OVERVIEW

We often hear people say, “We need to get back to the way they did things in the early church!” You have to wonder if such people have taken even a cursory look at Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. This church had a staggering catalog of problems, from divisions based on economic or social status to sexual immorality to out of control worship services. Many of us might have been tempted to wash our hands of the whole situation.

But Paul did not. He worked with the Corinthians, and it is for this very reason that 1 Corinthians is so valuable for us today. We get to see first-hand how Paul dealt with a congregation whose struggles mirror those we often face in our churches today. We will see how he tries to use the cross as a lever to upend their current approach to life, which draws on the values of Corinthian culture rather than those of Christian commitment.

Studying the letter is not an easy task. We will need to bring all our exegetical resources to bear at various points in the class: theological and hermeneutical reflection; rhetorical criticism; insights from the social sciences; and traditional “historical-critical methods” are all necessary for a thorough understanding of this portion of God’s word. We will also tackle many controversial subjects, like gender roles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which will test our capacity for constructive engagement with opposing points of view. Through it all, we will seek to become more ardent disciples of our servant Savior, and more effective communicators of his gospel. May God bless us as we move forward.

Introduction

CLASS I

Introduction: A Letter to a Vibrant but Troubled Church
Methodologies: How to Study this Complex Book
Historical background
  Geographical setting
  Hellenistic time
  Destruction and rebirth
  St. Paul’s Corinth
Paul and the Corinthian Church
Crucial Themes
  The Basic Problem: Values of Cross versus Values of Corinth
  Hyper-Spirituality: tongues, sex and marriage
Trust in human wisdom
Divisiveness – apparently on intellectual, personal, economic lines
To eat or not to eat: the question of idol meat
Theological quandaries: the resurrection

Part 1: Sophistry or Sacrifice

Classes 2-5
Paul’s Gentle Introduction (1:1-9)
The Spectre of Division (1:10-17)
God’s Response (1:18-2:16)
   God’s Paradoxical Wisdom
   God’s Powerful and Penetrating Spirit
To Each His Own: Paul and Apollos’ Ministry (3:1-4:21)

Part 2: The Right Use of the Body

Class 6
The Immoral Man (5:1-13)
Lawsuits before Unbelievers (6:1-11)
The Body is for the Lord (6:12-20)
Sex and Marriage (7:1-40)

Part 3: Food and Freedom

Class 7
Everybody Knows Everything (8:1-9:27)
   Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up
   Idols aren’t Real…
   …But Your Brothers and Sisters are
   Paul’s Own Example
Israel: Idolatry and Immorality (10:1-13)
Idol Food in Idol Temples (10:14-11:1)

Part 4: Order in the Church!

Class 8
Hermeneutical Paper Due
Men, Women, and Prophecy (11:2-16)
Divisions at the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)

Class 9
Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)

Part 5: The Resurrection

Class 10
The Resurrection (15:1-58)
   The Tradition
   The Problem
   Adam and Christ
   The Great Change

Part 6: Final Instructions and Greetings (16:1-24)
ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translation/Class Preparation of Gk. Text of 1 Cor.</td>
<td>Due Final Day of Class (no extensions)</td>
<td>15-30% (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneutical Paper: The Long Road from Corinth</td>
<td>Due March 15</td>
<td>20-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
<td>Due May 3</td>
<td>50-60%</td>
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ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS

The Greek Competency quiz will be administered during Class 2. You will be asked to translate one or two verses from a text in the Greek New Testament, parse some verbs and nouns, and do some grammatical analysis. A sample exam resides outside my office. The quiz will be marked pass/fail and will not affect your final grade, but you must pass this quiz to continue in the course.

The Translation/Class Preparation component is designed to encourage thorough preparation of the Greek text of 1 Corinthians. A few notes:

1. **No translation, no comments.** Students who have not read the Greek text for the day with reasonable understanding are not permitted to ask questions or make comments in class (aside from e.g. “Could you move the overhead up?” or “Is the quiz next Monday?”). As noted in “What We Do and Why” (see below), there are comments that are not at all helpful, and this rule is intended to minimize such comments.

