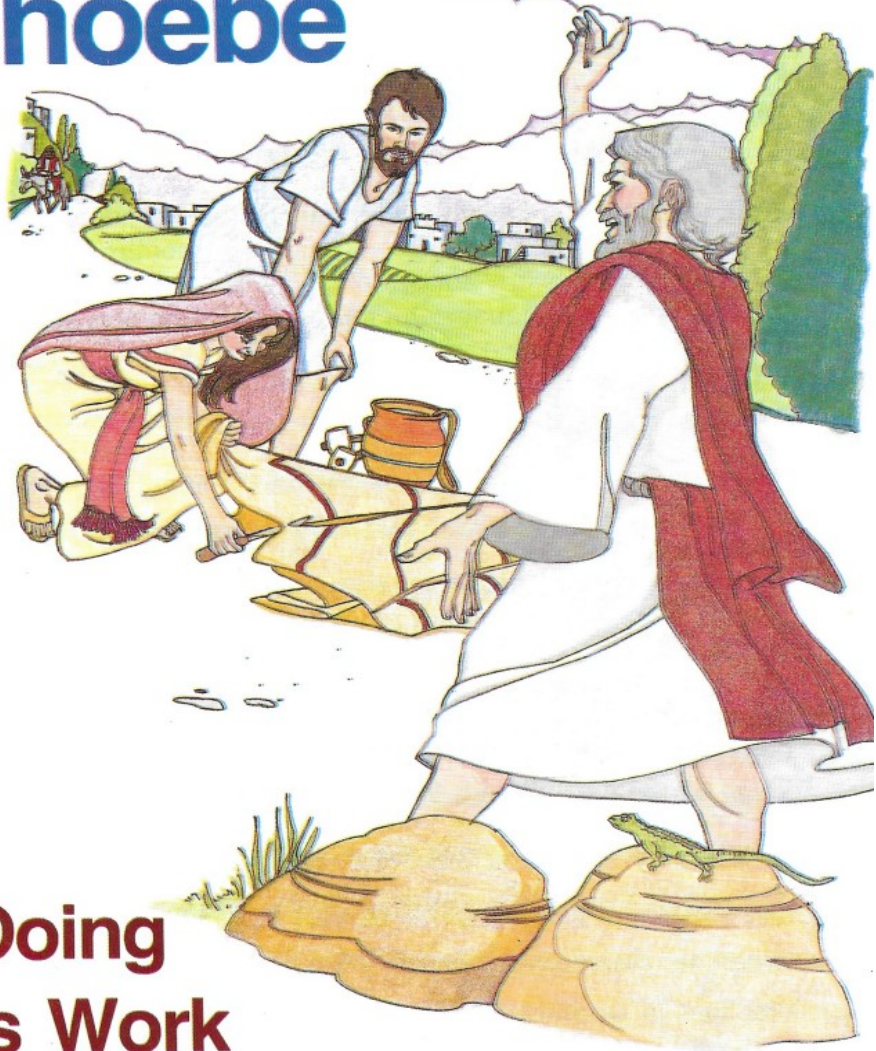


We Believe: **Special People of the Church / 4**

Priscilla, Aquila and Phoebe



Women Doing the Lord's Work

"He's coming, Priscilla, our friend Paul is coming." Aquila put aside the tent he was mending and ran to greet Paul, kissing him as was the custom among

Christians of that time. Priscilla ran to her house to get some water for their guest. She knew he would be hot and thirsty from his long journey.

After they had greeted each other and Paul had been refreshed, he said, "How is the tent business?"

"Too busy as usual," Priscilla replied. "We're glad you're here to share the work."

"And the profits," added Aquilla. "A missionary has to live, Paul. You look as if you haven't eaten well in days. Don't you spend any money on yourself?"

"Of course I do," Paul said. "But the needs of our communities are great. Forget about me. How is the church here?"

"We meet regularly for worship and instruction in our house. Our numbers are growing each week. Since your first visit, we have been winning more and more people to Jesus."

