

Acts 18:1-11: Yearbooks, Dreams, and Jesus

Introduction: Yearbook

Ok good morning Open up your bibles to the New Testament to the book of Acts and we are going to be in chapter 18. We've got a lot to do. The best way I can describe this chapter to you is that it is like a yearbook for the first church in the city of Corinth.

Anybody remember yearbook photo day growing up? For me it was a special day where I picked out my favorite clothes and got my hair did up nice and...no. it was the worst. Anybody else hate yearbook photo day? Starched button up shirts so you couldn't wrinkle it even if you tried, and of course fresh middle school acne always appeared on yearbook day. In fact, Middle school yearbooks are really a huge conspiracy between parents and teachers to create blackmail to be used against you the rest of your life. You've probably blocked that out of your mind. Let me help you recall how horrible it was.

SHOW PHOTOS listening for my cues to go through them:
1. Todd Unzicker 2. Chuck Reed 3. Rick Langston 4. J.D. Greear 5. Spence Shelton 6. Courtney Little Shelton 7. Side by Side of Spence & Courtney

A yearbook is a snapshot of what life was all about that year right? I want today to be an opportunity for you to zoom out from your day to day. If we were to take a snapshot of your life right now to put in a yearbook, what would we put in there? What are you giving your life to? As you hear the story of this church I want you to zoom out to think about what you are giving your life to.

Acts 18 introduces us to several people, we see what they were remembered for, and most importantly we see a snapshot of how God accomplishes his plan, which is to make disciples. This chapter represents about 18 months in the early life of the Corinthian church and here's the main take away: **God accomplishes his plan through everyday people.** (REPEAT)

That's what this "yearbook" is trying to tell you. There is a God who has a plan (make disciples) and his intention is to use everyday people to carry it out.

We are going to read Acts 18 and then see three (maybe four) signs to know if you are living God's plan for your life

1. After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

If you've spent much time in the bible you recognize Corinth because that is where the Corinthians live. The apostle Paul wrote two letters to the Corinthian Church that appear in the new testament. Today we are seeing the beginnings of this church that was so important to Paul.

2 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.

The first who show up in the Corinthian yearbook are Aquilla & Priscilla. They've been literally kicked out of their country under religious persecution and arrived in Corinth as refugees. That's where God begins. Two refugees. Think about this: How God is going to use them BEGINS with the total upheaval of their lives. When life looked totally finished and they were just in survival mode in this new city, God was just beginning to use them in his plan. That needs to be encouragement and a challenge to some of you today. He takes what looks like a dead end and uses it as a beginning. Are you in a dead end situation? Life not turning out how you expected? Not getting the promotion? losing your job? get dumped again? Didn't get into that school? Are you literally a refugee like these two? GREAT NEWS! Your plan might look like a dead end but God is just getting started with you! God uses everyday people with everyday problems and everyday situations to carry forward the greatest hope in the world!! And Its not just that he can use you, its that he plans to use you.

And he went to see them, **3** and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. **4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

They made tents during the week, talked about Jesus at night, and then on his day off he went and preached. The

life of a church planter is not that glamorous.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. **6** And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Finally the interns have arrived! Now Paul can devote more time to evangelizing. He puts down the tents and gets to it everyday.

Real quick "Your blood be on your own heads." This could come across as something an angry fundamentalist says. Share Christ with your friends, and if they don't believe, just look at them and scream "YOUR BLOOD BE ON YOUR OWN HEADS." Haven't seen that one in any evangelism training tools lately.

Lest you think Paul is lacking compassion here, remember these are the same Jews Paul longs to see come to faith. But he knows all he *can* do is share the gospel with them. Paul feels a burden that unless he shares the gospel with them, he in some way shares in the guilt of their condemnation. Two chapters later he says "I testify that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Paul knows he cannot control someone's response. Jonah 2.9 tells us salvation belongs to the Lord. not Paul. But God's plan for him is to declare Christ to them. That's paul's yearbook bio: Preached to jews & gentiles to follow Jesus.

Do you carry that sense of urgency? That other people's souls are at stake and so you must share the gospel with them? That urgency in sharing the gospel with those we love is what we must take from Paul here.

