

## **“What if” series (A study from the book of Acts)**

Week 15: Acts 18

August 17, 2025

*Acts 18:18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. 21 But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. 24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.*

### **Introduction**

- What do you do well?
- What do you like to do?
- What do you do now that you didn't know how to do earlier in life?
- Every single one of us is constantly being shaped by others and are shaping others by what we believe, say and do.
- God designed us to be this way. And it's why Jesus gave us the church.
- We are in a series where we are going through the book of Acts, which is a history of the early church written by Luke. He recorded what the church did, what they believed, how they lived out their mission with each other. We are calling the series “What if . . .?”
- We have said that **the church is God's way to change the world**. But how does this change of our world, our community, happen?
- No matter how good our programs are, the teaching, the music, and people are shaped and changed one relationship at a time.
- We are changed and change others when we focus on making and being disciples.
- Because while experiences, training and teaching influence us, it is how we practice them in the context of life and relationships that they begin to change us.
- If we are going to be a church that changes the world by making disciples as Jesus told us to (remember that a disciple is a follower of Jesus, living his ways and shaping their lives around Jesus as their king), and if we ourselves are going to be those kind of disciples, how does that happen?
- Because you will be shaped by others and you will shape others. The only question is how this happens and what the end result looks like.
- And we want to be those kind of people, because do you know what I have never heard in my life, ever? I decided to reject everything Jesus said, to live opposite of all he taught and my life is so much better. My relationships are better, my life is better and you gotta try it.

## Main Sermon Text

- Acts 18 is a great snapshot of what this looks like and what is a pattern throughout the life of the early church.
- It begins as Paul reaches the end of the second missionary journey that we started last week.
- Paul continued to travel after he left Philippi, going on to Athens, and eventually to Corinth.
- He actually spent a considerable amount of time (about a year and a half) in Corinth. He then returned to Jerusalem, via a stop in Ephesus and eventually ended back in his home church in Antioch.
- By the end of chapter 18, Paul leaves on his next journey, called the third missionary journey.
- Luke records some significant things in this part of the narrative.

*Acts 18:1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 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, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.*

*5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.*

- Priscilla and Aquila who were already followers of Jesus had to flee from some persecution in Rome in AD49. They ended up in Corinth, a large metropolitan city of 80-100k people. It had a large theatre that could seat up to 15k people. It was a center for business and commerce.
- Paul met them when he came to Corinth and spent significant time with them. He worked alongside them. They developed such a relationship that when Paul finally left Corinth, they came along.

*18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.*

- Paul had developed such a relationship with them and had poured into them and seen their potential that he invited them to greater levels of service. Priscilla and Aquila became key people in the life of the early church. We see their names pop up again and again in Paul's letters to the early churches.
- It shows something we have already seen over and over, that:

## I. Discipleship happens in relationship.

- Discipleship, learning how to follow Jesus, always happens best in relationships.
- You can only learn so much from reading a book or watching a YouTube video (which, by the way, is still another person communicating).
- We learn and grow from interacting with people.
- God could have been content to simply leave his people to flounder along with the books of the law and prophets. They had all the information. Perhaps he could have downloaded more information. But he did not. He came in relationship and modeled and lived relationship. This means we must:

### Choose who to invest in.

- Sometimes this means getting with people that you already have a relationship with. Paul repeatedly chose people to invest himself in. He chose Silas. He chose Timothy. He knew them and wanted to see them develop. Paul would choose people from his circle of influence and then invest deliberately in them.

- Consider those we've specifically seen named so far (and this doesn't include all those referenced but not by name).
  - Many of us don't think there is anyone in our lives that we could invest in. But the truth is that every one of us has people in our lives who could benefit from a relationship with us. The obvious ones are our kids, family, spouses. Or people in our church – in our Life Group, those we serve alongside, or just people we share a passion or interest with.
  - Alternately, just be aware of the people that God sometimes puts in our path.
  - Priscilla and Aquila were unknown to Paul, but he came to Corinth and happened to run into them as they had to relocate due to political pressure. They struck up a friendship and were off to the races.
  - Regardless of how it happens, we need to be aware and looking around on who God might have in our circle for us to disciple.
  - Think deliberately of who you can (or already are) influencing or who might influence you.
- 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.*
- It's not good enough just to have relationships. We all have those. Whether we have one or many.