"Yes. A while ago a man named Apollos came to us because he had heard of our belief in the Lord. He had been getting information about Jesus from here and there. Many things he told us were not true or were partially wrong. We spent many days with him correcting his errors. Apollos is a strong and faithful follower now and has gone off to teach people on his own. He has written us several times and says he has found many, many people who want to know about Jesus and believe in him." Priscilla's face was becoming flushed with excitement.

"You have done very well since we first met in Corinth. Your trip to Rome was very successful and now your work here in Ephesus is showing great success." Paul was proud of his friends. Their faith in the Lord shone in all they did. Their love for each other and their love for Jesus was the source of their

happiness even when times were hard.

"I have a letter to send to Rome. I must keep in touch with the church there. I need a reliable, trustworthy messenger to carry it to Rome. Can you suggest someone?" Paul was concerned. Many times Christians were put in prison and physically harmed. He himself had suffered both. He did not want his messenger to be hurt, but the letter had to be taken to Rome.

"Yes, we know someone just right for such a task. Her name is Phoebe. She has been working with us for many months now. Her work is exemplary and her faith cannot be questioned. She serves the tables of the Lord each time our community meets for worship, and ministers to the needy in our group, making sure all are fed, clothed, and housed. As a woman she may not meet with much difficulty traveling to Rome. No one would suspect a woman of carrying such an important letter." Both Priscilla and Aquilla agreed on the choice, and Phoebe was summoned.

She was a young woman with a pleasant smile and manner. Her faith in the Lord shone in her face. Her pure heart impressed everyone who met her, Paul saw that Priscilla's recommendation was true.

"I have a task for you," he said. "It involves great risk."

"I am ready to do anything you wish to help spread the Good News."

Paul told her of the work she must do and she set off immediately to get ready for the journey.

Through the work of people such as Paul, Priscilla, Aquilla, Phoebe, and Apollos, the new church flourished, growing to what it is today.

Put these events in order:

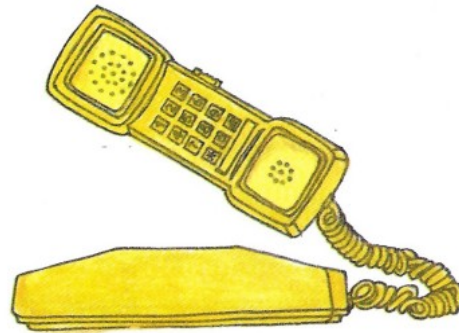
- ___ Paul met Priscilla and Aquilla.
- ___ Paul sent Phoebe to Rome.
- ___ Priscilla and Aquilla met Apollos.
- ___ Apollos taught others about Jesus.
- ___ Priscilla and Aquilla founded a church in their home.

Being a Saint

Check the qualities Priscilla, Aquilla, and Phoebe had which helped make them special in the eyes of God:

- ___ They were careless.
- ___ They were hard workers.
- ___ They cared that others knew about Jesus.
- ___ They let their lives be used by the Lord to do his work.
- ___ They made a lot of money.
- ___ They were good teachers and made sure what they taught was correct.
- ___ They loved Jesus and people.

Write your ideas here:



Have you ever played "telephone?" If you have not, try it now. It goes like this: Everyone sits in a circle. The "starter" whispers something once into the ear of the person on the right. That person whispers it to the next person, and so forth until everyone has heard it. The last person says what he has heard out loud. Sometimes what the "starter" said is exactly what the last person says; sometimes it is totally different.

Why do the statements sometimes change? Why do people misunderstand others?

Session 4—Priscilla, Aquilla and Phoebe

Key Concepts

1. Priscilla and Aquilla shared in God's Kingdom by helping teach, and by establishing churches in Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus. (Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:2, 24-26; 1 Cor. 16:19)
2. Phoebe was entrusted by St. Paul to help minister to the needs of the church at Rome. (Rom. 16:1-2)
3. These people knew and loved Jesus through their association with St. Paul, and were important in spreading the Good News.
4. Priscilla, Aquilla, and Phoebe were ordinary people called to serve God.

Objectives

Students will

1. Recall the events in the lives of Priscilla, Aquilla,

and Phoebe by putting those events in chronological order.