7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius (TISH-US) Justus, a worshiper of God (means a gentile who was a christian). His house was next door to the synagogue. **8** Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

Next two pictures in the Corinthian yearbook are Tishus and Crispus. A gentile believer and a Jewish believer. Tishus puts his neck on the line by housing Paul, and Crispus does the same just by being a synagogue ruler who comes to faith. Both of these guys risk a lot. Crispus especially is putting his job on the line by believing in Christ. Tishus is putting his neck out by housing a guy that isn't very popular. There is an angry Jewish mob building and its going to come after the guy in his guest room. Their bios might read "gave up reputation or risked his career to follow Jesus."

But the verse ends with...MANY Corinthians believed! This is the whole point of Acts 18...and really the book of Acts. God doing extraordinary things through everyday people. I think what God wants to show us in this chapter is regardless of your background, your race, and your profession, God has a plan for you and it ends with people believing and getting baptized.

Even Paul, who we often put on a pedestal, was an everyday guy. Look at the next three verses:

9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, **10** for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." **11** And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. The first thing God says to Paul is "do not be afraid." Do you know why? Because Paul was Afraid!! In his first letter to this Corinthian church Paul reminded them of how he came to them "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling."

*[1] And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. [2] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3] **And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,** [4] and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2.1-5*

Paul was afraid! He has already been beaten & rejected and he's going to be beaten and rejected again. And...this is very important...Paul is an everyday guy like us! He isn't Superman. He's scared of what's coming for him. Which should encourage you. Paul is an everyday guy with a nine to five tent making job, trying to serve God during a few of his free hours on Sunday, and a fear of what following Jesus

will get him into. When it comes to faith in Jesus Christ there are no extraordinary people! Just everyday people that God does extraordinary things through!! And he has a plan for you and I too!

The most important thing you gotta see here is something we will circle back to. And that is how God speaks to Paul. He gives him two promises and a command and they are all for you and I today.

What this entire chapter (we'll get to more of it in a minute) is pointing you to is very simply that God accomplishes his plan through everyday people. His plan: make disciples. His tools: you and me. blue-collar, white-collar, red-neck collar, neighbors, clergy & interns. People with pretty stable career paths and people whose lives have been totally flipped upside down. All with one thing in common: They chose to live out God's plan for their lives. **That's their yearbook theme: Trading our plan for God's plan.** So here's the question you should leave with today & discuss with your small group if you are getting together this week: **What plan are you living for right now?** What plan is guiding your decisions, and influencing your relationships? Some plan is, the question is which one. I want to look back through this chapter and show you three signs that help you evaluate whether or not God's plan is your plan.

3 Signs you are living out God's plan for your life

1. You are investing your life into others, not yourself (currently 7 minutes)

Paul moves in with Aquilla and Priscilla. He works with them, and we know from other places in scripture he develops a deep friendship with them. That's why he takes them with him to Ephesus when he leaves in verse 18. By the time he writes his first letter to the Corinthian church, Aquilla & Priscilla are leading a house church in their home! He mentions them in 3 letters.

And then Aquilla & Priscilla turn around and invest their life into a guy named Apollos who shows up at the end of the chapter. He was preaching about Jesus but didn't yet know how the story ended. So when Priscilla & Aquila heard him they pulled him aside and "explained the things of God more accurately to them."

We don't know if it was one conversation or if it was months. But they took their time away from their tent-building to pass on to this guy what they had learned from Paul. That's a sacrifice. If you don't build tents you don't get paid. But God put someone in front of them and because God's plan was driving their decision making they went for it. God's plan: make disciples of all nations. So, that's what they went to do.

Great little thing here: Remember that one little note about Timothy the intern arriving in verse 5? Timothy is

watching Paul pass to Aquilla & Priscilla who then pass to Apollos. Sometime later timothy gets a letter from Paul that we know as 2 Timothy and in 2:2 Paul says “what you have learned from me entrust into faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Timothy, what you saw us doing, go do it! THAT’S THE PLAN! GIVE YOUR LIFE TO TEACHING PEOPLE WHO WILL TEACH OTHERS! PASS ALONG THE FAITH!

~~Think about yearbook—How you are remembered is directly related to who & what you invested your time & energy into.~~

Cole McClaughlin decided me and about 8 other guys would be worth two years of his time and energy. He Came to our nasty duplex every week to pass along the faith. He didn’t know I’d meet alex or josh or Robert and seek to pass along the faith to them. He just gave up his plan for God’s plan and for him that meant giving his time and energy to passing on the faith to a bunch of college guys.

