

# IN THE WORK

A Five-Day Devotional from the Story of Priscilla

Priscilla is easy to walk past. She doesn't have a dramatic conversion story. She doesn't perform a miracle or deliver a prophecy or show up at a critical moment in the way the more famous figures of the New Testament do. She appears in six verses across three different letters, always alongside her husband Aquila, always doing something quiet and practical and costly.

And yet Paul calls her a fellow worker. He says she and Aquila risked their necks for his life. He greets them before almost anyone else in one of the more personal chapters of his letters. The church in Corinth knows her name. The church in Ephesus met in her home. Apollos, probably one of the more gifted communicators in the early church was taught by her.

Priscilla is what faithfulness looks like when nobody is watching. She built a life that became her ministry.

## DAY ONE

### The Ordinary Beginning

**Acts 18:1–3** “After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.”

The story of Priscilla begins in a workshop.

Not a synagogue, not a vision, not a moment of dramatic calling. Paul arrives in Corinth, finds a Jewish couple who share his trade, and moves in with them. They make tents together. That's how it starts.

There is something I love about the sheer ordinariness of this beginning. Luke doesn't tell us that Priscilla had a profound encounter with God before Paul arrived. He doesn't tell us she was already known for her faith or her teaching or her hospitality. He tells us she was a tentmaker, recently displaced from Rome because of an imperial edict, living in Corinth with her husband when the apostle Paul knocked on the door.

And she let him in.

In a shared trade, a shared home, an ordinary Tuesday in Corinth where a man needed a place to work and she had one.

We have a tendency to think that significant ministry begins with significant moments. That the people who end up mattering to the kingdom of God knew, early and clearly, that they were going to matter. Priscilla's story seems to refute that narrative. The workshop came before everything else. The ordinary came before the significant. And the ordinary was not a waiting room for the real thing it was the real thing, already in motion.

If you are in a season that feels ordinary. If your faith is being lived out in a workshop rather than on a stage. If the work you are doing feels too small to matter, too unglamorous to be what God actually had in mind for you. Priscilla made tents. She opened her home. She showed up consistently in the ordinary texture of her days. And the early church was shaped by it.

The ordinary is not the obstacle to ministry. For most people, it is the location of it.

— Priscilla's story begins in a workshop, not a calling. Where in the ordinary texture of your daily life; your work, your home, your neighborhood, is God already at work in ways you might be overlooking because they don't feel significant enough?

— She opened her home to Paul before she knew what that would lead to. Is there an act of ordinary hospitality or availability that you've been holding back because the timing doesn't feel right or the significance isn't clear? What would it look like to simply open the door?

— What is the difference between waiting for a significant moment to begin significant ministry and recognizing that the ordinary moments are already the ministry? Where do you need to make that shift in perspective?

## DAY TWO

# The Risk

**Romans 16:3–4** “Greet 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.”

Paul writes this from a distance, from Corinth, sending greetings to Rome and the phrase he uses has really stayed with me since the first time I read it. They risked their necks for my life.

This is not a metaphor. Paul is not using colorful language to describe a minor inconvenience. At some point between the tentmaker's workshop in Corinth and the writing of this letter, Priscilla and Aquila put themselves in physical danger to protect the apostle Paul. We don't know exactly what happened, Luke doesn't record it, nor does Paul elaborate, but whatever it was, it was serious enough that Paul mentions it years later, still grateful, with the whole network of Gentile churches offering thanks alongside him.

They risked their necks. Plural. Both of them. Together.

There is something important about the way Paul describes their partnership throughout his letters. It is always Priscilla and Aquila, or Aquila and Priscilla, always together, always named as a unit. Their ministry was not parallel. It was joint. The risk they took for Paul was not one spouse's decision that the other reluctantly accepted. It was a shared decision, made together, by two people who had built a shared life around a shared mission.

Partnership in the gospel, at its depth, is not simply agreement in theology. It is not showing up to the same church and believing the same things and sitting in the same seat. It is the willingness to absorb cost for someone else's mission. To put something real on the line; comfort, safety, reputation, resources, because you have decided that the advance of the gospel matters more than your own protection.

That kind of partnership is built over time. It doesn't arrive fully formed. Priscilla and Aquila had been making tents with Paul, living with Paul, sharing meals with Paul, before they were in a position to risk their necks for him. The relationship preceded the sacrifice. The ordinary days in the workshop were the formation that made the costly moment possible.

And notice what Paul says about the scope of the gratitude. Not only I give thanks, he writes, but all the churches of the Gentiles. One act of costly partnership by two tentmakers in an unnamed crisis produced a ripple of gratitude across the entire Gentile church network. They could not have known, when they made their decision, how far its effects would reach. They just knew Paul needed them. And they showed up.

