

Dr. David deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament

Session 5, Family and Household

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 5, Family and Household, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. David deSilva's "The Cultural World of the New Testament" explores the significance of family and kinship in the ancient world, particularly within first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman societies. DeSilva highlights the importance of lineage in determining social standing and honor, contrasting the cooperative ethos of family relationships with the competitive dynamics of interactions with outsiders. He examines biblical genealogies and examples from the Apocrypha to illustrate these concepts. The lecture further discusses the structure and function of the ancient household, including the roles of women and slaves, and explores how Jesus redefined kinship by emphasizing a broader, inclusive "family of Abraham" within the early Christian community. Finally, the lecture sets the stage for a future examination of how the early church adopted and adapted the concept of kinship.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Cultural World of the NT, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Introduction → The Cultural World of the NT).



**DeSilva_CultureNT_
Session05.mp3**

3. Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 5, Family and Household

Family and Household in the First Century

Quiz

1. Why was lineage so important in the ancient world, and how did it impact an individual's social standing?
2. How did the Gospel of Matthew use genealogy to establish Jesus' identity and significance?
3. In what ways could kinship be considered "fluid," and how might the definition of kin shift according to different circumstances?
4. Explain the difference between the ideas of cooperation and competition in the context of the ancient family unit.
5. Describe the concept of a "Cadmean victory," and how it relates to the ethic of sibling relationships in the ancient world.
6. What was the role of trust in kinship relations? How did this differ from interactions with outsiders?
7. Describe the typical composition of a household in the ancient world, according to Aristotle, and the key roles of each member.
8. How did marriage in the ancient world differ from modern concepts of marriage?
9. What were the primary differences between a household in the ancient world compared to a modern one in terms of production?
10. What was the typical role of a pedagogue in ancient education, and what does the term's modern meaning reflect?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Lineage was paramount in the ancient world because it determined an individual's place in society and was the primary source of honor and merit. A person's social standing was largely inherited from their parents, family, and ancestors.
2. Matthew used Jesus' genealogy to demonstrate his descent from Abraham and David, thus establishing him as the heir to the promises made to them and

validating his messianic claim. It was a means of demonstrating Jesus' essential identity in the context of his culture.

3. Kinship was fluid in that its definition could expand or contract based on the context. In the diaspora, Jews might regard all other Jews as kin, while in Judea, the definition of kin might be limited to one's immediate family or clan. Kinship could also be redefined in the presence of an obvious, shared, external threat.
4. In the ancient family, cooperation was the expected mode of interaction, as families were supposed to work together to advance the common good. Competition was regarded as inappropriate within families, as it was seen as undermining family unity for personal gain.
5. A "Cadmean victory" refers to a situation where a victory leads to mutual destruction or harm and is often used to describe sibling rivalry taken to the extreme, such as the tragic outcomes between the sons of Oedipus. It illustrates the pitfalls of seeking individual gain at the expense of family.
6. Trust was central to kinship relations, as kin were expected to cooperate and look out for one another. Deceit and lying were seen as acceptable strategies for dealing with outsiders, but betraying a kin's trust was considered shameful.
7. Aristotle described the household as minimally consisting of a husband and wife, a father and children, and a master and slaves. The male (husband, father, and master) held the central position of authority within this hierarchical structure.
8. Marriage in the ancient world was generally arranged, understood as a means of creating alliances between families, not based on individual romantic love. Women were always considered embedded in a male household, and divorce was usually initiated by men.
9. Ancient households were primarily units of production, engaging in agriculture, crafts, and trades. This is in contrast to the modern household, which is typically a unit of consumption where most members do not contribute to the generation of family income.
10. A pedagogue in ancient times was a slave responsible for disciplining children and ensuring they learned their lessons, not a teacher. The modern meaning of pedagogy reflects the way that learning and development was often done in that era but not the position of the one providing the guidance.