Who are you passing along the faith to? Some obvious applications:

- a. Get in a small group. maybe lead one. We are recruiting and training leaders all summer so that we can start more groups this fall so that you can jump into Gods plan for your life and pass along the gospel to others.

- b. Come invest in the next generation. Our kids, ESPECIALLY our students, need adults that spend their formative years alongside of them. Passing along what God has taught them.
- c. PARENTS: What plan are you living for? Want to know? Ask your kids “what are the important things in our family?” Then take a deep breath...and remember that Moses was a doubter, king david was an adulterer, the disciples were thick-headed, and Paul was a scaredy cat and remember that God is writing a perfect story with imperfect people.

QUALIFICATION: If you are wondering if you are able, the answer is: are you willing to live for God’s plan in your life and then pass along what he does in your life to others? THAT’S IT. That’s discipleship. I’m choosing to give my life over to what God wants to do with it. To make my decisions and build my relationships how he calls me to according to his words...and I’m going to take you along for that ride.

For me middle school ministry is the most daunting thing on the planet. You know the secret of middle school ministry? deodorant. But the other secret is that you are just giving them what God is giving you. And if that sounds scary then perfect, that leads us to our second point.

2. **You find security in Christ, not in your plan (vv 9-10)**

9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, **10** for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”

God gives Paul two promises: Presence & security. I am with you = presence. No one will harm you = security.

In The gospel, you have the same promises God gave to Paul. You have his presence: Jesus promised in Matthew 28 to be with you always. God’s holy spirit is given to every believer and Christ says he will be with you and in you¹. You not only have his presence, you have security. Ephesians 1 tells us that when you believe the gospel you are “sealed with Christ” until he comes back. And then Paul, who is hearing this promise, will later say in Romans 8 “*what can separate us from the love of Christ? [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

It’s like Paul is remembering that moment in Corinth where God spoke to him as he’s writing this promise to the other believers. He is passing on to them what God gave him.

Maybe you are in here today and you know as I’m talking you’ve been searching after that kind of security but you’ve been running from his presence.

Illustration: My son and I were at a friends house watching the world cup game against Belgium and my friend has a nice little dog. My son usually not scared of dogs was surprisingly skiddish. And so we get in the house and hes beside me and the dog comes running up and my son takes off away from me & the dog yelling “daddy, daddy, daddy.” So I had to tell him “son I cant protect you if you run away from me.” “The safest place for you is with me.” Some of you are like this with God. Life has you scared of something and you are running away from the one person who can save you from it. You need to come to him who is greater than all our fears. Spurgeon said “the fear of God kills all other fears in our hearts.”

The security you need is in Christ. But the problem is you are running See you problem is sin... You need to rest in his salvation for you. He separated himself from the father so you could never be separated from him again. That’s what God is reminding Paul of here. And its what you need to hear today.

3. **You are risking enough to need God’s help (vv 9-10)**
These two promises are attached to something though aren’t they? Most of us just want those two promises that God is with us and he will protect us. But God never

¹ John 14.17

gives us his presence and security without calling us to action. We want him to...we want to hear "I am with you, no harm will come to you...now go do what you want to do." BUT he never says that. God never gives us his presence and security without calling us to action.²

To Paul: GO ON SPEAKING...FOR (that little word in verse 10) **the reason** why I am with you and no one will harm you here in Corinth: because I have many in this city who are my people. God had a plan for Paul. God's provision for Paul was for his plan for Paul.

So here's my question: Is your commitment to the gospel causing you to risk anything? I'm not saying you have to become a martyr, but I am telling you that God always calls his people to circumstances that require them to trust him. Can you point to anywhere in your life where its going to take God's help to accomplish his plan for your life? Where you are putting yourself out there? If not, you may just be living your plan with a religious candy coating on top. Many people are.

Are you in a place where you are saying "God, this is what you've called me to so I'm stepping out here but I don't see any way this happens unless you provide. And that scares me, but I'm trusting you"

"God I know I'm the only Christian in this company of

² Joshua 1.9, Gideon, Great commission

30 people and I don't know where to start but I'm trusting you and willing to put myself out there because your plan is now my plan. I don't know what it means and that scares me but I'm in!"

