

## **THE MARRIAGE OF AQUILA AND PRISCILLA: A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN COUPLES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Since the institution of marriage in the creation account (Genesis 2:18-24, New Revised Standard Version), marriage has remained one of the most important institutions affecting people's life and well-being. On one hand, many married couples have in one way or the other, contributed their quota to their communities and to the work of God. On the other hand, some marriages have had negative influence on people's commitment to God and to their society as well as their families. In an era of where instability in marriages is in the increase, the author uses the union of Aquila and Priscilla as a model for contemporary couples, bringing out the needed lessons to be learnt from this godly marriage. Throughout the study, it is demonstrated that a Spirit-filled couple will have a godly marriage that will result in a powerful ministry for the Lord.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The author of the book of Hebrews writes, "Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; ..." (Hebrews 13:4, NRSV). This implies that, marriage is honorable and sacred. We must therefore remain faithful to one another in marriage. Marriage is one of the most basic and influential societal unit in the world and it is also an important institution within the society. Before the existence of the state and the Church, God created the oldest institution on this planet - marriage. In all parts of the world, whatever continent or nation, one will find that men and women are joined together in the bonds of matrimony and are raising families. This calls into attention the role marriage plays in the life of an individual and the community as a whole.

### **Understanding Marriage**

The definition of marriage varies depending on the perspective from which one is looking at it. According to John Stott, Genesis 2: 24 implies that the marriage union has at least four characteristics. It is an exclusive man – woman relationship ('a man ... His wife...'); it is publicly acknowledged at some social event ('leave his parent'); it is permanent ('cleave to his wife'); it is consummated by sexual intercourse ('they will become one flesh'). He thus offers a biblical definition of marriage as, "An exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutual supportive partnership and normally crowned by the gift of children."<sup>2</sup>

At the All Africa Seminar on "The Christian Home and Family Life", organized by the All Africa Council of Churches in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, marriage was defined as; "God's ordinance for man from the beginning of creation, a union properly entered into, with full consent by a man

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<sup>2</sup> John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (London: Marshal Pickering, 1984, 1990, 1999), 323 quoted in John Abedu Quashie, *By Custom and by Ordinance: The Duplicity of Marriage Ceremonies in Ghanaian Christianity*. *Trinity Journal of church and Theology*, 18, No. 2 (2014) 64

and a woman competent to marry one another, and publicly recognized in the society in which they live.”<sup>3</sup> These definitions raise certain critical issues which are very important in any discussions on marriage. First, marriage is ordained by God right from the beginning of the human race. God instituted marriage whereby, man will leave the parents and cling to the wife to become one. God’s act in this direction indicates that humankind has no hand in the invention of the marriage institution and that, it is God who brought it into existence. This is probably the reason why the Council of Churches Seminar report states that marriage is ordained by God. The second issue is that, it frowns on homosexuality (that is Lesbianism and Gayism) and polygamy when the definition speaks of a man and a woman. Thirdly, the man and woman must be of age<sup>4</sup> since their full consent is needed. Fourthly, the movement of the man to cling to the woman makes it a permanent one. The fifth issue to point out are that, the place where the marriage is to be conducted must be a recognized and registered place, with people serving as witness for the public recognition. Finally, Marriage is consummated by sexual intercourse that is why it is normally but not always crown with children, this is because children are gifts from God. From this backdrop, the issue of proper entry into marriage becomes a major concern. This is because there are situations in which people are living together presuming to be in marriage but – which cannot be termed as marriage. The way they entered into such unions, looking at the discussions above are not the proper entries into marriage. An example is co-habitation; that is an arrangement where two people who are not married live together without registering their relationship as a marriage.

Concerning the purpose and dimensions of marriage, Don Browning<sup>5</sup> argues that historically, marriage has consisted of five dimensions and all these dimensions are essential for an adequate understanding of marriage as both an institution and a living reality and that, the meaning of these five dimensions has varied over time. The five dimensions are; natural, contractual, social, religious; and communicative. The purpose for the dimension of natural inclinations is that, issues of sexual desire union are address. It also helps fulfill God’s commandment to “be fruitful and multiple” (Genesis 1&2). The good and benefit of marriage calls for its contractual dimension. Here, full consent of the would-be couple, the families of various parties and other items such as bride price and dowry are used for the contract. On Social dimension, it is a social good mainly based on the procreative aspect. It also has a religious significance because marriage is regarded as a covenant among Christians. Finally, it is of communicative reality between two equals. Marriage is a union of equals and as such, the couples must be subjected to each other as in Ephesians 5: 21.

