

# How Do I Grow My Gifts?

## Why Your Talent Isn't Enough

### Acts 18:24-28

This study explores the story of Apollos, a gifted speaker and passionate teacher who still needed guidance to grow. Though talented, he lacked a full understanding of the gospel until Priscilla and Aquila stepped in. This passage challenges us to reflect on our own gifts and the importance of humility, learning, and community in developing what God has given us.

## I. Why This Study?

### A. Objective:

1. To explore how Acts 18:24-28 shows that natural talent alone is not enough for spiritual maturity or ministry.
2. To examine the role of community, correction, and continued learning in growing our gifts.
3. To gain wisdom about developing God-given talents for the good of others and the glory of God.

### B. Relevance:

1. Many gifted people assume their talent is all they need to serve God.
2. This passage reminds us that passion and knowledge must be nurtured, shaped, and expanded in community.
3. It challenges us to embrace mentorship, correction, and continual learning.

## II. Context of Acts 18:24-28

### A. The Background of Apollos in Ephesus:

1. Apollos, a learned Jew from Alexandria, arrives in \_\_\_\_\_, known for his eloquence and knowledge of Scripture (v. 24).
2. He teaches \_\_\_\_\_ about Jesus but knows only the baptism of John (v. 25).
3. Priscilla and Aquila hear him and invite him into deeper understanding, teaching him \_\_\_\_\_ the way of God (v. 26).

4. Equipped with new understanding, Apollos powerfully \_\_\_\_\_ his opponents and proves from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah (vv. 27-28).

**B. Historical Insight:**

1. Alexandria was a center of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ thought.
2. Apollos was already respected and skilled, but his knowledge was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The involvement of Priscilla—a woman—in teaching Apollos signals the \_\_\_\_\_ role of diverse voices in shaping ministry.

**C. Key Takeaway:**

1. Our gifts, no matter how strong, require \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Talent is only the starting point.

**III. What Happens When I Think My Talent Is Enough?**

**A. Gifts Without Growth Lead to Limitations (vv. 24-25)**

1. Key Verses:

*“He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures... but he knew only the baptism of John.”*

2. Key Lessons:

a) *Knowledge and eloquence are valuable, but \_\_\_\_\_ understanding limits impact.*

b) *Passion must be paired with openness to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

c) *Catholic mystic St. John of the Cross writes: “Without humility, knowledge becomes a wall between us and God, not a bridge.”*

**B. Community Is the Key to Growth (v. 26)**

1. Key Verses:

*“When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.”*

2. Key Lessons:

- a) *Growth happens in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, not in isolation.*
- b) *Apollos' humility in receiving correction from Priscilla and Aquila is as \_\_\_\_\_ as his skill.*
- c) *Catholic ethicist Dr. M. Shawn Copeland writes: "True learning begins when we risk our pride and open ourselves to the wisdom of others, especially those we overlook." (Enfleshing Freedom)*

**C. Mature Gifts Serve Others Powerfully (vv. 27-28)**

1. Key Verses:

*"He vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah."*

2. Key Lessons:

- a) *Properly developed gifts are used to strengthen the community and \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ.*
- b) *Apollos' growth \_\_\_\_\_ his effectiveness and his contribution to the gospel movement.*
- c) *Black mystic and poet Howard Thurman writes: "The fruit of the inner life is power rightly channeled—not self-serving but a river of life flowing outward." (Meditations of the Heart)*

**IV. Scholars' and Theological Insights on Growing Our Gifts**

A. St. John of the Cross (Catholic Mystic): "Our greatest talents are the most dangerous if they are not surrendered to the Spirit's refining fire."

B. Dr. M. Shawn Copeland (Catholic Theologian and Ethicist): "Freedom comes not in the brilliance of our gifts, but in the discipline to be formed and reformed by love." (Enfleshing Freedom)

C. Howard Thurman (Mystic and Ethicist): "The disciplined spirit is a power beyond talent—it is the difference between noise and music." (Disciplines of the Spirit)

D. Sr. Thea Bowman (Black Catholic Scholar and Mystic): “God didn’t make me just to be smart or talented—God made me to give myself away.” (Selected Writings)

E. Dr. Miguel De La Torre (Latinx Ethicist): “The gospel calls us to decenter ourselves—our gifts, our ego—and seek the wisdom in those we’re trained not to see.” (Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins)

F. Evelyn Underhill (Christian Mystic): “The soul grows not by what it achieves, but by what it receives from God and others.”

## **V. Prayer Focus**

1. Pray for humility to recognize where your gifts need growth and guidance.
2. Ask God to place wise teachers, mentors, and correctors in your life.
3. Pray for courage to use your gifts for the good of others, not your own glory.

## **VI. Key Takeaway**

Talent is never enough. God calls us to nurture our gifts in community, receive correction, and continually grow. The Spirit’s work refines natural ability into holy service.

## **VII. Discussion and Reflection Questions**

1. What stands out about Apollos’ combination of talent and teachability?
2. How do you handle correction or guidance from others? Why is this sometimes difficult?
3. What spaces in your life offer room for growing your gifts?
4. How does community help shape and strengthen spiritual gifts?
5. What would it look like to surrender your talents fully to God’s purposes?