2. **If you translate less than 50% of the required Greek text, you fail the class.** There is simply no way a person should pass a Greek exegesis class when he or she has read less than half of the relevant material. This does not mean you have to parse every last word, but you do need to read the Greek with a reasonable level of understanding.

3. **The less you do, the more it is worth.** I don’t want to artificially inflate grades by giving a huge bonus to people who do what I consider the minimum reasonable amount of translation – namely, 100% – but I do want to discipline those who do considerably less. So if you do between 90-100% of the translation, it will be worth 15% of your final grade. If, however, you do between 80-90%, it will rise to 20%. Between 65-80% will be worth 25%, and between 50-65% will be worth 30%. For example: if you read 50% of the Greek, you will receive a 50 on the translation component, and that will be worth 30% of the final grade. This means you are essentially starting with a B, and you can only go down from there.

The Hermeneutical Paper will focus on the very difficult question of how to move from the Corinthian context to your own. The emphasis here is less on exegesis per se, and more on the underlying presuppositions which dictate how you apply the letter to the present day. In a 4-5 page essay, I would like you to explain the principles which ought to guide us as we move from exegesis to application in the case of 1 Corinthians. You should use at least one concrete example from the letter in your paper. You may wish to take one of the controversial topics (roles of men and women; spiritual gifts, etc.) for this purpose, or you may wish to discuss the relevance of an apparently “irrelevant” topic, like meat sacrificed to
idols. In any event, the crucial thing is how well you articulate the principles for moving from Corinth to your setting. In other words, I am NOT asking you to solve the question of whether people should speak in tongues in your church – I am asking you how one ought to go about making such a judgment. You will be marked primarily on the cogency of your argument and the clarity of your presentation.

The Exegesis Paper should be a 12-15 page paper drawn from any text in 1 Corinthians. You must pass the exegesis paper to pass the class. Usually 6-12 verses is about right, but exceptions are possible. For the format, you should follow that of the Harper’s New Testament series, which is a running commentary on the text – less choppy than some other series, but still packed with exegetical detail. (Note, however, that unlike Harper’s you need to properly document your use of secondary sources throughout the paper. You paper should also include more detail on the Greek text.) At the conclusion of your exegesis, please attach a page or so concerning the application of your passage to the present day. Remember that this is a Greek exegesis paper, and you must show a thorough acquaintance with the Greek text, from textual criticism to translation, to issues of structure, grammar and lexicography. Historical background is also crucial, as is your text’s relationship to the rest of the letter. I will expect you to integrate all relevant information from the various topics you have studied in Interpreting the New Testament. Please note the page limit: more is not at all better! I will grow increasingly unhappy with each additional page. (You may, however, include sentence flows, discourse analysis, or structural charts as appendices.) Be concise. Please use 1.5 spacing and 12 point font (except of course for footnotes). You must include page numbers in your paper so that I can readily see if you have exceeded the page limit. Papers without page numbers will be penalized. I look forward to the fruits of your labor.

Note 1: If you wish to receive work back, you must include your box number on the paper. Unnumbered papers will be kept in my office.
Note 2: NO WORK IS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL. Each paper must be handed in as a hard copy.
Note 3: Please refrain from putting the paper in an envelope unless absolutely necessary.
What We Do in Class, and Why

Q&A

Class Participation

Q: Why should I have to put up with inane comments from fellow students? I pay to hear what the Professor has to say!
A: There are several reasons you should put up with it. The most important one is that I believe God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer for the edification of the whole (see esp. 1 Cor. 12-14). While I also believe in special gifting for teaching (see James 3), this hardly absolves others of the responsibility to be active learners. We regularly hear complaints about people not putting into practice what we preach from the pulpits. Is this any wonder if we train them to focus their attention exclusively on the speaker? We are meant to make disciples, not to perpetuate Stalinist personality cults. Disciples ask questions, make mistakes, need rebuke and encouragement. You cannot just tell them, “Shut up and do what you’re told.” I would hope that in the graduate classroom we would model the dynamic interaction that was meant to flourish in the Spirit-filled body of Christ. Another reason is that you may actually learn valuable content from your fellow students. It is true that in general the professor ought to know more than the students about the topic at hand. But this hardly means he or she has exhaustive knowledge of the subject, or that everything will be communicated with crystal clarity.