In Ghana, there are three (3) types of Marriages celebrated. These are: Customary, Ordinance (Cap.127) and Mohammendans (Cap.129) Marriage.<sup>6</sup> All these types of marriage are acceptable by the laws of Ghana. Each marriage has its unique characteristics, but couples in godly marriage mostly serve the Lord. Such a marriage would exemplify, the love of Christ for the Church. In this case, marriages can be a cradle for Christian missions where the couple is united in the spirit of missions, the children are raised and nurtured within an ethos of missions and then the entire family can be mobilized for the work of God and humankind.

## Background of Aquila and Priscilla

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<sup>3</sup> All African Conference of Churches, *Report of All Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life*, Geneva, N.P, 1963), 13 quoted in John Abedu Quashie, *By Custom and by Ordinance: The Duplicity of Marriage Ceremonies in Ghanaian Christianity*. *Trinity Journal of church and Theology*, 18, No. 2 (2014) 64

<sup>4</sup> In Ghana, to be of age means to be 18years or above.

<sup>5</sup> Don S. Browning, “What is Marriage? An Exploration” in *The Book of Marriage: The Wisest Answers to the Thought Question*, ed. in Dana Mark and David Blankehorn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001) 2 quoted in John Abedu Quashie, *By Custom and by Ordinance: The Duplicity of Marriage Ceremonies in Ghanaian Christianity*. *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, 18, No. 2 (2014) 63.

<sup>6</sup> Laws of Ghana. Marriage Act, 1884-1985. <https://www.reworld.org/pdfid/548edd8f4.pdf> (accessed on 25th September, 2019).

Aquila and Priscilla were first century Christian missionary married couple described in the New Testament and traditionally listed among the Seventy Disciples.<sup>7</sup> They serve as a biblical example of a ministering couple.<sup>8</sup> In Acts and the Epistles of Paul, Aquila and Priscilla are presented to us as the model of Christian married couple. This couple, Aquila and Priscilla, are mentioned seven times in four different books of the New Testament, namely; Acts of the Apostles, Romans, 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy. Careful study of scripture indicates that, these couples are always named together and never individually. They are described in the New Testament as providing a presence that strengthened the early Christian churches. They lived, worked, and traveled with the Apostle Paul, who described them as his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus.”<sup>9</sup> Paul was generous in his recognition and acknowledgment of his indebtedness to them in Romans 16:3-4. Together, they are credited with instructing Apollo’s, a major evangelist of the first century, and “(explaining) to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). Aquila and his wife settled in Corinth, where Paul first found them (Acts 18:2) and then they later accompanied Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:19). We next read of them back in Rome (Romans 16:3). The last reference to them is in 2 Timothy 4:19. They clearly had a somewhat unsettled life, but they fully identified themselves with the local Christian assembly wherever they lived; regardless of the cost to themselves.

Acts 18: 3 tells us that Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome. That was when a Jew named Aquila, who had migrated to Rome from the province of Pontus embarked on a journey to the city of Corinth. By his side was his faithful wife, Priscilla. We do not know for certain whether she was Jewish or Roman, nor are we sure whether or not they were both Christians at the time. But one thing we do know is that they were together. With Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, we had little information about her ethnic background as compared to the husband. Gilbert Bilezikian has this to say about her:

Priscilla was a woman of Jewish heritage and one of the earliest known Christian converts who lived in Rome. Her name is a Roman diminutive for Prisca which was her formal name. She is often thought to have been the first example of a female preacher or teacher in early church history. Coupled with her husband, she was a celebrated missionary, and a friend and co-worker of Paul.<sup>10</sup>

The name Priscilla or Prisca as in Roman diminutive means “Primitive” that is, original or venerable.<sup>11</sup> For Aquila, the husband of Priscilla, we read that he was originally from Pontus and also was a Jewish Christian as stated in Acts 18:2. According to R. C. H Lenski, the name Aquila means “Eagle.”<sup>12</sup> He added that Aquila was originally from the Roman province of Pontus on the south shore of the Black Sea, called the Euxine Sea during the Roman period.<sup>13</sup> Priscilla was always mentioned alongside her husband, and together they lived in Corinth, the Capital of the Roman Province of Achaia, situated on a plateau on the Isthmus of Greece with two harbors near it. That is, Cenchreae and Lechaem.<sup>14</sup>

