

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 20
Growing in Love Together
Acts 18:18-28 - Week of September 30, 2018
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

Be willing to be a beginner every single morning. Meister Eckhart

All clear-minded people should remain two things throughout their lifetimes: Curious and teachable. Roger Ebert

The unteachable man is sentenced to being taught by his own experience. The tragedy is he reaches nothing further than his own pain. Criss Jami

Happiness is always on the other side of being teachable. Shannon L. Alder

As long as you're green, you're growing. As soon as you're ripe, you start to rot. Ray Kroc

Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more. Proverbs 9:9

1. Which quote do you relate to the most and why?

Read Acts 18:12-28

2. Who has had a significant influence in your faith journey? What is it about them that inspires and convicts you?

Many people will likely name parents or grandparents as key faith influencers. Others might name a famous teacher or author. This is wonderful and to be celebrated, but it's also important to get people to think outside of the box of parents and celebrities. You might also need to get people out of the "30 years ago when I came to faith it was" rut and thinking through who the personal influencers are these days.

3. In verses 24-25 we learn that Apollos was *a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures . . . and spoke with great fervor and taught Jesus accurately.* To be "learned" means broadly educated and knowledgeable. "Fervor" relates to passion and zeal. Apollos was a rare combination of head and heart. On the scale of head to heart, where do you tend to land most and why? What can we learn for our own effectiveness in ministry from Apollos?

a) On the one hand, Apollos was very much a man of the world. His reading and learning were most likely not limited to Judaism or Christianity, or to what agreed with his religious worldview. On the other hand, he had a mastery of Scripture.

This is a balance we all need. We're not to shun worldly wisdom nor are we to imbibe it without being grounded in our biblical wisdom.

b) Knowledge in and of itself is not sinful. In fact it can be useful. The question is what does our knowledge and learning lead us to. Is it more knowledge, superiority or godly transformation? The bible underscores a tension between how knowledge can puff up (Eccl 1:18, 1 Cor 8:1) or build up (Prov 15:14, 2 Pet 1:5).

c) Passion without knowledge is just as harmful as knowledge without passion. Christians, denominations seem to put more emphasis on one versus the other. Some emphasize biblical accuracy and teaching while others focus on the outward experience of the Holy Spirit as key. God gave us both heart and heads for a reason. We need both to fully follow Jesus.

d) Apollos finally, was a teachable man. Luke doesn't elaborate on exactly what points he was efficient or deficient in. We're simply told he "taught about Jesus accurately but knew only the baptism of John." We know that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, and therefore Apollos, having learned about the Messiah through John's disciples would have known much, but not all he needed to understand. At any rate, he was clearly more persuasive, outspoken, learned and gifted than Priscilla and Aquila - he was a superb public debater, impossible to defeat (cf 28). Yet despite the fact that he surpassed them in most areas, he was willing to listen to a Christian sister and brother who knew better than he at certain specific points. This is remarkable and rare. It's hard to listen to people when you think they're beneath you and the world agrees with you. All our relationships need to come under the mold of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. Being teachable is a very godly trait, one that we should never lose even if God allows us to live to 102.

*NOTE - Apollos received instruction from a woman, which in his day would have been very out of the ordinary. In fact, it's interesting to note that when we first meet the tent makers in 18:1 they introduced as Aquila and Priscilla. This fits the convention of the time. But in 18:18, 26 the couple is introduced as Priscilla and Aquila. Not only was this counter cultural, but it also hints at the fact that Priscilla might have been a more gifted teacher than Aquila.

d) It's safe to infer that Priscilla and Aquila were both bold and gentle in their approach. Note how they spoke to him privately, in their home, rather than confronting him publically. Inviting him to their home was also a way of extending friendship to him. Yet it also took courage for them to approach the likes of Apollos.

4. *I treasure the picture of a husband and wife offering hospitality and ministering the gospel together. O that more of us would live as partners in the gospel—co-saboteurs of the kingdom of darkness, rather than frittering our years away on less noble pursuits and passions. There are so many different story-lines clamouring for our marriages—so many distractions and seductions. A marriage, just like singleness, is too precious a gift to spent on pettiness and non-intentional living. Bring more gospel-sanity to our marriages, Jesus. Rescue us... resuscitate us... refresh us. Scotty Smith¹ Where in your life is the gospel most alive? Where are you in need of gospel-sanity?*

¹ Scotty Smith, A Prayer About Staying Teachable, (The Gospel Coalition, July 12, 2010)

5. It's interesting to note that Priscilla and Aquila were not relatives of Apollos or even long-time friends. Yet each one took a risk. The risk of transparency, honesty and accountability. By God's grace it paid off, the relationship proved to be loving and life giving. This is true of all relationships be they be a BFF, child, parent, pastor or neighbour. But the risk of truth and grace is exactly what we often avoid. We'd rather hide, pretend, keep things superficial for fear of being offended or offending. But without grace and truth our relationships fail to be loving and life giving. This is true for Life Groups too: *When small groups shift from mutual accountability to vague sharing, they loose power . . . they die.*²
- Have you ever experienced this?
 - What can be done to combat this?
 - How did Lori and Jonathan's story that they shared Sunday impact you?
 - How might the story of what God is doing in you these days help others?

You might have to help people understand "accountability" as it's not a popular word these days. It comes packed with fears of forced confessions and faked transparency. Healthy mutual accountability is simply the willingness to be open and honest with one another so that we can grow together. And yes, it's messy! As you delve into this issue be careful not to pontificate. As a leader, your job is to create a safe environment of trust where sharing flows freely not forced.

Read Revelation 2:1-5

6. From Sunday's sermon: *Revelation 2:1-5 was written some years after Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos, and Paul (Acts 19) landed in Ephesus to plant a church. It was written to an established church, to believers who had some years of experience in the faith.*

What if the greatest threat to our faith is institutionalization? The threat of becoming too comfortable and confident in our doctrines and programs. That though we read our bibles and pray, we love our routines more than our Jesus. It's so easy to go through motions. Growing more in love with Jesus and the world he died for is really what Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos' journey was all about. It's what our journey is all about too.

- Can you identify with what happened to the Ephesian believers?
- How are you guarding your heart against growing cold?
- How can we be praying for you?

² John Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, (Zondervan, 2003) p 174