

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 6, Introduction to 1 Corinthians, Part 1

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 6, Introduction to 1 Corinthians, Part 1.

Well, welcome to our sixth lecture in our journey into the book of 1 Corinthians.

We've covered a number of items that I would call big philosophical interpretive issues in terms of what we're going to face when we get into the book of 1 Corinthians and see that there are diversities of opinions. But today, I want to talk to you about some basic facts of introduction to the book of 1 Corinthians. I'm not going to spend an elaborate amount of time on this.

I have given you an elaborate set of notes. Note packet number five has about 30 pages of notes about historical backgrounds. There will be a number of slides and so forth that you'll be able to access through the site or go online.

I have a number of quotations from individuals who were sort of the travel guides of the ancient world, giving you information about the city of Corinth that you can read at your leisure. I also highly recommend that you read the introduction to 1 Corinthians in some major commentary that you're using. Hopefully many of you will be using the commentary by Garland.

It's very readable and very usable by English students. There's certainly language in it, but not language that's going to bother you if you do not use Greek. So, I would highly recommend that you read a good introduction to the book of 1 Corinthians.

I'm not going to give you all that information. I'm only going to highlight some things, and I'll leave it up to you to fill in those gaps. But let's think about a number of items about the city of Corinth.

First of all, it's geography. Why was Corinth such an important city? Well, at the time of Paul, Corinth was at the crossroads between the East and the West. The ancient world moved goods either by land or by sea.

And the Mediterranean can be a very nasty body of water. I was in the Navy, and I was on a destroyer, and I can remember numerous times when we were in the Mediterranean how quickly that Mediterranean could get all churned up. And while it may seem to be large, it's actually a small body of water.

And so instead of getting the big swells which sort of move, you get all of this churned-up water, and it can be extremely rough. Well, in the ancient world, when sailing and using sails was the main way that boats operated, to go down around that southern, what they called the Peloponnesus of Greece, was extremely dangerous because the prevailing winds from the west could blow you out into open waters where survival could be quite a challenge. And so, Corinth was a very, very important place in the ancient world, and it was also important in Paul's time for the same reasons.

It was a merchandising city. It was a crossroads. In some ways, we would call it a Navy town, to use an analogy.

It was a wild place on a number of occasions as these traveling sailors came through the area to leave a ship and pick up a ship and party in the meantime. Now, under the idea of geography on page 20, I've given you a little description here of the isthmus, where it's located. Corinth was just south of this route that they had chosen to create from the Aegean Sea to the eastern areas.

It was three and a half miles. And so, they would bring a ship to dock in Cenchrea and then they would take their goods and services across by carts and animals and put them on another ship. Then, the next day, the sailors would pick their ships up and continue up in those protected waters along the coastlines.

And so, Corinth was a stop. It was a major merchandising situation just because of its natural geography. In the 1800s, almost 2,000 years after Paul's time, they actually built a canal.

There is now a modern canal, kind of like the Suez Canal, where this was the canal that joined these two bodies of water so that the ships could go through that three and a half miles rather than be unloaded and then reloaded. But that was a long, long time. So, in the ancient world, Corinth served that purpose in this geography for merchants, for the sailors, as it were, who were attached to these ships.

It was a very popular city, and it was also a bit wild. We can see some of the residual pieces of that, I suppose, as we get into the book of First Corinthians. Now, historically, we could talk about two Corinth's.

There's the classical and ancient Corinth, and then there's the Corinth of the New Testament period, the time of Paul. But in the second century before Christ, Corinth gave Rome resistance as Rome became the controlling power in the ancient world after the time of Alexander the Greek's conquest.

And a general named Mummius Achaius came to Corinth and devastated and flattened the city. For nearly 200 years, the city of Corinth did not operate as a major

bustling city. But in 44, actually, about a hundred years, excuse me, in 44 BCE, the city was reformulated as a Roman colony.

Now it was a Greek colony. Now, it's a Roman colony. Now, Rome had taken over everything that was Greek and absorbed the Greek things to a great extent.

But Rome was more organized. It had more laws, if you please, and was able to control the vast amount of territory that the Alexandrian group had established through warfare. But they weren't very good at managing.

Rome was a great manager in the ancient world. So, Rome took over Corinth and re-established it about 50 years before the time of Christ. And by the time of Paul, which was less than a hundred years, but somewhere close to that, by the time Paul arrived in Corinth in our Christian witness in the scriptures, Corinth had once again become a very bustling city.

