

WEEKLY REFLECTION

The image of the apostle Paul in Acts 18 seems far removed from what usually comes to mind—as the most prolific church planter in history, he has a reputation within the church for being bold and unabashed in his pursuit of God. Yet Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians shows us that he was with them “in weakness and in fear and much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). The Lord had to personally tell him to not be afraid. (Acts 18:9) Why? Because He was with Paul, but practically speaking, He had many in the city who belonged to Him, and He would bless Paul with their companionship. (v.10)

Among them are Priscilla and Aquila (v.2), Silas and Timothy (v.5), Titius Justus (v.7), and Crispus (v.8). Apollos comes to them when they are in Ephesus, not Corinth (v.24), but regardless we see God sending people around Paul to support him and to participate in their shared mission. Their call is to know God, to glorify and enjoy Him forever, but they are also called to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded. (Matt. 28:18-20)

Church, who are your Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy? Who is pouring into your life with their experience and wisdom; who are you walking alongside as you learn and grow together; and who are you pouring into as you mature throughout your spiritual journey? Paul’s example in Acts 18 shows us the importance of having spiritual friendships we can lean on, while Apollos’ experience with Priscilla and Aquila teaches us humility as we seek to equip others and to be equipped for God’s Kingdom (v.24-28). God placed these people around each other so that they could go on speaking instead of being silent, proclaiming powerfully the good news of Jesus Christ. (v.9) As you set out to be a Kingdom-builder, who and how can you be working and growing with for God’s good purposes?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

When was the last time you experienced loneliness? How did that affect you, and what got you through that time? Are there any spiritual friendships you can rely on the next time you feel isolated or alone?

QUESTION TWO:

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:3 that he came to the Corinthian believers “in weakness and in fear and much trembling.” Can you find the reasons in Acts 16 and 17 why Paul arrived in Corinth in such a despondent state?

Despite his low spirits, God continued to provide, and He encouraged Paul to go on speaking, to not be silent. (Acts 18:9) What are some ways that God provided for Paul, and how does Paul’s experience encourage you to proclaim the gospel despite your own fear and weakness?

QUESTION THREE:

Paul was surrounded by people such as Priscilla and Aquila, Silas and Timothy, and Titius Justus and Crispus. What do we know about these people? Why were they a source of invaluable comfort and support to Paul? As we seek out spiritual friendships of our own, how can we be a good friend to others and encourage them to keep their eyes on God as we seek to point each other towards Him?