Q: Amen! I love that answer to Question 1, because I love to talk in class! There’s no such thing as a dumb question, right?
A: Ah, wrong, actually. There are all sorts of dumb questions that get asked: questions that stem from people not listening to what was said earlier in class, questions that stem from people willfully mis-hearing things because of their theological prejudices, questions that stem from people wanting to make themselves the center of attention even though they are making a statement of little or no value. As a rule of thumb, students in a medium size class (twenty-thirty students) ought to make one or two comments per class. When you open your mouth to speak in class, you should not do it casually or simply because the mood strikes you. You ought to do it because you are compelled by the Spirit, and you discern that the question you ask or the comment you make will build up the others in the class, not simply display your erudition. Paul is clear in 1 Cor. 14 that even people with the Holy Spirit cannot claim to be “carried away” and unable to control themselves. “The spirit of prophets is subject to prophets” (1 Cor 14: 4). This may speak to the fact that prophets can exert internal checks on their own speaking, or it could refer to the fact that other prophets can rightly tell a speaker that his or her message is not in fact springing from the Spirit but from some other source. In either case, there is a need for responsible speech in the assembly of God’s people.

This of course ends up requiring a delicate balance. It is the Professor’s responsibility to manage things for the benefit of all students, but it is difficult to simply ignore a given student because you suspect they might say something useless. The onus, as I see it, is primarily on each participant who chooses to speak. Could this lead to some less valuable things being said? I suppose so, but that is a risk I am willing to take. If nothing else, the (occasional!) ridiculous comment provides a laboratory for breaking down faulty reasoning, and a model for handling such situations in your own ministries – because, yes, people will actually make inane comments in churches!
Unusual Educational Experiences

Q: Why do we sometimes have to listen to children’s books or folk songs or watch film clips? I thought we were supposed to be studying the gospel of Luke, or New Testament theology.

A: Two points here. First, we are not only studying the text in its original language and setting, we are learning to communicate that text in the contemporary world. While I primarily emphasize communicating from the pulpit or the lectern, it is important to utilize more non-traditional delivery systems, provided they are carefully chosen and relate meaningfully to the biblical passage in question. Second, there are times when a song or story may in fact capture the essence of a passage as well or better than a detached, clinical examination of the grammar or historical background.

Q: Amen, again! (It’s me, the guy who likes to talk in class!) I hate grammar and history and all that. It’s so liberating to hear that none of that matters!

A: Ah, wrong again, although I guess technically that was “more a comment than a question.” Grammar and history and all that do in fact matter, profoundly. In Greek exegesis classes in particular, you are expected to know the details of the text intimately. Even if we spend much of our discussion time on a question of theology or application, I am presupposing that you will have worked hard at translating the passage and exploring any relevant background material. If you want to preach God’s word rather than you own word, you need to work.

References to Popular Culture and Sports

Q: Why are there so many references to popular culture and sports in the lectures? And why are they all to things that happened, like, a million years ago?

