

“Investing in Emerging Leaders”
Acts 18:24-19:10

10/13-14/07

6 p.m.; 9 & 10:45 a.m.

OPEN to Acts 18:23 (**PAGE** 1725)

INTRODUCTION

Anne Sullivan, a 19-year-old orphan, was chosen for the task of instructing six-year-old Helen Keller who was both blind and deaf.

It was the beginning of a close and lifelong friendship between them. Later Helen went to college, where Anne spelled the lectures into Helen’s hand.

After graduating with honors, Helen Keller devoted her life to helping the blind and deaf.

I wonder what would have happened to Helen Keller if Anne Sullivan hadn’t devoted her life to discovering methods and techniques to teach Anne, who could not see or hear ...

To His followers, Jesus has entrusted a world full of people who, spiritually, are deaf and blind. And, He has entrusted to us *The Message* that, empowered by the Holy Spirit, opens deaf ears and blind eyes so that people can see and hear God Himself and enter into an eternal relationship with Him.

As we’ve been seeing the past several weeks, we are called to plant the words of The Message in people’s lives, and also to invest our time, love and energy along with the words.

Once someone responds to *The Message*, there’s a “next step,” and it has to do with helping Christians grow to maturity. God expects all His children to mature, and to help others to grow in their faith in Christ.

Today we’re going to see three very different types of people in whom Christian leaders invested. They are different in terms of where they are in their relationship with God ... and all of them need the help of more mature Christians.

I. Invest in Current and Future Leaders (Acts 18:23-28)

READ Acts 18:23-28

Apollos has the potential to be a strong leader in the Church.

Here’s what we learn about him:

v. 24: **Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos**, (a Jew ethnically and his spiritual upbringing)

a native of Alexandria, (*the capital of Egypt; the cultural and educational center of the Roman world; where the OT was translated into Greek*)

He was a learned man (*eloquent, cultured, learned*),

with a thorough knowledge of the (OT) Scriptures.
(*through teaching and personal study*)

v. 25: **He had been instructed in the way of the Lord** (Jesus),

and he spoke with great fervor (*a dynamic communicator*)

and taught about Jesus accurately, (*ἀκριβῶς; with exactness*)

Now, so far, from this description, we see that Apollos is definitely a gifted and up-and-coming leader. From this description, he may sound like a completed leader who needs no further instruction or development.

But, we need to read the last phrase in v. 25:

though he knew only the baptism of John (*the Baptist*).

There is a huge gap in his understanding of what Jesus taught and what it means to follow Him.

Even though he is incredibly bright, saturated in the OT Scriptures, and a dynamic communicator, his message is very incomplete and so, it's off-target.

A leader with an off-target message leads people astray. That is a big deal.

Apollos needs someone to come alongside him to complete his education ... his understanding about Jesus.

So, seeing this, a leadership couple, **Aquila and Priscilla**, take him under their wings:

v. 26a: **He (Apollos) began to speak boldly in the synagogue.** (that's) **When Priscilla and Aquila heard him,**

Aquila and Priscilla, are likely the most unique couple we read of in the NT.

They are most often referred to as **Priscilla and Aquila**; Priscilla's name listed first five of seven times.

This may be because in their evangelistic and church-planting work, **Priscilla** was more the evangelist, the more up-front of the two.

In Acts 18 we read that the two of them were expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius along with the rest of the Jews. (A.D. 49)

Then they met the Apostle **Paul** in **Corinth**. The three of them were **tentmakers**, and worked together to make a living there, while preaching the Gospel and establishing the Church. They worked in Corinth for **1½ years** (Acts 18:1-3, 11).

Then they traveled together to **Ephesus**. Paul left, but Priscilla and Aquila remained, and began the church there. As such, they are the key leaders of the Church in Ephesus.

So, after hearing Apollos teach in the synagogue,

v. 26b: they invited him to their home and **explained to him the way of God more adequately.**

Again, he knew only the baptism of John.

What does this mean?

Apollos didn't know about Christian baptism

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

Christian baptism is identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a public declaration that one has placed their faith in Jesus Christ and will follow Him for the rest of their lives.

Apollos didn't know this.

It's likely that he also didn't know about the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and other key Christian teachings.

So, **Priscilla and Aquilla** invite him to their home, and teach him more thoroughly the ways of the Lord. I don't see this happening in one evening over dinner and coffee. It likely took several days or weeks.

They may even have baptized him ... in obedience to the Lord's command.

Now, as a result of the investment that is made in his life, Apollos becomes a more effective leader and won't be hindered by incomplete knowledge of what it means to know and follow Jesus.

fruit of investment:

v. 27-28: We see that he goes on to help the Church greatly ... he is recommended by the church in Ephesus, and his stop after this is in the region of **Achaia** in the city of **Corinth**, where his ministry really launches.

