

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 16, 1 Corinthians Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 16, 1 Corinthians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture provides an in-depth analysis of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, emphasizing the socio-cultural context of Corinth and its impact on the early church. The lecture highlights that many problems addressed by Paul stemmed from Corinthian values infiltrating the church, such as emphasis on social status and tolerance of immorality. **Mathewson explains how Paul's responses were often rooted in the Old Testament, offering a contrasting perspective to Corinthian norms.** Specific issues like divisions among leaders, sexual immorality, and improper observance of the Lord's Supper are examined through this lens. **The lecture uses historical and textual details to illuminate the challenges faced by the Corinthian church and Paul's efforts to guide them toward a more gospel-centered way of life.** Finally, the professor emphasizes the need to understand this background to correctly interpret Paul's message.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 16 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



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3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 16, 1 Corinthians

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on 1 Corinthians:

Briefing Document: 1 Corinthians

Overview: This lecture focuses on understanding the context of 1 Corinthians to properly interpret the issues Paul addresses. Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that 1 Corinthians is part of an ongoing communication between Paul and the Corinthian church, making reconstruction of the problems challenging. He highlights the influence of Corinthian culture on the church, leading to various issues, and the importance of understanding the Old Testament lens through which Paul addresses them.

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. 1 Corinthians as Part of an Ongoing Communication:

- 1 Corinthians isn't a standalone piece, but part of a series of letters. Paul had previously written a letter to the Corinthians that is now lost to us (making our "1 Corinthians" technically "2 Corinthians"). "What we call 2 Corinthians is technically 4 Corinthians because 2 Corinthians mentions a severe letter that some persons actually feel has been combined with another letter into 2 Corinthians."
- This ongoing interaction means Paul assumes the Corinthians are aware of the background issues, requiring modern readers to reconstruct the situation.

1. Sources of Information and Structure of the Letter:

- Paul received information about the Corinthian church in two ways: word-of-mouth reports (addressed in chapters 1-6) and written reports from the Corinthians (addressed in chapters 7-16). In chapter 7 verse 1, Paul says, "now concerning the matters about which you wrote."
- Another way to divide the book up is in relation to how Jews would have characterized Gentiles during this time. Sexual immorality in chapters 5-7 and idolatry in chapters 8-14. With chapter 15 dealing with the hope of resurrection.

1. **The Influence of Corinthian Culture:**

- A major problem was the infiltration of Corinthian secular culture into the church. "It seems that the Corinthian culture had now infiltrated the church."
- This manifested in a crisis of leadership (emphasizing social status, political wrangling, and patron-client relationships) and the persistence of sexual immorality.

1. **Crisis in Leadership:**

- The Corinthians were treating their church leaders like they would leaders in Corinthian society, emphasizing social status and creating divisions.
- This behavior reflects "the wisdom of Corinth," which Paul contrasts with "God's standard of wisdom, which revolves around the gospel of a crucified, humiliated, and suffering Lord."
- This may explain why Paul refused financial support from the Corinthian church, wanting to avoid being perceived through the lens of political wrangling and social status.

1. **Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 5):**

- Paul addresses an instance of sexual immorality – a man living with his father's wife – that was tolerated and even boasted about by the church. "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not even found among the pagans... a man is living with his father's wife... and you are arrogant about it."
- Paul's primary concern isn't the individual sin itself, but the church's tolerance of it. "What really has Paul upset is not so much the man's sexual sins, but the fact that the church arrogantly tolerates it."
- Dr. Mathewson suggests the church might be tolerating the behavior because the individual is a wealthy patron, highlighting the continued influence of social status.

1. **Old Testament Framework:**

- Paul addresses the problem through the lens of the Old Testament, referencing Leviticus 18 (prohibitions against incest) and Deuteronomy (the need to maintain purity within the community).

- He envisions the church as a purified community, a holy temple. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God?"

1. **Instructions on Marriage (1 Corinthians 7):**

- Paul addresses questions about marriage and sexual relations.
- There are different interpretations to verse 1, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is well for a man not to touch a woman." Some scholars propose Paul's response to rampant sexual immorality and he wanted to prevent it. Others believe this is a response to what the Corinthians' were thinking. "It wasn't Paul who was saying it's good for a man not to touch a woman, but it was the Corinthians who were saying that."
- He offers guidance for married couples, those considering divorce, and single individuals, addressing specific issues that have arisen within the Corinthian church.

1. **Problems During Worship (1 Corinthians 11):**

- Paul criticizes the Corinthians for divisions that manifest during the Lord's Supper (communion). "When you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you."
- Wealthier members were arriving early, eating a full meal, and even getting drunk, while poorer members arrived later and received lesser food. This highlights the perpetuation of social divisions within the church. "Each of you goes ahead with your own supper and one goes hungry while another becomes drunk... do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?"
- Paul emphasizes that partaking in communion in an "unworthy manner" refers to doing so in a way that creates division and humiliates others, not just unconfessed sin. To discern the body and blood of Christ means to understand that this Lord's supper proclaims the unity of God's people as members of the body of Christ based on the death of Jesus Christ.

