

“According to God’s Holy Law”: Priscilla and Aquila Married for God

ACTS 18:1-4,18-28; ROMANS 16:3-4

Marriage mathematics is a strange thing indeed. Usually one plus one equals two. But when we studied God’s design for marriage in the example of Adam and Eve, we discovered that one plus one equals one (Genesis 2:24). “One flesh” is symbolic of all other levels of intimacy: social, economic, spiritual, and vocational. It is the creation of a new social unit. This means that one plus one equals three, because there are now three realities: the husband, the wife, and the marriage relationship. When two Christians become one (or three) there is a powerful synergy making the impact of their lives more than the sum of the two. So they can serve God better together than they could as two singles. Probably no couple in the Bible illustrates this better than Priscilla and Aquila, the tentmaking friends of the apostle Paul who helped him plant churches in at least two cities of the Roman Empire (see “Bird’s Eye View” at the beginning of this studyguide). If Adam and

Eve show us what God meant marriage to be before sin entered the human family, Priscilla and Aquila show us what marriage can become when two people are married "according to God's holy law." This magnificent couple was married for good and married for God.

- ♣ 1. Why do you think some Christians feel that becoming married has made them less effective in Christian service than they could have been if they had remained single?

What factors could make being married an asset to serving God?

Note: Today we would call Priscilla and Aquila bivocational missionaries. They served God as church-planting workers in three cities—Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus—but, like Paul, they supported themselves by a trade, in this case making tents.

READ ACTS 18:1-4, 18-22.

- ♣ 2. What kinds of pressures would Priscilla and Aquila have faced as they lived for Christ while moving from city to city?

Note: In 1 Corinthians 16:19 Paul mentioned that a church met in Priscilla and Aquila's home.

3. What benefits would their special friendship with Paul have brought to Aquila and Priscilla as well as to Paul?

What benefits could hosting other ministering couples or singles bring to your life together?

READ ROMANS 16:3-4.

4. (Apparently, Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome.) Living and working with the apostle Paul undoubtedly brought many pressures and problems. What level of commitment did this couple have to a fellow worker and to the church?

READ ACTS 18:23-28.

5. This couple's ministry to Apollos is a model of team ministry. How did they approach this sensitive task?

What characteristics could possibly have destroyed their ability to work together with such harmony?

6. Howard and Charlotte Clinebell list the many dimensions of intimacy possible to a couple: emotional (sharing significant feelings), intellectual (sharing ideas), aesthetic (sharing beauty), creative (sharing acts of creativity), recreational (sharing fun),

work (sharing a task), crisis (sharing pressures), spiritual (sharing ultimate concerns), and sexual (sharing physical affection).^{*} In the brief accounts we have, what kinds of intimacy are indicated in Aquila and Priscilla's relationship?

7. In all the references to Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2,18-28; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19) one is never mentioned without the other, and in four of the six times, Priscilla, the wife, is mentioned first. What do these references tell us about how this couple worked?

What difference would it have made if Aquila and Priscilla (or should we say Priscilla and Aquila?) had been merely one leader (the husband or the wife) and a support partner?

^{*} Charlotte H. Clinebell and Howard J. Clinebell Jr., *The Intimate Marriage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 28-31.

8. What dangers have you experienced in trying to serve God together? What benefits?

9. What attitudes have you learned from this story that could make being married an asset for Christian service rather than a distraction?