Scripture does not vividly state that Aquila and Priscilla were expelled from Rome by a decree during the days of Emperor Claudius but looking at the record in Acts 18: 1 - 4, it is very clear that, Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome and apparently Claudius’s decree will not discriminate between Jews and Messianic Jews. Murphy-O’Connor opines that this decree went out in AD 49, and so they had arrived in Corinth somewhere in the middle or end of that year.<sup>15</sup> Most scholars date this decree to AD 49.<sup>16</sup> There

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<sup>7</sup>Cleophas Lucas, February 13<sup>th</sup> – the Apostles Aquila and Priscilla (1<sup>st</sup> cnt). <https://www.lucascleophas.nl/?=11898> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Ministering used here is attending the needs of others and doing some acts of the minister or priest. Ministering couple in this context therefore refers to couples doing such work together.

<sup>9</sup> Marie Noël Keller, *Priscilla and Aquila: Paul’s Coworkers in Christ Jesus* (Liturgical Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publications, 1989), 200-201.

<sup>11</sup> R. C. H Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Acts of Apostles.” In *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (New York: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), 817.

<sup>12</sup> Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Acts of Apostles”, 817.

<sup>13</sup> Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Acts of Apostles”, 817.

<sup>14</sup> Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Acts of Apostles”, 817.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Conner, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Text and Archaeology* (Wilmington DL: Michael Glazier, 1983), 133.

<sup>16</sup> Murphy-O’Conner, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Text and Archaeology*, 134.

are some scholars, however, who have suggested AD 41 as the possible date for the expulsion.<sup>17</sup> The main occupation of this couple was tent making.<sup>18</sup>

Aquila and Priscilla decided to relocate to the Roman colony of Corinth and practiced their trade of tent making in that cosmopolitan and Latin speaking city. Morally, Corinth was of poor standard during its day. To “Corinthianize” meant to learn to only indulge in luxury and immorality.<sup>19</sup> Venus was worshipped there with her one thousand female prostitutes, while the Isthmian games were held as a public spectacle.<sup>20</sup> Aquila and Priscilla met Paul when they relocated to Corinth. The Apostle Paul was attracted to this couple, not only because of their common faith in the Lord Jesus, but also because of their common occupation “for by occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:3). Paul was of the same trade, which he used to support himself (Acts 20:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). Since both were involved in this trade, it can be assumed that this was possibly a family business. This couple did not only stay at Corinth. They were always on the move, so Enoch Wan calls them diaspora couples when he opines that

Aquila and Priscilla were Jewish couple, as a couple in diaspora, they have been described to be a model family in action for missions and are always on the move: ready to be mobile for the sake of the Gospel while on the move: from Pontus to Rome, then to Corinth and to Ephesus and again back to Rome.<sup>21</sup>

After months of ministering in Corinth, Paul decided to move his base of operation to Ephesus. He took Aquila and Priscilla to this major trading center on the west coast of Asia Minor, the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire; Rome, Alexandria and Antioch on the Orontes being larger (Acts 18:18,19). Paul left them there in order to establish the work in the city. He also promised that he would return to Ephesus after his visit to Jerusalem. In 1 Corinthians 16:19, we read that in Ephesus, they established a church that met in their house. This afforded them the opportunity to show hospitality to sinners and saints.

One day, while attending the synagogue in Ephesus, they (Aquila and Priscilla) heard Apollos, a Jewish preacher from Alexandria who was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, but he only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-25). After the meeting, they took him aside, possibly to their home and explained to him the finer points of the Word of God and His salvation (Acts 18:26). Finally, Paul did not want to be a burden on the church in Ephesus, so he stayed and worked with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 20:34).

The next time Aquila and Priscilla are recorded in Scripture is when they were back in Rome; Romans 16:3-5 teaches that. Rome, not Corinth or Ephesus, was home for them, so they returned to the Eternal City sometime after the death of Claudius in or around AD 54 and Nero’s reversal of the Jewish expulsion decree. Murphy-O’Conner suggests they returned to Rome during the summer of AD 55.<sup>22</sup> Church history teaches that this couple died in a martyrdom just like Paul.<sup>23</sup> In all these journeys, this couple exhibited unique characteristics that we need to learn from as much as they engaged in missionary activities.