Key Quote:

"So again, Paul doesn't say a whole lot addressing the individual who's committing the sin, but he has everything to say to the church by portraying them as a holy community along the lines of the Old Testament community of God that were to be pure, that was to remove impurity from their midst, by portraying them as a temple to which you could only be admitted if one was pure."

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson's lecture underscores the importance of understanding the socio-cultural context of 1 Corinthians. By reconstructing the problems faced by the Corinthian church and recognizing the influence of Corinthian values, we can gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of Paul's instructions and their relevance for contemporary readers. The lecture also highlights Paul's reliance on the Old Testament to address the issues.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 16, 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians: A Study Guide

I. Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What evidence suggests that 1 Corinthians is not the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthian church?
2. What are the two main ways Mathewson suggests that 1 Corinthians can be divided up or thought about?
3. What are the two major problems in the Corinthian church that seem to be a result of Corinthian culture infiltrating the church?
4. According to Mathewson, what is the major problem Paul is addressing in chapters 1-3 of 1 Corinthians?
5. Why does Mathewson suggest Paul refused financial support from the Corinthians?
6. What was particularly shocking about the situation described in 1 Corinthians 5 regarding sexual immorality?
7. What is the key issue regarding the situation in 1 Corinthians 5 that has Paul most upset?
8. What is the difference between how the New American Standard Bible and the New Revised Standard Version translate 1 Corinthians 7:1?
9. According to Mathewson, what is Paul addressing in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 17 through 34?
10. According to Mathewson, what does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. Paul refers to a previous letter he wrote to them in 1 Corinthians 5:9, which is not extant. Additionally, 1 Corinthians is technically 2 Corinthians, and what we call 2 Corinthians is technically 4 Corinthians.

2. One way is to divide the book according to how Paul received information: chapters 1-6 address problems from word-of-mouth reports, and chapters 7-16 respond to written reports. Another way is to consider the division according to the common Jewish understanding that Gentiles were characterized by sexual immorality (addressed in chapters 5-7) and idolatry (addressed in chapters 8-14).
3. One is a crisis in leadership stemming from the Corinthian emphasis on social status, patron-client relationships, and the influence of sophists. The other is the infiltration of Greco-Roman views on sexuality, leading to problems of sexual immorality within the church.
4. Paul is not just addressing division in general or the human propensity to quarrel and compete. Paul seems to be addressing the specific problem of the Corinthians treating their church leaders in the same way they would treat secular leaders, emphasizing social status and political clout, reflecting the wisdom of Corinth which is foolishness when measured against God's standard of wisdom.
5. Mathewson suggests that Paul refused financial support to avoid being perceived in light of the patron-client relationship and the political wrangling that was occurring in Corinth. He did not want his ministry to be associated with social status or financial dependence, as it might compromise his message.
6. The surprising aspect is that the sexual immorality, specifically a man living with his father's wife (stepmother), was a type of sin that was not even found among the pagans. Furthermore, the church was boasting about it instead of mourning and repenting.
7. Paul is most upset about the church's tolerance and even boasting about the immoral behavior, rather than the sin itself. He is concerned with the church's failure to address the issue and maintain its purity.
8. The New American Standard Bible suggests that Paul is telling the Corinthians that it is good for a man not to touch a woman. The New Revised Standard Version uses quotation marks, indicating that this is a summary of what the Corinthians were saying.
9. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul addresses issues in the church related to the celebration of the Lord's Supper when they come together for worship. He criticizes the divisions and social distinctions (between rich and poor) that have infiltrated their practice of communion.

10. To partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, according to Mathewson, is to do so in a way that humiliates, demeans, or creates division within the church. This means failing to recognize and uphold the unity of God's people as members of the body of Christ.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the ways in which Corinthian culture influenced the problems that arose in the Corinthian church, according to Mathewson. Provide specific examples from the text to support your analysis.
2. Explain how Paul uses the Old Testament to address the issues of sexual immorality and church purity in 1 Corinthians 5. What specific Old Testament concepts or passages does he draw upon, and how do they inform his response?
3. Analyze the different interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7:1 regarding the phrase "it is good for a man not to touch a woman." What are the implications of each interpretation for understanding Paul's overall message in chapter 7?
4. Explain how the social divisions in Corinth, particularly between the wealthy and the poor, affected the way the Corinthian church celebrated the Lord's Supper, according to Mathewson. How does Paul attempt to correct this problem in 1 Corinthians 11?
5. Discuss Mathewson's interpretation of what it means to partake of the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner" in 1 Corinthians 11. How does this interpretation differ from more traditional understandings of this passage, and what implications does it have for contemporary Christian practice?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Achaia:** The Roman province in which Corinth was located, in modern-day Greece.
- **Apollos:** A Jewish Christian from Alexandria, known for his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures; he became an influential leader in the Corinthian church.
- **Cephas:** Another name for the Apostle Peter, a prominent leader in the early church.
- **Chloe's People:** The source of word-of-mouth reports that reached Paul about the problems in the Corinthian church.
- **Corpus:** A collection of writings or documents. In this context, it refers to the collection of letters written by the Apostle Paul.
- **Extant:** Still in existence; not lost or destroyed.
- **Greco-Roman:** Relating to the cultures and civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods.
- **Lord's Supper/Eucharist/Communion:** A Christian ritual commemorating the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples, symbolizing the body and blood of Christ.
- **Patron-Client Relationship:** A social and economic relationship common in the ancient world, in which a wealthy patron provided benefits to a client of lower social status in exchange for loyalty and support.
- **Platonism:** A philosophical system derived from Plato, emphasizing the distinction between the physical and spiritual realms.
- **Sophist:** A wise teacher or philosopher, often competing for followers in ancient Greece.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 16, 1 Corinthians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About 1 Corinthians

