**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 18:23-28**

**\* Read Acts 18:23-28. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

The main theme of the sermon this week is discipleship/disciple-maker. At Fegenbush, Pastor Aaron’s outline will be: Identify, Invite, Invest. At Fegenbush, Pastor Scott’s outline will be: Vision of Discipleship, Pattern of Discipleship, and Fruit of Discipleship. At East, Pastor Blake’s outline will be: What does it (disciple-making) produce? What does it look like? What is the fruit/result?

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**1. What is the context of Acts 18:23-28?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*Acts 18:23-21:16 describe the third missionary journey of Paul, which was based in Ephesus and lasted from A.D. 52-57. Acts 18:23 highlights the general pattern of Paul’s discipleship efforts before Luke highlights a specific pattern/example of discipleship in Acts 18:24-28. In Acts 18:23, Luke notes that Paul cared about the follow-up and continual growth/strengthening of the disciples whom he had met on his earlier missionary journeys. Next, in Acts 18:24-28, Luke describes how God used ordinary men and women (see the relationship between Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos) to make disciples so that His gospel was proclaimed, His church was built and His kingdom was advanced.*

*As you read over this passage, think about these questions: What are the main themes of this passage? Why is it important that Luke talked about the church being strengthened and disciples made by people other than the apostles? How can you apply this passage this week?*

**2. What is going on in Acts 18:23?**

*Acts 18:23-21:16 describes the third missionary journey of Paul, which lasted from about A.D. 52-57. As in the second missionary journey, Paul once again visits places where he has been to strengthen the disciples of those regions. In this one verse, there is packed about a 1,500 mile journey from Antioch of Syria to Ephesus in fulfillment of his promise in Acts 18:21, and there is implied pastoral concern of Paul to present everyone mature in Christ (see Colossians 1:28-29), regardless of what he might endure in fulfilling the work of an evangelist/shepherd.*

*As you look at this passage, think through what it takes to strengthen disciples and what must be endured to strengthen disciples.*

*Tony Merida writes, “Paul’s evangelistic zeal was mingled with a passion for spiritual growth and healthy congregations. We too must desire earnestly to see people converted and to see them grow in grace—in the context of healthy churches.”*



*Note that this map of Paul’s Third Missionary Journey comes from the ESV Study Bible.*

**3. What is going on in Acts 18:24-26?**

*Acts 18:24-26 describes the pattern of a disciple-making relationship between Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos. Apollos is from Alexandria, which is a region known for the world’s greatest library and excellent education. Luke highlights five characteristics about Apollos: (1) eloquent in speech; (2) competent in Scriptures; (3) fervent in spirit; (4) lack of knowledge; (5) teachable at heart. It was his lack of knowledge concerning the way of God that caught the attention of Priscilla and Aquila. They took Apollos aside to explain the way of God more accurately. God uses this life-on-life relationship to equip Apollos for more faithful and fruitful ministry in the days ahead.*

*As you read the passage, note the following: (1) One of the most difficult aspects of this passage is discerning what Apollos knew and when Apollos came to saving faith. As for what Apollos knew, it appears that he knows the ministry of John and Jesus, but he does not know about Christian baptism and the work of the Spirit in building the church. As for when Apollos came to saving faith, it appears from the text that Apollos is an immature/incomplete believer in verses 24-25, as he instructs others in the way of the Lord and teaches others the way of Jesus accurately. A point for us to consider is that Apollos shares what he knows about the Lord and humbles himself to learn from others what he does not know about the Lord. (2) Discipleship involves a life on life relationships. In this case, a married couple leveraged their marriage to equip others for the work of the ministry.*

*For Apollos in Corinth, see 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12. For Aquila and Priscilla, see Acts 18:2-3, 26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.*

*John Polhill acknowledges the difficulty of discerning what Apollos knew and when Apollos came to faith. He writes, ““How one could have known only the baptism of John and yet have received the Holy Spirit is hard to understand. Equally confusing is the reference to Apollos’s teaching about Jesus accurately.”*

*Darrell Bock writes, “Apollos is a figure caught in transition who ministers in the Diaspora and thus needs to be brought up to date. His preaching is not inaccurate, merely incomplete. Acts 10:45–46 shows that one can have the Spirit without being baptized, since God sovereignly distributes the Spirit in response to faith. Apollos is easily brought up to date when Priscilla and Aquila speak with him. They inform him of the Way “more accurately”....Apollos now understands better than before the full benefits offered in salvation, especially as it relates to the Spirit of God. Certainly the commendation of him to Achaia tells us that the church does not have any concerns after the time of additional instruction.”*

