

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8, Structure of 1 Corinthians Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8, Structure of 1 Corinthians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture, the eighth in a series on **1 Corinthians**, continues the introduction to the book and specifically examines its **structure**. He outlines **two key literary patterns** Paul uses: three distinct statements marking major sections (1:11, 5:1, 7:1) and the recurring Greek phrase "peri de" ("now concerning") introducing various topics. The lecture also introduces **several important commentaries and resources** for studying 1 Corinthians, emphasizing the value of in-depth reading and contextual understanding.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8 – 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 → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).



Meadors_1Cor_Session08.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8, Structure of 1 Corinthians

Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on 1 Corinthians - Lecture 8

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors serves as a continuation of the introduction to 1 Corinthians, specifically focusing on the macrostructure of the letter and providing a preliminary overview of key commentaries and resources for further study. Meadors emphasizes that understanding the structure is crucial for properly interpreting the content of 1 Corinthians, which he describes as a unique book due to its dialogical nature stemming from communication between Paul and the Corinthian believers. He identifies two primary literary patterns Paul uses to indicate the book's structure: three significant statements within the text and the recurring use of the Greek phrase *peri de*. Furthermore, Meadors provides a Western-style outline of the book and strongly encourages diligent reading and research, recommending several key commentaries and New Testament introductions.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. **Two Literary Patterns Indicating Macrostructure:**
 - **Three Key Statements:** Meadors highlights three distinct statements in 1 Corinthians that signal major shifts in Paul's discussion and thus divide the letter into significant units:
 - **1 Corinthians 1:11:** "My brothers and sisters, some of whom are from Chloe's household, have informed me that there are quarrels among you." This statement introduces the first major unit, chapters 1-4, which addresses issues arising from oral reports.
 - **1 Corinthians 5:1:** "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate." This marks the beginning of the second major unit, chapters 5-6, dealing with reported sexual immorality and court problems.
 - **1 Corinthians 7:1:** "Now for the matters you wrote about." This phrase initiates the third and largest unit, chapters 7-16:4, where Paul responds to a written communication from the Corinthians covering various topics.

- **Recurring Phrase *Peri De*:** Meadors explains that the Greek phrase *peri de*, an idiomatic expression meaning "now concerning," consistently introduces new topics within the third major section (chapters 7-16). He points to examples in:
 - 7:1: "Now concerning the things you wrote..."
 - 7:25: "Now concerning virgins..."
 - 8:1: "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols..."
 - 12:1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts..."
 - 16:1: "Now concerning the collection of the saints..."
 - 16:12: While the ASV translates it as "but as touching Apollos," Meadors points out the underlying *peri de* structure in the Greek, suggesting it could also be understood as "now concerning Apollos."
- 1. **Structure of 1 Corinthians (Western Approach):** Meadors presents a traditional outline that aligns with the two literary patterns he discussed:
 - **Introductory Remarks:** 1:1-9 (Salutation)
 - **Paul's Response to Oral Communique from Chloe's Household:** 1:10 - Chapter 4 (Addressing quarrels)
 - **Paul's Response to Oral Reports/Rumors:** Chapters 5-6 (Dealing with fornication, sexual issues, and litigation)
 - **Paul's Response to Written Communique from Corinth:** 7 - 16:4 (Addressing various matters):
 - Chapter 7: Marriage and sexuality
 - Chapters 8-10: Meat offered to idols
 - Chapter 11: Church order
 - Chapters 12-14: Spiritual gifts
 - Chapter 15: Resurrection
 - Chapter 16: The collection for the Jerusalem church
 - **Closing of the Epistle:** 16:5-24

