

Week 3

Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

In this series, we're looking at several little-known people in the Bible that God used for His glory. They're showing us that it isn't just the "upfront" person that God uses. It's most often the everyday people who are behind-the-scenes.

Illustration: Let's say you need major heart surgery. When you start looking for the right doctor to perform the surgery, you don't want a high school drop-out – you want a doctor that is famous for specializing in *this* particular surgery.

But, what you don't realize is that as soon as this expert agrees to do your surgery, an army of behind-the-scenes people are set into motion in order to carry out a successful surgery for you. For example:

- The people who schedule your surgery
- Check in person when you show up
- Insurance people
- Diagnostic people
- Imaging specialists
- Nurses
- Nurse Practitioners
- Food service people
- Janitors keeping the place clean
- Pharmacists providing medicine
- Lab technicians
- Anesthesiologist
- Surgery prep team
- Security, making sure the place is safe
- Parking people
- Critical care unit that's standing by
- Maintenance crew (power, lights, medical equipment, etc.)
- Rehab team that's on standby to get you up and walking again
- Chaplain

For every *well-known* surgeon, there is also an army of *little-known* people in the background, but it takes all of them to pull off a successful

surgery. And it's the same way in the Kingdom of God – He uses all kinds of people to win the lost and disciple the saved!

And tonight, I want to introduce you to another one of those hidden heroes in the NT named *Apollos*.

Background

When God was ready to do something great in the city of Ephesus, He sent Paul to visit the city and share the gospel with the Jews in their synagogues. It captured their interest and they wanted to know more about Christ. In other words, Paul had “planted the seed” of the gospel.

God then sent a couple named Priscilla and Aquilla (who we'll look at next week) to stay in that city and set up their tent-making business in the marketplace. And they kept sharing the gospel each day as they had conversations with their customers. They were “watering the seed” daily.

And that's when God sent a hidden hero named Apollos to preach powerful messages to the people in Ephesus, and many of them were saved!

So, Paul *planted*, Priscilla & Aquilla *watered*, and Apollos *harvested*. But God was the One making the whole process work!

And tonight, we're going to focus in on this hidden hero named Apollos and see why God was able to use this little-known guy in such a powerful way...

1. He studied the Scriptures carefully and consistently.

Acts 18:24 “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures.”

It's obvious that Apollos did more than just occasionally and casually read God's Word. He didn't just glance at it on Sundays and Wednesdays. It says he was “competent” (or “mighty”) in the Scriptures.

If you want a practical example of what it means to be “mighty in the Scriptures,” just look at Ezra in the OT. Three times in Ezra chapter 7 it says, “God's Hand was upon Ezra,” and then in verse 10, the Bible tells us why:

Ezra 7:10 "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel."

If you really want God to use you to impact your community or campus for the glory of God, you have to move beyond casually and occasionally reading God's Word. You become mighty in the Scriptures when you *study* it and *do* it (put it into practice in your everyday life), and then your words and actions begin to *teach* others how to know and follow Christ!

But you'll never have this kind of impact if you don't carefully and consistently study God's Word. Peter said it this way:

1 Peter 2:2-3 "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

You see, when we first get saved, we're like "infants" – baby Christians after we've been "born" again. And we crave God's Word like an infant craves milk. But we're not supposed to *remain* infants. Slowly but surely an infant grows and begins to eat solid food...

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready."

Hebrews 5:12-14 "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

Some of these people had been saved long enough to be teaching other believers the "basic principles" of the Bible but instead, they still needed milk themselves. They were still "unskilled in the Word" like little children. Paul said "solid food is for the mature" – a person who has been "trained by constant practice."

The only way to grow up spiritually and become mighty in the Scriptures is to study God's word consistently, put it into daily practice, and teach it to others by your words and actions.



Are you consistently studying God's Word – moving from *milk* to *meat*?

2. He wasn't lukewarm in his walk with Christ.

Acts 18:25 “[Apollus] had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

It says that Apollus was *fervent in spirit* which literally means to “boil.”¹ In other words, he gives new meaning to being “on fire for God!” His consistent knowledge and practice of God's Word was like fuel to a fire!

Romans 12:11 “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”

Being fervent in spirit doesn't mean that you never have disappointments, setbacks, and hard days in your walk with Christ. It just means that you are constantly fanning the flame in your relationship with Christ.

Illustration: A fire needs two things to thrive: fuel and oxygen. If you remove either, the fire will go out.

- **Fuel** (wood, coal, etc.) – Every verse or passage you study daily is like adding wood to the fire.
- **Oxygen** – Prayer is like the oxygen that allows a fire to breathe and grow.

You see, God uses those verses and passages to speak to *you*. And you are to use those same verses and passages to guide your prayers as you speak back to *Him*. And God uses this daily process to fan the flame in your relationship with Him!



Are you consistently fanning the flame in your relationship with Christ? Is it lukewarm? Or has it died out altogether?

3. He wasn't quiet about his faith.

Acts 18:26a “He began to speak boldly in the synagogue...”

You may be thinking, “I'm just not a bold person.” But do you consistently

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 479). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ask God to help you with boldness? Listen to the following verses:

Psalm 138:3 "On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased."

The New American Standard version says, "You made me bold with strength in my soul." But notice: David *asked God* to give him boldness!

Proverbs 28:1 "The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

We cannot be quiet about our faith. We have to speak boldly for truth!

4. He was humble and teachable.

Acts 18:26b "But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Verse 25 said Apollos was "acquainted only with the baptism of John [the Baptist]." You see, Apollos knew the Scriptures, but his understanding was limited to the baptism of John the Baptist. John said...

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me [Jesus] is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

You see, Apollos only knew about John's outward baptism with water, but no one had taught him that Jesus was bringing an inward baptism – meaning the Holy Spirit would come to live inside you and ignite an inward fire for God in you your soul!

So, Apollos's understanding of the Scriptures was not *inaccurate* or *insincere*; it was just *incomplete*.² He had more to learn and he was humble enough to receive correction when Priscilla and Aquila "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." He could have been stubborn and prideful, but instead he was willing to learn from believers who knew more about God than he did...

Proverbs 1:5 "A wise man will hear [listen] and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel."

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 479). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Like an infant who grows into adulthood, God intends for us to continually learn and grow in our faith. If we don't, we limit our effectiveness.

5. He helped others in their walk with Christ.

Acts 18:27 *“And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed.”*

Notice: Apollos is encouraged by other believers in the first part of the verse (“the brothers encouraged him”). But he’s also an encourager of others in the last part of the verse.



We all like to receive encouragement, but how often do *you* encourage others?

6. He stood firm against the enemies of God.

Acts 18:28 *“For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ [Messiah] was Jesus.”*

Apollos made a huge impact on the Jews who were saying that Jesus wasn't the Messiah. When it says Apollos powerfully “refuted” them, it means he “*put them to shame.*”³ This doesn't mean he was being mean-spirited or arrogant. He wasn't trying to embarrass or humiliate unbelievers. It just means his teaching was so convincing, it put all their arguments to shame!

So, what about you? Do you...

- Are you consistently studying God's Word – steadily moving from *milk to meat*?
- Are you consistently fanning the flame in your relationship with Christ? Is it lukewarm? Or has it died out altogether?
- Are you quiet about your faith? Do you stand firmly for truth.
- Are you humble and teachable – eager to learn from those who know more than you?
- We all like to receive encouragement, but how often do *you* encourage others?
- Are you standing firm against the enemies of God?

Small Groups

³ John Phillips, *An Expository Commentary*, pg.376