— Partnership in the gospel involves absorbing cost for someone else's mission. Is there someone in your life whose mission God is asking you to invest in? Not just with encouragement, but with something that actually costs you? What is holding you back?

— Priscilla and Aquila’s willingness to risk for Paul grew out of years of ordinary shared life. How are you investing in the relationships that might one day be called upon for something costly? Where are you building the depth that makes sacrifice possible?

— They couldn’t have known the scope of the gratitude their act would produce. How does that reframe the way you think about small acts of costly faithfulness, the ones that feel too minor to matter, too local to reach very far?

### DAY THREE

## The Correction

**Acts 18:24–26** “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He 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. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Apollos is impressive. Luke doesn’t soften the description. Eloquent. Competent in the Scriptures. Fervent in spirit. Bold in the synagogue. He is, by every visible measure, a gifted communicator doing significant work.

And he has a gap in his understanding. He knows the baptism of John, the preparatory message, the call to repentance, the announcement of the one who is coming but he doesn’t yet have the full picture. He doesn’t know about the death and resurrection of Jesus, the giving of the Spirit, the

fullness of what the gospel means. He is teaching what he knows accurately. He just doesn't know enough yet.

Priscilla and Aquila hear him. And they take him aside.

Not publicly. Not in the synagogue where he has just been speaking boldly. Not in a way that would embarrass him or undermine his credibility or make a scene of his incomplete understanding. They take him aside, privately, relationally, personally and explain to him the way of God more accurately.

And Apollos receives it. He doesn't defend himself. He doesn't appeal to his credentials or his boldness or the crowds who have been responding to his teaching. He listens to two tentmakers, in private, and his understanding of the gospel grows.

There is a great deal of wisdom embedded in the way Priscilla handles this moment. The correction is given in the form most likely to be received privately, without an audience, in the context of relationship. It is not issued from a position of superiority. It is extended from a place of shared investment in the same mission. We want what you're doing to be as effective as possible. Here is what you're missing.

And the result is that Apollos becomes more accurate. He goes on to Achaia, where he is a significant help to those who believe through grace, and where he powerfully refutes those who challenge the faith publicly. The private correction by two tentmakers in Ephesus made the public ministry of one of the early church's most gifted leaders more effective.

Faithful partnership sometimes looks like this. Not affirmation and encouragement, though those matter. But the harder, more costly gift of honest, private, relationally grounded correction offered without ego and received without defensiveness that makes someone better than they would have been without it.

— Priscilla corrects Apollos privately and relationally rather than publicly and hierarchically. Is there someone in your life who needs a honest, caring word that you've been holding back? Either because the timing feels wrong or because you're not sure how it will land? What would it look like to take them aside the way Priscilla did?

— Apollos receives the correction without defensiveness, despite being gifted and bold. Where in your own life are you most resistant to correction? What does Apollos' response challenge you toward?

— The private correction made the public ministry more effective. How does that reframe the way you think about the value of honest, relational accountability in your own faith community? Who in your life is playing that role for you?

#### DAY FOUR

## The Long Faithfulness

**Romans 16:3–5** “Greet 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. Greet also the church in their house.”

Priscilla appears in three different cities in the New Testament.

Corinth, where she and Aquila are making tents when Paul arrives. Ephesus, where they go with Paul and stay on after he leaves, where they hear Apollos in the synagogue and take him aside to teach him more accurately. Rome, where Paul writes to greet them at the beginning of Romans 16, where the church again meets in their home.

Three cities. Years apart. The same names, doing the same things. Working. Opening their home. Investing in the people around them. Absorbing the cost of partnership. Staying connected to the mission wherever the mission takes them.

There is no record of a breakthrough moment in Priscilla's ministry. No single sermon that changed everything, no dramatic healing, no vision in the night. What there is instead is a consistent pattern, traced across years and miles, of a woman who kept showing up wherever the gospel needed her and kept doing the quiet, costly, relational work of building the church.

The church met in her home. That detail appears in both Romans 16 and 1 Corinthians 16. It is not incidental. In the first century, before there were church buildings, the home was the church. The person who opened their home for the gathering of believers was not providing a venue they were providing the community itself. Priscilla and Aquila's home was the place where the church in Ephesus existed. And then the church in Rome. They carried it with them.

This is what faithfulness over time produces. Not a legacy built on a single heroic moment, but a life so consistently oriented toward the mission that the mission keeps happening wherever life is being lived. Priscilla didn't build a platform. She built a life. And the life kept producing the thing she was most committed to, city after city, year after year, without anyone writing a book about it.