*About Acts 18:26, the ESV Study Bible states: “As an example of the Holy Spirit’s work in bringing about the growth of the church in Acts, this verse provides positive support for the idea that both men and women can explain God’s Word to each other in private or informal settings without violating the prohibition in*[*1 Timothy 2:12*](https://www.esv.org/1+Timothy+2%3A12/)*against women teaching an assembled group of men.”*

*Of Priscilla and Aquila, Tony Merida writes, “Every Christian should take note of this couple’s gentle persuasion method, which is advocated elsewhere in the New Testament and demonstrated by Jesus, the Servant of the Lord (see Matthew 12:17-21; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). We shouldn’t try to correct brothers and sisters by using an argumentative, critical spirit; rather, we need to use an open Bible and a loving tone.”*

*Of Priscilla and Aquila, Derek Thomas writes, “Clearly, we have an example of a couple who had given seven or eight years of intensive gospel work while exiled from their native home in Rome. In the midst of adversity, they were a source of immense good to others. Instead of feeling sorry for themselves they turned their difficulty into an opportunity for ministry. They utilized their marriage, unique as it was to some extent, to the advantage of the gospel. The extent of this advantage for the gospel is seen in the fact that the church sent Apollos (with letters of recommendation) to Achaia as an apologist for the gospel….The work that Priscilla and Aquila invested in Apollos now bore fruit in another city.”*

**4. What is going on in Acts 18:27-28?**

*With the affirmation/blessing/commendation of the brothers in Ephesus, Apollos is sent out to Corinth where he strengthened/equipped/aided the believers in standing firm against the Jews because he refuted the Jews by showing from the Scriptures that the Christ is Jesus. The fruit of disciple-making is messengers equipped, disciples strengthened, and gospel proclaimed so that others may come to know and follow Jesus.*

*Note that the role of the church is to affirm/recommend those who go out from them as ambassadors of Christ. How might this responsibility impact the way we practice church membership and church discipline and the way we send out church planters and missionaries? Also, note that the power of Apollos comes the Scripture in verse 28. How might this shape our evangelism and encourage us as we engage unbelievers and equip believers?*

*For examples of letters of commendation, see Acts 15:23-29; Romans 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3.*

*Derek Thomas writes, “God had been at work in spreading the gospel in ways that lay outside of that which Paul had been engaged in. God is not restricted to accomplishing his work through us. We are mere instruments in his wonderful purposes.”*

*Darrell Bock writes, “In sum, this unit shows how growth can occur in the church. Priscilla and Aquila minister to and encourage Apollos in his new ministry. They instruct him. Apollos, for his part, is open to their instruction. Thus these ministers encourage each other in a task they know they share. They are aware that it is a task bigger than any one of them. This encouragement even extends to letters of recommendation so that people will be more likely to receive what he is saying. This kind of mutual cooperation and encouragement in pursuit of a theologically faithful ministry enables the church to carry out its mission. Apollos ministers even though he has more to learn. On the other hand, Priscilla and Aquila encourage him to grow even as they recognize that he is an effective minister.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “This passage has reminded us that, like Apollos, we need to grow in our understanding of what Christ has accomplished for us in the gospel. We have also seen that this may be accomplished by those who are not necessarily ‘ordained’ and set apart in what we sometimes refer to as ‘full-time Christian ministry.’ Husbands and wives may accomplish this work, too, by opening up their homes and engaging in acts of hospitality, thereby supplementing the work of the local church. Is this something we can do for Christ? In doing so, our work may bear fruit in places we may never visit.”*

*R. Kent Hughes writes, “The truth of Christ and life in the Spirit come to those who are humble enough to listen and to be taught. Such an attitude is essential for life and ongoing growth in the Spirit. Every time we open the Word, we should be willing to hear and heed it.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.

1. In Acts 18:23, Paul sought to strengthen the disciples in the places he had previously visited. In a similar way, what does it look like for our community group to strengthen one another? How might a discipler-disciplee relationship lead to the strengthening of one another? What would it look like for our community group to pursue those members who have not been to our group in some time for the sake of strengthening them?

2. As you read about Apollos in Acts 18:24-26, what stands out about him? How might his instinct to share what he knows be of encouragement to us to share with others what the Lord has taught us? How might the humility and teachability of Apollos be an example to us?