1. Why did Paul write 1 Corinthians?

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address various problems that arose in the church he established in Corinth after he left. These issues were reported to him through both word-of-mouth and written communication. These problems stemmed primarily from the infiltration of Corinthian culture into the church, which led to issues like divisions among members, problems with leadership, and sexual immorality.

2. How did Paul organize 1 Corinthians?

There are two ways to look at the way that Paul organized the letter. One way is based on how Paul received information. Chapters 1-6 address issues Paul heard about through oral reports, while Chapters 7-16 respond to matters the Corinthians wrote to him about. Another is based on the idea that Jewish people at the time commonly characterized Gentiles (which the Corinthians would have been) by two major sins: sexual immorality and idolatry. Chapters 5-7 address issues of sexual immorality, while Chapters 8-14 address idolatry.

3. What was the crisis in leadership that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-3?

The Corinthians were treating their church leaders (like Paul, Apollos, and Cephas/Peter) in the same way they treated leaders in Corinthian society. This involved emphasizing social status, political clout, and patron-client dynamics. Paul argued that this way of treating leaders reflected the wisdom of Corinth, which is foolishness when measured against God's wisdom in the gospel of a crucified and suffering Lord. He called on the Corinthians to stop treating their leaders in this way and instead treat them in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. What was Paul's concern regarding sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 5, and why was the church tolerating it?

Paul was deeply concerned about a specific instance of sexual immorality: a man living with his father's wife (stepmother). Paul is upset that the church was tolerating this behavior, even boasting about it, which he says even pagans would condemn. Several reasons the church would tolerate it have been considered: they may have been so used to seeing this that they didn't think it was out of the norm, they thought that they were emphasizing grace over judgement, or they may be unwilling to alienate an influential or wealthy member (patron) of the church. Paul's solution is for the Corinthian church to expel the immoral person in order to preserve the purity of the church, drawing on Old Testament concepts of maintaining purity within the community.

5. How does understanding the Old Testament help in interpreting 1 Corinthians 5?

Paul uses the Old Testament as a lens through which to view the situation in Corinth. He draws parallels between the situation and Old Testament prohibitions against incest (Leviticus 18). Also, he reminds them that they are a holy temple (1 Corinthians 3). By calling on the Corinthians to see their church as a purified community, a holy temple, Paul calls them to expel the individual to maintain the community's purity.

6. What is the debate surrounding 1 Corinthians 7:1, and how does punctuation affect interpretation?

The debate revolves around whether Paul himself is saying "it is good for a man not to touch a woman" (implying abstinence) or whether this is a quote of what the Corinthians wrote to him. Different punctuation in translations reflects these interpretations. Since original manuscripts lacked punctuation, the way translators punctuate influences the reading. If it's a quote from the Corinthians, it suggests they were advocating for abstinence, possibly due to Platonic or Gnostic influences or a reaction to rampant sexual immorality in Corinth.

7. What problem was Paul addressing regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11?

Paul is upset that divisions and social status differences from Corinthian society had infiltrated the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper. Wealthier members were arriving early, eating a full meal served by servants in the main dining area, while poorer members arrived later after work and received lesser food in a smaller room. Paul says that they are using something that should celebrate their unity and they are instead further expressing the social division. Paul emphasizes that this goes against the very purpose of the Lord's Supper, which should promote unity and fellowship in Christ.

8. What does it mean to "partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner" according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11?

To partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner means to do so in a way that humiliates, demeans, or refuses to acknowledge someone else. It involves using the Lord's Supper to create or perpetuate division within the church. Paul calls on the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they have demeaned someone else or if they are dividing the church through their actions. He says that to discern the body and blood of Christ means to understand that this Lord's Supper proclaims the unity of God's people as members of the body of Christ based on the death of Jesus Christ.