There are people groups around the world who have never heard the name of Jesus and God's plan is to reach them. In Pauls day and in ours the gospel almost always goes forward through everyday people first, then the pastors come in and help build the church. Is God calling you to be a part of his plan somewhere else? in another city or country and you are hesitant because you are afraid? GOOD!! So was Paul! Remember that he is with you and you have security in Christ! His plan is so much better than yours anyways.

One of my good friends here is in his early 60s now and he tells me regularly that he wants his greatest days of faith to be ahead of him, not behind him. Those who've been redeemed by Christ are never done trusting him for what is next.

It's there, when you are living for his plan, that you will experience his presence and security.

(MUSIC)

Listen, The great testimony of the church is that God has saved us. Everyone in here who is a Christian that understands the gospel would say "I am a miracle of

God's grace." God saved me and sometimes I cannot believe it. Here's what I'm telling you: God didn't do that just for you. The way we say it a lot around here is he didn't just save you from something he saved you for something. For his plan. To make disciples all around the world.

What plan are you living for? What next step is God calling you to? Maybe its simply trusting him for salvation and you've never done so. Maybe its investing your life into other believers here in our church family. Maybe its stepping out in a conversation with a co-worker or friend or family member trusting that God's plan is more important than your plan with them. Maybe its leveraging your skill set for God's glory somewhere else. I don't know what it is but I know God accomplishes his plan through everyday people who give up their plan for his.

BENCH

Now I'm going to skip all the way down to verse 24 to continue the story. from 12 – 23 basically Paul gets mobbed but gets his life spared. Another Jewish leader who became a Christian, Sosthenes, is beaten for his belief. Then Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus, dropped them off there and kept going all over the Mediterranean strengthening the disciples.

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. **25** 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 was smart and a gifted teacher. One of those guys you hated because he didn't have to study but still made straight As. He wanted to use his intelligence and teaching gift to honor God. He was passionate about it. But he only knew about the baptism of John. Basically, he didn't have the full story about Jesus yet. He taught what he knew but he wasn't all the way there!

Lest we put him up on a pedestal Paul would refer to Apollos and himself...again in his letter to the Corinthians, saying

"what then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each...I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." 1 Corinthians 3.5-6

Apollos, like everyone else, is a servant. See God did not design the church as a social ladder to climb the ranks in. He gives us all the same value, different roles, to accomplish HIS PLAN by pointing one another to Jesus. Everyday people being used by an extraordinary God.

26 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.

Priscilla & Aquila (note the woman's name is first this time) went to Ephesus with Paul. This is their third home since they became followers of Christ. And they hear this guy teaching about Jesus but he missed that part about Jesus missing the messiah. So they step out YET AGAIN and put themselves out there. This time with a guy who is an eloquent teacher. They are doing what Paul did. It's risky for them but they step out where God has them and God uses it to train Apollos. Who then goes back over to Corinth and encourages the believers and leads more people to faith. He's becoming like a second Paul.

4. Your dreams are bigger than you

- a. No way Paul saw Apollos coming when he hung out with Priscilla & Aquilla. Wasn't about their potential. It was about the gospel going forward!
- b. Charles Spurgeon came to faith through a shoe salesman.
- c. **This is why this is so critical: God doesn't do things in your life just for you.** Everything he does in your life, is for accomplishing his plan which is making disciples all over the world.

Conclusion – Are you living for your plan or God's plan? You are going to be astonished at the story you get caught up in

when you give yours up. Its so much bigger, so much better than what you are dreaming for yourself.

- That moment where you got caught up in God's plan and wondered "how did I get here?" – probably phrased it..well, this is how I'm gonna die. – Daniel, Garret, & spence in Indian taxi.

Sermon Planning Meeting

- **RJ**
 - You'll spend 90k hours of your life at work – business insider
 - be strategic
 - God uses your circumstances to achieve his purposes (v.1-4)
 - God wants you to join him in his work (vv 18-21)
 - what do you worship? Jesus or Comfort?
 - God wants you to pour your life into someone else's (vv 24 – 28)
 - A&P took their time (tent time) to give to Apollos
 - CEO Graphic –
- **Todd**