1. **Importance of Reading and Research (The Three R's):** Meadors strongly emphasizes the necessity of diligent reading and research for understanding 1 Corinthians. He states, "Remember, the three R's of learning are reading, reading, reading, research, and research. There is just no substitute for that." He shares his own practice of consulting commentaries even when preparing lectures, highlighting the vast amount of information available and the limitations of conveying it all.
2. **Commentary Recommendations:** Meadors provides a curated list of commentaries, offering insights into their strengths and approaches:
 - **David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary Series):** Recommended as the "first volume for working in Corinthians" due to Garland's narrative writing style, clear summaries, and synthetic approach. Meadors suggests reading Garland's summaries before engaging with specific sections.
 - **Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Pillar Commentary Series):** Described as a "very useful, very exacting, and sophisticated" commentary, more in-depth than typical Pillar series volumes, from an "Australian Evangelical" perspective.
 - **Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians* (Revised Edition):** Noted for its detailed textual critical discussions but also its readability due to Fee's background as a scholar and preacher.
 - **Joseph Fitzmeyer, *1 Corinthians* (Anchor Bible Series):** Characterized as a "fine accumulator of information" that focuses on presenting data rather than extensive judgment. Meadors recommends the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* as an "absolute must" for one's library, especially in electronic form. He recounts an anecdote about Fitzmeyer's preference for factual analysis over excessive hermeneutical interpretation.
 - **Clinton Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*:** Recommended for understanding how Paul structures the material in larger units (1-9, 1-4, 5-6) from a literary and theological perspective, although Meadors cautions about Talbert's potential overemphasis on chiasms.
 - **Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC):** Described as a "weighty" and "massive commentary" that delves into many interpretive issues. Meadors shares Fitzmeyer's assessment of it as "too hermeneutical," implying a stronger focus on diverse interpretations rather than solely on the text itself.

1. **Recommendation of Bruce Winter's Work:** Meadors highly recommends the works of Bruce Winter, particularly *After Paul Left Corinth*, which explores the Roman background and influence on the Corinthian context. He praises Winter's synthetic approach and ability to facilitate a "legitimate transfer" of meaning to contemporary settings. He also mentions *Seek the Welfare of the City* as a valuable resource, especially for studying the pastoral epistles. Meadors encourages acquiring and reading all of Winter's volumes.
2. **Building a "Consciousness" of Corinth:** Meadors emphasizes the importance of building a "consciousness of what it would have been like to have lived in Corinth, to have listened to Paul." He hopes the introductory material will "warm up" students, providing necessary context before delving into the specifics of the letter.
3. **Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 in the Next Lecture:** Meadors concludes by informing the audience that the next lecture will begin the detailed examination of the text, starting with 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 1 to 9 (the epistolary opening).

Quotes:

- "Brothers and sisters, some of whom are from Chloe's household, have informed me that there are quarrels among you." (1 Corinthians 1:11, quoted from the 2011 NIV)
- "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate." (1 Corinthians 5:1, quoted from the speaker's translation)
- "Now for the matters you wrote about." (1 Corinthians 7:1, quoted from the speaker's translation)
- "...peri-death. It's actually an idiomatic way of saying now concerning."
- "Reading is for information. Reading is not to just sit there and work through a bunch of words."
- "Remember, the three R's of learning are reading, reading, reading, research, and research. There is just no substitute for that."
- "...our libraries are populated by lots of books from people who may not be from your tradition. And so, you have to, on one hand, use discernment. Who's the

commentator that you're reading? What would be the bias of that commentator?"

- "...the facts, only the facts. That's what Fitzmeyer's after." (Referring to Fitzmeyer's approach)
- "Too hermeneutical." (Joseph Fitzmeyer's two-word assessment of Thistleton's commentary)
- "Winter was the warden... of the Tyndale House in Cambridge, England... Their primary goal is to mentor PhD students at Cambridge University who respect the scriptures and understand things relatively from an English evangelical standpoint."
- "...you're building a consciousness of what it would have been like to have lived in Corinth, to have listened to Paul..."

