

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor. 6:7-20 Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 6:7-20, [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org)

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture on 1 Corinthians 6:7-20 explores Paul's response to reports of issues within the Corinthian church. The session focuses on **believers engaging in lawsuits against one another**, which Paul views as a moral defeat, highlighting their failure to live by Christian values. Meadors emphasizes the importance of **understanding the historical context of Roman Corinth**, particularly the social customs of the elite, such as banquets that included sexual activity, and how this influenced their interpretation of Christian freedom. Paul counters the Corinthian slogan "**all things are lawful**" by asserting that not all things are beneficial or non-enslaving, especially regarding sexual immorality. The lecture concludes by examining Paul's theological grounding for sexual purity, emphasizing that **believers' bodies are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit**, urging them to flee sexual sin and honor God with their physical being.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).



Meadors_1Cor_Session17.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 6:7-20

Briefing Document: Dr. Gary Meadors on 1 Corinthians 6:7-20

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors focuses on Paul's response to oral reports concerning issues within the Corinthian church, specifically addressing lawsuits among believers (6:7-8) and sexual immorality (6:9-20). Meadors emphasizes the underlying moral failures revealed by these issues and stresses the importance of understanding the Greco-Roman, particularly Roman Corinthian, context to properly interpret Paul's teachings.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Lawsuits Among Believers as a Moral Defeat (6:7-8):

- Paul critiques the Corinthians for resolving disputes through worldly courts instead of within their Christian community.
- Meadors highlights the repeated phrase "Do you not know?" throughout chapter 6, indicating Paul is reminding them of prior teaching.
- The very fact of lawsuits signifies a "complete defeat" for the believers, demonstrating a failure to live according to Christian understanding.
- **Quote:** "this very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged?" (p. 1)
- Lawsuits are seen as symptomatic of deeper problems and a "moral defect," indicating an inability to operate according to biblical values within their cultural context.
- **Quote:** "Paul points out that lawsuits are merely symptomatic of deeper problems, yea, even a moral defect." (p. 2)
- Meadors cautions against directly applying 1 Corinthians 6 to modern legal systems like those in the USA, noting differences in their basis (analogy vs. identity, civil vs. potentially criminal law, status-based vs. theoretically fair).
- While not a prescriptive text against all legal recourse, Paul's exhortation to "rather be wronged than embarrassing the assembly still has to be given due consideration." (p. 3)

2. Sexual Sins and the Christian's Position in Christ (6:9-11):

- Paul upbraids the Corinthians regarding various sexual sins, including fornication, idolatry, adultery, and homosexuality, using a "vice list."
- **Quote:** "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (p. 3)
- Meadors emphasizes the transformative nature of their conversion: "And that is what some of you were. Now, that is an extremely important statement. That is what some of you were, but now you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God." (p. 3-4) This past reality demands a changed lifestyle.
- He briefly addresses the terms used for homosexuality in the original Greek (malakoi and arsenokoitai), noting they were not debated in the first century but are now. He recommends resources for further study on this topic.
- Meadors distinguishes the biblical clarity against homosexuality from the more complex issue of transgender, for which there is no direct scriptural text. He suggests using a biblical worldview and implicational reasoning to address transgender issues.
- He introduces the idea that deviations from a normative biblical worldview, including feelings of being "born this way," could be a consequence of the Fall and the brokenness of the world.

3. The Corinthian Slogan "All Things Are Lawful" (6:12) and Its Context:

- Paul addresses a Corinthian slogan: "I have the right to do anything" (NIV 2011), which Meadors believes was likely used to rationalize immoral behavior.
- **Quote:** "Paul's citation and critique of what seems to be a Corinthian slogan. ... ESV, all things are lawful for me. The NIV, original. Everything is permissible for me since I have 2011 here. I have the right to do anything." (p. 9)
- This slogan appears multiple times (6:12, 10:23), and Paul counters it with qualifications: "but not all things are helpful" and "but I will not be enslaved by anything."
- Meadors discusses two views on the origin of this slogan:

- A general slogan of freedom wrongly applied to sexual domains.
- A reflection of the secular ethic of the elite, who believed their status permitted them to do as they pleased. Meadors favors this view, drawing heavily on the work of Bruce Winter.
- He highlights the cultural context of Roman banquets, common among the elite in Corinth, which involved eating, drinking, and sexual activity with courtesans as an accepted practice, particularly after the age of 18 when young men received the *toga virilis*.
- **Quote:** "Roman banquets, which were a part of Roman colonies like Corinth, were common, but access to those banquets was the privilege of the social elite, those who had status. Those banquets were for eating, for drinking, and for love-making." (p. 15)
- Meadors argues that Paul's critique in 6:12-20 is more directed at the context of the banquet and the elite's dualistic ethic than simply against visiting brothels.

