

God uses Married Couples

- Acts 18:1-4; 18-28
- I didn't preach a special sermon for mothers on mother's day, and I am not preaching a special sermon for fathers today. But I love how God led us to this text on this day, because I believe this is a great text for fathers AND mothers. More specifically, it is a great text for married couples, whether they have children or not. We are right in the middle of a busy wedding season. Amos and Ivey last week. Daniel and Carol Ann next week. Jordan and Emily the next week. So, today we are going to look at Aquila and Priscilla's marriage and their ministry. Well, kinda look at their marriage. We really don't know how they treated each other on the little things, the ones that are very important. Like whether Aquila served his wife by helping with household chores. Someone said, "The most important four words in a marriage are, 'I'll do the dishes.'" We don't know whether Priscilla told Aquila often how proud she was to be married to him, even if he NEVER made it into the Bible. Someone said, "Behind every great man is a surprised woman." We don't know whether Aquila opened the door for Priscilla before they walked into their house. Prince Philip said once, "When a man opens the car door for his wife, it is either a new car or a new wife." Not so, your Prince-ness! We don't know some of the little things about A&P that are HUGE in showing your spouse that you really value him or her. But we actually know a lot about their relationships with each other, with the church, and especially with the Lord, based on just a handful of times they are mentioned in the Scriptures.
- I think you could make the argument that Aquila and Priscilla were Paul's favorite married couple. He talks about them as a couple more than any others, even mentioning them in the closing of the last letter he ever wrote, 2 Timothy. He had lots of good reasons to really like them. After all, he lived with them for a year and a half in Corinth. He worked with them as a tent maker, as they shared that profession in common. And he took them along when he left Corinth on his way to Ephesus. What are some qualities we see in this married couple that are worthy of emulating? I see five that stand out.
- **1. They were willing to be uprooted for the sake of the church.**
- These two moved a lot. If you didn't know any better, you would guess they were either military or foreign service. Well, in a way they were. They were part of God's army and they were ambassadors for Christ. Just like us! But look at where they lived. Aquila was from Pontus originally, which was northern Turkey. (Acts 18:2) Paul meets them in Corinth, but they had come there from Rome, after Claudius made all the Jews leave the city. When Paul left Corinth after 18 mos. of ministry, who does he take with him, but Aquila and Priscilla. (Acts 18:18-19) They went to Ephesus with Paul and had a church that met in their home. (1 Cor. 16:19) Then they went back to Rome where they again had a church that met in their home (Romans 16:3a, 4a). Finally, they went back to Ephesus, and that's the last we hear of them. (2 Tim. 4:19)
- **2. They worked together as equals.**
- We know they worked together in their own business in Corinth. We see that in the text, as Luke says, "they were tentmakers by trade." (Acts 18:3) We also know that they worked together in ministry. They approached Apollos as a team to talk to him about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 18:26) Finally, we know that even those who wrote about them in the Bible regularly interchanged the order of their names. Sometimes it's Aquila and Priscilla, and other times it's Priscilla and Aquila. They were truly one flesh and you never see one without the other or hear of Aquila without Priscilla. Marriage should be like that. You see the unity candle or unity sand a lot of times in weddings now, and it is a great picture of what marriage is positionally right from the very beginning. But it takes time and work and humility for that picture to become a reality in practical terms. It reminded me of an article I read in April about a 92 and 91 year old couple who had been married for 70 years, and died 15 hours apart. They held hands at breakfast that morning, as they did every morning. Their 8 children said they had been inseparable since meeting as teenagers, once sharing the bottom of a bunk bed on a ferry rather than sleeping one

night apart. When Helen died on the evening of April 12, her husband Kenneth told the children, "Mom's dead." He quickly began to fade, and he was surrounded by 24 of his closest family members and friends when he died the very next morning. Amazing love!