3. In your own words, how would you define discipleship/disciple-making? What are the key ingredients/characteristics of discipleship/disciple-making? After hearing the sermon and examining the passage, how has your definition/understanding of discipleship/disciple-making been refined/corrected/clarified? What are your fears and challenges concerning disciple-making? With those fears and challenges in mind, why is it important that we seek to be obedient to the Word concerning disciple-making?

4. What are your fears when it comes to life-on-life discipling relationships? How does the Lord address those fears through the Word and by His Spirit? Why is disciple-making/discipleship crucial to lead people to know and follow Jesus? What are your fears and challenges concerning disciple-making? With those fears and challenges in mind, why is it important that we seek to be obedient to the Word concerning disciple-making?

5. At Highview, we have something called the Journey of Discipleship that visually shows what it looks like to know and follow Jesus. How is discipleship/disciple-making related to each of the 4 arenas/environments (worship, community group, discipleship group, multiply)? How have you seen the Lord use each of these arenas to instruct you in the way of God more accurately?

6. Like Aquila and Priscilla, are we opening up our homes to have conversations about the Word, the gospel, and how it speaks to and shapes all of life? Also, like Aquila and Priscilla, what would it look like to leverage our careers to make disciples of all nations (remember, Aquila and Priscilla were vital members in the churches of Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus)? Finally, what might we learn from how Aquila and Priscilla corrected and instructed Apollos?

7. In Acts 18:27, we see the role of the church in sending out disciple-makers. What did the church do to encourage, equip, and send out Apollos? How might we encourage, equip, and send out laborers to make disciples in places where the name of Christ is not named?

8. As you look in Acts 18:28, where does the power of Apollos come from? Why ought the Word to be central to the discipling relationships? How can we guard our time together to make sure that the Word remains central in discipling relationships rather than other books (even though they may be good Christian books) or other things?

9. Read Matthew 9:37-38. Take time to pray for God to raise up disciple-makers at Highview Baptist Church. Pray that God would cultivate a culture of disciple-making in our midst? Pray that God would help us to send out disciple-makers to places where the name of Christ is not named.

10. Tony Merida noted the following application questions on this passage: What do Paul’s follow-up visits teach us about the importance of follow-up discipleship and the value of the local church? What can we learn about instructing leaders from the example of Aquila and Priscilla? What can we learn about how to receive instruction from the example of Apollos? What about the ministry of Apollos most resonates with you?

11. As you look at this passage, how does it call us to obedience and an others-focused mentality? Remember, Pastor Aaron is challenging us to be about obedience and others in 2018.

12. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. David Jones):

A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

13. In his book, Asking the Right Questions, Matthew Harmon gives the following instructions/questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like).

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing).

c. Look for God’s concerns (what things, events, people, he is concerned about).

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image.

b. Look for the fallen condition.

c. Look for how God’s people should live.

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for.

b. Look for sin to confess and repent.

c. Look for promises and truths to believe.

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others.

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others.

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others.

B. Applying the Bible

1. What does God want me to think/understand?

2. What does God want me to believe?

3. What does God want me to desire?

4. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Recognize your need to be discipled and to disciple others.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—1 Corinthians 5; Job 18

2. Tuesday—1 Corinthians 6; Job 19

3. Wednesday—1 Corinthians 7; Job 20

4. Thursday—1 Corinthians 8; Job 21

5. Friday—1 Corinthians 9; Job 22

6. Saturday—1 Corinthians 10; Job 23

7. Sunday—1 Corinthians 11; Job 24

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 2)**

1. March 11th—Acts 18:24-28

2. March 18th—Acts 19:1-41

3. March 25th—Acts 20:1-16

--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)

4. April 8th—Acts 20:17-30

5. April 15th—Acts 21:1-26

6. April 22nd—Acts 21:27-22:29

7. April 29th—Acts 22:30-23:35

8. May 6th—Acts 24:1-27

9.May 13th—Acts 25:1-12

10. May 20th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 25:13-26:32

11. May 27th—Acts 27:1-44

12. June 3rd (Memorial Day Weekend)—Acts 28:1-31

1. For this discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts;* I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; John B. Polhill, *Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts*; R. Kent Hughes, *Acts*; R. C. Sproul, *Acts*; John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of* Acts; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesu in* Acts; ESV *Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)