Conclusion:

Lecture 8 provides a foundational understanding of the structure of 1 Corinthians, highlighting the key literary markers that divide the letter into distinct sections based on the sources of Paul's information and the topics he addresses. Dr. Meadors strongly encourages students to engage in thorough reading and research, recommending a variety of commentaries with different strengths to aid in their study. The lecture sets the stage for a detailed examination of the text, beginning with the salutation in the subsequent session.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8, Structure of 1 Corinthians

Study Guide: 1 Corinthians Lecture 8

Key Concepts

- **Macrostructure of 1 Corinthians:** The overarching organizational framework of the letter.
- **Literary Patterns:** The methods Paul uses to structure his writing.
- **Oral Communique:** Information received verbally by Paul.
- **Written Communique:** Information Paul received in written form.
- **Peri de:** A Greek idiomatic phrase meaning "now concerning" used by Paul to introduce new topics.
- **Salutation:** The opening greeting of a letter (1 Corinthians 1:1-9).
- **Closing:** The concluding remarks of a letter (1 Corinthians 16:5-24).
- **Synthesis:** The combination of different ideas or pieces of information to form a coherent whole.
- **Commentary:** A book that provides explanation and interpretation of a text, especially scripture.
- **New Testament Survey/Introduction:** A book providing an overview of the New Testament, with introductions often delving into critical issues of each book.
- **Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia:** A reference work containing articles on various topics, people, and places mentioned in the Bible, offering compressed and skilled information.
- **Hermeneutical:** Relating to the theory and practice of interpretation.
- **Roman Background/Influence:** The social, cultural, and political context of the Roman Empire that shaped the city of Corinth and its inhabitants.
- **Tyndale House:** A scholarly institution in Cambridge, England, focused on evangelical biblical studies and mentoring PhD students.

Quiz

1. What are the two literary patterns Dr. Meadors identifies that Paul uses to indicate the macrostructure of 1 Corinthians? Provide a brief example of each from the lecture.
2. According to the lecture, what are the three main units of the body of 1 Corinthians, and what information or event introduces each of these units?
3. Explain the meaning of the Greek phrase "peri de" and its significance in understanding the structure of 1 Corinthians. Provide two examples of where this phrase appears in the letter according to the lecture.
4. What are the three categories of issues Dr. Meadors mentions that Paul addresses in his response to oral reports or rumors (chapters 5 and 6)?
5. Why does Dr. Meadors suggest that chapters 1-4 might be the "biggest challenge" in studying 1 Corinthians as a unit?
6. What is the primary difference Dr. Meadors highlights between commentaries that focus on data and those that offer more synthesis, using Garland's commentary as an example of the latter?
7. According to Dr. Meadors, what is the benefit of using a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia in studying the Bible, and what example does he provide to illustrate this point?
8. Summarize Fitzmeyer's approach to commentary writing as described by Dr. Meadors, and contrast it with Thistleton's approach.
9. What is Tyndale House, and what is Bruce Winter's connection to it? What is the general focus of Winter's work on 1 Corinthians according to the lecture?
10. What does Dr. Meadors emphasize as the importance of reading and bibliography in biblical learning, summarizing Dr. Bess's perspective on writing books?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two literary patterns are three major statements and the use of the Greek phrase "peri de." The three statements are found in 1:11 (Chloe's household reporting quarrels), 5:1 (reports of sexual immorality), and 7:1 (matters they wrote about). "Peri de" is used idiomatically to mean "now concerning," such as in 7:1, "Now concerning the things you wrote."
2. The three main units are chapters 1-4, introduced by the report from Chloe's household in 1:11; chapters 5-6, introduced by the report of sexual immorality in

5:1; and chapters 7-16:4, introduced by the phrase "now for the matters you wrote about" in 7:1.