- **3. They cared for others more than they did themselves.**
- We see that in the way they take Paul in, not just as a fellow worker in the tent-making trade, but into their home. We see it in the way they opened their home to the church, just about in every place they lived. We see it also in the way they ministered to Apollos. They were not intimidated by Apollos great eloquence and learning. They weren't concerned that they might look foolish approaching this bold preacher with a word of encouragement and correction. They cared more about him than they cared about how they looked or were perceived by him. Also, they were gracious in their approach. They took him aside (vs. 26). First, notice that they took HIM aside, not someone close to him. Which would have been easier? Someone else. But again, they cared more about Apollos than they did themselves. Second, notice that they took him ASIDE. It wasn't a public lesson or scolding or a public anything. It was a private word of exhortation. I have blown it many times by correcting one of my children in front of the others and seeing the shadow of embarrassment come across their face. When at all possible, take someone aside for correction or for instruction in righteousness. Third, notice that they EXPLAINED the way of God to him. They didn't just tell him there was a better way and he needed to find it. They certainly didn't yell at him or ridicule him. They explained it. It took time. And patience. And courage! But again, they cared about him more than they cared about their schedules or their reputation. As a result, Apollos who was called a bold speaker by Luke before is now called a POWERFUL speaker.
- **4. They were workers.**
- There is a story about a farmer who wanted to sell his mule so he put an ad in the local paper. One day a man from another community came and asked if the mule was a good worker. The reply was that the mule did a day's work. Then he asked if the mule obeyed every command. The owner said yes. The farmer asked if they could hitch the mule up to see how he worked, which they did and the farmer took the reins and told the mule giddy-up. The mule just stood there. The farmer tried a couple of more times and still the mule didn't move. He looked at the owner and said, "I thought you told me this mule obeys." "He does," says the owner, who then picked up a 2x4 and walked to the front where he was facing the mule. He hit the mule as hard as he could with the 2x4. He then walked back and said to the farmer, "Try again." The farmer did and the mule obeyed. The owner said, "This mule always obeys, but you have got to get his attention first."
- Here's the thing about followers of Jesus Christ. He gets our attention ONCE, and not with a 2x4 but with the goodness of the Gospel, with His sacrifice on the cross, and then we become His workers. His slaves, actually. This married couple is a picture of two people, yoked together through marriage and yoked with Christ through salvation, fully engaged in following His lead.
- Paul said in Romans 16:3 – "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus." I love that phrase, "fellow workers in Christ Jesus." May it be said of all of us who know Jesus, whether we are driving a truck or selling houses or teaching school or running a multi-million dollar corporation. That we are fellow workers in Christ Jesus.
- C.T. Studd said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." And that leads to the last point:
- **They took risks.**
- The Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles erupted in violence from August 11 to 17, 1965 in what is now known as the Watts Riots or the Watts Rebellion. The six days of racially-fueled violence and unrest resulted in 34 deaths, 1,032 injuries, 3,438 arrests, and over \$40 million in property damage. Pastor E. V. Hill was a black minister who lived in the area and opposed the riots, tried to get the people to stop. He got a threatening phone call during this time and was told that if he did not cease his involvement in the racial conflict that he would be killed. They told him that

they would put a bomb in his car. The next day when he woke up he couldn't find his wife. He went to the garage the car was gone. He was looked out the window and saw his wife was driving up in the car. When he asked her what she was doing she said, "I just wanted to be sure any bomb would not explode on you."

- Aquila and Priscilla took risks. In the same text in Romans, Paul says, "(they) risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well." We don't know what they did exactly. It may very well be that when Paul was under attack for his teaching in Corinth, and staying in Aquila and Priscilla's home, they were threatened as well. "Get rid of this guy or we will make you pay." Others believe it happened in Ephesus, where there were also riots because of Paul's preaching. We don't know, and it doesn't matter. The truth is, there were very real risks, life threatening risks that this married couple took together for the sake of the Gospel. And Paul doesn't take it for granted, because their courage made it possible for Paul's ministry to the Gentile churches to continue. Where did that courage come from? Faith!
- Hudson Taylor said, "Unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith."
- What are the greatest risks we face as married couples? The risk of humbling ourselves when things are tense in the marriage. The risk of taking the first step to make things right, to start the conversation, to say "I'm sorry," and "I love you, and want to work things out."
- Willing to be uprooted. Worked together as equals. Cared more for others than they did themselves. Workers. Risk-takers.