4. Paul's Counter-Affirmation and Christian View of the Body (6:13-20):

- Paul emphatically rejects the idea that "all things are permitted," asserting moral boundaries and the need for self-restriction for the good of others.
- **Quote:** "Paul himself emphatically rejected the aphorism that these things are permitted, which he twice cited with the use of the strong adversative but. An adversative is a conjunction, but there are different ways to say it in Greek, and Allah is the strongest way to say it. It's not permitted. It's not permitted." (p. 13)
- He delineates a Christian view of the body, affirming that God has ultimate authority over it and has defined the ethics of sex.
- Meadors emphasizes that there is no duality between body and spirit in the Christian worldview; actions of the body reflect the soul.
- Paul uses three rhetorical questions ("Do you not know?") to highlight the sacredness of the body:
- The body is a member of Christ. Uniting it with a prostitute is unthinkable.
- The body is violated by wrong connections. Sexual union creates a unique bond ("two become one flesh"), making sexual sin particularly serious.
- The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

- The final exhortation is to "Flee from sexual immorality" and to "honor God with your bodies" because believers are not their own; they were "bought at a price."
- **Quote:** "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are sacred space. You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." (p. 22-23)

Conclusion: Dr. Meadors concludes that 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 directly address the issue of the elite Corinthians and their belief that their status allowed them liberties, including sexual sins within the context of Roman banquets, which are contrary to Christian ethics. He stresses the ongoing relevance of Paul's teaching for Christians facing similar cultural pressures to compromise their moral standards.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 6:7-20

Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 6:7-20

Key Themes:

- The moral implications of lawsuits among believers.
- The Christian's position in Christ as a motivation for ethical behavior.
- Critique of a potential Corinthian slogan: "All things are lawful."
- The significance and sacredness of the believer's body.
- The clash between Roman cultural norms (specifically regarding banquets and the elite) and Christian ethics regarding sexual immorality.

Outline of Key Sections:

1. Lawsuits Among Believers (6:7-8):

- Paul's critique: Lawsuits represent a moral defeat.
- Emphasis on being wronged rather than engaging in litigation.
- The failure to live according to Christian understanding and values.
- Distinction between Roman and American court systems; caution against direct application of the text.
- Focus on civil rather than criminal matters in the Corinthian context.

1. The Christian's Position and Avoidance of Sin (6:9-11):

- "Do you not know?" as a recurring rhetorical question, highlighting forgotten or ignored teachings.
- Vice list: Identifying behaviors incompatible with inheriting the kingdom of God.
- The transformative power of Christ: "Such were some of you, but now you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified."
- Expectation of a changed lifestyle reflecting their new identity in Christ.

1. Critique of "All Things Are Lawful" (6:12):

- Paul's citation and critique of a potential Corinthian slogan.

- Variations of the slogan in different Bible translations (ESV, NIV).
- Paul's counterpoints: "but not all things are helpful," "but I will not be enslaved by anything."
- Possible interpretations of the slogan:
 - A general slogan of freedom misused to justify immoral behavior.
 - A reflection of the elite's perceived liberty due to their social status.
- Winter's argument connecting the slogan to the ethical dualism of the Roman elite and the context of banquets.

1. **The Body and Sexual Immorality (6:13-20):**

- Rejection of another potential slogan: "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food."
- The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord.
- Believers' bodies as members of Christ; the implications of uniting them with a prostitute.
- The concept of two becoming one flesh in sexual union and the unique nature of sexual sin.
- The believer's body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Exhortation to flee from sexual immorality and honor God with their bodies.

1. **Historical and Cultural Context:**

- The influence of Roman culture in Corinth, particularly regarding the elite and their social practices (banquets, ethical dualism).
- The significance of the toga virilis and its connection to elite social gatherings.
- The prevalence of sexual immorality in the first century Roman world, including temple prostitution and practices associated with banquets.
- The clash between this cultural backdrop and the new ethical standards of Christianity.

