

Goals

A mature Christian knows how to repay the love of God through acts of service. In this unit, students will study several great workers in the Bible. Lydia, like most of us, led a very busy life. Yet in spite of all her secular obligations, she was able to balance out her spiritual, family and career life.

Our students will further learn of characters such as Apollos and Ezra who both demonstrated how a person's willingness to know and practice God's word have a direct effect on how God uses their life and how effective their service is. Our students will learn that while it is important to serve God, it is more crucial to have daily spiritual cultivation. Otherwise, we will suffer the same consequences as Eli who failed to examine the condition of his heart and after many years of service was rejected by God.

unit
3**Teacher Devotional**

Food is something we eat in order to stay healthy and alive. It is also something we enjoy and find satisfaction in. But the Lord Jesus shows us how doing the will of the Father and accomplishing His work can provide us with the satisfaction and enjoyment that food gives to our body. As a Christian, prayer and the word of God nourish our soul. However, our spirituality grows even more when we strive to obey God's commandments and work for Him. We will experience an indescribable joy and satisfaction while serving the Lord. As we mature in faith we will be concerned with not only receiving, but giving and sacrificing ourselves for others.

Labor For Jesus

"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'" (Jn 4:34)

Lesson 9

Apollos of Alexandria

Listed Scriptures

Acts 18-19:12; 1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:1-4:13; 16:12; Tit 3:13

Lesson Aim

- 1) To imitate Apollos' zeal and diligence in preaching the word of God.
- 2) To stand up for the truth.
- 3) To have a correct attitude in serving God.

Memory Verse

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isaiah 41-45

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

**Aquila and Priscilla**

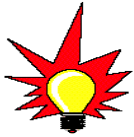
Aquila was a Jew, a native of Pontus and by occupation a tentmaker. Fleeing from Rome because of an order of Claudius commanding all Jews to leave that city, Aquila went to Corinth, where he was living when Paul found him. Paul and Aquila were of the same craft. The Bible does not mention how and when Aquila and his wife Priscilla were converted to Christianity. But the Bible mentions how this couple worked tirelessly and actively for the ministry of God. They made tents and ministered with Paul, helped Apollos know the complete gospel, opened up their home as a church wherever they went and assisted the young Timothy.

Tentmaker

Jewish boys were expected to learn trades from which they could earn their living. Paul and Aquila were "tentmakers," a term which was also applied to leather-

working in general. From an early age, they were trained to cut and sew leather into tents and other leather goods. Tents were in high demand because they were used throughout the Empire to house soldiers. Tentmakers regarded themselves as artisans who were proud of their work despite the long hours. Artisans were higher than peasants in status and income, but higher classes, who thought labor with one's hands was degrading, despised them. Furthermore, in those days people in the same trade formed cooperative trade guilds. In the ancient economy, people of the same trade did not compete with one another as they do today. Their trade guilds normally adopted a patron deity, and they ate sacrificial food at their regular banquets together. This cultic orientation of trade guilds would exclude practicing Jews from the fellowship, making Jews delighted to find other Jews of their own trade.

W A R M U P



The Pew

Once upon a pew I sat
And heard the preacher ask,
"We need someone to teach a class,
Now who will take this task?"

Then God sat down beside me there
And said, "Son, that's for you."
But, Lord, to stand before a class
is one thing I can't do.

Now Brother Forbes would be the man to call,
There's nothing he won't do.
I'd rather hear the lesson taught
From here upon my pew.

Once upon a pew I sat
And heard the preacher ask,
"We need someone to lead the songs,
Now who will take this task?"

Then God sat down beside me there
And said, "Son, that's for you."
But Lord, to sing before a crowd
Is one thing I can't do.

Now Sister Jenkins will do the job,
There's nothing she won't do.
I'd rather hear the music played
From here upon my pew.

Once upon a pew I sat
And heard the preacher ask,
"I need someone to keep the door,
Now who will take the task?"

Then God sat down beside me there
And said, "Son, that's for you."
Saying things to strangers, Lord,
Is one thing I can't do.

Now Brother Neal can talk to people, Lord,
There's nothing he won't do
I'd rather someone come to me
And greet me on the pew.

As years just seemed to pass me by,
I heard that voice no more.
Until one night I closed my eyes
And woke on heaven's shore.

There were four of us together there
To face eternity.
God said, "I need just three of you
To do a job for me."

"O Lord," I cried, "I'll do the job,
There's nothing I won't do."
But Jesus said, "I'm sorry, Friend,
In heaven there is no pew."