It was still a navy town to a great extent. It was a place of international trade between the East and the West. But they were different cities.

And you will read about that, for example, in your introductions. If you read Garland, for example, he gives you a great section on how the Corinth of Paul's time as a Roman colony was different than the Corinth of the second century BC, when it was primarily a Greek colony. What was it like to live in the city of Corinth? Well, there are testimonies to the city of Corinth that have survived and can be read.

But one of the challenges is that you always need to be careful about the date of the source that you're reading. You could read ancient sources that describe a Corinth that was not the Corinth that Paul went to because it's the classical Corinth. It's the Greek Corinth, rather than the Corinth of a hundred to two hundred years later, when Paul actually arrived.

So those details need to be considered. Whenever you're doing the ancient study, you must always be studying sources that are germane to the decades in which you're looking at something, not something that's hundreds of years before or hundreds of years after. So, the time of the record for the city of Corinth is extremely important.

The classical Corinth or the Roman Corinth. Also, you have to think about it; on page 21, we are talking about these things. Who is writing the report? For example, there was a writer named Aristophanes who wrote about Corinth.

He was a comic playwright. But what's most interesting is that he was pro-Athens. Now, Athens and Corinth were rivals in many ways.

They were very different cities, and yet they were rivals for attention in the ancient world and even in the Roman world. And Aristophanes, because he was pro-Athenian, coined the term Corinthianizer. And in his plays, he used Corinthianizer in the Greek language to describe a person who was a flagrant fornicator.

And he, so to speak, criticized and gave a negative image of Corinth, which it may have deserved in some aspects of Corinth in relation to the plays that people would hear. So, a Corinthianizer was a person who was sexually immoral was a person who was sexually wild, and Corinthianizer captured that. But if you read an account that does that, you have to ask yourself the question, well, just how bad was it? Certainly, it existed, but Aristophanes is trying to make Athens look good and Corinth look bad.

So when you're reading ancient accounts, you always want to know, who did this writer favor? And would this writer be likely to criticize one city over another? Corinth, I'm sure, gave plenty of grist for that mill, but nonetheless, ask yourself who's doing the writing. There's another important time factor when we study Corinth. We're interested in the ancient religions.

Aphrodite was a part of the Venus cult in Corinth, which was sexually related. The ancient Corinth talks about a thousand temples, and I'm going to use a word here: temple prostitutes in that ancient city of the second millennium BC and before. Well, was that the city that Paul came into? Were there a thousand of these temple prostitutes in the city that Paul came to? You can't take a 200-year-old testimony to the nature of that temple that was destroyed and then rebuilt and re-established and functioning in the time of Paul.

More than likely, much continuity exists, but there was probably a great deal of discontinuity between just how many numbers were there. Now, it might strike you strange to hear this kind of nomenclature: temple prostitutes. The word prostitute is a loaded term, and it has a very negative connotation in Christian morality. Yes, and no matter what spin you put on it, it would have a negative moral connotation.

But you have to understand that in the ancient religions, both going back into Israel where you have the Baal cult, the Baal cult was a fertility cult. In its temple and in its religious practice, the sexual aspect was used as a form of worship because that was a deep-level aspect of fertility. Now, that seems very strange to us, and of course, it would be from the standpoint of Christian morality, but that was very much part and parcel.

If you've ever wondered why ancient Israel had so much trouble getting Baal out of their blood, you can imagine why from the standpoint of the fact that it had that sexual draw in its practices. Read the book of Hosea. Hosea was commanded to marry Gomer, and in chapter 3 of Hosea, we see that Gomer is involved with the cultic practices of the Baal cult.

She may well have been a temple prostitute, a temple paramour. There are lots of discussions about this. That's for another place in time for you to look into.

But here's Hosea and Gomer. Gomer actually has to go buy her back from the temple and take her almost as property to be able to keep her. God used this relationship between Hosea and Gomer, his wife, and the struggle that was going on between Israel and the Baal cult in ancient Canaan as illustrations of what kind of struggle was involved with following the Lord and not following the false gods.

Well, to some extent, in the Greek religions of the second millennium, and also in the Roman religions and the residual pieces of that, the Aphrodite cult and the Venus cult existed in Corinth. And that sort of thing certainly would have gone on, but you're going to have to be very careful about what claims you make and how much of it was going on. Strabo, who was an ancient travel guide writer, if you please, writes about Corinth as a city of love with the temple of Aphrodite sporting 1,000 temple prostitutes.