Essay Questions

1. How did the emphasis on lineage and kinship in the ancient world shape the social structures and values of the time, and in what ways did those values influence the writings of the New Testament?
2. Compare and contrast the concept of family in the ancient world with the modern Western understanding, highlighting the major differences in expectations, roles, and relationships.
3. Analyze the role of women in the ancient household, drawing from the views of various authors of the time. How does this picture align with or deviate from modern perspectives of women?
4. Discuss the ways in which the New Testament authors challenge and redefine the traditional notions of kinship, specifically considering how they apply those concepts to the Christian community.
5. Explore the ethical implications of the master-slave relationship in the ancient world and analyze how ethicists attempted to mitigate the harsh realities of slavery and whether their efforts were effective.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Lineage:** A person's descent from a particular ancestor or family, which is very important to social standing in the ancient world.
- **Ethos:** The characteristic spirit and belief system of a culture, era, or community, in the text, particularly relating to familial relations.
- **Cadmean Victory:** A victory that is self-defeating or results in destruction or loss to the victor, often in fraternal conflicts.
- **Oikos:** The ancient Greek word for household or family, it is also the root word of "economics" which reflects the concept of family as a unit of production.
- **Patriarchal:** A social system in which males hold primary power and authority.
- **Fictive Kinship:** A social tie or relationship that is not based on blood or marriage, but is deliberately created through mutual bonds, such as friendship or religious allegiance.

- **Pedagogue:** In the ancient world, a slave responsible for the behavior of children in the household; in the modern world, an educator.
- **Limited Goods:** In the ancient economy, goods such as honor, resources, and money were seen as finite, so one's gain was another's loss.
- **Diaspora:** A population that is scattered across different places, but particularly refers to the Jews who lived outside of Israel in the ancient world.
- **Filial Piety:** The duty and respect children owe to their parents, particularly in caring for them in old age.
- **Chastity:** Sexual purity and exclusivity, usually in the context of marriage for women in the ancient world.
- **Reciprocity:** The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, which some ethicists applied to master-slave relations.
- **Oikonomia:** The management of a household; the term from which "economics" derives.
- **Philadelphia:** The Greek term for the love between siblings, used in the New Testament to describe the ideal relationships within the Christian community.
- **Ethnos:** A people group who are bound together by a common culture, such as the Jewish people.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpt by Dr. David deSilva on "Family and Household" in the New Testament world:

Briefing Document: The Cultural World of the New Testament - Family and Household

Source: Excerpts from "DeSilva_CWNT_EN_Lecture05.pdf" (Dr. David deSilva, The Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 5)

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I. Introduction: The Importance of Kinship

- **Family as a Foundational Unit:** Dr. deSilva establishes the family as the most fundamental and influential social unit in the ancient world, particularly in the context of the New Testament. He emphasizes that understanding the dynamics of family and household is crucial to grasp the kinship language used throughout the New Testament.
- *"The family is the most basic social unit in human society, the group that, for most individuals, is the most frequently encountered and the most significantly engaged social unit over the course of a lifetime."*
- **Lineage as Social Location:** Lineage was the primary means of establishing a person's place in the social structure. It determined status, honor, and inclusion within the community.
- *"In the ancient world, lineage established the location of a person in the social fabric."*
- **Genealogies in Scripture:** The emphasis on genealogies in the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Ezra, Nehemiah, Matthew) highlights the importance of lineage for social and religious identity. For example, membership in the nation of Israel was contingent upon a verifiable lineage within the 12 tribes.
- *"If you don't have a verifiable lineage within the family of the 12 tribes, you are not part of that people."*
- **Inherited Merit and Honor:** Individual merit was tied to the merit and honor of one's family and ancestors. This concept is illustrated in the story of Tobit, who scrutinizes Azariah's lineage before accepting him on a mission.

- *"The starting point for a person's honor is the honor of the family into which he or she was born, which he or she inherits from forebears."*

