them the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

You know, we're to save people from an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth. But it doesn't stop there. And, you know, we see, you know, even I remember hearing someone preaching on different disciples of Jesus.

And they were talking about Andrew. And they were pointing out that, you know, Andrew seemed to be always the fellow that was bringing people in dribs and drabs to Jesus.

He was the one who brought his brother Peter to Jesus. He was the one who brought the little boy with the five loaves and the two fish. He brought him to Jesus. He was the one who brought the group of Greeks to Jesus in the temple courts.

[14 : 22] And so you see that, you know, there is that need for us to bring others to Jesus. But Christianity is also a journey.

And oftentimes, you know, it can be a long one. And sometimes it can be a lonely one. And so it's important that we're able to be there to disciple others on that journey.

To walk alongside them through the ups and downs in life. And, you know, discipleship, it sounds like a fancy word. But really, it isn't.

It's very simple at its core. It's being there alongside people and bringing them and helping them to come closer to Jesus.

So number one, we're commanded to. But then secondly, we're to. Why is there such an importance on discipleship? Secondly, it helps us to defend the gospel.

[15 : 22] And we see in verse 28. It says, Apollos vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate.

Proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. And you see the effect that Priscilla and Aquila had on Apollos.

You know, they were able to, in private, correct him and get him straight. And then he was able to go out and to refute, to prove to people that Jesus really is the Messiah.

He really is the one who has come to save you from your sin. And, you know, 1 Peter 3 tells us to always be ready to have a reason for the hope that is in us.

And so it's so important that we do, when people ask us questions, Obviously, we will not have every answer to every question. But we should have answers for why we believe what we believe.

[16 : 27] You know, we should read about the Bible, learn from the Bible, learn from other people, from their life experiences. And be able to talk to people and give them reasons for why we believe in the Christian faith.

And then thirdly, we see that it helps to strengthen the church. In the previous verse, in verse 27, after Apollos has received this correction from Priscilla and Aquila, he goes to another city, to Achaia, and it says that, on arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. And so we see with Apollos, as he's corrected, as he's made aware of maybe how to, of what the right teaching is, he then, as he goes to other places, he is, it says, a great help to other believers. And so as we disciple others, and as we encourage others on in the faith, in their walk with God, you're helping, in a sense, to strengthen the whole church.

You know, because, you know, as you disciple one person, they will, in turn, hopefully disciple another, and then that person another. And it becomes, as I said earlier, that chain effect, where there's more and more links along the way.

[17 : 54] But then fourthly, I think also it's an exercise in humility. And, you know, discipleship is an exercise in humility because if you're allowing yourself to be disciplined, then you're realizing you don't know everything yourself.

And Proverbs 12, verse 1 says that, whoever loves discipline loves knowledge. But he who hates correction is a fool. And so there needs to be a part of us that is willing to accept correction, that it's a good thing to be, to in humility, realize, look, we don't know everything.

There is other people who have had, who are more mature than us, who have been through lots of things in their life, and they've been, they've seen lots of ups and downs, and they can help us in our journey as well.

So those are maybe some of the reasons why, why it's important to have discipleship. But then lastly, how do we actually do it? You know, how should we look to be disciplined ourselves and then in turn disciple others?

And I think firstly, it comes from the heart. And it comes from doing it in a way which is respectful and sincere. And as in the Bible it says, as if they are your family.

[19 : 25] And we see that with Priscilla and Aquila here in these verses. As they take Apollos aside, they don't, in public, stand up as Apollos is teaching and say, no, no, no, Apollos, you're wrong.

You haven't got the full picture. They let him speak and then they take him aside to their house. Maybe they give him a meal, I'm not sure. But they, in private, in their own home, they say, look, you know, maybe here is the full picture.

Maybe you haven't got the whole thing. So, and they try to educate him in that and correct him. And Paul says that even to Timothy as he's trying to disciple people in the church.

