

# Partners in God's Family

## Paul and Women

**G**ROWING UP I heard many stories about Paul's missionary journeys and knew that he traveled with Barnabas and Silas, Timothy and Mark. But I never heard that Priscilla and Aquila also accompanied Paul and were stationed in Ephesus to encourage and instruct the church there. Yet, as Acts 18 makes clear, this couple played a central role in Paul's ministry. They led the church that met in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19) and were able to correct the charismatic teacher, Apollos. Biblical scholars note that placing Priscilla's name first is unusual and may indicate that she had a higher social status than her husband. Certainly, they functioned as a team, with both playing vital ministry roles.

Unfortunately, this aspect of Paul's ministry is often overlooked. It is true that he wrote several passages urging restrictions on women's participation in public worship. Yet, he also worked with women and included them in his evangelistic efforts. He trusted Phoebe with his letter to the believers in Rome and urged them to welcome her as a fellow saint and co-worker. He also included nine other women in those greetings, and expressed warm appreciation for their work. In Philippi, he and Silas witnessed to a group of women and then stayed with Lydia, who convinced her whole household to be baptized.

So why did Paul write such negative passages about women in leadership? While this

*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who  
work with me  
in Christ Jesus,  
and who risked their necks for my  
life, to whom not only I give  
thanks, but also all the  
churches of the Gentiles.*

(ROMANS 16:3-4)

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