

## Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor. 5:1-6:20 Resources from NotebookLM

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

### 1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 5:1-6:20, [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org)

**Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture** on 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6 **explores Paul's response to oral reports concerning sexual immorality and legal disputes within the Corinthian church.** The lecture specifically examines the issue of incest discussed in chapter 5, highlighting its condemnation in both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, citing sources like Josephus and Cicero. **Meadors emphasizes the Corinthian church's tolerance of this behavior, possibly influenced by the offender's high social status and potential as a benefactor.** He analyzes Paul's call for excommunication and addresses the complexities of interpreting the phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" within the context of church discipline. **The lecture underscores the community's responsibility in addressing sin and maintaining its purity, referencing the imagery of the temple.** Ultimately, it sets the stage for further discussion on the meaning of delivering the offender "to Satan."

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14 – 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\_Session14.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 5:1-6:20**

#### **Briefing Document: 1 Corinthians 5-6 - Paul's Response to Oral Reports**

##### **Overview:**

This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors focuses on Paul's response to oral reports and rumors concerning the Corinthian church, specifically addressing issues of sexual immorality (incest) in chapter 5 and unspecified court cases in chapter 6 (based on the structure outlined). Meadors emphasizes the community aspect of these problems and the Corinthian church's apparent tolerance of deviant behavior, potentially influenced by social status and cultural norms. He draws upon historical and cultural context, including references to Greco-Roman views on incest from Plutarch and Josephus, as well as Roman law and social structures. Meadors also delves into the complexities of interpreting the Greek text, particularly concerning the prepositional phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4.

##### **Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:**

#### **1. The Context of 1 Corinthians 5-6: Responding to Oral Reports:**

- Chapters 5 and 6 of 1 Corinthians are distinct from chapters 1-4, as they are based on oral reports and rumors mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1, concerning sexual immorality and legal disputes within the Corinthian church. This contrasts with chapters 1-4, which responded to a report from Chloe's household (1:11).
- Later, in chapter 7 and onwards, Paul will address issues raised in a letter written to him by the Corinthians.

#### **2. The Scandal of Incest in Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-8):**

- Paul addresses a specific instance of incest: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man has his father's wife" (1 Corinthians 5:1, implied). Meadors clarifies that this refers to a man living with his stepmother.
- Incest was widely condemned in the Greco-Roman world, not just within Jewish law. Meadors cites Plutarch, who "condemns incest as a lawless act," and Josephus, who, while representing Moses' teachings, also reflects Greco-Roman values by abhorring "men's lying with their mothers as one of the greatest crimes and the like for lying with the father's wife."

- Meadors highlights Bruce Winter's theory that the incestuous man may have been of high social status or a benefactor of the church, which could explain the church's reluctance to confront him. "If so, to offend the benefactor would undermine the church's influence in the community and perhaps even invite hostility." This aligns with the social status issues discussed in earlier chapters.
- The church's inaction and even pride in this situation is heavily criticized by Paul. "And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?" (1 Corinthians 5:2, implied). Meadors suggests their pride ("phusio" - puffed up/arrogant) might stem from valuing their social standing over God's word.
- Paul calls for the excommunication of the offender. "When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and are with me in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 5:4-5, NIV 2011). Meadors notes the significance of the church as a whole being responsible for this action. "The church, as a body, is responsible for its members. If one member deviates from the norm, it affects the whole body."

### **3. The Community Aspect and the "Leaven" Analogy:**

- Meadors emphasizes that Paul addresses the community as a whole for tolerating this sin. "It was the community, not just the individuals, who were creating risk because the community was tolerating deviant behavior."
- Paul's call to "purge out the old leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7) uses Old Testament imagery of the community as a sacred space (like the temple) that needs to be kept pure. "So the community can be pure. That's the imagery from the Old Testament." He notes that while individuals are temples of God, the church collectively is also considered the temple.

### **4. Cultural Context and Roman Law:**

- Roman law also condemned adultery and incest, treating them as serious criminal offenses potentially punishable by exile or death. "Even in that empire, it was criminal law. It's viewed as a very serious violation. Requiring punishment. Something from exile to death." The statute of limitations, usually five years, did not apply to these offenses, highlighting their severity in Roman society.
- However, Roman law favored individuals of status, making it difficult for those of lower status to prosecute them. "Roman law favored, however, persons of

status... You could not if you were a person of non-status. You couldn't even take a person of status to court." This reinforces the possibility that the offender's social standing influenced the Corinthian church's inaction.