But again, he's talking about ancient Corinth. He's writing at a time of somewhere in the range of 200 years, in a city that was destroyed and re-established before Paul even arrived. So you can't take that as a proof text for the kind of town in which Paul came.

And yet we know that it certainly was a wide-open place, and it sported ancient religions that were certainly not along the moral order of Jewish Christian thinking. So Murphy O'Connor has correctly observed that many New Testament introductions and commentaries have stressed this aspect, that is, the ancient classic Corinth, because it appears to provide an explanation for certain features, like in 1 Corinthians 5-7, where we have sexual and moral issues going on. But you have to be careful about your evidence.

That's part of the historical study. Certainly, it was a Roman town, and it was wide open, and there's still plenty of those kinds of problems going on, but let's be careful with the evidence that we use to claim that. We know that the Jews existed in the city of Corinth.

There's archaeological evidence. In ancient times, when buildings were built, they had doorposts. Then, they would have a stone that would go over the doorpost.

And these were all clay, stone sorts of constructions. When they were destroyed, many times, those stones would be broken. Well, we have found archaeologically a stone, and I've pointed this out to you on page 21, down there just below the middle.

The stone was broken. The capstone to the door was broken. What survived were the letters that tell us the synagogue was on the front end, and then the letters that tell us Hebrews were there on the back end.

We've lost the middle. It's broken out, but we have the two ends. And so, there was a synagogue of the Hebrews in the city of Corinth, which tells us that Corinth had Jewish input and Jewish influence.

Also, Philo's inclusion of Corinth in his list of the diaspora. Those are the Jews that were scattered abroad in his writings. Philo was really a contemporary of Christ and Paul, so we know that there was a Jewish presence in the city of Corinth.

How much would have to be researched by experts in that particular field? Synagogues typically were established when, at least, the ancient records claim that when there were 10 Jewish families, they could establish a synagogue. You might also be interested in knowing that the synagogues were pretty much run by the Pharisees and the Jews who were scattered abroad.

If you think about the Gospels, you have the Sadducees, who were primarily priests associated with the temple. You have the Pharisees, who were primarily related to the teaching of the law. They were the ones who would do the sermons and would have the scrolls and the Bible if you, please.

And where the Sadducees were primarily caretakers of the temple at its various stages. Now, in that regard, that means that the Sadducees had to stay close to Jerusalem because that's where their center of operation was. The Pharisees, however, could be scattered all over the place because their authority and their realm of expertise was in the ancient manuscripts and in the Bible.

Therefore, they could take the scrolls to any part of that ancient world and be authoritative teachers. So, no matter where you went, either in the Greek world after the scattering of Israel or in the Roman world, you would find communities of Jews all over the place. You would find what we call synagogues.

Synagogues were Jewish community centers. They weren't temples. There was one temple for Jews in Jerusalem, but there were many synagogues.

They were Jewish community centers, and the individuals who would have run those Jewish community centers would have been from a Pharisee standpoint because they were the ancient Bible teachers. And so, we have this issue of distinguishing classical and Roman Corinth, distinguishing the historiographers who wrote about these cities, and being sure we understand the time in which they wrote, and then the information that they gave us about the cities, whether it has to do with the artifacts of the city or their worship and religions of the city, be sure that we have

the right time frame for that. That's a noteworthy aspect of looking at the Greco-Roman history of the city of Corinth.

So, it was a major city. It was an important city. Its history, its situation in life, but it was a Roman world.

And here's where the introduction in Garland comes in, and I have highlighted some of this in the notes just in case you can't come across that particular volume. You'll notice at the bottom of page 21 that I'm giving you some of this information. You see, the Bible, my friends, was not written in a vacuum.

It was written in a real time and place, where you have a real world and people, and you have all of these ancient polytheistic religions that existed in places like Athens and Corinth. In relation to the description of Athens, it says it was easier to find a god in Athens than it was a man, and what they meant by that quotation was that there were so many statues about gods, so many little memorials to gods. You remember, in Acts 17, it talks about this statue to an unknown god.

That statue is actually related to a plague that came to Athens. They couldn't get rid of the plague. They brought in an outsider, sort of a prophet priest from the outside.

The plague went away. They credited that person, but they weren't really sure which god to give the credit to, so they created this memorial to an unknown god, so that they didn't offend the deity that might have delivered them from the plague. Then Paul comes along and uses that as an illustration of what you don't know, I'm going to tell you about in the city of Athens.

