

Opening Scripture: 1 Cor 3:5-6 “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”

Good morning. Today we are looking at who this Apollos was. We'll be in Acts 18. We left off in the story with Paul having stayed and ministered for some time in the city of Corinth, leaving and taking a couple named Priscilla and Aquila with him—they travelled to Ephesus, Paul continued to preach and reason in the Synagogues with the Jews; returned to Caesarea and Jerusalem and then back up to Antioch, his home base.

Acts 18:24-25 “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was competent in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately about Jesus, although he knew only John's baptism.”

We encounter a man today whom Luke describes in 18:25 a “boiling over with the Spirit.”¹

- His zeal was hot; his preaching expressive and eloquent
- His knowledge was advanced/well educated in the OT
- His handling of the Scriptures was careful and competent
- His teaching was precise/and exacting —yet one thing he lacked. He'd only knew John's baptism of repentance.

Apollos was a Hellenized Jew from Alexandria—north Africa. This means that he grew up in a cultured city. According to the Jewish Philosopher and historian Philo—Jews from this region were refined, well-respected and well-educated in the synagogues.

Luke goes on to describe his ministry and continuing education in the Gospel.

²⁶ He began to **speak boldly** in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, **they took him aside and explained** the way of God to him more accurately. ²⁷ When he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers and sisters wrote to the disciples to welcome him. After he arrived, ^{27b} **he was a great help to those who by grace had believed.** ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

Summary of Apollos: Apollos was a great help to those who by grace had believed.

How do we become helpful to the church?

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1–23:35*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2798.

1. Resist the impulse to merely consume Luke's description of Apollos highlights his giftings. As an educated, well-informed, gifted teacher—Apollos didn't hesitate to contribute to the life and growth of the church.

Discover your spiritual gifts: What is a spiritual gift? How do I identify my gifts? (1 Cor 12:4-7). “Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. ⁷ A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good”

A spiritual gift is any work of grace supplied by the Spirit to the individual intended for the edification and growth of the Church.

These gifts come in two varieties:

- These gifts can be supernatural—divine endowments of power such as miracles and healing and prophetic encouragement. **These are non-native gifts given by the Spirit for the occasion that necessitates that special enablement. Such as** healings, miracles, discernment, prophetic insight.
- Or they can be what I call extra-natural gifts—these are native abilities we already possess when we come into the body of Christ. Paul mentions gifts of administration, hospitality and various gifts of leadership. These works of grace are spiritually baptized into the service of Christ and contribute to the building up and edification of the whole body.

Develop your gifts—The first time I ever gave my testimony and shared from Scripture in my home church—I came off the stage and my youth pastor said, “Um, yeah I think God has called you to be a preacher.” From the age of 15 to 50 I have been doggedly working on improving my skills. I didn't have that gift until I was saved. **Nobody is an A+ on day one. Whatever gifts and abilities that God has placed in your life needs refinement, practice, experience.**

Deploy them in an appropriate ministry opportunity. Some of you have hidden talents and capabilities and you need to activate them for the glory of Christ and the help of his body. **Caveat: Some of you are not in a place where your gifts can be exercised.**

- **Illus. My back** I've had this pulled muscle in my shoulder blade making it impossible to do any upper body exercise. So, I'm icing it, heating, resting it—trying not to overdo it. I need to heal that body part before I stress it again. And some of you are like that. You're broken—hurting, someone or some situation just damaged you. And frankly, you are in a season where you need to heal up. **When I lost my voice, I wanted nothing more than to do my job,** to contribute with my gifts—and I couldn't. God sovereignly sidelined me for the better part of 3 months. Listen, some of you need to hear this—*don't jump in right now.* **There are good reasons not to engage in ministry. It's ok to take a season and heal up, recharge, restock. It's perfectly ok if you're new to town, looking for a church family and haven't quite gotten to know us yet. We'd prefer you not serve in those cases. But it's not ok to church hop—exhausting a church's resources and then just moving on because you crave novelty and get bored.**
- **Consumer-Christianity is bad for the church and bad for you personally.** In a recent study, Hope College psychologist David Myers concluded that in comparison to their grandparents, this generation of young adults experiences:

(1) phenomenal wealth and opportunity,
(2) less satisfaction with what they have
(3) and greater risk of depression, anxiety, and other social pathologies that accompany excessive affluence and minimal responsibility (DeAngelis, Consumerism, 2019). When people excessively consume and they don't contribute they fuel their own neuroses.

CCC is not a store and God doesn't want you to be a customer. People's lives are characterized by high consumption and low contribution are the most disgruntled dissatisfied people in the church.

Nobody described Apollos as a consumer. Luke described him as a spiritually gifted, knowledgeable, industrious member of the body of Christ who, as Luke says, was a great help to the church.

The 2nd way we become a great help, rather than a hinderance, to the church is when we...

2. Learn from mentors. Apollos entered a mentoring and coaching relationship with people who had been around Paul and had been instructed better. Aquila and Priscilla were better instructed, more mature, had closer associations with the Apostles. And Apollos needed their perspective.

I'm talking about regularly seeking out the advice, wise counsel, and perspective of trusted friends who are mature in Christ who can offer some perspective.

Two terms that will help us here.

agonistarch: One who trains and coaches. Comes from the Greek word agonia (agony). Jews attended synagogue, the Greeks had the Gymnasiums. Paul uses the verbal form in

1 Cor 9:25 "Everyone who competes (*ἀγωνίζομαι*) in the games goes into strict training." Coaches can't always do what you, the player, can do. But they can train you and bring the best out of you.