He says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5, do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

And so there's a need for us, as we seek to disciple others, to do it in a way which is respectful. Do it in a way as if you were doing it to your own family, he says.

[20 : 41] You know, whether it's to older men or younger men, or older women or younger women, the way we do discipleship, the way we bring along people with us and give them an example to follow is done in a respectful and sincere way.

And then following on from that, number two, we're to receive instruction with humility. And we see Apollos, how he takes it.

You know, we see he goes to their house, they explain it to him, and then he is able to go out of there and put it into practice. You know, he doesn't refuse their help.

He takes it and he puts it into practice. And very simply for us, it's a question of, can we receive correction?

In humility, will we think to realize that we don't know everything and that there are so many others who know so much more than us? And will we take that correction and that instruction from other people and take it to heart and put it into practice when it's given to us?

[22 : 00] So I think that's how, in our hearts we're to receive instruction, how to receive discipleship, and then in a way, how to give it.

And then we see discipleship, it's not going to look the same way in any given situation. And you know, for Priscilla and Aquila, they were discipled consistently by Paul over 18 months.

And Apollos was discipled over one meal. You know, Jesus, he discipled a 12 for three years, and yet he met Zacchaeus for one afternoon or evening.

You know, discipleship is going to look pretty different from one person to the next. And you know, it can be as formal as meeting once a month or once a week and setting goals and reading books and everything like that.

It can be meeting for coffee every now and then and catching up and checking in and seeing how you're doing. It can be doing things together or working alongside each other. It can be something as simple as I was saying earlier, just after church here and talking together.

[23 : 11] You know, there's no one size fits all for discipleship. And the main thing is where your heart is at. And you know, does it long to grow closer to Jesus and willing, is it willing to take correction from others and learn from other people's wisdom?

And then, is there then a willingness and a desire to pass this on to other believers? Is there a longing in your heart to take others under your wing and to delight in seeing them grow in the Lord? And Ephesians 4.29 says, to let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

And you know, sometimes you can, you know, you can be so harsh with words that are encouraging and sometimes so encouraging with words that sound harsh.

and so much of it comes with how you do things, not necessarily the words you say or the actions you take, but how you do it, how you come across to people.

[24 : 23] And I suppose that really is the heart of the question is, how do you do it? You know, with your heart, you're having the right mindset, that love for people and a desire to see them grow and a joy in your heart when you do see others growing and coming alongside them in that way.

And so, from these verses, what you see, I think, is this example of how discipleship can work. And we see the effects of this discipleship, you know, in the church.

Think of, you know, you can think of the first 18 chapters of Acts and how it's played out from just the disciples meeting in the upper room on the day of Pentecost through to however many years later this is and the thousands and thousands of people that are around all of the Mediterranean. And you think of 2,000 years later now today, think of how that has grown and grown and grown. And it's because people are willing to go out and to reach people with the gospel and then to disciple others and bringing them along in their faith.

And so, we as a church, as people here in Amazing Grace, we want to be people that disciple others and that want, we should want to learn and to be discipled by others too.

[25 : 55] and so, let us grow together in being discipled, in learning together as God's people and we learn, we do learn so much from his instruction, from his word.

But we also, let's not forget how we learn from others around us and put that into practice as we see other believers and we see how they are growing in the Lord and how they have overcome obstacles and challenges in their life.

Let's learn from each other and grow in that, in God's grace together as God's people. Let's pray. Father, just as we have heard your word this morning and we see over the book, the course of the

book of Acts how you have been building your church and you've been building your church through your word but you also use people to build your church.

We see how you used Paul, we see how you used Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos and so many others throughout the book and Father, we pray for us today that you would use each one of us to be people who would draw others to you, who would disciple others and encourage them on in their faith and that we would also be people who would be willing to take correction and instruction from other people as well to learn from other people's example.

Help us to be those sorts of people who with humility in our hearts and respect for others that we would love to speak your truth into other people's hearts and to encourage them in their walk with you.

[27 : 48] So help us I pray and bless the rest of our time together now. Amen.