Well, Corinth would have had much of this same situation, where you have little worship centers all over the place, where you have people who have gathered around one of these ancient deities or another and created communities, and then you'd have the Jews who gathered around Yahweh. They would have been viewed as just another of the many religions that existed in the ancient world. So that was the world into which Christianity came.

In those early days, Christianity was viewed as a Jewish sect, as an aspect of Judaism that had taken off and even was in conflict with its ancestors, the Jews, in its development of the religion. Christianity was born out of the Jewish center, and so, consequently, that's the way it was often viewed. We have some records, not as much as we wish, some records in which the Christians were viewed this way by the Roman governors.

The Bible wasn't written in a vacuum. Its events took place in a real world. What kind of world was that? Well, notice these bullet points here very quickly.

The Bible addressed the world of its time within the historical, cultural, and literary conventions of its time. That's why it's important for us to go back and study the Bible in its original context, whether that context is geographical, historical, literary, or language-related because that's where it was birthed. And for us to probe it, we need to understand those things.

It wasn't written in English originally. It wasn't in a context of Europe, or in a context of America, or in a context of Asia. It was in the context of the first-century Roman world.

The more we know about that, the more consciousness we'll have of that world when we read references within the New Testament. We're reading an epistle. First Corinthians is an epistle.

The word epistle is a word that means letter. So, if we talk about the epistles of Paul, we're talking about the letters of Paul. Paul wrote to these various groups, congregations, some of which he'd founded, some of which his cohorts had founded, and maybe he hadn't even been there, and places to which he had visited, and he was writing back.

He's writing them letters. That's the genre. A genre, the word genre, means a kind of literature.

For example, poetry is a kind of literature. Narrative is a kind of literature. An epistle is a kind of literature.

I like to imagine epistles as one-way telephone conversations. I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but on occasion, I'll be sitting on the couch doing something, and my wife will be across from me in a chair, and she'll get a phone call. Now, I'm only hearing her side of the conversation.

Now, my wife is sort of infamous for volunteering me for things. One time, she got a phone call, and it was the wrong number, but the person had a problem. She told the person on the other end of the phone that my husband was a pastor. He'd be more than happy to help you.

Well, I suppose that's a good thing to do, but she would volunteer me for almost anything before I even knew what was going on. So here I'm sitting, and I'm listening to her conversation with another person. I'm only hearing half of it, and what I'm hearing is telling me, here we go again.

I'm being volunteered for something, and I'm making all kinds of hand signals and saying, you know, don't volunteer me. Ask me first, but what happened at the end of that when she hung up and finally informed me of what was going on? I heard half of

it, and I was completely wrong about what I was hearing because I did not have the other end of the telephone. Now, every time we read an epistle, we're in danger of listening to half of the conversation and not hearing the other end of the phone.

We weren't there, so we had to do reconstruction. We have to be careful that we're not jumping the gun, that we're not making assumptions about what we're reading or hearing, but that we have a more reconstructed picture of things so that we can answer these questions carefully. That is so much part of the problem in the church.

The epistles seem very, very easy to read, don't they? That's why we spend so much time in the epistles, but I want to tell you that that can be very deceptive. We can make a lot of mistakes about what the Bible means by assuming that what it says is what we think it says. No, we must establish what it is saying in terms of its own time and place, its own audience, and its own issues so that we can rightly understand what it means in order to move into the arena of what it means for my current situation.

So, epistles are letters, and here's a famous phrase: they are occasional literature. Please notice that in the quotations on page 21, and by the way, from now on, like I said, I use my notes as a blackboard, and when I'm talking to you, it's almost like I'm going to stand up and write occasional literature on the blackboard. That's something that's extremely important.

That's part of the literary genre of a letter. It's occasional. It's written to something that's going on that the audience knows about, and the writer knows about, but you're not the audience in terms of the original audience, and you're not the writer, so therefore, you have to get into that adequately, so that you are in tune with them, not making assumptions.

Assumption is the mother of most mistakes in life, and in the reading of the Bible. Do not assume. Occasional literature is written to an occasion, and you'll get snippets of what that occasion is about, but we have to work very diligently to unpack that occasion so that we can rightly understand what's going on between a writer and their audience.

One cannot get their arms around 1 Corinthians without some understanding of the Roman world. We've talked about that. You'll read about it, and you'll hear about it more as we move through our lectures.

Rome did absorb the Greek world it conquered. We should expect aspects of Hellenism. Now, there's a word that may be new to you.

Helene is the Greek word for Greek. Hellenism means you've been Greekized, if you please, and Alexander the Great was an interesting conqueror. If you haven't looked at Alexander in that particular time in history, there's another good reading hobby.