## **II. Discipleship means being purposeful in our interactions.**

- Paul would deliberately invite people into his life to see, participate and watch to learn about what he was doing. He was intentional.
- I have grown most or developed my character and skills most quickly and effectively when I had someone walking alongside that I trusted who could invest in me.
- Jesus spent three years walking alongside, teaching and demonstrating to develop his disciples. Paul was doing the same thing. He didn't sail through life just doing his thing and hoping for the best. He purposefully, intentionally engaged with others.
- Here's where we run into problems. Tell me if you've ever thought these thoughts:
  - I am not eloquent.
  - I have nothing worth passing on to another person.
  - Everyone is further along than me – how can I help another.
  - I don't know nearly enough.
  - I'm a mess, how can I help another.
- My friends, if you are a follower of Jesus, you have something to offer another.
- Not to mention the skills you have acquired over the years.
- Our problem is that we tend to minimize our own talents while maximizing others, especially the ones we don't have.
- I guarantee there are people who look at your life and wish that had some talent or gift that you take for granted.
- So how can we be purposeful? It doesn't have to be complicated. Simply:

### **Share your life with others**

- After all this time with Paul, Paul feels compelled to move back to Jerusalem and Priscilla and Aquila stay in Ephesus. There they meet a man named Apollos.
- 24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

- This guy was all in on Jesus. He was powerful speaker and teacher. The problem was that he only had a part of the story. A part that Priscilla and Aquila had from their time with Paul. So they invited Apollos into their lives to help him grow.
- Be hospitable. Discipling others begins here. Hospitality means purposefully engaging with others so they are comfortable and cared for. This often involves opening our homes (what your house looks like is NEVER a reason to not connect with people). It is opening up your life and being transparent.
- Be interested in others. Priscilla and Aquila did not have to help Apollos. They wanted to. They were not arrogant or jealous. They wanted to help him grow. So they asked him into their lives to invest in him.
- Be invested in others. Priscilla and Aquila were not proud. They didn't shame Apollos for his gaps in understanding. They equipped him. They were for him. They believed that empowering him was more important than being the answer themselves.
- Purposeful interactions with someone is simply taking the time, effort and expense to be hospitable with them. Be interested in them. Their story. Their journey. Share your own life and story. Then take the next step and be invested. Consider how you might help them move forward in their faith journey.

### III. Discipleship takes humility.

- To disciple another person well takes humility
  - To be discipled well also takes humility.
  - Consider, Priscilla and Aquila were not lording it over Apollos. They did not tell him to stop. They knew things that Apollos did not and they wanted to help him out.
- 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*
- On the other side, Apollos was humble enough to be teachable.
- 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*
- Apollos was passionate. He was knowledgeable. But he was also teachable. He didn't let pride block his growth. He received instruction and became even more effective in ministry.
  - Humility means I recognize that I don't know it all. I don't have it all figured out. And I bring that into how I interact with others.
  - It keeps me learning. It keeps me from control and domineering as I share with others and it keeps me from rejecting what I need to apply to my life.
  - I wonder where each of us is at today?
  - Are we helping others from a place of humility? (Which, by the way, is not pretending you know nothing. You can recognize your gifts and still be humble)
  - Are you allowing yourself to be discipled in humility?
  - A disciple is a learner – this never stops. The most powerful leaders are often the most teachable followers.

### Conclusion

- **The church is God's way to change the world.**
- Have you ever considered that your greatest contribution to this world will not be a "what" but a "who."
- That when you stand in front of Jesus and he tells you "Well done" it will be because of the investment you made in others for the kingdom.
- You have no idea what your investment in another person may bring about.
- Apollos benefited from the instruction he received from Priscilla and Aquila.

*27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.*

- His impact continued to grow.
- He affected so many that people in the church in Corinth put Apollos at the same level as Peter and Paul.
- He was a powerful leader and teacher in the early church. He worked with other young leaders including Titus and appears to have planted churches or supported young churches.
- All because people invested in him.
- **The church is God's way to change the world.**
- Your greatest contribution to this world will not be a "what" but a "who."
- My friends, there is an epidemic of loneliness in our world. There are so many people who are desperately looking for meaningful interactions.
- Discipleship happens in relationship
- It requires purposeful interactions
- We do this in humility
- You are not responsible for how someone responds to you. But you are responsible to have relationships where you can purposefully interact in a spirit of humility.
- We have enough people in this room so that no one who desires to be discipled needs to be left behind. Let's be transparent, interested and invested in each other.