### **Priscilla and Aquila’s Missionary Ministry Activities**

The purpose of Enoch Wan’s work on diaspora study is to describe the diaspora couple Aquila and Priscilla to be a model family in action for missions.<sup>24</sup> Aquila and Priscilla were engaged in various missionary activities, five of them are outlined below: To begin with, the couple hosted Paul for 18 months in Corinth

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<sup>17</sup> Murphy-O’Connor “Prisca and Aquila”. *Bible Review* 8 No. 6 (1992), 51.

<sup>18</sup> G. T. Ralph, *Proclaiming the New Testament: The Acts of Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986), 50

<sup>19</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Text and Archaeology*, 133.

<sup>20</sup> Lenski, “The Interpretation of the Acts of Apostles”, 817.

<sup>21</sup> Enoch Wan, “Diaspora Couple, Priscilla and Aquila: A Model for Family in Action for Missions.” *Global Missiology*. English 3, No. 6 (2009). <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/179/499> (accessed on 24thSeptemberr, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Prisca and Aquila”, *Bible Review* 51.

<sup>23</sup> Jannel N. Abogado, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Early Church: History, Motives and Theology*. *Philippiniana sacra*, 50, No. 150 (May-August 2015) <https://www.academia.edu/persecution> (accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019)

<sup>24</sup> Enoch Wan, “Diaspora Couple, Priscilla and Aquila: A Model for Family in Action for Missions.” *Global Missiology*. English 3, No. 6 (2009) <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/179/499> (accessed on 24thSeptemberr, 2019).

after being forced by Claudius to leave their place of origin, Pontius, for Corinth as tent-makers<sup>25</sup> as Acts 18:1-4 reads. In contemporary terms, they were victims of anti-semitism or racial prejudice. If they had not known Christ before this period, then they would have certainly met him now, for no one could spend time in Paul's presence and not be infected by his contagious and enthusiastic love for his Saviour. Paul joined this couple in a common profession to both of them, that is tent making. Not only did his relationship with them provide needed income, but also Christian fellowship.

The issue is that, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul on his missionary journey. Acts 18: 18 – 22 indicates that this couple accompanied Paul on his missionary journey to Ephesus for church planting and even became founding members of the church. Acts 18:18-22 also indicates that Paul left this couple in Ephesus for Antioch. So they (Aquila and Priscilla), stayed in Ephesus where eventually, a church emerged and they served as founding members. Again, in Romans 16:3, we read that Aquila and Priscilla were helpers of Paul. This simple term “helpers” speak volumes about this couple and what we need more in our churches today. This couple evidently helped Paul to establish churches and provided a meeting place in their home.

Furthermore, the next concern is that, this couple opened their home privately to coach Apollos. In Acts 18:24-26, we see a new name come on the scene; and that is, Apollos. He was an educated man, eloquent in speech, versed in scripture, accomplished in religion, enthusiasm in spirit, an accurate teacher and a bold man. He, however was lacking in few doctrinal areas, for he only knew of the baptism of John and therefore needed further instruction. Aquila and Priscilla then had to properly instruct him in order to be an effective missionary. So they (Aquila and Priscilla) took him aside and worked with him privately, completing what was lacking in his knowledge. In verse 25 of Acts 18, the word “instructed” used is from the Greek word *vketecheo*, meaning; “one well taught.” Well taught is from *akribos*, which also means diligent, exactly, perfectly. Accuracy is the outcome of carefulness<sup>26</sup> and it is the same noun that was used in I Thessalonians 5:2. This suggests that Paul and his companions were careful ministers of the word. One well taught also means “to teach orally,” “to inform,” that is, instruction that is made by the word of mouth.<sup>27</sup> This implies that Apollos was not ignorant. He had more than a rudimentary knowledge which he obtained by close interaction. He was diligently and carefully taught orally, in other words by word of mouth and was just lacking in few doctrinal issues. So we see in verse 26 that Aquila and Priscilla “explained to him ... more adequately”; or expounded to him more perfectly. This word used as “expounded” or “explained” is from the Greek *ektithemi*, meaning “to expose,” to set out, “eke out;” this implies that, the teaching Aquila and Priscilla gave was more exactly or most exact.<sup>28</sup> From these words, it can be argued that, Aquila and Priscilla had higher level of education not only in matters pertaining to Jesus or the Christian religion, but how rigorously they pursued and taught; as implied by the exactness of their teaching. Presumably, it is believed he was instructed in the distinctive Pauline doctrine.<sup>29</sup> All that I want to conclude with this point is that, the couples were involved in the teaching of Apollos on proper exposition on scripture.

