

## EXCERPT

IVP Academic

### **Priscilla** *The Life of an Early Christian*

May 14, 2019 | \$20, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5248-2

Who was Priscilla? Ben Witherington combines biblical scholarship and winsome storytelling to give readers a vivid picture of this important New Testament woman. In this work of historical fiction, Priscilla's story makes the first-century biblical world come alive as she looks back on her long life and remembers the ways she has participated in the early church.

## Who Was Priscilla?

Rome was burning, would not stop burning—trees, houses, adults, children—all burning and screaming. Prisca watched in horror as whole districts of the city burned to the ground for six full days.

She felt despair as the *vigiles urbani* who were in charge of maintaining order and fighting fires fell with exhaustion, overwhelmed with their impossible task. The fire started in the *subura* in an *officinae promerzialiū vestium* or cloth merchant's workshop where there were highly flammable materials stored, and it raged out of control for what seemed like an eternity, scorching the exterior wall of Aquila and Prisca's leatherworking shop.

For days they watched the fire, hoping it would miss them, but now the fire burned right up the hill because of the winds coming from the south, and it burned down the place where Aquila and Prisca lived in the *insulae*. Prisca wished she could ignore her senses as she listened to the crackling of pine needles outside her window and the smell of burning pine tar and wood. She and her husband grabbed what clothes they could, snatched up a tent, got everyone out of the house, and headed to the high ground of the Palatine Hill where Nero's palace was. She saw a dog whimpering in an entrance way to a villa, calling for its master, lying on the mosaic tiles that ironically read *cave canem*, "beware of the dog"!

Collapsing on the Palatine Hill, reeling from all they'd witnessed, what they heard next chilled them despite the heat of the fire. Nero was playing his lyre and singing while watching, indeed enjoying, the fire. As they huddled with others taking refuge on this high ground, they began to hear rumors spreading as quickly as the fire through the Eternal City that Nero ordered the fire set, so he could rebuild, and some said rename, the city, remaking it in his own egomaniacal image to be called Neropolis. However, barely had they processed that thought when Nero shifted the blame onto that "atheistic sect that worshipped a crucified Jewish man named Christus." And then the persecutions and martyrdoms began in earnest in Roma.

Prisca tossed on her bed as the dream mixed with images of the eternal flame in the Temple of the Vestal Virgins, which was indeed never to go out. She snapped awake and pulled the blanket around her in the early morning as she struggled to banish the hellish dream of the devastating fire in the tenth year of Nero's reign.

*It's only a dream*, she told herself. But even though it had happened more than thirty years ago, Prisca could not eject this scene from her nightmares. Her unmarried adopted daughter, Julia, who slept in the cubicle next to Prisca's sleeping quarters, struggled awake as she recognized Prisca's rapid breathing from this recurring dream.

"Can I help you? Is it the dream again?" she asked with a concerned look on her face as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes.

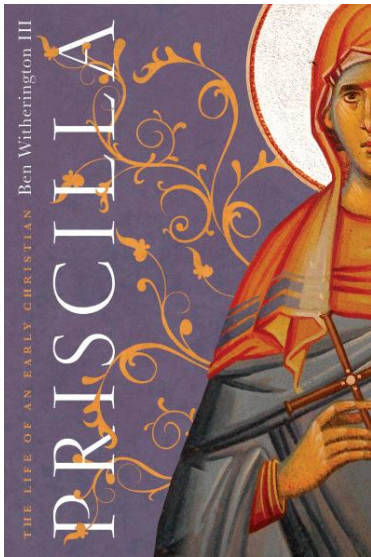


**Alisse Wissman**, print publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)

**Krista Clayton**, broadcast and online publicity  
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)

INTERVARSITY PRESS | [ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)





EXCERPT

IVP Academic

**Priscilla**  
*The Life of an Early Christian*

May 14, 2019 | \$20, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5248-2

Prisca nodded. "It happened again, Julia. The same nightmare again. After all our prayers and all this time, it's still impossible to erase those days from my mind." She looked thoughtful. "I've been thinking lately that perhaps it would help give me some peace, some rest from the nightmares to put it all in perspective. Perhaps I should have you write my story down. Maybe I should even go back to the beginning when the Master died, and I was a young girl visiting Jerusalem for the first time during the Feast of Shavuot."

Julia, who had been in Prisca's household most of her thirty years, longed to know more of her fascinating life, but until now Prisca had kept these details to herself, reluctant to relive them. So Julia sat up a little straighter and sloughed off the last of slumber, suddenly wide awake. Unable to hide her delight, she quickly answered, tumbling over a torrent of words. "I think it's high time for you to tell the whole story!" She got up and moved next to Prisca, speaking rapidly now. "You are one of only a handful of Christ followers who are still alive and were there from the beginning. Peter and Paulus have been dead for almost thirty years and the word from Ephesus is that John the elder is near death's door. I'll gather a stylus, my writing tablet, some papyri, and lots of ink. We can make a chronicle of how the Good News of Christ came to and spread throughout Roma, as only someone like you can tell it."

—Taken from Chapter One: From the Beginning



**Alisse Wissman**, print publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)

**Krista Clayton**, broadcast and online publicity  
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)

INTERVARSITY PRESS | [ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)





BIO

IVP Academic

**Priscilla**  
*The Life of an Early Christian*

May 14, 2019 | \$20, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5248-2

## Prominent Scholar Explores the Life of Priscilla

Ben Witherington III (PhD, University of Durham) is a prominent evangelical scholar and Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. Witherington has written over forty books, including *The Jesus Quest* and *The Paul Quest*, both of which were selected as top biblical studies works by *Christianity Today*. His other works include *The Indelible Image*, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, *The Gospel Code*, *A Week in the Life of Corinth*, and commentaries on the entire New Testament. He also writes for many church and scholarly publications and is a frequent contributor to *Patheos* and *Beliefnet*.

Witherington is an elected member of the prestigious *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, a society dedicated to New Testament studies. He is a John Wesley Fellow for Life, a research fellow at Cambridge University, and a member of numerous professional organizations, including the Society of Biblical Literature, Society for the Study of the New Testament, and the Institute for Biblical Research. He previously taught at institutions such as Ashland Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt University, Duke Divinity School, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

An ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church and a popular lecturer, Witherington has presented seminars for churches, colleges, and biblical meetings around the world. He has led numerous study tours through the lands of the Bible and is known for bringing the text to life through incisive historical and cultural analysis. Along with many interviews on radio and television networks across the country, Witherington has been seen in programs such as *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, *Dateline*, and the Peter Jennings ABC special *Jesus and Paul—The Word and the Witness*.

Read Witherington's *Patheos* blog *The Bible and Culture*, and visit his website at [benwitherington.com](http://benwitherington.com).



**Alisse Wissman**, print publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)

**Krista Clayton**, broadcast and online publicity  
800.846.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)

INTERVARSITY PRESS | [ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)