So here we see the emphasis upon the need to continually invest in upcoming leaders. We also see, in Apollos, the need to remain humble and teachable and learners throughout our lives on Earth.

Leaders meetings, intern program.

I. Invest in Current and Future Leaders

II. Invest in God-Following Non-Christians (Acts 19:1-7)

READ Acts 19:1-7

In Ephesus, Paul encounters a very unique situation. He finds “**disciples**” who haven't heard about Jesus, or the Holy Spirit.

I think the term “**disciples**” refers to them being **disciples of John the Baptist** ... they are following, to the best of their knowledge, God's message through John the Baptist and responding positively to the spiritual light they have received.

They are not yet believers in Jesus, but they are “God-followers.”

They are not “**born again,**” nor have they heard *The Message* of the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ.

So, Paul teaches them and they believe.

They receive Christian baptism, then they receive the Holy Spirit.

Now they are **disciples** of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION

There was a time in my life, my youth and most of my teenage years, when I was similar to these men.

I was raised in a church, I was taught about God and Jesus, but I didn't know I could have a personal relationship with God, nor did I know that I could be completely forgiven of my sins, nor that Jesus would live within me through the Holy Spirit ...

I worked at believing and following what light I had been given, but I was not yet a Christian. But, I was a "God-follower" in the sense of responding positively to the spiritual truth I knew.

Only later, as a young adult, did I hear the full *Message* about Jesus and, by faith, surrendered my life to Him.

There are people like this all around us ... they have some information, incomplete information, and are responding to what they know, but have not heard the full Message about Jesus.

They are worth our investment!

II. Invest in God-following Non-Christians

III. Invest for Spiritual Reproduction (Acts 19:8-10)

READ Acts 19:8-10

Here we see the full range of evangelism, discipleship, leadership development and church planting that occurs in Ephesus:

v. 8: The usual pattern of preaching of Jesus in the synagogue.

v. 9a: The usual pattern of resistance from the unbelieving Jews.

v. 9b: The usual pattern of Paul taking those who believe, separating from a hostile synagogue, establishing the church, and continuing to invest in them.

But, in v. 10a: An unusual pattern of Paul himself staying in one place a long time: he usually leaves behind a few team members to nurture the church while he goes to a place the Gospel hasn't been proclaimed.

But, now, he stays himself, investing in the new believers who mature and some become leaders, evangelists and church-planters throughout the province of Asia.

v. 10b: Amazing fruit: *everyone* in the province of **Asia** hears the Word of the Lord ... in 2 ½ to 3 years (Acts 19:10, 20:31).

"...**the province of Asia**, (is) the west coast of modern-day Turkey. During this time the churches at Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were founded (Col.

4:13). (Very possibly) all seven churches named in Revelation 2-3 were started at this time ...” (BKC)

So, you see the importance of investing *The Message* about Jesus to every person and at every level of spiritual development with a continual focus on spiritual reproduction ... growing new believers into maturing believers who can then help grow other new believers.

- Evangelism: Planting *The Message* in the hearts and minds of people. Some of them believe in Jesus.
- Follow-up: New Christian discipleship; **“milk of the Word.”** (1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:12-13, 1 Peter 2:2)
- Discipleship: **“meat of the Word,” “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** (Hebrews 5:14, Matthew 28:19-20)
- Servanthood: discovering and developing your spiritual gifts and callings. This includes leadership development.
- Spiritual reproduction: Continuing the process of evangelism, follow-up, discipleship and church expansion, church planting.

This puts every Christian in two very clear places in terms of investing *The Message*:

- 1) Continuing to learn and apply the Scriptures, remaining teachable and growing.
- 2) Investing in / serving other people.

Not everyone will be a teacher or a church-planter, but, everyone is called by God to serve and invest in others.

- This is why we invest in children. Their lives matter! They will lead God’s church one day!
- This is why we invest in youth. Their lives matter! They will be the key leaders of God’s church one day!
- This is why we urge all adults to continue to grow in their knowledge and application of God’s Word ... in their relationships, whether single, married or parents.
- This is why we offer so many different equipping classes and opportunities for the people of this congregation.

CONCLUSION

1) Are you growing spiritually?

Have you placed yourself in a position where you are growing spiritually and responding to God's Word to become more mature?

2) Are you serving others, investing in them?

Children, youth, adults, new people to the Church?

Before Jesus, this is non-optional.

3) Are you a God-follower or are you a born-again believer in Jesus Christ?

“Father I will take responsibility for my spiritual growth by finding out where to connect. I will also begin to serve others. Please empower me and lead me! In Jesus' Name, Amen.”