Again, the next activity of the couple seen was risking their lives for Paul; this is a remarkably an outstanding point. We read in Romans 16:4 how Paul says they “risked their necks for my life.” Paul did not state the exact place whether it was in Corinth or Ephesus or elsewhere. They were wholly dedicated and loyal to him. They gave all that they had.

Lastly, this couple started a “house-church” in Rome, upon their return. This was a consistent pattern of faithful Gospel ministry and church planting effort in various circumstances and multiple

<sup>25</sup> Wan, Diaspora Couple, 1.

<sup>26</sup> AMG's Annotated Strong Greek Dictionary. In Strong Complete Word Study Concordance (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004), 12 quoted in Rahila Adewusi, Priscilla's role in the improvement of Apollos' knowledge: A Challenge for African Women in Higher Education. *West African Journal of Higher Education*. 4, (2015) 117.

<sup>27</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990) 1454.

<sup>28</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of Apostles*, 1454.

<sup>29</sup> R. V. G Tasker, “The Act of Apostle” in *Tyndale New Testaments Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 307 quoted in Rahila Adewusi, Priscilla's role in the improvement of Apollos' knowledge: A Challenge for African Women in Higher Education. *West African Journal of Higher Education*. 4, (2015) 121.

locations; that while they were in Ephesus, the church even met in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19). Everywhere this couple went, they were unifying people together around the doctrines of Christ, bringing people together for ministry and the proclamation of the Word. They were incredibly people, always at a point of unifying Christians. They were not dividers, but reconcilers.

### **Implications for contemporary couples**

Aquila and Priscilla give us wonderful characteristics as they journeyed and partnered Paul in his ministry. We do know in the New Testament scriptures that, this married couple travelled from one place to another to help establish churches. At certain times in their homes. We also know from this study that, this couple lived in Corinth, Rome and Ephesus. In every one of these locations, Paul mentions this couple; indicating how relevant and beneficial they were to the Lord and others. This and other lessons they teach to serve as a better model for contemporary marriages and ministry.

First, the couple had an evangelistic ministry. This couple had a concern for those who were lost. This can be seen in the way Paul calls them. First, Paul calls them “fellow workers.” This is not a term he threw around lightly. He used it only to describe his closest companions; the likes of Timothy and Titus (Titus 1:4; 1 Timothy 1: 2; 2 Timothy 1: 2). In essence, Paul was stating clearly that Aquila and Priscilla were, “a part of his ministry team.” They could be trusted entirely for the work of the ministry. They cared deeply for Paul’s mission, which was to see people come to know Christ. They worked alongside with him as fellow workers for that aim. In short, like Paul, they were evangelistic too. In relation to contemporary marriages, even though we have church buildings, there is no substitute for the home as a center for evangelism and spiritual nurture in the community. Home Bible classes can be an effective tool for reaching the lost or getting believers growing in the Word. The possibilities for using our homes to serve the Lord are unlimited. This might be a good opportunity for husbands and wives to discuss and pray about issues together.

Secondly, the ministry of the couple was hospitality: that is, they opened their homes. Acts 18:2 recorded their first meeting. The text shows that Paul stayed with them. He was alone, and they welcomed him in. Not only did they welcome him but also provided work for him. Paul lived with them for about eighteen months; working together both for an occupation and for the sake of the gospel. Their house was clearly what is sometimes called “an open home”, where all the Lord’s people, both the poor and wealthy were welcomed. When they lived in Ephesus, and then in Rome again, they opened their home to the local assembly despite the obvious risk of persecution this involved (1 Corinthians 16: 19; Romans 16.3-5). No doubt interested unbelievers were also welcomed there and heard the message of the gospel warmly and lovingly explained to them. Again, Paul was invited to use their home as his base throughout his extended gospel campaigns in Corinth and Ephesus. ‘Aquila and Priscilla’s home was not a palace kept selfishly from others, but a workshop used unselfishly for God and His interests’. What is our home like? And how do we welcome people? For contemporary marriages, in order to use our home as an evangelistic center, we must first be hospitable in our activities. This will enable us to welcome others.

