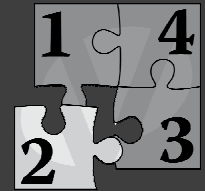




weekly discipleship track



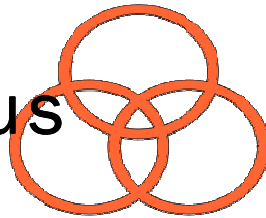
reflect, relate, receive, respond

Walking Through the Scripture Together

August 17 - 23, 2008

Acts 18:18-28

Team Jesus



Text Acts 18:18-28 (TNIV)

Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. **19** They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **20** When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. **21** But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. **22** When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

23 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.

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **25** 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. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the believers 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. **28** For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Thought

You know, I just don't think we can improve on how Paul describes our unity as the body of Christ in his first letter to the fractured Corinthian community. He doesn't instruct them in how to form a more solid coalition through Machiavellian maneuvers, political ploys, or religious reasoning. He just reminds them of the key reality they needed to embrace and "flesh out": you are the body of Christ. Peterson captures it well for us in his rendering in the *Message*:

You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ...

I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes no difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 *Message*

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lean In

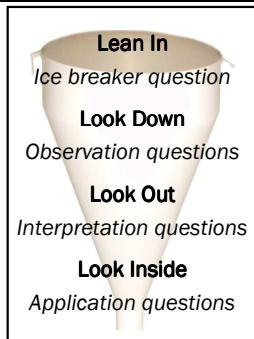
- What was your best experience playing team sports whether in school or just for fun? What did you enjoy most? What was most challenging?

Look Down / Look Out

- What do you make of Paul evidently making and keeping a vow and shaving his head and all? Why do you think Luke mentions this — and why do you think he doesn't provide more explanation?
- What seems to be governing Paul's choices as he arrives in Ephesus and then departs? What does he tell the people there?
- What was Paul's purpose in his third trip through central Asia Minor? What was he intent on doing?
- What picture do you get of Apollos? What kind of man is he? What impresses you most about him?
- What lessons do you see in Priscilla and Aquila's interaction with Apollos? How do you know when to correct or update a teacher or pastor (or anyone)? How did Priscilla & Aquila do it right?
- How did Apollos impact Corinth? What did he do?

Look Inside

- What is your record as a "promise-keeper"? What was the biggest or the most unusual promise you've ever made and kept? In what areas of your life do you see a need to find your voice? Where might you need to be silent for a season?
- Which do you find more challenging — making visits or receiving them? Why?
- How approachable and teachable are you?
- How is God calling you to "work in the field" or "build on the foundation"? How will you pursue this call?



Family Discussion Guide

Day One Acts 18:18 & 2 Corinthians 1:15-19

How important do you think it is to keep our promises? How good are you at keeping *your* promises? How do you handle it when others don't keep theirs? What can help us to be better "promise keepers"?

Day Two Acts 18:19-22 & James 4:13-17

Is James saying it's wrong to make plans? How do we balance looking ahead and making plans with trust in what God might intend to do?

Day Three Acts 18:23 & Hebrews 10:19-25

Who do you know that could really use some encouragement? What are some practical ways you can encourage them?

Day Four Acts 18:24-26 & 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Priscilla and Aquila — tentmakers — corrected a very smart teacher and speaker. What's more challenging for you — to correct someone else, or to have someone else correct you? What can we learn from how Priscilla and Aquila corrected Apollos?

Day Five Acts 18:27-28 & 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

What do you think you are really good at? What special gifts and talents do you think you bring (or would you like to bring) to your family? To your school? To your church or youth group?

Life in Bible Times



Alexandria

Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Inheriting the trade of ruined Tyre and becoming the center of the new commerce between Europe and the Arabian and Indian East, the city grew in less than a generation to be larger than Carthage. In a century, Alexandria had become the largest city in the world and for some centuries more, was second only to Rome. It became the main Greek city of Egypt, with an extraordinary mix of Greeks from many cities and backgrounds.

Alexandria was not only a center of Hellenism but was also home to the largest Jewish community in the world. The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, was produced there. The early Ptolemies kept it in order and fostered the development of its museum into the leading Hellenistic center of learning (Library of Alexandria) but were careful to maintain the distinction of its population's three largest ethnicities: Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian. From this division arose much of the later turbulence, which began to manifest itself under Ptolemy Philopater who reigned from 221–204 BC.

The city passed formally under Roman jurisdiction in 80 BC after it being under Roman influence for more than a hundred years. In 115 AD Alexandria was destroyed during the Jewish-Greek civil wars.

In the first century, the population of Alexandria contained over 180,000 adult male citizens (from a papyrus dated AD 32), in addition to a large number of freedmen, women, children, and slaves. Estimates of the total population range from 500,000 to over 1,000,000, making it one of the largest cities ever built before the Industrial Revolution and the largest pre-industrial city that was not an imperial capital.



— Wikipedia

Pompey's Pillar in Alexandria

details, details...

He had his hair cut off because of a vow

Paul had apparently earlier taken a Nazirite vow that had now ended; such a vow had to be fulfilled at Jerusalem, where the hair would be presented to God and sacrifices offered. For one who thought of himself as a Jewish Christian (2Cor 11:22; cf. Rom 9-11) and who at the conclusion of three missionary journeys to the Gentile world could still insist that he was "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6; see also 26:5), such an action should not be thought strange. As a Gentile writing to Gentiles, however, Luke evidently felt no need to explain this distinctly Jewish practice.

They arrived at Ephesus

Ephesus will be the focus of Paul's work during his third missionary journey — a journey that, unlike the first two, found him spending the majority of his time in one place (Ephesus) and letting the word spread out to the surrounding countryside from there. The mention of Paul's stop now as his second journey concludes anticipates his upcoming stay and the promising signs of fruit. With Aquila and Priscilla staying there, perhaps also along with Luke, Sosthenes and Apollos, Paul would be entering a field in Ephesus that had already been prepared.

Apollos wanted to go to Achaia

Tradition says, and Paul's letters seem to support, that Apollos made a huge splash in Corinth, but when people started polarizing around him, he left, withdrawing to Crete. He only returned years later after Paul's letters had helped to restore unity. Tradition says Apollos then lived out his days in Corinth as "bishop" of the church (we would probably say "senior pastor").