II. The Nature of Kinship

- **Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus:** The Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus tracing his lineage back to Abraham and David, a deliberate choice to establish Jesus' identity as the heir of God's promises.
- *"It's a great way to open the story of Jesus in the first century by going through and laying out Jesus' descent from Abraham and David."*
- **Numerology and Lineage:** Matthew's emphasis on the number 14 in Jesus' genealogy (David's name has a numerical value of 14) is a deliberate way to underscore Jesus' connection to King David.
- *"In Hebrew, the name of David, spelled with a dalet above and another dalet, adds up to 14. And so, by encoding 14 into the genealogy of Jesus...Matthew is able to say something about Jesus as the ultimate offspring and seed of David."*
- **Kinship Beyond Blood:** Kinship wasn't always determined by literal blood relations. It could extend to broader ethnic groups, as with Greeks who felt a sense of kinship regardless of blood relations due to shared culture, or Jews vis-a-vis non-Jews.
- *"Greeks, who might not really be related in any traceable way by blood, nevertheless could talk about their kinship with one another vis-a-vis barbarians because at least we Greeks, whatever our actual lineage, are of the same kind."*
- **Fluidity of Kinship:** The definition of kinship could expand or contract depending on the situation. In the Diaspora, Jews might consider all other Jews as kin, while in Judea, kinship might be limited to closer family and clans. The presence of an outside threat (e.g., Roman cohort) could unify groups of people who might otherwise be considered distant from one another.
- *"So, all that to say, kinship can be thought of rather fluidly. Our definition can expand or contract depending on the setting and what's going on in this context."*
- **Jesus and the Broader Family of Abraham:** Jesus emphasizes the larger kinship of all Jews as descendants of Abraham, challenging smaller subgroupings based on clan or religious affiliation (like Pharisees). Jesus aimed to unite all Jews as brothers and sisters, as seen in his healing of the crippled woman and his acceptance of Zacchaeus.

- *"Against these smaller subgroupings of what is kin in Israel, Jesus keeps pointing out the relationship of all Jews one to another as sons and daughters of Abraham."*
- **The Parable of the Two Brothers:** This parable is used to highlight that "sinners and tax-gatherers" (who are considered "other") should also be viewed as members of the same family and be treated with the love and respect due to a sibling.
- *"And so, really, a better way to think about them is not as those sinners and tax-gatherers but as our brothers and sisters."*

III. The Ethos of Kinship

- **Cooperation over Competition:** Kinship was characterized by cooperation and mutual support rather than competition. Families were to work for the common good of the kinship unit, rather than one member gaining at another's expense.
- *"However, families were expected not to compete for goods so that one gained at another's expense but rather to cooperate so that the whole kinship unit gained greater access to the goods it needed or wanted."*
- **Sibling Bonds:** The relationship between siblings was considered a model of friendship, where they share values, resources, and look out for each other's interests. The concept of "sibling rivalry" was considered undesirable.
- *"In this context, the relationship between siblings was often considered to be one of the strongest and most important bonds among human beings in the ancient world. It was the epitome of friendship."*
- **The Cadmean Victory:** This was an example of a complete lack of cooperation where no one could truly win (such as brothers killing each other in war).
- *"This became known as a Cadmean victory because it really represented the nadir, the lowest point of sibling relationships. Each was trying to win, but you can't win if you're fighting against your brother or your sister. It's just simply impossible to have a victory in that situation."*
- **Trust and Honesty:** Trust was paramount within families. Deceit was acceptable against outsiders but shameful when used against kin.
- *"It would be, however, utterly shameful to use deceit or lying against one's own family members."*

- **Unity and Harmony:** Unity and harmony were essential qualities of kinship. It was better to lose an argument than to rupture the relationship.
- *"To preserve their unity and to preserve their harmony at all costs, it is better to lose an argument to lose a share of an inheritance than lose a brother's or a sister's love and to break or rupture the harmony that should characterize kin."*
- **Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Siblings were to seek forgiveness and reconciliation when conflict arose.
- **Philia (Brotherly Love):** The ethic of sibling love (Philadelphia) was an important ideal and prominent in the New Testament.

IV. The Ancient Household

- **Structure of the Household:** The household consisted of the husband, wife, children, and slaves. The father/husband/master was the central figure. Unmarried siblings, female relatives, and surviving parents were commonly part of this unit.
- *"He talks about a household as composed of, at the minimum, a husband and wife, a father and children, a master and slaves. What's noteworthy about his description is that one member of each pair is actually the same person. The father, the husband, the master, that's all the same guy who is, therefore, kind of the central hub of the household."*
- **Marriage:** Marriages were arranged as alliances between families, not based on romantic love. Marriage was most often within the same tribe or ethnic group.
- *"Marriages were generally arranged because marriages brought families together. And they were understood, really, as alliances between families, not as an act determined by two lovebirds based on individual motivations."*
- **Women's Roles:** Women were embedded in the household of a male (father or husband). Divorce was handled differently based on culture, but often involved a wife returning to her nearest male relative.
- *"And women tended always to be embedded, conceptually, in the household of some male. The household of their father, prior to marriage. The household of the husband after marriage."*
- **Household as a Unit of Production:** Unlike modern households, ancient households were units of production (e.g., farming, fishing, artisan work).

