

Growing Stronger Together

Acts 18.18-28

“Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” Ephesians 6:13

Waterbrooke seeks to be a gospel-centered multi-ethnic family that is captivated by Jesus, compelled to love others, and **called to make disciples to the glory of God.**

"In the same way the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, **to make them little Christs.** If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. " C.S. Lewis

The challenge for the church is to make disciples who can thrive under the pressures of spiritual warfare, under the temptations of the world, under the battles of their own hearts. We are all stewards of this. **The perseverance of the saints is a community project.**

I. Circling Back - Acts 18.18-23

“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.” Acts 18.23

Discipleship is perpetually pursuing one another for the sake of our mutual growth and perseverance in the faith.

a. Paul relied on partnerships.

“After this, Paul stayed many days longer, then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.”

“In the absence of a healthy, honest, faithful community I don’t give you much of a chance in the Christian life. Those who isolate themselves from the local church, or even those who attend a local church but avoid genuine fellowship and regular interaction and accountability with others, are a disaster waiting to happen. You are the means by which God desires to keep others faithful and full of hope. Others are the means by which God desires to sustain you in perseverance and endurance. We are all placed in this local church so that by means of one

another's input and encouragement and warning we might continue steadfast in our commitment to Christ." Dr. Sam Storms

b. Paul relied on prayer.

"At Cenchrea, he had cut his hair; for he was under a vow." (Acts 18:18)

c. Paul relies on presence.

"When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them, he said, 'I will return if God wills,' and he set sail for Ephesus." (Acts 18:21)

Circling Back: Paul wanted to ensure that people not only heard the gospel but held to the gospel. He was just as concerned that people grew up in the faith as he was that came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Fostering Gospel Fluency - Acts 18.24-26

"Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus... 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." Acts 18.24-26

"Your endurance will be spotty at best. There will be moments when you forget who you are and live as a grace amnesiac. There will be times when you get discouraged and for a while quit doing the good things God calls you to do. There will be moments, big and small, when you willingly rebel. Perfect endurance demands just that—perfection—and since none of us is there yet, we must look outside ourselves for hope. Your hope of enduring is not to be found in your character or strength, but in your Lord's." Paul Tripp

A right understanding of the gospel is crucial to perseverance. The gospel doesn't just convert a person. It keeps and matures them.

"So, when Paul says in Romans 1:16 that 'the gospel is the power of God for salvation,' I take him to mean that the gospel is the only message in the world that powerfully can bring a person not just to conversion, but to everlasting safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God." John Piper

Gospel Fluency: We need to help one another grow in our understanding of how the gospel shapes absolutely every part of our lives as Christians. We need to help each learn how to persevere in the power of the gospel.

Biblical Illustrations:

Galatians: How to grow in the fruit of the Spirit and to not walk according to the flesh.

Ephesians 4 and 5: How to grow together into the fullness of Christ, putting off the old self and putting on the new.

Romans 6-8: How to walk in the Spirit, living no longer as slaves to sin but living in the freedom of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11-14: How to use your gifts for the greater good, living in love to mutually build one another up in the faith.

Philippians 2-4: How to follow the example of Christ in humble service and unity as we share in Christ's sufferings as a people.

III. Serve Together - Acts 18.27-28

"When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus." Acts 18.27-28

"... For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." Romans 12:3-8

The church perseveres when each of us seeks to do what God has uniquely gifted us to do... together.

Group Study Questions:

Opening Question (Warm-Up)

1. When you hear the phrase “**Growing Stronger Together**,” what comes to mind—what has helped you grow most as a Christian: personal disciplines or relationships with others? Why?
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I. Circling Back – Strengthening the Disciples (Acts 18:18–23)

2. Read Acts 18:18–23. What stands out to you about **Paul's priorities** during this season of ministry?
3. Verse 23 says Paul went about “**strengthening all the disciples**.” What does that suggest about how Paul understood discipleship?
4. Why do you think Luke intentionally records Paul *circling back* rather than only focusing on new conversions?
5. The study says, “*Discipleship is perpetually pursuing one another.*” What are practical ways this happens—or fails to happen—in local churches today?

Partnerships

6. Paul traveled with Priscilla and Aquila. Why is partnership so essential for perseverance in the Christian life?
7. Dr. Sam Storms says isolation is “a disaster waiting to happen.” Where do you see the temptation toward isolation in your own life?

Prayer and Presence

8. Acts 18:18 mentions Paul being under a vow. What does this tell us about the role of **prayerful dependence** in ministry and perseverance?
 9. Paul says, “I will return if God wills” (v.21). How does this reveal a balance between **intentional planning** and **humble trust** in God?
 10. How have you personally experienced the strengthening effect of someone’s **presence** rather than just their words?
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II. Fostering Gospel Fluency (Acts 18:24–26)

11. Read Acts 18:24–26. What strengths did Apollos already have? What was still lacking?
12. Why is it significant that Priscilla and Aquila corrected Apollos **privately and graciously**?
13. What dangers arise when someone is passionate and gifted but **not fully grounded** in the gospel?
14. Paul Tripp speaks of being a “grace amnesiac.” What does that look like in everyday Christian life?

15. How is **gospel fluency** different from simply knowing gospel facts?

Gospel for Growth, Not Just Conversion

16. Why is it tempting to think of the gospel as only the “entry point” to Christianity?

17. Which of the biblical examples listed (Galatians, Romans 6–8, Ephesians 4–5, etc.) most resonates with where you need growth right now?

18. How can small groups practically help one another connect the gospel to areas like conflict, temptation, discouragement, or suffering?

III. Serving Together for Perseverance (Acts 18:27–28)

19. What impact did Apollos have once he was more fully equipped?

20. How do verses 27–28 show that **strengthened disciples become strengthening disciples**?

21. Read Romans 12:3–8. Why is humility essential when talking about spiritual gifts?

22. What happens to a church when people either:

- Don't use their gifts, or
- Use their gifts without love?

Personal Application

23. What gifts or opportunities has God given you to serve others for their perseverance in faith?

24. Where might God be calling you to serve **more intentionally** alongside others rather than alone?

Closing Reflection & Prayer

25. The study says, “*The perseverance of the saints is a community project.*” How does this challenge the way you think about your responsibility to others in the church?

26. Who in your life right now might God be calling you to:

- **Circle back to,**
- **Strengthen with the gospel,** or
- **Serve alongside?**

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God would make your group a means of grace—helping one another endure, mature, and joyfully serve together in the power of the gospel.