Apollos

Apollos was a Jew, a native of Alexandria which was a large seaport in northern Egypt and the second most influential city in the Roman Empire. It was one of the three cultural centers; the others being Tarsus and Athens. The population consisted of many Jews: one out of five were Jews. Research into Scriptures was popular and the Septuagint was completed in Alexandria. Apollos grew up in this kind of environment. Although mentioned only a few times in the Bible, Apollos was an important worker in the early church. In his epistles, Paul spoke of Apollos as a fellow-worker (cf 1 Cor 6:12; Tit 3:13). Besides his eloquence and special gifts in pastoring the church, Apollos is noted for his meekness, willingness to accept correction, zeal and spirit of service.



A Apollos Was Zealous for the Word

The Bible introduces Apollos as being fervent for the word (Ac 18:26, 28). How did Apollos demonstrate his zeal for the truth?

a. He preached the word

Apollos' zeal for the word was demonstrated through his eagerness to preach about the Lord Jesus. He went about the synagogues speaking and teaching about the Lord Jesus, although at the time he only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 18:25b). He came to a complete knowledge of the truth only after Aquila and Priscilla expounded the truth to him. Apollos' zeal in preaching the word is a good example for us. While it is important to equip ourselves with the truth in order to lead others fully to the Lord (Col 1:28), it is our duty to preach and share with others the complete gospel and God's wonders in our lives (Mk 16:15; Phil 2:22; Phil 1:5, 12-13).

b. He defended the truth

If you've ever been to a flea market you will notice many imitation products. Sometimes they resemble the true and genuine version so closely that it's easy

to be deceived. This applies to the truth also. After about 60 A.D., the truth that was given by the Lord became twisted and confused. Many believers were lured into believing heresies. In various letters of the Bible, the apostles such as Peter, Paul and Jude encouraged the believers to confute, contend, and restore the truth (Acts 20: 28-31; 2 Thess 2:1-12; 2 Pet 3:1-18; Jude 3, 17-19). While on earth, the Lord Jesus also warned that in the end time "false Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect" (Mk 13:22).

In 1 Timothy, the apostle Paul gave instructions to the young Timothy on dealing with false teachers who had infiltrated the church (1 Tim 4:1-4). Paul mentions that there are people who are very fervent for God, but they are false teachers. These false teachers gave rules forbidding marriage and demanded abstinence from certain foods. Such teachings became part of what is known as Gnosticism— a belief that the spirit is good, but the physical world is evil. Thus anything done for the body's pleasure or to fulfill its needs (such as marriage relationships or eating) was evil. They advocated that to be "good" and to achieve a higher spiritual state, a person must deny all evil, including natural physical desires. However, God had never forbidden marriage or prohibited certain foods besides what was decided by the Holy Spirit and apostles in Acts 15. Such rules violated God's principles and disturbed God's patterns for relationships and diet. Today, there are denominations that forbid marriage. This appears to be a godly and noble thing but it is not in accordance to biblical teachings.

How can we fight such heresies? The Bible mentions that Apollos was well versed in the Scriptures and he was able to powerfully confute the Jews through the Scriptures. Unless we are grounded in the word, we will be susceptible to false teachings and be "blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14). This can happen when individuals read passages out of context, read into Scripture their own interpretations, or twist the words of the Bible for his or her own purpose. When the True Jesus Church was established its mission was to rectify erroneous teachings or beliefs and to spread the gospel. We need to equip ourselves in order to confront and eradicate false teachings and teachers when they arise.

c. He obeyed the truth

We can find many people like Apollos in other denominations and religions. They serve God fervently, love God deeply, and are very zealous for their

beliefs. They even sacrifice their own comforts to bring the gospel to the remote parts of the world. Despite such efforts and sincerity, they have an incomplete understanding of the true gospel. Romans 10:2 speaks of such people as having “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” When Priscilla and Aquila expounded the truth to Apollos, he humbly accepted and obeyed the truth. The Lord tells us that salvation is only for those who believe and obey the word of God. There are Christian denominations today who believe that the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and Foot-Washing are not necessary for salvation. Unlike Apollos, such people refuse to submit and obey the truth.

Reflection:

1. How did Apollos demonstrate his zeal for God’s word?
2. In the last days false teachers will arise even in the true church. How can we identify who they are?
3. Why is it important to contend for the truth?



B. The Learned With Humility

In Acts 18:3 we learn that Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers and were not of high standing. Apollos on the other hand was a highly educated and eloquent man. Nevertheless, Apollos’ education and social standing did not prevent him from accepting the correction and instruction from the lowly tentmakers. When he realized his inadequacies, Apollos immediately became obedient to the truth. Consequently, he became an even more powerful and effective worker of God.