Everyone within the household, including women and children, contributed to its economic productivity.

- *"But in the ancient world, a household like ours would also be a basic unit of production."*
- **Husband's Authority:** The husband/father/master was in charge of household management. This concept of authority was known as *oikonomia*. This was understood as the duty, diligence, and beneficent care for those in his household. The husband held a hierarchical and patriarchal position in the household. Jewish authors were even more insistent on women's inferiority to men.
- *"Ethicists speak of this man's authority in terms of duty, diligence, and beneficent care...it is a strictly hierarchical and patriarchal society."*
- **Wife's Role:** Wives were considered junior partners but were seen as essential to household management.
- **Wife's Ideal:** The ideal wife was characterized by submission, silence, seclusion, and sexual purity.
- *"One of the features in this ideal is submission...Another facet of this ancient ideal of the wife or the woman is silence and reticence to speak...A third aspect of this ideal is seclusion...and then, a final and indispensable aspect of this ideal is sexual purity."*
- **Children's Role:** Children were under the absolute authority of their parents and had a duty to honor them, especially in old age. Children were seen as being like their parents.
- *"Children in the ancient household were under the absolute authority of their parents, most particularly, the father. And they were taught to understand their duty toward their parents."*
- **Education:** Education started in the home. For the upper class, it could be more extensive (including a pedagogue, public schools, and gymnasiums.) Religious instruction was also the duty of parents in the home.
- *"Education varied greatly in the ancient world. It began in the home for all people but was often largely confined to the home for families of lesser means."*

V. Slavery in the Ancient World

- **Prevalence:** Slavery was a common and integral part of the ancient economy (1 in 5 people).
- **Sources:** Slavery resulted from conquest, criminal penalties, birth to enslaved parents, and debt.
- **Nature:** Slaves were considered "living tools" under the complete power of their owners.
- *"Aristotle speaks of the slave as a living tool."*
- **Varied Treatment and Roles:** Slaves' treatment and roles ranged from harsh (mines, rowing) to relatively influential (imperial household). The treatment of a slave was completely at the mercy of the owner.
- *"Slaves could be put to a very wide variety of tasks and find themselves living out their lives in a wide variety of locations."*
- **Efforts at Reciprocity:** Some ethicists tried to foster relationships of reciprocity between masters and slaves but with little overall effect.

VI. Fictive Kinship

- **Kinship Beyond Blood:** Kinship could also be based on shared conduct, goals, or commitments rather than on blood ties. Failure to maintain ideals could break kinship ties.
- *"kinship is not measured only by blood but by the similarity of conduct and pursuit of the same goals."*
- **Christian Community as New Family:** Jesus recognized that his teaching could disrupt natural kinship, leading to his followers forming a new family, a *fictive kinship* group, that was even stronger than ties of blood.
- *"Quite similarly, Jesus recognizes that following him threatens natural kinship connections, and so he speaks of his followers forming a new family together. We might call this a fictive kinship group, not related by blood and genealogy, per se, but sharing so closely other commitments that being kind, being of a like kind is more important than being kin in a natural sense."*
- **New Kinship:** Those who followed Jesus became "brothers and sisters" and shared common resources.

VII. Conclusion & Preview

- **1 Peter and Kinship:** The next lecture will explore 1 Peter, which reflects the values of kinship and uses household as a metaphor for the church.
- **Impact of Christian Proclamation:** The lecture will also investigate the impact of the Christian message on natural households and family relationships.

Key Takeaways:

- Understanding the ancient concept of family and household is vital for interpreting the New Testament.
- Kinship was a foundational social construct that defined status, honor, and obligations.
- The ethos of kinship promoted cooperation, trust, and unity within the group.
- Ancient households were units of production, structured hierarchically with the male at the head.
- Slavery was an integral part of the ancient world, with slaves under the absolute authority of their owners.
- Jesus established a new form of kinship based on shared commitment rather than blood.

