

Seminari Theoloji Malaysia
Interpreting the New Testament: 1 Corinthians
19-21 & 26-28 August, 2016
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Course Description and Objectives

As a community of believers, we will approach 1 Corinthians with several questions:

- (1) Why did Paul write this letter?
- (2) What were the issues that Paul addressed in this letter?
- (3) What could most possible be the background to the issues that Paul addressed?
- (4) What principles and resources best allow the contemporary readers to apply the teaching of Paul?
- (5) How many contemporary readers appropriately apply the teaching of scripture?

The course is thus an exercise in applied hermeneutics where we will bring all our exegetical and modern technological resources together in an exegetical study of this fascinating letter. It is therefore assumed that those who take this class would have some knowledge of New Testament background and some grasp of approaches to biblical interpretation. In other words, it is assumed that students will have taken courses on Survey/Introduction to NT AND Biblical Interpretation/Exegetical Methods. Students who have yet to take the above two courses will be greatly disadvantaged and are encouraged to take them before attempting this course.

This course is based on both the Greek text (although no prior knowledge of Greek is assumed) and the English translation of 1 Corinthians. The preferred English translations used throughout this course are the newly revised NIV 2011 version, ESV and NRSV. These versions are chosen as they present a good case study for the difficulties involved in the translation process which will be highlighted in the course

A study of 1 Corinthians will show how the church in Corinth met with controversial problems that have a very modern ring: divisions within the church, ministerial favoritism, moral failure, spiritual elitism, excessive charismatic expression, theological heresy, and failed financial pledge. Encounter with this letter thus shows how "biblical" modern church problems can be. As such, there will be time for group discussion on the application (and misapplication?) of 1 Corinthians in our Malaysian Church context today.

Recommended Reading

- 1) David Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- 2) Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- 3) Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*. 3rd ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002 (selected texts only – pages 5-39, 52-69, 152-69, 178-85).
- 4) Optional reading: Daniel N. Schowalter & Steven Friesen, eds., *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Harvard Theological Studies 53. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- 5) Optional reading: Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter & James C. Walters, eds. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- 6) Optional reading: Edward Adams & David G. Horrell, eds. *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004. This is an excellent book providing a brief overview of the development of interest and scholarship in the Corinthian letters.

Assessment

i. *Hermeneutical Paper (30%)*

The reflection paper will focus on the very difficult question of how to move from the Corinthian context to your own. The focus is less on exegesis, but on how you apply a particular issue addressed in 1 Corinthians in your context. In a 4-5 page essay, explain the principles which ought to guide you as you apply the complicated issues in 1 Corinthians in your context, be it in your ministry, church, or workplace. You should use one concrete example from the letter (eg. Roles of men and women; spiritual gifts; food sacrificed to idols; sexual immorality, etc). Following this, prepare a 2-3 page sermon outline or bible study material based on the passage/issue you have chosen.

ii. *Exegesis Paper (70%)*

Write an exegesis paper of approximately 2,500-word (excluding footnotes and bibliography) on any passage in 1 Corinthians. Attached to the paper should be an additional 1-2 page outline of a Bible study or expository sermon. The passage chosen should be different from the one the hermeneutical paper above. Students are expected to demonstrate some degree of familiarity with Greek in their exegesis paper. Please consult the instructor concerning your passage before beginning on your paper.

Important Note:

1. **Refer to the *SBL Handbook of Style* or *Chicago Manual/Turabian* if you are uncertain of proper citation of footnotes, bibliography and writing style.** Please note that I pay serious attention to proper citation of references.
2. The Exegesis paper is due on 31 January 2017 for non graduating students. If you are graduating in 2016, please follow the final date for submission as stipulated in the academic calendar.
3. Note that no extension for the paper will be entertained. Any delay in submission of your assignments will result in automatic grade penalty, except in emergency cases only. Please note that ministerial or church duty (such as last minute preaching on a Sunday or Youth Camp does not constitute an emergency). Every 24-hour delay in submission after the deadline will attract a 1/3 grade penalty.

Select Bibliography

Commentaries

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- Kistemaker, Simon. *1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- Perkins, Pheme. *First Corinthians*. *Paidea*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.
- Robertson, A. T. & Alfred Plummer. *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the 1st Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*. ICC. 2nd. Ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914.
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- Witherington, Ben, III. *Conflict and Community in Corinth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

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- Adams, Edward & David G. Horrell, eds. *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- Cameron, Ron & Merrill P. Miller, eds. *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*. Atlanta: SBL, 2011.
- Cheung, Alex T. *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy*. JSNTSup 176. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
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- Horrell, David G. *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*. SNTW. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.
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- Tucker, J. Brian. *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1-4*. Eugene: Pickwick, 2010.
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