Get a book on Alexander the Great so that you can see the world that was framed by Alexander, into which the New Testament emerged a little bit later. Hellenism, then, means what was contributed from that Greek world to this larger world that Alexander conquered. He founded cities.

In fact, Alexandria, Egypt, is named after Alexander. You'll see all kinds of residual pieces of the Greeks in that huge world that they conquered, but they couldn't control it. That's why Rome filled that vacuum and became the controlling entity in the ancient world.

It's the responsibility of commentaries to inform you as you read about the world of the New Testament. But, my friends, you have to be extremely vigilant. Even a commentary that can give you some good information may lead you astray on certain points.

That's why, in a multitude of counselors, there's safety. In other words, in a multitude of sources, you can find those common denominators that can lead you in a good path. Garland, in his volume by Baker on pages 3 to 13, gives you an extended introduction to the Roman heritage that was a part of the city of Corinth.

Let's talk about some of the social relations on page 22. Colonies were founded to foster the majesty of Roman culture, religion, and values. Rome dominated that world.

Roman law dominated that world. The Roman army dominated that world. It was a mercantile society.

People were running all over the place. You might think, wow, you know, it was the ancient world, and they had to walk, use horses, and have carts. It must have been awful getting around.

Well, they didn't have as hard a time about it as you think. I once ordered a book for a library where I was ordering books called Roman Roads. And the map in that volume on Roman Roads looked like the interstate of any major country.

In fact, even more so. Today, you can go to Palestine, Greece, and that entire ancient world and find the residual pieces of Roman roads that were built centuries ago, even millennia ago. The Romans were great road builders.

They were going everywhere. And this happened very early in ancient times. For example, even back to the time of Abraham.

Years and years ago, while I was researching some issues of the second millennium BC, I came across an interesting text about someone in Mesopotamia who owned a rent-a-cart business. You could think of this like a U-Haul rental company that rents trucks out. And those trucks go over the country.

And maybe the truck was licensed in New York and ended up in California. Well, in that ancient world, those carts were rented out in Mesopotamia. This merchant was complaining because he was losing carts that were not coming back from the Mediterranean.

So, they would rent the cart as it was in Mesopotamia and take it to the Mediterranean coast, but it wasn't getting back. Sometimes, when you're out traveling, a truck will pass you, and it will have on it a bunch of U-Haul rental trailers that are being transported, ported back perhaps to the place from which they originated or getting those things evenly distributed so they could be rented out. Listen, the ancient world was a busy place.

Particularly during the Roman Empire because Rome had created a situation all the way from the Atlantic Ocean along the coast of Spain to the west, unto the, get my geography right here, unto the eastern regions that the Greeks had conquered. And Rome was controlling, and you could travel freely and quickly into those areas as far as the world was concerned. So, travel was a big part of it.

And as they traveled, the language, the Greek was the lingua franca of the world, which means everybody that was anybody in the merchandising domain had to deal with the Greek language. Latin was also dominant because that was the Roman language. And yet at the same time, you could get along in speaking the Greek of that time.

And it wasn't a classical Greek. It's known as Koine Greek. Koine is a Greek word that means common.

It was the common language of the people. The Bible was written in Koine Greek dominantly because it was the language that people were using. The classical Greek was there, but it was more of an academic Greek in some ways, a highly educated Greek.

It was not as much a part of the language of the people, even though they certainly would have recognized it and many would have used it, but not the person on the street so much. All right, now, so it was a mercantile society. There was a lot of social status.

Please highlight that phrase, social status. We're going to come back to that in the book of First Corinthians a great deal. Everything was set up along social status.

There was a viciousness in the competition to achieve status, dignitas. One thought they were due a certain respect. That influenced courts.

It influenced relationships between people. You can see that in First Corinthians 11, some people were eating hot dogs and some people were eating steaks, and they were having trouble because social status was getting in the way of the commonality among the Christians. We'll see that later.

The values spawned were antithetical to the message of the cross, particularly those related to honor and status, which was so basic in the Greco-Roman social system, in which power manifests itself in ruthlessness and self-advancement is thought to be the only sensible course. When we get into First Corinthians 5 and the problems with courts, this will come back up in a big way. This competition surfaces in First Corinthians as one of Paul's challenges.

You don't operate that way, you operate a Christian way. This competition surfaces in all kinds of ways. The Christian community had become simply another arena to compete for status according to societal norms.