This detailed briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of the key themes and ideas discussed in the lecture excerpt, emphasizing the significance of understanding the ancient world's family and household structures for interpreting the New Testament.

5. FAQs on deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 5, Family and Household, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Family and Household in the First Century

- **How did lineage impact a person's status and identity in the ancient world, particularly in the context of Israel?**
- Lineage was paramount in determining a person's social standing and identity. It established an individual's place within the social fabric. In the nation of Israel, a verifiable lineage within the 12 tribes was necessary for membership in the community. Internal hierarchies were formed based on lineage, with particular attention given to preserving the lineage of priestly and Levitical clans. A person's honor was directly linked to the honor of their family and ancestors.
- **How did the concept of "kin" extend beyond immediate family ties in the first century?**
- Kinship could be fluid and extend beyond strict blood ties. It was also defined by shared values, beliefs, and common purpose. This could include people of the same ethnicity or those who adhered to similar religious practices. For example, Jews in the Diaspora might consider other Jews as kin, regardless of actual genealogical connections. This definition could contract or expand based on the social context and external pressures. Ultimately, shared essence or "kind" could be a strong defining factor in who was viewed as "kin."
- **What was the ethical ideal for relationships within a family, especially among siblings, in the ancient world, and how does it differ from modern perspectives?**
- In the ancient world, families were expected to operate on cooperation rather than competition. Siblings were seen as the epitome of friendship, where all things were held in common, and they were expected to advance one another's interests. While there was an awareness of sibling rivalry, it was not to be cultivated. Siblings were expected to act in such a way that the family benefited as a whole. This is quite different from the 20th and 21st century emphasis on sibling rivalry and individual success that is common in the West.

- **What was the significance of trust and unity within the family structure, and how did it contrast with interactions with those outside the family?**

Trust was a crucial element of kinship, as family members were expected to work for each other's good and not their own at the expense of their kin. Deceit and lying were acceptable tactics to use with outsiders but utterly shameful when used against kin. Unity, harmony, and sharing of values and goods were vital. Conflict was to be resolved through forgiveness and reconciliation. The family should hide each other's disgrace from outsiders and always act with patience toward each other.

- **What was the structure of the ancient household, and how was it a unit of both consumption and production?**
- The ancient household was more than just a place to live; it was a unit of production. At its core, it included a husband, wife, children, and sometimes slaves. It could extend to unmarried siblings, female relations, surviving parents and married siblings with their children. Households were often engaged in producing goods. For instance, a craftsman's family would work together to create goods. Women in the household would contribute through their own crafts or managing domestic aspects. This is quite different from the modern view of a house being primarily a place of consumption.
- **What was the role and position of women within the ancient household, and how were their actions and behavior constrained?**
- Women were always embedded in the household of a male figure, first their father, then their husband. They were essential partners in household management, though always considered junior by virtue of their gender. The ideal was for women to be submissive, quiet, and secluded, primarily within the private spaces of the home, and above all, sexually pure. The husband was in authority within the household, though the idea of a wife as property is contested by the sources. Women's voices and autonomy were severely limited.

- **What was the status of children in the ancient household, and how were they educated?**
- Children were under the absolute authority of their parents, particularly the father, and taught to honor them throughout their lives. They were seen as reflections of their parents. Education started at home, focusing on the family's trade, basic literacy and values. More affluent families might employ a pedagogue to discipline and supervise education. The broader education of citizens, for those with that status in Greek and Roman cities, also took place in public institutions like the gymnasium. Religious instruction was a matter for parents.
- **What was the nature of slavery in the ancient world, and how did it impact the household and social structure?**
- Slavery was widespread, with slaves often making up a large percentage of the population. It resulted from military conquest, criminal punishment, birth to slave parents, or debt. Slaves were essentially regarded as the property of their owners. Despite some ethical guidelines, they lacked legal recourse against brutal treatment. Slaves performed a wide array of tasks, from grueling manual labor to positions of influence within imperial households. The institution of slavery was a central component of the ancient economy and played a big role in Roman wealth.