3. "Peri de" is a Greek idiomatic phrase meaning "now concerning." It is significant because Paul uses this phrase consistently to signal a shift to a new topic or a response to a specific issue raised by the Corinthians. Examples include 7:1, "now concerning the things you wrote," and 8:1, "now concerning things sacrificed to idols."
4. Paul's response to oral reports or rumors in chapters 5 and 6 deals with fornication (sexual issues) and litigation (court problems). Dr. Meadors notes that these issues relate to status at the end of the day.
5. Dr. Meadors suggests that chapters 1-4 might be the biggest challenge because while it is a unit stemming from the report in 1:11, commentaries sometimes focus too much on individual details and miss the overall synthesis and main point of this section.
6. Commentaries that focus on data primarily provide information about specifics, such as word meanings and historical context, while commentaries offering more synthesis aim to provide a coherent overview and understanding of larger sections. Garland's commentary is presented as more synthetic, using narrative writing and summaries to give the big picture.
7. Dr. Meadors states that Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias compress a lot of information into smaller packages in a skilled manner, allowing readers to learn substantive content. He gives the example of looking up why the land of Israel was called the land of milk and honey, showing how such articles can provide meaningful insights that can be reflected upon.
8. Dr. Meadors describes Fitzmeyer's approach as focused on presenting raw facts and data without making many personal judgments, similar to the detective Joe Friday ("the facts, only the facts"). In contrast, Thistleton's commentary is described as "too hermeneutical," meaning it focuses more on the various interpretations of the text and the underlying interpretive principles rather than just the text itself.
9. Tyndale House is a scholarly institution in Cambridge, England, associated with Cambridge University, focused on English evangelical biblical studies and mentoring PhD students. Bruce Winter was the warden (principal/president) of Tyndale House. His work on 1 Corinthians focuses on bringing out the Roman

background and influence on the issues Paul addresses, providing a synthetic look at the context.

10. Dr. Meadors emphasizes that reading and research are essential for biblical learning, echoing the "three R's" (reading, reading, reading, research, and research). He recounts Dr. Bess's reluctance to write a book, stating he'd rather have people ask why he hadn't than why he bothered, highlighting the overwhelming amount of information in the field and the challenge of contributing meaningfully.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of understanding the macrostructure of 1 Corinthians for interpreting its individual parts. How do the three major indicators (1:11, 5:1, 7:1) and the use of "peri de" contribute to this understanding?
2. Compare and contrast the different types of commentaries discussed by Dr. Meadors (e.g., data-focused vs. synthetic) and explain the value of utilizing a variety of these resources when studying 1 Corinthians.
3. Analyze the role of historical and cultural context, particularly the Roman influence in Corinth, as a crucial element in interpreting Paul's letter. How does the work of scholars like Bruce Winter contribute to this understanding?
4. Evaluate the importance of consulting reference works like Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias in biblical study, using the examples provided by Dr. Meadors to support your argument.
5. Reflect on Dr. Meadors' discussion of bibliography and the overwhelming nature of scholarly resources. How can a student effectively navigate this wealth of information to deepen their understanding of 1 Corinthians?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Bibliography:** A list of books and other sources referred to in a scholarly work.
- **Chiasm:** A literary device in which parallel elements are presented in an ABBA pattern, creating a central point or emphasis.
- **Epistle:** A letter, especially a formal or didactic one; often refers to the letters in the New Testament.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, particularly scripture.
- **Idiomatic Construction:** An expression or phrase whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meanings of its individual words.
- **Litigation:** The process of taking legal action.
- **Oral Reports/Rumors:** Information or stories circulated verbally rather than in writing.
- **Prepositional Phrase:** A group of words consisting of a preposition, its object, and any modifiers of the object.
- **Salutation:** The formal greeting at the beginning of a letter.
- **Textual Criticism:** The scholarly discipline of identifying and removing errors from manuscripts to reconstruct the original text.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 8, Structure of 1 Corinthians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on 1 Corinthians (Based on Dr. Meadors' Lecture)

1. How does Dr. Meadors suggest 1 Corinthians is structured, and what are the primary indicators of this structure?

Dr. Meadors explains that 1 Corinthians uses two main literary patterns to indicate its macrostructure. The first is a series of three key statements that introduce major sections: 1 Corinthians 1:11 ("quarrels among you"), 1 Corinthians 5:1 ("sexual immorality among you"), and 1 Corinthians 7:1 ("now for the matters you wrote about"). These verses mark the beginnings of significant units within the letter. The second indicator is Paul's recurring use of the Greek phrase *peri de*, which is idiomatically translated as "now concerning," often introducing new topics or responding to specific issues raised by the Corinthians.