Worldly wisdom and knowledge can often become obstacles to receiving the truth. Apollos did not allow his pride to hinder his acceptance of the truth. Similarly, we cannot reject instruction or correction based on how we feel about a certain person, their educational background or status. We should weigh everything with sound judgment and the word of God.

Reflection:

1. If you were Apollos, how would you have responded if you were corrected by people who were inferior to you in age, learning and social standing?



C. Apollos Was Ferocious in Spirit

From the Bible, Apollos comes through as a very active and dynamic worker who was constantly improving and changing himself. After he understood the complete truth, Apollos crossed over to Achaia to help the brothers and sisters there. Apollos did not wait to be asked. He took the initiative to offer his help to the believers. Such proactiveness is inspired from a fervent faith. Romans 12:11 exhorts us to “Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.” Are there times when our faith flags to the point where like Elijah we have fallen asleep? Does prayer, reading the Bible and holy work no longer appeal to us? When Elijah ate of the bread and drank of the water that God had provided, his strength revived and he ran on the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kgs 19:1-8). Today, in order to rekindle our love and zeal for God, we have to eat God’s word and drink the spiritual water, which is the Holy Spirit (Ps 19:7a).

Reflection:

1. Throughout our lives, we go through spiritual peaks and valleys. What do you do when you are at a spiritual low?
2. Share an experience when the Spirit of God fired you up.
3. Suggest ways we maintain a fervent faith.



D. Apollos Utilized His Gifts

Although Apollos was a well-educated and eloquent man (Ac 18:24), he did not live in an ivory tower, far removed from the common masses. Apollos used what he had learned to teach and help his people. Being educated and possessing great abilities are not ends in themselves. What is most important is how we utilize those gifts. When Apollos arrived at Achaia, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed (Ac 18:27). Apollos was good at watering, i.e. pastoring, so when he came to the Corinthian church in Achaia, he was able to contribute to the holy work immensely (Job 4:4; Eph 4:29; Rom 15:1-2; 14:19).

Talents are natural gifts and skills that God has given each of us. He bestows His gifts on us not out of favoritism but so that we can build up the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:17-19). God doesn’t love the pastor more than the cook, or the teacher more than the gardener— He loves them equally because they are all a part of Him. We all have a skill that can be used for the benefit of the Lord.

In Japan, there once lived a very poor family. They were so poor that they could

no longer support their young son. With a great deal of effort, they managed to send their 4-year-old son into the General's family. Because the boy was so young, the steward of the house allocated him one simple job. The boy had to take care of the General's shoes. Every night, the steward would tell the boy where the General was going the next day and what shoes he had to wear. The boy would then prepare and polish the shoes for the General. When morning came, the boy quickly placed the shoes before the great General and assisted him in putting them on. This he did each day.

One morning after a great snowstorm had brewed the previous night, the General opened his door to find that the boy was not there. "The snow is so deep, and the child is so young, let him sleep" the General thought to himself. A little while later, the little boy came running to the General's house. Feeling embarrassed over his tardiness, his words tumbled out as he tried to explain himself. "When I rose this morning and saw the snow, I was worried that you would catch a cold, and so I put your shoes inside my robe to keep them warm. Somehow I dozed off again and ..." Before he had finished his explanation, the boy pulled out the General's shoes from inside his robe. The General was very moved and told the boy that he need not have gone through so much trouble. The boy then replied, "My father said that no matter what we do, we have to do it to the best of our ability. Although all I can do is care for the General's shoes, I want to be the best shoe caretaker in the whole of Japan". As the years flew by, this little boy grew up and became a great general of the Japanese army.

Reflection:

1. How have we utilized the gifts we have received to serve God?
2. What are our reasons for receiving an education?

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



Due to the nature of this lesson, the Check For Understanding questions can be found after each Bible Study section under the heading "Reflection".

A Life of Service



While it is important to serve God, correct attitudes and motives are essential to determine whether God will accept our service. How pitiful it would be to dedicate our life to service yet have none of our works remembered by God. To God, the condition of the heart is most important. Read the following case studies and identify some of the common misconceptions and faults that we have while serving God.

Case 1

Annie had brought two of her friends from college to attend the Friday night service. After service while the pastor was talking to her friends, Annie went to get some refreshments. Seeing that Annie's hands were full, Sarah took the initiative to help. Annie however, replied curtly, "I will take care of them myself" and took the drinks from Sarah's hands. Sarah was stunned by Annie's reaction. Identify Annie's weakness and suggest how we can prevent this from happening in our service to God.