A: The pedagogically correct answer is that I am trying again to show that the gospel can relate meaningfully to modern culture. Pastors and teachers are always under a cloud of suspicion that they have no real understanding of the everyday lives of people inside or outside of the church. The occasional reference to popular culture (and I hope it is only occasional, not a steady diet) can serve as a reminder that we do in fact keep in touch with what is going on. The less pedagogically correct answer is that I spent an inordinate time of my semi-misspent youth watching television and listening to new wave music, so that when my little mind is searching for illustrative material, it is more likely to hit upon the Brady Bunch than a Brandenburg Concerto. And the older I get, the less distant those days feel, so 70’s references seem “contemporary” to me (if I really want to be down with it I may venture into the 80’s or 90’s). Sorry.
Greek Exegesis Classes
12 Step Method

The Method and the Class

Those of you who have not had me for Interpreting the New Testament, or who have not had Dr Stuart for Old Testament, may not be familiar with the 12 Step Method for interpreting the Bible. Don’t panic: all of the New Testament faculty teach essentially the same methodology. It is simply the terminology that differs. Below I give a brief summary of Stuart’s 12 step method (with my own very minor adjustments) so that you will know what I am referring to during the course of the semester.

In Greek exegesis classes, I will expect you to think through all twelve steps as you prepare the texts we will be covering that day. Obviously this will involve consulting secondary sources on matters like historical background, but the bulk of the work will consist of you assessing for yourself the various exegetical issues that may arise. It is also important to remember that not all the steps will be equally relevant for every text. We may be speaking about a passage which has no significant textual variants but raises major theological issues. Or we may find a passage in which the meaning of a single word carries enormous weight in interpretation.

Generally speaking, in the early lectures of the term I try to do in-depth exegesis of the initial chapters of the book, explicitly invoking the various steps of the exegetical process (not necessarily in order). As the semester goes on, we tend to take a more synthetic approach, dealing with the major themes of the chapter or section, and dealing with particular exegetical problems as they arise. Often the discussion may focus on one exegetical skill with particular relevance for that text.

The reason I find the 12 step method so helpful is that it forces you to think through all the potentially relevant information for exegesis and application. The Bible is a very complex book, and a single favored approach can never do justice to its richness. We need to be open to a variety of questions that arise from the text and develop skills for addressing all of them. The 12 step method gives you a framework for asking and answering those questions.

The Method in Brief

The twelve step method can be broken down into five major categories. The various steps answer the questions:

- What is there? (Text, Translation, Lexical Data, Grammatical Data)
- What sort of thing is it? (Genre/Form)
- How is it set up? (Structure)
- How does it fit in? (Historical Context, Literary Context, Biblical Context, Secondary Literature)
- Where does it go? (Theology, Application)

Here is a little more detail on each of the steps, with the questions you will ask yourself as you work through a passage:

Text
Is the NA27 secure, or might the original have read differently? Do the variants highlight any interesting interpretive issues?
Translation
How are you going to put your Greek text into your target language? How can you capture nuances in the text without overtranslating?

Lexical Data
Speaking of translation, what do the words mean, anyway? Do any of them necessitate a thorough word study? How are the important words used in the OT?

Grammatical Data
Speaking of words, how do they fit together? What is intended by the various prepositions, nouns, verbs, articles, particles, etc.?

Genre/Form
What am I dealing with at the macro level (genre) – an epistle, an apocalypse, a gospel? How should that affect the way I interpret this passage? What am I dealing with at the micro-level (form) – a miracles story, a household code, a dream vision account? Can I compare with similar forms inside, or outside, the canon?

Structure
What does the X-ray of my passage look like? How does it flow? Is there an argument I need to follow? Any parallelism?

Historical Context
The passage was not written in a vacuum – how does the “outside world” affect my understanding of the text?

Literary Context
How does my passage fit with the surrounding material? With the book as a whole?

Biblical Context
How does my passage fit in with the OT? With the rest of the NT?

Theology
How does my passage fit in the flow of the bible’s story of the work of the creating and redeeming God? What contribution does it make to questions asked in systematic theology?

Secondary Literature
What have other people said about my passage? Do I need to alter any of my conclusions in light of their input?

Application
How does this text apply to those in my church community? How should it affect my own life? How would it relate to other church situations I am aware of around the world?