- Incest specifically required a formal act of accusation, particularly against a person of status, further explaining why the church might have hesitated.

## **5. The Complexities of Interpreting 1 Corinthians 5:4 ("in the name of the Lord Jesus"):**

- Meadors dedicates significant time to analyzing the prepositional phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4, highlighting the challenges of translation and interpretation due to the flexibility of Greek word order compared to English.
- He uses a chart comparing the King James Version (KJV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the original New International Version (NIV), and the 2011 NIV to illustrate how different translations punctuate and thus interpret the phrase, attaching it to different elements of the sentence (e.g., Paul's judgment, the assembly of the church, the act of handing over to Satan).
- The KJV's use of commas around the phrase suggests non-commitment, leaving the interpretation open.
- The NRSV and New Living Translation (NLT) connect it to Paul's pronouncement of judgment. "as if present, I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus" (NRSV).
- The early NIV connects it to the assembly of the church: "when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus."
- The 2011 NIV sets it off slightly, suggesting the presence and power of Jesus when the community gathers.
- Meadors discusses various scholarly interpretations (labeled A-F), including the controversial view that the man might have been claiming to act in Jesus' name, showcasing the potential for misinterpreting Christian freedom in a nascent Christian community. While unlikely, this interpretation is considered possible given the cultural context and the Corinthians' potential lack of deep understanding of Christian ethics.
- He quotes Thistleton's commentary, noting the difficulty of definitively settling on one interpretation due to the complex sentence structure in verses 3-5. Thistleton favors the interpretation that "in the name of the Lord Jesus" governs all the

clauses (E), but acknowledges the plausibility of it being connected to "with power" (C). He deems the interpretation linking it solely to Paul's judgment (F, adopted by NRSV and NLT) the least likely.

### Quotes:

- "Chapters 5 and 6 are based on 5:1 that there are certain rumors about behavior at Corinth that are related particularly to sexuality and to courts."
- "In relation to the sexual issues that come up, particularly in the first part of chapter 5, there are, outside the Bible, references that point out that incest... was not acceptable in the Greco-Roman world."
- "He both abhorred men's lying with their mothers as one of the greatest crimes and the like for lying with the father's wife." (quoting Josephus)
- "Winter does Reconstruction once again in relation to this, and his Reconstruction of the incestuous man as of high social status..."
- "If so, to offend the benefactor would undermine the church's influence in the community and perhaps even invite hostility."
- "The A is sexual problems in Chapter 5. The B are lawsuits in Chapter 6. And then A prime... is sexual problems in the name of fornication in the last part of Chapter 6." (referring to a potential chiasm)
- "It was the community, not just the individuals, who were creating risk because the community was tolerating deviant behavior."
- "Paul says to purge out the old leaven. So the community can be pure."
- "You ought to be holding a funeral instead of being proud of this and have put out of your own fellowship the man who has been doing this." (paraphrasing Paul in 5:2)
- "When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and are with me in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan..." (1 Corinthians 5:4, quoted)
- "Modern translations tend to insert full stops, that is, periods, in order to break up long sentences. 1 Corinthians 5, verses 3 to 5, is actually one sentence."
- "Translation requires interpretation."

- "Such as the length of the single convoluted sentence in verses 3 to 5... it is difficult to argue for one view over another." (quoting Thistleton)
- "He says it's gaining acceptance that N modifies the man's actions. The one who did this in the name of the Lord Jesus." (referring to a less popular interpretation)

**Concluding Thought:**

Dr. Meadors' lecture provides valuable insight into the historical, cultural, and textual complexities surrounding Paul's response to the issues in the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 5-6. He underscores the importance of understanding the community context, the potential influence of social status, and the interpretive challenges inherent in biblical translation. The lecture sets the stage for further discussion on the meaning of "handing this man over to Satan" in the subsequent session.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 5:1-6:20