For teacher reference:

After being involved in church work for a period of time, it is easy for us to develop wrong attitudes such as pride and self-righteousness. We get used to the sense of power and refuse to accept suggestions or advice from others. We may also find it difficult to work alongside others. Such symptoms occur when we serve God but do not spiritually cultivate. In this instance Annie has the misconception that the truthseekers belong to her. She needs to understand that God leads His sheep to the fold through us who are His mere instruments. The faith of the truthseekers needs to be established on God. If we introduce our friends to other members, they can learn more of God's grace. Annie also needs to learn the importance of teamwork.

Case 2

Linda has recently moved to the area and is excited about getting to know the brothers and sisters in the church. Shortly she begins to take notice of Tom who is an active and outstanding brother in the church. She joins the Bible studies and youth activities as a means to know Tom better. Some of the youths in the group have begun to notice this and are unsure of whether speak to her about it. Why is Linda's motive for doing church work wrong? What are some of the wrong motives that we may have for doing church work? What should we do when we find that our motives are wrong?

For teacher reference:

When we engage in holy work, it is important to constantly check our motives. One of the main reasons why we participate in divine work is to repay the love of God. Some people, however, have served with wrong motives. They have used holy work as an opportunity to pursue the opposite sex, power, recognition, self-satisfaction or other personal benefits. In the Old Testament, priests had to first cleanse and wash themselves before they went about their service. Similarly, we need to prepare and cleanse ourselves when doing holy work. We need to constantly examine ourselves and remove fleshly passions through the word of God and prayer. Those who serve with wrong motives cannot serve for long and they will cause discontent and disharmony among the members. Only those who are sincere and pure in heart can stand before the Lord and serve Him (Ps 24:3-4).

Case 3

Vera was asked to lead Bible study. Each time, Vera had refused because she felt incapable. Vera feels she would not be able to match up to the standards of the other Bible study leaders. How can we help Vera have the correct concept? Have we declined to do holy work for this reason before?

For teacher reference:

God has given each of us certain responsibilities based upon our abilities. There are times however, when we are given responsibilities which are beyond our capabilities and in which we have no experience. However, just as God gave Peter, an uneducated fisherman, spiritual wisdom, power, grace and eloquence to preach the gospel and perform many miracles, God will also supply us with the necessary gifts to accomplish His work. Gifts come in various ways: 1. We are born with certain gifts and talents. 2. We pray and request for gifts to benefit the church. 3. We acquire and refine a skill after much training and effort. Instead of comparing her abilities with others, Vera needs to realize that so long as she has the faith and willingness, God can use the little that she has to benefit her fellow brothers and sisters (Jn 6:1-14). At the beginning she may find there's plenty room for improvement, but as with all skills, practice makes perfect.

Case 4

Rob was the head teacher for the Junior 1 class. During lunchtime, he reminded Sam, a fellow teacher, that he was teaching that afternoon. Sam shook his head and said it was not his turn. Rob asked if he had checked the schedule that he had given to Sam a while back. Sam said that he had lost it. This was not the first time Sam had lost the schedule. Rob is frustrated and annoyed at Sam's attitude. Now Rob has to go and teach the class instead. Sam on the other hand feels com-

elled to teach because there are not enough teachers but he feels he doesn't work well with kids. Have you experienced similar conflicting feelings as Sam? How did you deal with it?

For teacher reference:

To be able to serve God is an honor and a privilege. Not everyone is given such opportunities. When we are called upon to undertake a responsibility, we should do so faithfully and diligently. Sam has conflicting feelings. He feels obliged to help out, but his heart is not there. Rob needs to help him realize the reasons why he serves and provide encouragement and support. If Sam continues to be non-committal then Rob may need to find a replacement instead. Meanwhile Sam could try to look into other areas of church work where he has more interest and talent in.

Case 5

Mandy has been a member of the choir for some time. She sings in the alto section. One thing she's noticed however is that whenever solo parts come up, it's always given to the same people. She feels that if given the chance she could do just as well. In fact, she's noticed that the things she is assigned to do in church are menial tasks. As the youth counselor, help Mandy solve her problem and suggest ways to help her.

For teacher reference:

A church is an organization with many different areas of work such as cooking, hymnal leading, teaching RE classes, and so on. Despite the variety of tasks, there is not one type of duty that is better than the other. Each type of holy work is just as necessary and important to build up the body of Christ. We would not lose out on our reward if our duty is to clean the bathrooms as opposed to someone who sang solo in choir, so long as we do it with a willing and sincere heart. We should not look down on what we do in church even though the tasks are "behind the scenes." When God sees that we are faithful in little, He will give us more gifts and responsibilities. We need only to wait for God's time and opportunity.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



May God give us a heart of understanding and humility so that we will use our gifts wisely to serve Him. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have (2 Cor 8:12).