So, we have values and conflict. You've got Roman values, you've got Judeo-Christian values, and I'm going to say it that way, Judeo-Christian values because Jewish-Christian is so connected. The Old Testament wasn't thrown away when the church came to operate, but it was absorbed.

There are many ethics in the Old Testament that aren't repeated in the New Testament. It doesn't need to be repeated because it was very much a part of the moral fiber of Judeo-Christian ethics, and they were in conflict with many of the Roman ethics and the ethics of that Greco-Roman world. So, the world of First Corinthians, according to what Garland tells us, reflects a church that had drunk deeply from a variety of wells, the well of individualism.

The well of power produces status. Well, it sounds a lot like the world I live in, and you live in, more than likely, particularly in the Western world, but this is a part of human nature. Human nature is individualistic.

Human nature looks for power to control. That's the kind of world we're seeing in this first-century Roman world. The spirit of the world, the wisdom of the world that Paul talks about, would have been infected with individualism and power.

Status created the haves and the have-nots. Sexual abuse on the basis of status rigged courts in favor of those who had status. This was all a part of everyday living in a Roman colony like Corinth.

Paul seeks to transform the Corinthians from a Roman worldly value system to a biblical value system. The conflict is about values, and that's where it always is. And having said that, I would like to emphasize that when we think about living the Christian life, it was very popular some a while ago to talk about a purpose-driven life.

Well, unfortunately, that was barking up the wrong tree. Christianity is not about a purpose-driven life. Christianity is about a virtue-driven life.

That's what the Bible is about. Sure, there are purpose clauses in Greek. There are purpose statements in the Bible, which are the things that we should do.

Definitely, we have purposes and goals, but they are all packaged in what we call the virtue-driven life of the New Testament. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is a virtualist. Paul leading the Corinthians to think differently is leading them into the virtues of the Christian life, not the virtues of a Roman individualistic power struggle.

All of us live in certain cultures, and I often use this illustration. I'll ask you, do you think a fish feels wet? Now, think about that for a moment. Doesn't that bother you? Does a fish feel wet? I've often wondered about that.

Well, I used that illustration one time a long time ago in a lecture. I had a biologist come up to me. He was a marine biologist after the lecture and explained to me why fish do not feel wet.

The explanation, as many of you have experienced, I'm sure, is that all fish are covered with slime and that slime creates a barrier between the fish and their environment. That's why if you catch and release fish, like bass, for example, when you handle them, you don't take hold of that whole thing and rub it all over and hold it up and rub it. You take a hold of its jaw and hold it up very carefully, being careful not to touch the fish.

Why? Because that fish has a protective film, that slimy stuff that you don't want to touch anyway, that protects it from the evils of the water. It's a barrier, and if you touch that and remove it, you subject that fish to possible infections in the water. This biologist interestingly told me that when there are fishing contests, a biologist can take a sample of that slime and tell you which lake that fish was caught in so that nobody could cheat if the fish had to be caught from a certain water.

Isn't that interesting? So, I ask you, does a fish feel wet? The answer is no because they have that slime that protects them from their environment. Now, let me ask you this: to use an analogy. Do you feel your culture? And I think by analogy, the answer is no, you don't.

You grow up in it. You live in it every day. It's like breathing the air around you.

We don't feel our culture. The only way we can make a distinction between the culture that we live in and the culture that God is calling us to is through focused research on the virtues and ethics that the Bible calls us to live by and contrast those ethics to the world into which we're operating. Like a fish doesn't feel wet, we don't feel our culture.

We have to be educated to identify where that culture is in violation of Christian culture. That's not automatic. It comes back once again that we who are called to be leaders in the Christian community have got to do our homework so that we can help our fish understand the waters in which they're swimming so that they can be protected from the disease of the world.

That's what Paul's trying to do in 1 Corinthians. Don't be worldly-wise; be Christ-wise. We'll bring this back up later, particularly in chapters one and four.

Well, I've been about 45 minutes, and that's what I'm going to try to keep these to a great extent. 45 minutes to an hour at the very most. I got a little carried away in the other introductions but I'm going to stop here on page 22 and we'll pick this up in the next lecture at the bottom of page 22.

In the meantime, I hope that maybe you can procure the volume on 1 Corinthians by David Garland published by Baker, and you can read that introduction. As a result of that, you can fill in the gaps and make much more sense of this whole thing by reading and rereading so you can get your arms around the kind of culture into which Paul spoke the gospel. I'll see you in the next lecture.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 6, Introduction to 1 Corinthians, Part 1.