Key Figures and Concepts:

- **Paul:** Author of 1 Corinthians, addressing issues in the Corinthian church.

- **Corinth:** A Roman colony with a diverse population and prevalent Greco-Roman cultural influences.
- **Oral Reports:** Information Paul received that prompted his response in this section.
- **Lawsuits Among Believers:** A specific problem Paul addresses, viewing it as a moral failure.
- **"Do you not know?":** A recurring rhetorical question emphasizing the Corinthians' lack of understanding or application of Christian teaching.
- **Vice List:** A catalog of behaviors contrary to Christian living and inheriting the kingdom of God.
- **Justification, Sanctification, Washing:** Key aspects of the believer's transformation through Christ.
- **"All things are lawful (permissible)":** A potential Corinthian slogan Paul critiques.
- **Roman Banquets:** Social gatherings of the elite involving eating, drinking, and often sexual activity.
- **Ethical Dualism:** The Platonic idea that the material body and immaterial soul are separate, influencing the elite's view on ethical behavior.
- **Toga Virilis:** The garment signifying a young Roman male's coming of age and entry into elite society.
- **Porneia (Sexual Immorality):** A broad term encompassing various forms of sexual sin.
- **Body as Members of Christ:** The intimate connection between believers and Christ.
- **Two Become One Flesh:** The biblical understanding of marital union, applied to highlight the seriousness of sexual sin outside of marriage.
- **Body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit:** The indwelling presence of God in believers, emphasizing the sacredness of the body.
- **Bruce Winter:** A scholar whose work emphasizes the Roman cultural context of 1 Corinthians.
- **G.D. Fee:** Another commentator on 1 Corinthians.

- **David Garland:** A commentator on 1 Corinthians, whose work is critiqued for lacking sufficient engagement with Winter's historical reconstructions.

Quiz: 1 Corinthians 6:7-20

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:7, what does the very fact that believers are suing each other indicate about their spiritual state? Why does he consider it a defeat?
2. What is the significance of Paul's repeated use of the phrase "Do you not know?" in 1 Corinthians 6? What does this suggest about his prior teaching or the Corinthians' understanding?
3. Describe the transformative message in 1 Corinthians 6:11. What does Paul remind the Corinthians about their past and their current identity in Christ?
4. What are the two main interpretations discussed regarding the Corinthian slogan "All things are lawful"? Briefly explain each perspective.
5. According to the lecture, how did the social status of the Roman elite in Corinth potentially influence their ethical views and practices, particularly concerning banquets?
6. Explain Bruce Winter's argument connecting the Corinthian slogan and Paul's response in 6:12-20 to the cultural context of Roman banquets.
7. How does Paul use the concept of believers' bodies being "members of Christ" to argue against sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6?
8. What is the significance of the metaphor of "two becoming one flesh" in the context of Paul's discussion of sexual sin? How does it relate to marriage and other sexual relationships?
9. Explain the metaphor of the believer's body as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" in 1 Corinthians 6:19. What implications does this have for how believers should view and treat their bodies?
10. What is Paul's final exhortation regarding sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20? What reasons does he give for this command?

Quiz Answer Key: 1 Corinthians 6:7-20

1. The fact that believers are suing each other indicates that they have been completely defeated already. Paul views it as a defeat because they are relying on worldly structures to solve their problems instead of living according to their Christian understanding and being willing to be wronged for the sake of unity.
2. Paul's repeated use of "Do you not know?" suggests that he had previously taught the Corinthians about these matters, but they were either ignorant of or disregarding his instructions. It serves as a strong critique, reminding them of foundational truths they should have already grasped.
3. Paul reminds the Corinthians that some of them used to live according to the sinful behaviors listed in the vice list, but through Christ, they were washed, sanctified, and justified. This highlights the transformative power of the gospel and implies that their current behavior should reflect their new, clean standing before God.
4. One interpretation is that it was a general slogan of freedom that the Corinthians were misusing to rationalize immoral behavior, particularly in the realm of sexual ethics. The second interpretation, supported by Winter, suggests it was a slogan reflecting the elite's belief that their social status permitted them greater liberty, aligning with their ethical dualism.
5. The Roman elite in Corinth, influenced by Platonic thought, often held a dualistic view separating the physical and immaterial, leading them to believe their physical actions had little impact on their spiritual state. This, combined with the norms of elite banquets involving sexual activity, likely fostered a sense of entitlement and freedom from conventional ethics.
6. Winter argues that the slogan "All things are lawful" was likely a justification used by the Corinthian elite, rooted in their cultural acceptance of practices within Roman banquets, which included sexual activity. Paul's counter-affirmations then directly challenge this elite mindset and their dualistic understanding of the body and spirit in relation to these practices.
7. Paul argues that believers' bodies are intimately connected to Christ, being members of his very body. Therefore, uniting one's body with a prostitute would be taking a member of Christ and joining it to something profane, which is unthinkable and unacceptable.
8. The metaphor of "two becoming one flesh," originally referring to the bond of marriage, is used by Paul to emphasize the profound and unique nature of sexual