### 1 Corinthians 5-6: Paul's Response to Oral Reports

#### Study Guide

#### I. Context and Background

- **Source of Information:** Identify the origin of the issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6. How does this differ from the issues discussed in chapters 1-4 and what will be discussed in chapter 7?
- **Garland's Summaries:** Why does the lecturer recommend reading Garland's summaries at the beginning of sections? What is the overarching theme of chapters 5 and 6 according to Garland's synthesis?
- **Greco-Roman Views on Incest:** What evidence is presented from outside the Bible (Plutarch and Josephus) regarding the acceptability of incest in the Greco-Roman world? Summarize their perspectives.
- **Josephus's Perspective:** According to Josephus (as interpreted in the lecture), what are some of the reasons why incest was considered wrong in Jewish tradition? How does his Greco-Roman context potentially influence his views?
- **Winter's Reconstruction:** What is Bruce Winter's perspective on the social status of the incestuous man in Corinth? What potential societal ethics and repercussions are discussed in relation to publicly exposing him?
- **Benefactors:** Explain the role of a "benefactor" in the context of the early church. How might the social status of a benefactor have influenced the Corinthian church's response to the incestuous situation?
- **Talbert's Structural Analysis:** Describe Talbert's proposed chiasm for chapters 5 and 6. What are the key components (A, B, A') of this structure? What is a chiasm, and how common was it in the ancient world? Provide an example from the Old Testament.
- **Community Focus:** According to the lecture, what is the primary lens through which Paul addresses the issues in chapters 5 and 6? Why is the community's role emphasized over individual actions in this context?

- **Shame as a Cultural Value:** Explain the significance of "shame" in the cultural context of Corinth. How does Paul utilize this concept in his response to the issues?
- **Vice Catalogs:** What are vice catalogs? Where does Paul use them in chapters 5 and 6? What is the broader significance of virtue and vice lists in biblical and extra-biblical literature?

## II. 1 Corinthians 5: The Issue of Incest

- **The Nature of the Sin:** What specific sexual immorality is reported in 1 Corinthians 5:1? How does the lecturer clarify the meaning of the phrase "has his father's wife"? What grammatical aspect of the verb indicates the ongoing nature of the sin?
- **Possible Corinthian Justifications:** What two possible reasons are suggested for why the Corinthian church might not have addressed the incestuous relationship?
- **Comparison to Heathens:** How does Paul characterize the incestuous act in comparison to the practices of "heathens"? What evidence from Roman law (discussed by Winter and citing Cicero) supports this assessment?
- **Roman Legal Context:** Describe the treatment of adultery and incest in Roman criminal law. How does the statute of limitations relate to these offenses? What limitation existed regarding the prosecution of individuals with high social status?
- **Paul's Bemoaning of Lack of Repentance:** What is Paul's reaction to the Corinthian church's response (or lack thereof) to the incest? What does he say they should have done instead of being "proud"?
- **The Meaning of "Puffed Up":** Explain the Greek term *physio* and its significance in the context of Corinthian pride. How does this term relate to other issues Paul addresses in the letter?
- **Three-Fold Involvement in Discipline:** Outline the three entities involved in the disciplinary action Paul calls for in 1 Corinthians 5:3-4. What does the phrase "when you are assembled" imply about the early church's practices?
- **The Significance of "In the Name of the Lord Jesus":** Discuss the complexities of interpreting the phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4. How do different English translations punctuate and thus interpret this phrase? What are some of the various interpretations discussed in the lecture (labeled A-F, and Garland's point)?



- **Handing Over to Satan (Mentioned):** While not fully discussed in this lecture, what does the lecturer indicate will be the topic of the next lecture concerning 1 Corinthians 5:5?

## Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What was the primary source of the information that led Paul to address the issues in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6? How did this differ from the source of the issues in chapters 1-4?
2. According to the lecture, what did prominent non-Christian writers like Plutarch and Josephus believe about incest in the Greco-Roman world?
3. What was Bruce Winter's theory regarding the social standing of the man involved in the incestuous relationship in Corinth? How might this have affected the church's response?
4. What is a chiasm, as explained in the lecture? Provide the proposed structure of chapters 5 and 6 according to Talbert.
5. Why does the lecturer emphasize the community's responsibility in addressing the sins mentioned in chapters 5 and 6, rather than focusing solely on the individuals involved?
6. In 1 Corinthians 5:1, what specific sexual immorality does Paul report is occurring in the Corinthian church, and what grammatical aspect indicates its ongoing nature?
7. According to the lecture, how did Roman law view incest, and what were some of the potential punishments for this crime?
8. What does Paul say the Corinthian church should have done in response to the incestuous situation instead of being "proud"? What Greek term does he use to describe their pride?
9. According to the lecture, what are the three key entities involved in the disciplinary action that Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 5:3-4?
10. What is the main interpretive challenge discussed regarding the phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4? Provide one example of how different English translations handle this phrase.

## Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary source of information for chapters 5 and 6 was oral reports and rumors mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1. This contrasts with chapters 1-4, which were based on a report from Chloe's household (1:11), and chapter 7 onwards, which addresses written inquiries from the Corinthians.
2. Both Plutarch and Josephus condemned incest, indicating that it was not an acceptable practice in the broader Greco-Roman world. Josephus, while representing Jewish teaching, also reflected Greco-Roman societal values in his disapproval.
3. Winter suggests the incestuous man was of high social status, possibly even a benefactor of the church. This status might have made the Corinthian church hesitant to publicly condemn his actions due to potential negative repercussions for their community.
4. A chiasm is a literary structure where parallel ideas are presented in an A-B-A' pattern, with the main point often located in the center. Talbert proposes a chiasm for chapters 5 and 6 with A being sexual problems in chapter 5, B being lawsuits in chapter 6, and A' being sexual problems (fornication) at the end of chapter 6.
5. Paul emphasizes the community's responsibility because he views the church as a body where the sin of one member affects the whole. The community's tolerance of deviant behavior created a risk to the purity and reputation of the entire church.
6. Paul reports that a man in the Corinthian church is having sexual relations with his father's wife, which is a form of incest. The use of the present infinitive indicates that this was an ongoing situation, not just a single past event.
7. Roman law viewed incest as a serious criminal offense, with punishments ranging from exile to death. Unlike some other offenses, the statute of limitations often did not apply to cases of adultery and incest, highlighting their severity.
8. Paul states that the Corinthians should have gone into mourning over the incest and expelled the man from their fellowship instead of being proud. He uses the Greek term *physio*, meaning "puffed up," to describe their arrogance.

9. The three entities Paul mentions as being involved in the disciplinary action are Paul himself (in spirit), the Lord Jesus Christ (present in power), and the assembled church (responsible for enacting the discipline).
10. The main interpretive challenge lies in determining which part of the sentence in 1 Corinthians 5:4 the phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" modifies (e.g., the assembly, Paul's judgment, the act of handing over to Satan). For example, the early NIV attached it to the act of being assembled ("when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus"), while the NRSV connects it to Paul's pronouncement of judgment.

### Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the various factors, both internal to the Corinthian church and external (Greco-Roman societal norms and Roman law), that might have contributed to their failure to address the incestuous situation described in 1 Corinthians 5.
2. Discuss the significance of community responsibility in Paul's approach to church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5. How does his emphasis on the collective body contrast with a more individualistic understanding of sin and accountability?
3. Compare and contrast the different interpretations of the phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" in 1 Corinthians 5:4, as presented in the lecture. What are the theological implications of attaching this phrase to different actions within the passage?
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of Paul's rhetorical strategy in 1 Corinthians 5, particularly his use of shame, Old Testament imagery (leaven), and his direct call for disciplinary action. How might his approach have been received by the Corinthian church?
5. Drawing on the information provided in the lecture, discuss the challenges faced by early Christians in navigating their new faith commitments in a culture with established, and sometimes conflicting, social, legal, and moral norms. Use the example of the incestuous relationship in Corinth to illustrate these challenges.

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Incest:** Sexual relations between people who are closely related by blood or marriage, often considered taboo and prohibited by law and social custom.
- **Plutarch:** A Greek biographer, essayist, and philosopher of the Roman era, whose writings provide insights into the moral values of the time.