- Stott Quote: many do not believe gospel not because it isn't true but because it seems trivial to Christians – get from Todd
- A&P could have been excused because they'd had a tough run. but they didn't see it that way. They went about the business of advancing the gospel
- Spurgeon – fear of God kills all other fears in our hearts
- **Chris Greene:** God builds his church:
 - **With ordinary people:** Leveraging your life for the gospel is not giving up your lifestyle but leveraging it to bring others in
 - **by tearing down our fears** (vv 9-10) – Chris's daughter runs away when scared by a dog – Chris yells – come back. How can I protect you if I'm not with you? – need a story like this
 - **Through Discipleship** (vs.24-28) –
- **Peter Park:** God builds his church with ordinary people
 - What God has done in the past is a promise for what he's going to do in the future
 - The promise of the presence of God compels us
 - quote: you can't out sacrifice God.
- **RICK** – the problem is not that you have a boring testimony, it's that you have a boring walk with Christ now. You were saved from eternal damnation and separation from God. not not not boring.

- **We are ordinary people speaking to ordinary people that God is going to use to do extraordinary things**
- **Bowe** – Did a bunch of outlines
 - an investment is worth it when what we get back is better than what we give away. do we believe that in disciple making?
 - Nobody is always a good disciple
 - Show the everydayness / ordinariness of Paul – he got scared & he had a work week. A surprise to our audience is that we are all ordinary.
- Daniel
 - Surprised by the guy he invested in becoming a missionary in Nepal. Could say the same about me becoming a pastor.
- Chris Papa
 - Make sure “ordinary / everyday” is empowering and not “talking down to”
 - Look backwards and acknowledge who has brought you to the point to where you are. Great chance to encourage some others who invested into you.

v.1 Bock – Corinth was a newer city (no building more than 100 yrs old). estimate 200k people: big for an ancient city,

larger than Athens, known for prosperity and licentiousness. "it was the Las Vegas of its time." What happens in corinth..

- makes sense based on the craziness of the church we read about in 1 corinthians

Sermon from Cov Life Church – Corinth 500k people, Ephesus 750k people (market of asia) yet Athens only 10k people.

v.2 – A&P left rome b/c of the civil disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (misspelling of Christus or Christ).

v.9-10 vision: do not be afraid: ref 1 Cor 2.4 – he was very afraid. he did not speak eloquently but with power from Spirit

Bock – Paul is in Athens a few weeks whereas he is in Corinth more than a year and a half, yet the accounts are about the same length.

Bock suggests common themes of Paul's journey: To the jew first, then to the gentile, divine direction and strength in the face of persecution, and the continued expansion of God's people.

Intro

and then after picture day you wait for months until... you all get your copy on yearbook arrival day...and...I know

somebody is already thinking this...you sign the yearbook! OH man... "Baby... I will love you forever and these past four...hours...we've been dating have changed my life. We'll always have home room..XOXO. And then there's the guy who leaves his legacy as the guy who signed your crack. 10 years later you look back and you..REMEMBER. The yearbook is a snapshot reminding you of what was happening during that time in your life. My senior year it had that little bio right below your picture. It zooms out from the everyday, it chronicles the big events and summarizes what your life was all about. Spence was on the soccer team, the baseball team, and in a bunch of clubs to make his college resume look good. Random pictures with friends, etc. I was identified by what I gave my time and energy to. The yea

~~Bring a girl home? oh let me pull out that yearbook from 1995. I hated it so much that by the time I got into high school I became the editor of the yearbook!! HAHA that's right. Because if I was in charge, then I could control what picture of myself got put in there. What I learned as editor is that a good yearbook summarizes the entire year....in a book! Real complicated. "how do you think I won the best eyes superlative??" So you take a series of snapshots, put captions that say "Jason & Dave reppin' class of '00 in the cafeteria",~~

His plan in Corinth is, in a sense, the same as it is for Raleigh-Durham today. He has a plan to build his church through you. That's right. The biggest question you have to

answer in your life is are you living your plan or God's plan?

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, **13** saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." **14** But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. **15** But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." **16** And he drove them from the tribunal. **17** And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. **19** And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **20** When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. **21** But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.

23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Paul connects up with Priscilla & Aquilla, many think because they were actually Jews who had become Christians. They weren't called Christians yet but likely the reason Paul "went to see them" is because he heard there were some Christian tent makers. So they made tents together during the week, and then Paul went and preached on the weekends. Paul lived with Aquilla & Priscilla and we know from other places in scripture that he forged a deep friendship with them during these days. That's going to be important.