

Sermon Series: "A Believer's Family Album"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/18/2003

Title: "A Couple Mightily Used of God"

Text: Acts 18: 1-3, 18-21, 24-28

Intro.: Ills.

Theme: In a culture in which marriage's "market value" has been severely undermined, God lays before us the benefit and purpose and blessing of the companionship of marriage as it is aimed in common service to the Lord.

Why minister together as a couple?

The benefit of *mutual effort*

- *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work Eccl. 4:9*
- *"The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18*
- **Companionship with and for each other**

The benefit of *mutual support*

- *If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Eccl.4: 10*
- The **grace and mercy quotient** –God's spiritual support team for you in your fallenness and as you deal with the Fall
- **Ills.: Wayne Watson song:** "Grace keeps giving me things I don't deserve; Mercy keeps withholding things I do."

The benefit of *mutual encouragement*

- *Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Eccl. 4: 11*
- God wants us to cheer us on to further inward and outward growth by the significant people he brings into our lives

The benefit of *mutual strength*

- *Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Eccl. 4:12*
- For this to be true, Christ must be the **third strand** with his reconciling forgiveness
- Giving up pulling alone so that you are encourage to carry on
- **Ills.: Blind Mules motivation**

The benefit of *mutual ministry* – the story of Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18)

- **Give up and Reach out (Print and Read Acts 18: 1-3)**
 1. This couple could not initially see that God's sovereign plan for Paul led them through the persecution and evictions
 2. Aquilla and Priscilla probably didn't even know Paul before this but recognized a man aching in loneliness and with whom they had common ground —**tent-making**
 3. **Ills.: Nothing more important than the present**
 4. Be willing to build into our lives enough unreserved time/resource/energy to show **hospitality** (*love of foreigner*)
 5. As a couple encouraged each other to be disciplined to do that for the sake of expanding the Kingdom of God
 6. "We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth." 3 John 1: 8
- **Take in and Minister to (Print and read Acts 18: 18-19)**
 7. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Hebrews 10:24
 8. Our human nature, being as it is, doesn't want to sacrifice and needs to be confronted/encouraged to be Christ like
 9. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Phil 2: 4,5
 10. Aquilla/Priscilla not only picked up and left everything, AGAIN!, but also were willing to wait around, praying for Paul as he went off to do the heavy lifting of ministry while they made tents to support his work

11. Significant ministry doesn't necessarily mean a mission trip to Nicaragua or serving on Board for a charitable ministry—sometimes its watching the kids or picking up a task to free the other to minister at church or among other
- **Mentor beside (Print and read Acts 18: 20-21 & 24-28)**
12. When Jesus left us, he gave to each of us this command , “*Go and make disciples of all nations*”(Mat 28: 19)
 1. We often blow this off since the world is so large and we are so small — *can one/two people make a difference?*
 2. **Ills.: Desert thirst, a pump, and a note**
 3. He did not say to make them believers out of them but students of the word
 4. Paul disciplined Aquilla and Priscilla so that they could disciplined Apollos who disciplined countless others
13. The Biblical value of tag-team mentoring as a couple
 1. **Model: *I do and you watch*** (vs. 19)
 2. **Mentor: *You do and I watch*** (vs. 21, 26, 27)
 3. **Multiplier: *You do, and I move on*** (vs. 20, 27)

Blind Mule's Motivation

A neighbor was watching his next-door neighbor farmer as he was plowing his field with a one-bottom plow behind his blind mule. He listened as his neighbor called out, “O.K. Gertrude—now let's pull, come on pull, that's good, keeping going—O.K. Geronimo you pull too--hold up Alazar—too fast, Hooooo—keep pulling Gertrude. He watch for well over an hour as this effort of man and beast turned over the ground in preparation for the planting. When his neighbor took a break, he shouted out from his fence perch, “Hey Fred. I'm amazed that you got that blind old mule of yours to do all that work—especially when it is blind as a bat. But why do you call it by all those different names?” His neighbor mopped the sweat from his brow and stood up, straightening his back and said, “She's a good ole' mule but what keeps her going is thinking that she isn't doing it by herself. When I shout out those other mule names Gertrude thinks that others are pulling with her and that motivates her to pull all the harder.” Sometimes, not only knowing but also seeing that others are at work with you in doing God's will in your world helps you to carry on.

Nothing More Important than the Present

Chuck Colson reveals what self-sacrifice in ministry means when he revealed an incident in which he was confronted with his own self-centered agenda in a state penitentiary's death row cell-block: *My schedule was extremely tight, so after we finished “Amazing Grace” we said our good-byes and began filing out. We were crowded into the caged area between the two massive gates when we noticed one volunteer had stayed back and was with James Brewer in his cell. I went to get the man because the warden could not operate the gates until we had all cleared out. “I'm sorry, we have to leave,” I said, looking nervously at my watch, knowing a plane stood waiting at a nearby airstrip to fly me to Indianapolis to meet with Governor Orr. The volunteer, a short white man in his early fifties, was standing shoulder to shoulder with Brewer. The prisoner was holding his Bible open while the older an appeared to be reading a verse. “Oh, yes,” the volunteer look up. “Give us just a minute, please. This is important,” he added softly. “No, I'm sorry,” I snapped. “I can't keep the governor waiting. We must go.” “I understand,” the man said, still speaking softly, “but this is important. You see, I'm Judge Clement. I'm the man who sentenced James here to die. But now he's my brother and we want a minute to pray together.” I stood frozen in the cell doorway. It didn't matter who I kept waiting. . . Anywhere other than the kingdom of God, that inmate might have killed that judge with his bare hands—or wanted to anyway. Now they were one, their faces reflecting an indescribable expression of love as they prayed together.” (Charles Colson, *Loving God* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, Judith Markham Books, 1983], pp. 193-94)*

Acts 18:1-3

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

Acts 18:18-21

Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Acts 18:24-28

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.