- **Josephus:** A first-century Romano-Jewish historian whose works offer valuable historical context for understanding the New Testament period.
- **Benefactor:** A person who provides financial or other support to an organization or group, often holding a position of influence within that community.
- **Chiasm (or Chiasmus):** A literary device in which parallel phrases or clauses are arranged in an inverted order (e.g., A-B-B'-A'), often with the most significant point in the center.
- **Vice Catalog:** A list of vices or immoral behaviors, commonly found in both ancient philosophical and religious texts, used to highlight undesirable conduct.
- **Scandalous Morality:** Behavior that is considered shocking, offensive, and morally wrong within a community.
- **Present Infinitive:** A verb form indicating an ongoing or continuous action.
- **Statute of Limitations:** A law that sets a time limit for initiating a legal action; after the specified period has passed, the right to sue is lost.
- **Excommunication:** The act of formally excluding someone from membership and participation in a religious community.
- **Phusio (φυσίω):** A Greek verb meaning "to puff up," often used metaphorically in the New Testament to describe arrogance or pride.
- **Participial Clause:** A phrase that contains a participle (a verb form used as an adjective) and functions as an adjective, modifying a noun or pronoun.
- **Prepositional Phrase:** A phrase that begins with a preposition (e.g., in, on, at) and modifies another word or phrase in the sentence, often indicating location, time, or manner.
- **Genitive Absolute:** A grammatical construction in Greek consisting of a noun or pronoun in the genitive case and a participle, both of which are independent of the main clause and provide circumstantial information.
- **Imprimatur:** An official license to print or publish something, often implying endorsement or approval. In this context, referring to the claimed authority behind an action.
- **Speech Act:** An utterance viewed in terms of the action it performs.

## 5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 14, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Cor 5:1-6:20, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org)

### Frequently Asked Questions Regarding 1 Corinthians 5-6

#### 1. What was the primary catalyst for Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6?

Paul's response in these chapters was prompted by oral reports or rumors that had reached him concerning specific issues within the Corinthian church. Chapter 5 begins by addressing a particularly scandalous case of incest, while both chapters deal with problems related to sexual immorality and lawsuits among believers, contrasting with the earlier chapters (1-4) which were based on a report from Chloe's household about divisions within the church.

#### 2. What specific instance of "scandalous morality" does Paul address in 1 Corinthians 5?

The central issue Paul tackles in chapter 5 is a situation where a man was living with his father's wife, which is identified as a form of incest. Paul emphasizes that this behavior was considered unacceptable even by the prevailing Greco-Roman societal norms and Jewish law, making it a particularly egregious offense within the Christian community.

#### 3. Why was Paul so concerned about the Corinthian church's reaction to this incestuous relationship?

Paul was deeply troubled not only by the sin itself but also by the Corinthian church's apparent tolerance and even pride in the situation. He believed that their failure to address this blatant immorality reflected poorly on the entire community, potentially jeopardizing their witness and purity, drawing a parallel to the Old Testament concept of leaven affecting the whole batch of dough. Their inaction suggested they might be prioritizing the social status of the offender over biblical ethics.

#### 4. How did the social context of Corinth, particularly the influence of status and benefactors, potentially impact the church's response to the sin?

Corinth was a Roman colony where social status held significant sway. It's suggested that the man involved in the incestuous relationship may have been a person of high social standing or even a benefactor of the church. Challenging or disciplining such an individual could have had negative repercussions for the church, including financial or political jeopardy, as the community was accustomed to deferring to those with status and power.

**5. What actions does Paul instruct the Corinthian church to take regarding the man involved in the incestuous relationship?** Paul commands the Corinthian church to assemble and, with his spirit and the power of the Lord Jesus present, to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord. This is a call for severe excommunication, emphasizing the church's responsibility to maintain its purity and to enact discipline.

**6. How does the community aspect of the church relate to the issues discussed in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6?** Paul repeatedly emphasizes the corporate responsibility of the church. He views the problems of sexual immorality and lawsuits not just as individual sins but as issues affecting the entire community. He stresses that the church, as the temple of God (both individually and corporately), must be concerned with the purity and well-being of all its members and must not tolerate deviant behavior that could defile the whole body.

**7. What role does the concept of "shame" play in Paul's appeal to the Corinthians?** Paul appeals to the Corinthians' sense of shame, a powerful ethical and moral force in their culture. He suggests they should be mourning and ashamed of the situation rather than being proud. By highlighting their shameful inaction, Paul aims to challenge their self-perception and reputation within their own societal framework, hoping to motivate them to address the scandalous behavior.

**8. Why does the lecturer discuss the complexities of translating 1 Corinthians 5:3-5?** The lecturer delves into the nuances of translating this passage to illustrate that translation is not always a straightforward process but often involves interpretation. The placement of prepositional phrases, such as "in the name of our Lord Jesus," can significantly alter the meaning and its connection to different parts of the sentence (e.g., the assembly of the church, Paul's judgment, the act of handing the man over to Satan, or even the man's own actions). This highlights the importance of being a careful student of different Bible translations and recognizing that translational choices can reflect varying theological understandings.