union. Engaging in sexual activity outside of this committed relationship creates a similar bond with someone other than one's spouse, highlighting the violation and seriousness of sexual sin against one's own body.

9. The metaphor of the believer's body as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" signifies that the Spirit of God dwells within each believer, making their bodies sacred. This implies that believers should treat their bodies with reverence and avoid any defilement, including sexual immorality, as they are now the dwelling place of God's Spirit.
10. Paul's final exhortation is to flee from sexual immorality, emphasizing the need for a decisive break from such behavior. He reasons that sexual sin is unique in that it is a sin against one's own body because of the "two become one flesh" principle, and he reminds them that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, bought at a price, urging them to honor God with their physical selves.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of Paul's engagement with the issue of lawsuits among believers in 1 Corinthians 6:7-8. How does his response reveal his understanding of Christian community and the application of Christian values in conflict resolution?
2. Discuss the potential origins and implications of the Corinthian slogan "All things are lawful" within the social and cultural context of first-century Corinth, drawing on the insights provided in the lecture.
3. Critically evaluate Bruce Winter's reconstruction of the Roman banquet context and its influence on Paul's arguments against sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. How does this historical understanding shape our interpretation of the passage?
4. Explore the theological significance of Paul's teaching on the believer's body in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20. How does he connect the physical body to Christ and the Holy Spirit, and what are the ethical implications of this connection for Christian living?
5. Compare and contrast Paul's approach to addressing the specific issues of lawsuits and sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:7-20. What underlying principles or concerns seem to guide his responses to these different problems within the Corinthian church?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Adjudication:** The process of making a formal judgment or decision about a problem or dispute.
- **Aphoristic Slogan:** A concise and memorable statement used to express a general truth or principle.
- **Chiasm:** A literary device in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order.
- **Civil Law:** The body of laws concerned with private relations between members of a community rather than criminal, military, or religious affairs.
- **Criminal Law:** The body of law that deals with crime and the legal punishment of criminal offenses.
- **Elite (Social Elite):** A small group of people who have a lot of wealth, social status, and influence.
- **Ethical Dualism:** A philosophical or religious belief that there are two fundamental principles or realities, often good and evil, spirit and matter. In the context discussed, it refers to the Platonic separation of body and soul influencing ethical views.
- **Exhortation:** An address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something.
- **Fornication (Porneia):** Sexual immorality, generally referring to sexual activity outside of marriage.
- **Hermeneutical Ventriloquism:** The act of interpreting a text in a way that reflects one's own preconceived ideas or biases, rather than the original meaning.
- **Justification:** The act of God declaring a sinner righteous in his sight through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Licentiousness:** Promiscuous and unprincipled in sexual matters; disregarding accepted rules or conventions.
- **Prescriptive Text:** A text in scripture that commands or instructs what believers should do.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God's purposes.

- **Symptomatic:** Serving as a symptom or sign of a more significant underlying issue.
- **Transvestitism:** The practice of dressing in clothes traditionally associated with the opposite sex.
- **Toga Virilis:** The plain white toga worn by Roman citizens after coming of age, typically around 14-16, but mentioned in the lecture in the context of 18-year-olds and entry into elite society.
- **Vexatious Litigation:** Legal action that is brought without sufficient grounds and mainly intended to harass or annoy the defendant.
- **Vice List:** A catalog of immoral or wicked behaviors.
- **Virtue List:** A catalog of morally good or admirable behaviors.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 17, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 6:7-20, Biblicalelearning.org

Frequently Asked Questions on 1 Corinthians 6:7-20

1. What was the initial issue Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 6:1-6, and how does it connect to the rest of the chapter? Paul initially addressed the issue of lawsuits among believers, criticizing the Corinthians for taking each other to secular courts. He highlights this as a moral defeat, indicating their failure to resolve disputes within their Christian understanding. This problem of using worldly structures to solve internal conflicts is symptomatic of a deeper moral defect and sets the stage for Paul's broader concern about their behavior, particularly regarding sexual immorality, as he repeatedly emphasizes what they "ought to know" as believers.