2. What are the three main divisions of the letter of 1 Corinthians based on the structural indicators mentioned?

Based on the three key statements identified by Dr. Meadors, the main body of 1 Corinthians can be divided into three major units:

- Chapters 1-4, which address the quarrels and divisions within the Corinthian church, introduced by 1 Corinthians 1:11.
- Chapters 5-6, which deal with reported issues of sexual immorality and legal disputes among believers, introduced by 1 Corinthians 5:1.
- Chapters 7-16:4, which address various questions and concerns the Corinthians had written to Paul about, introduced by 1 Corinthians 7:1. The letter also includes an introductory salutation (1:1-9) and a closing section (16:5-24).

3. Why is understanding the structure of 1 Corinthians important for studying the book?

Understanding the structure of 1 Corinthians is crucial for proper contextual interpretation. Recognizing the major units helps readers understand that different sections address distinct issues or sources of information (oral reports vs. written inquiries). This prevents misinterpreting Paul's responses by taking them out of their original context. Commentaries are also typically organized according to this structure, making it easier to follow scholarly discussions.

4. What are some of the commentaries on 1 Corinthians recommended by Dr. Meadors, and what are their key characteristics?

Dr. Meadors recommends several commentaries, each with different strengths:

- **David Garland, 1 Corinthians (Baker Exegetical Commentary):** Recommended as a first read due to its narrative style, synthetic overviews at the beginning of sections, and clear explanations.
- **Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Revised Edition):** A detailed and readable commentary with attention to textual critical issues, useful for both scholars and preachers.
- **Joseph Fitzmeyer, First Corinthians (Anchor Bible):** A comprehensive resource focused on providing extensive information and data on the text, allowing readers to form their own judgments.
- **Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians (Pillar Commentary):** A deeper and more exacting commentary, considered very useful and sophisticated.
- **Talbert, Reading Corinthians:** A literary and theological commentary that focuses on how Paul put units of the letter together, highlighting literary structures like chiasms (though Dr. Meadors notes Talbert's potential overemphasis on this).
- **Thistleton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NIGTC):** A weighty and highly "hermeneutical" commentary that delves into various interpretations and interpretive principles behind the text.

5. Why does Dr. Meadors emphasize the importance of reading and research when studying 1 Corinthians?

Dr. Meadors stresses that there is no substitute for reading and research in biblical study. He notes that even experienced scholars rely on commentaries and other resources to prepare their teachings. Reading provides the necessary information and context for understanding the complexities of the text. Furthermore, engaging with different scholarly perspectives broadens one's understanding and helps to avoid narrow or biased interpretations.

6. What does Dr. Meadors suggest about using resources written by scholars from different Christian traditions?

Dr. Meadors advises using discernment when engaging with scholars from various traditions. While acknowledging potential biases, he points out that good scholars primarily present raw facts and data, with their interpretations usually coming later. He highlights that valuable insights and information can be gained from a broad range of writers, including Roman Catholic scholars, and encourages students to be open to learning from diverse perspectives while maintaining their own critical judgment.

7. What is the significance of Bruce Winter's work on 1 Corinthians according to Dr. Meadors?

Dr. Meadors highly recommends the work of Bruce Winter, particularly his book *After Paul Left Corinth*. Winter's work focuses on bringing out the Roman background and influence on the issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians. This provides crucial contextual understanding, helping to bridge the gap between the ancient world of Corinth and contemporary interpretations of the text. Winter's approach emphasizes the social and cultural dynamics at play in the Corinthian church.

8. What practical advice does Dr. Meadors offer for personal Bible study, drawing from the anecdote about the student and the Bible dictionary?

Dr. Meadors advises moving beyond simply reading words to grasping the content and meaning of the biblical text. He shares an anecdote about a student who found devotional reading more impactful by incorporating the study of Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias. This practice helps to unpack unfamiliar concepts, historical contexts, and cultural nuances, leading to a more substantive understanding and greater retention of what is read. He suggests that when encountering something unclear in the Bible, consulting such resources can significantly enrich one's comprehension and personal reflection.