Coaching: NBA coaches can't slam the basketball—but they have an objective relationship and a trusted perspective. And they can see where the play is breaking down, where the offense is missing a step, where the defense has left some gaping holes leaving the basket wide open. *The purpose of the agonistarch is to train you for a desired skill set.* As you run the race for Christ, you may need someone to give you needed coaching. A beneficial and objective perspective.

But you need more than a mere coach—you need relational mentoring.

rabbi (Gk. mentor): A recognized master who leads others in his/her way. This has more to do with a model. Jesus was both an instructor—a trainer and coach—giving the disciples an objective perspective and training them in a skill set. But he was also a father figure—a mentor who lived among them, a model they could follow.

Look what Paul told the Corinthians...

1 Cor 4:15 "For you may have countless instructors in Christ, but you don't have **many fathers**. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." He said, "You heard my Gospel and you saw my life. You yourselves know that my life matches my gospel.

We need instructors, teachers, coaches, and counselors—but we need more than that. We need vital mentoring relationships.

Biblical examples include (Ex 18—Jethro-Moses; Deut 34—Moses-Joshua; 1 Kngs 19—Elijah-Elisha; Naomi-Ruth; Luke 1—Elizabeth-Mary; Barnabas-Paul; Paul-Silas; Paul-Timothy; Peter-Mark). A mentor is more than a coach— The mentor knows what it's like to be where you are. To have worked through the pain, the heartache, the disappointment—or the challenge. The mentor can give you more than a coach's objective viewpoint—they can give you God-honoring wisdom.

How do I get mentoring help?

- **Participate in “body life”**—**this is the easiest answer but the hardest way to do it.** The best coaching and mentoring relationships are organic. Connections you make in community.
- **Reach out to a ministry leader**— **My friend Mike chastised me for not reaching out.** I was so impressed that he had the boldness to confront me and also to offering mentoring to me.
- **Be open to evaluation**— Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. If you do find yourself in a mentor-mentoree relationship, take the posture of a learner. Sometimes your mentor is there to show you the way and encourage you in progress. But at times they may have a question for you or a challenge. Be open minded and humble.
- **Re-evaluate the relationship**— **My college friend who was heartbroken we broke it off.** She was a good friend, hilarious—brilliant, many good qualities—*but we just didn't have that spark.* “Have you heard of this new show on TV called ‘Friends?’” That was the worst breakup line ever. But, I had (I needed mentoring ok?)—I had to explain that we were going to stay in the friend zone. Sometimes relationships just don't work out. And that's ok.
- **Understand that mentoring is for a season**—Apollos did not stay under the sponsorship of Priscilla and Aquila forever. There are people that God will bring into your life for a season and it's just for that season.

Priscilla and Aquila were willing leaders. And that may be the place you have to occupy. Becoming a good mentor and leader. I think of Andy Andrews and Rick Lum mentoring Troy Fuller. Troy would tell you his story.

How do I become a good mentor?

- **Count the cost.** It requires a willingness to take on that role. It is a responsibility. **Vic and Alan (Dennis and Jace in the past) have** taken on a coaching and pastoral mentoring relationship with me. It costs them a few breakfasts and some time every month.
- **Don't mentor members of the opposite sex**
- **Commit to a standing meeting**—make it lunch or coffee but have, generally, a standing appointment.
- **Ask questions and listen with empathy**—Nobody gets it right the first time every time. Short of moral failure or betrayal of a trust—that person gets a do-over.
- **Stay humble and give the glory to God**— By the time Paul writes 1 Corinthians—Apollos has become a well-respected teacher and has gained a strong following among the Corinthian believers. So much that Paul has to rebuke the Corinthians for idolizing his gifts.

1 Cor 3:5 “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”

- **Don't require an exclusive commitment**— **There is a danger in becoming addicted to any one person's voice.**
Illus. William L Craig and Don Carson are my favs. I listen to them the most. Craig is the best systematic and philosophical theologian today. Carson is the best biblical theologian in the world in my opinion. But there comes a point inevitably when the Spirit whispers, “Time to turn William off.” Or “Time to turn Don off.” And then I'll listen for a season to John Piper or Mark Dever or someone and again, the Spirit will do the same with them. It is not healthy for us to become addicted to anyone's voice.

1 Cor 3:22 “whether **Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come**—everything is yours.”

Recap

Apollos was known for contributing what God had planted in his heart, his abilities, his talents and spiritual gifts. Contributing and serving with our gifts inoculates us from becoming terminal complainers and ineffective, atrophied and paralyzed members of the body paralyzed by consumerism.

Apollos was eager to be taught. When a coaching, mentoring and pastoral relationship came into his live where he could be taught with greater precision and focus—he responded well.

Priscilla and Aquila were willing and able mentors. They stepped up, took the initiative—and the body of Christ in Ephesus and the surrounding region was greatly blessed for it.

Communion: 1 Cor 11

²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

Examination: (1) Is there any area left unreconciled (as far as it is up to you) with your fellow believers? (2) Is there anything you're doing—an attitude or action that is causing or contributing to a division in the body of Christ.

- If you have sought to live in reconciled relationships with other believers
- If you have refused to, or have repented from actively causing division in the body of Christ—then Communion is our opportunity to proclaim the significance of the Lord's death until he returns in glory.

Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."