The third lesson they teach is about their teaching and discipleship: Aquila and Priscilla may not have been accomplished public speakers, but they were diligent students of the Word, and they loved to share it with others. The scene which followed in the couple’s home was both delightful and very instructive. As stated earlier, in Acts 18:24, Aquila and Priscilla took him (Apollos) aside and worked on him privately, explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18.26); in other words, completing what was lacking in his knowledge. The result was that he soon went on to other regions with full assembly commendation and was greatly used in the Lord’s service. This was all due to the loving, gracious and fully-enlightened instruction of Aquila and Priscilla. Theirs, unlike Paul’s, was not on a public platform, but nevertheless very vital and effective just as on a public platform. Some people may never be powerful preachers, but can be faithful students of the Word, and their homes can be open to people whose hearts are hungry to hear the word of God. Contemporary couples should have the joyous privilege of nurturing other people. Such people will who someday have a wide and powerful ministry for Jesus Christ.

Steadfast and determination also come into play: this couple stayed on focus for the course of the ministry for years, since Paul greets them again at the very end of his final epistle, which he wrote from a Roman jail prior to his execution. In 2 Timothy 4:19, Paul simply says to Timothy, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila.” At this time, there were some major problems cropping up in Ephesus. Timothy was the man holding down the fort there and fighting the battle. He was their ordained pastor established in his position by Paul himself yet, we find that Paul wanted him to visit him in his Roman prison as soon as possible (2 Timothy 4:9). Paul knew that these faithful friends and co-laborers for the gospel (thus, Aquila and Priscilla) were there; and they were trustworthy to carry on the mission and to keep the church from error in the head pastor’s absence. They were steadfast in the ministry, having continued faithful over the course of several years since Paul met them in Corinth. This teaches contemporary couple to stay focus in marriage and also be ready for longevity in partnership for ministry.

The next lesson is that the couple were committed and dedicated: In simple terms, they did a self-sacrificial service. They served faithfully and sacrificially with the apostle Paul; even in challenging and life-threatening circumstances. No wonder Paul writes in Romans 16:4 that they “risked their necks for my life.” Aquila and Priscilla gave their all to the Lord (Acts 18: 4). So in Romans 16: 3 - 4 Paul sends greetings to “Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.” It was very dangerous to be a committed Christian in their days, as it still is in some countries of the world today, but before the Lord, they were both fully prepared to face the challenges at their time.

Furthermore, oneness in the Lord was one of their hallmarks. This can be seen in their marital life, daily occupation and their service to God. As Christian marriage partners, Aquila and Priscilla were inseparable. Neither of them is mentioned without the other; for one thing, they made their living together. Not every husband and wife can work together like this. It takes a mature relationship to work closely under the kind of pressure a job sometimes generates. But that is evidently the kind of relationship Aquila and Priscilla had. They were not only mates and lovers, they might have been good friends and companions. They had to be willing to give to each other more than they tried to take. They had to be able to accept suggestions as readily as they offered them. They enjoyed being together and working together. They were inseparable, and they were equals. They grew to love God’s Word and although they worked long and hard running their shop, making and repairing tents, maintaining a home and caring for their distinguished guest, they always found time for serious Bible study. Sharing the word of God together would have strengthened their love for each other and their spirit of togetherness. No doubt they went with Paul to the synagogue each Sabbath day as he reasoned with the Jews and Greeks and encouraged them to place their trust in Christ for salvation (Acts 18:4). Aquila and Priscilla not only made their living together and grew in the Word together, they served the Lord together. This is exactly what many Christian marriages lack. Husbands and wives need to study the Bible together, for there is an adage that “a family that prays together lives together.” This may be just one of the things marriages need. True oneness can only be found in Christ. It is not necessary that spouses will always be at their partner’s presence physically, but when there is true oneness, there is the manifestation of Unity and togetherness even in distance.

## CONCLUSION

For the present age, Aquila and Priscilla stand as a convincing united witness to all the good deeds that a loving and responsible marriage in the lord can do in a sinful world to uphold the testimony of Christ. Such godly unions have always been essential to the growth and protection of Christian assemblies down the age of grace. This couple were in active ministry for several years. They were entirely vital to Paul’s success: first supporting him while alone in Corinth; second, hosting the church in their house and remaining in Ephesus when Paul left; third, building up the church in Rome before Paul ever went there; and lastly, returning to Ephesus to continue the Lord’s work in a struggling church. This couple served the Lord with all their might. And Paul trusted them greatly. This couple was always together. We never see them apart. There is no mention of Aquila without Priscilla or vice versa. Everything they did was done as a team. Their legacy was not the churches they founded in their homes, but the model ministry they demonstrated

consistently – evangelism, discipleship and multiplication – winning, building and sending. We have seen Priscilla and Aquila as disciples, builders and leaders. Therefore, couples in ministry should learn to live in partnership rather than clamoring for any form of hierarchy.

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