2. Why does Paul emphasize the phrase "Do you not know?" repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 6? The repeated phrase "Do you not know?" serves as a strong critique, reminding the Corinthians of foundational Christian teachings they seem to have forgotten or were ignoring. Paul is bringing them back in line with the moral and ethical standards they should already be aware of, possibly from previous communication, including a "lost letter." This rhetorical device underscores the inconsistency between their actions and their identity as believers.

3. According to the lecture, how should Christians view lawsuits among themselves? Dr. Meadors explains that the very fact that believers are engaged in lawsuits against each other signifies a moral defeat. A community founded on harmony should ideally render such legal disputes unnecessary. Participating in lawsuits is seen as a confession of moral failure, an inability to operate according to biblical values and resolve conflicts within the Christian framework. Paul suggests it would be better to be wronged than to bring such shame upon the Christian community.

4. How does the historical and cultural context of Roman Corinth influence the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6, particularly verses 12-20? Understanding the Roman Corinthian context is crucial for interpreting 1 Corinthians 6. The lecture emphasizes the prevalence of Roman banquets among the social elite, which involved eating, drinking, and often sexual activity with courtesans as an accepted norm tied to their social status and a dualistic (Platonic) worldview that separated the body and spirit. Paul's critique of the slogan "all things are lawful" in verses 12-20 is likely a direct challenge to the elite's rationalization of their participation in these banquets and their associated sexual immorality, rather than just a general slogan of Christian freedom being misapplied.

5. What does the lecture suggest about the Corinthian slogan "all things are lawful for me" (or similar variations)? The lecture presents two main views on this slogan. The first, more traditional view, is that it was a general slogan of Christian freedom that the Corinthians were misusing to justify immoral behavior, particularly sexual licentiousness. However, the lecture leans towards the second view, supported by Bruce Winter's work, suggesting it was a maxim particularly embraced by the Roman social elite in Corinth, stemming from their secular ethic that "all things are permitted" due to their status, especially in the context of Roman banquets and a Platonic separation of body and spirit. Paul emphatically rejects this notion with his counter-affirmations, emphasizing that not all things are beneficial or edifying.

6. How does Paul address the issue of sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, and what key arguments does he use? Paul addresses sexual immorality by establishing a Christian understanding of the body. He argues that the authority over the body belongs to God, who has defined the ethics of sex. He refutes the idea of a duality between body and spirit, stating that they cannot be separated. Key arguments include: the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord; believers' bodies are members of Christ, and uniting them with a prostitute is unthinkable; sexual union creates a unique bond, making sexual sin a violation against one's own body; and the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing its sacredness and that believers are not their own but bought with a price, thus they should honor God with their bodies.

7. What is the lecture's perspective on applying the teachings of 1 Corinthians 6 to contemporary legal and cultural issues, particularly concerning lawsuits and sexuality?

The lecture cautions against a simplistic and direct application of 1 Corinthians 6 to modern contexts without careful consideration of the historical and cultural differences. Regarding lawsuits, it suggests that while the principle of preferring to be wronged rather than embarrassing the Christian community still holds weight, the Roman court system based on status differs significantly from modern systems like those in the USA. Similarly, regarding sexuality, while the biblical stance against certain practices like homosexuality is presented as consistent, the lecture highlights the need for careful theological reflection on issues not directly addressed in scripture, such as transgenderism, using a biblical worldview and principles. It warns against merely "moralizing" the text without understanding its original meaning and context.

8. What does Paul's emphasis on believers being "washed, sanctified, justified" in 1 Corinthians 6:11 imply for their present conduct? Paul's reminder that the Corinthians were once engaged in the very sins he lists (sexual immorality, idolatry, etc.) but have been washed, sanctified, and justified through Christ and the Spirit implies a radical transformation in their identity and therefore their expected behavior. Their past lifestyle is no longer acceptable. As those who have been redeemed and made righteous, they are called to live a life that reflects their new status in Christ, making better decisions and exhibiting a lifestyle that aligns with their justified standing before God.