2. Identify from a list those qualities these three early Christians had which enabled them to fulfill their missions.

3. Select from a list of statements those which are true about Christ.

Background for Teacher

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the only way to become a follower of his was through contact with those who knew him. St. Paul met Jesus in a dramatically revealing way (see Unit I, Session 3 on Paul's conversion, and Acts 9, 22, 26). Then he set off to establish churches, and pockets of Christianity throughout the Middle East. He met and made friends in these areas. Among his friends were Priscilla and Aquilla who were tent makers (as was Paul). Paul supported himself as he traveled by making and repairing tents. Whenever he was in Corinth,

he stayed with Priscilla and Aquilla. They were eager to learn about our Lord and became so knowledgeable that Paul entrusted them with a mission like his own—establishing a church. Among the experiences they had was meeting Apollos and teaching him about Jesus. Then Apollos, too, became a missionary, working to spread the Good News in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. They had a church in their home in Rome.

Very little is known about Phoebe. She is mentioned briefly in Acts. From this small reference we know that she probably helped in a Christian community with the distribution of the daily allotment of bread and other supplies. Often new Christians of this era formed communes and pooled all their resources. Recalling the story of St. Stephen will help you review how and why an order of special servants of the church was established (see Acts 6:1-6).

The story of Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts 5:1-10, will also give you background information on this era. From what we know directly about Phoebe and her time, we can safely assume that she was a highly respected member of her community, knew the teachings of Christ very well, and was trustworthy. St. Paul gave her the responsibility of carrying his epistle to Rome and helping to establish the church there. (For more information on these three, St. Paul, St. Stephen, and Apollos, see the pamphlets *About the Apostles and Paul*, *About Women in the Bible*, *Saints for Children from the Tradition of the Armenian Church*, Bible dictionaries and children's Bibles).

Materials Needed

- Maps of Paul's missions
- Deacon's robes
- Pictures of deacons and others who serve in the Armenian Church
- Bible
- Bible Dictionary

Procedure

1. Have on display maps of Paul's journeys, deacon's robes, pictures of deacons, and other workers in the early Church, and an early Church time line, if available, to put these events in order.

Greet students and let them look over materials until you are ready to start class.

Suggestion: Prayer of St. John Chrysostom. "Be with me always according to your unfailing promise and establish the words of your divine and irrevocable commandments. For you are the God of mercy and of compassion and of love toward men and the giver of all good things." Or: "O Lord, let me know your word and teach it that all who hear your word may come to know and love you as I do." (15 min.)

2. Introduce the session by telling students that often when we learn something we want to share it by

teaching it to others. Ask the children to recall who St. Paul was and what he did. (If they do not say it, bring out the fact that Paul introduced others to Jesus and taught them about him.) If children have difficulty opening up to the discussion, you may start them by asking:

- Who are your great grandparents? Who told you about them?
- Who is Abraham Lincoln? How did you learn about him? Do you know anything important that he said?

Conclude the brief discussion by announcing that in today's story they're going to read about three people who were very important in the early Church. They never met Jesus directly, but learned about him from St. Paul. Then they shared what they knew with others. In this way they helped establish the Kingdom of God on earth. (10 min.)

3. Have students open their texts to page 103, and read the story of Priscilla, Aquilla, and Phoebe.

Do the follow-up activity putting the story in order.

Discuss the common qualities these people and St. Paul had that enabled them to complete their work and serve God. Use the list in the text as the focal point of the discussion, crossing out those character traits and abilities that were not necessary for service. Add to the list any other qualities the students may suggest. (15 min.)

4. Have students play "telephone" as described on page 105. Discuss. (10 min.)

5. Put away texts and bring students' attention back to the deacon's robes and pictures of servants of the early Church. Have them tell what they know about what the deacon in their church does. Tell them about the role of the deacon in the early church: That deacons helped serve the tables of the Lord and helped bring others into the church (evangelical work). Refer to sources in the Bible and Bible dictionary, about the different ministries of this period. (10 min.)

End with a prayer suggested by the students, or Hayr Mer.

Extending the Lesson

1. Have students spend time in church observing the role of deacon.
2. Have them write their own epistle—a letter to a friend telling them about Jesus.
3. Have them select a Bible story to tell to a Nursery student. Prepare it now or for homework and tell it to the child next week if arrangements can be made with the Nursery teacher.