Paul calls her a fellow worker. Not a supporter. Not a helper. A fellow worker. The word he uses, *synergos* is the same word he uses for Timothy and Titus and his closest ministry partners. Priscilla is not in the supporting cast of Paul's ministry. She is in the same category as the people he trusted most.

She got there by showing up. Consistently. Across years. In ordinary places.

— Priscilla's faithfulness is traced across years and cities, not built on a single moment. What does consistent, unglamorous faithfulness look like in your life right now and are you treating it as the real thing, or as a placeholder until something more significant comes along?

— The church met in her home. She made the community possible by opening the place she lived. What does it look like to open your life, your home, your time, your relational world, in a way that makes the community of faith more possible for the people around you?

— Paul calls Priscilla a fellow worker the same category as his closest ministry partners. How do you think about your own role in the mission of the gospel? Is it primarily one of supporting from the margins, or active partnership at the center? What would need to change for it to become the latter?

## DAY FIVE

# The Life Becomes the Ministry

**Philippians 4:3** “Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

Priscilla didn't build a platform. She built a life.

That sentence has been at the center of her story all week, and it's the summary of everything this series has been pointing toward.

We live in a moment when the metrics of significance are visible and quantifiable. Followers. Views. Reach. Impact. We have built an entire vocabulary around the idea that faithful ministry produces something measurable, something that can be pointed to, something that demonstrates that the investment was worth it. And there is nothing wrong with fruitfulness. Jesus talked about it constantly. But the way fruitfulness tends to get defined in our cultural, as platform, as influence, as the number of people who know your name, is not the way Priscilla's story defines it.

Priscilla's name appears six times in the New Testament. She never preaches a sermon that gets recorded. She never writes a letter that gets preserved. The church historian Eusebius doesn't dedicate a chapter to her. And yet the early church is different because she existed. Apollos is more accurate because she took him aside. The churches in Ephesus and Rome had a home to meet in

because she opened hers. Paul is alive, and the mission continues, in part because she and Aquila put their lives on the line for him.

The life became the ministry. Not because she planned it that way, not because she was building toward a legacy, but because she consistently oriented her ordinary life, her home, her trade, her relationships, her willingness to absorb cost toward the one thing that mattered most.

This is the thread that has run through all four weeks of this series.

Elizabeth waited for decades in ordinary faithfulness and became the first person in the New Testament to recognize the Messiah. She didn't plan that. She just kept showing up.

The Canaanite woman pressed toward Jesus through three nos with nothing to offer but her need and her refusal to redirect that need anywhere else. She didn't have credentials. She had persistence.

Martha served faithfully, got corrected honestly, kept walking toward Jesus with her broken and bewildered heart, and ended up making one of the clearest confessions of who Jesus is in any of the four Gospels. She didn't arrive at that confession by having an easy life. She arrived there by staying in the conversation through the hard one.

And Priscilla opened a workshop, opened a home, opened her life to the mission of the gospel and the early church was shaped by it in ways that are still being felt.

None of them had a platform. All of them had a life. And the life, offered consistently and faithfully to the God who gave it, became more than any of them could have produced on purpose.

This is what God does with ordinary people who show up. He doesn't need the platform. He needs the availability. He doesn't need the impressive credentials. He needs the open door. He doesn't need the polished performance. He needs the honest, persistent, sometimes bewildered, often unglamorous, always costly faithfulness of someone who has decided that his mission matters more.

— Priscilla’s life became the ministry, not because she planned a legacy, but because she consistently oriented her ordinary life toward the mission. Looking at your own life: what would it look like for life to become the ministry? What would need to be reoriented?

— Looking back across all four women in this series; Elizabeth’s long faithfulness, the Canaanite woman’s persistence, Martha’s honest journey from distraction to devotion, Priscilla’s ordinary partnership, which one has spoken most directly to where you are right now? What is it saying?

— None of these women did everything. None of them had unlimited resources or perfect circumstances or a clear view of where their faithfulness would lead. They did what they could, with what they had, where they were. What is the “what you could” in your current season? And what is stopping you from doing it?

### **A Note to Close the Series**

Four women. Four stories. Four different expressions of what it looks like to follow Jesus in the middle of a real life.

Elizabeth, who waited longer than most of us will, and discovered that God had been listening the whole time.

The Canaanite woman, who pressed through every no with an argument built not on her worth but on his abundance.

Martha, who was corrected, kept walking toward Jesus anyway, and became someone who could say yes, Lord at a tomb.

And Priscilla, who opened a workshop and a home and a life, and let the gospel do with it whatever it needed to.

None of them are presented as people who had everything figured out. All of them are presented as people who kept showing up. And the God who met them in their waiting and their pressing and their grief and their ordinary work is the same God who is present in yours.

They did what they could. So can we.