

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

The Corinthian Letters

NT-633 (2 or 3 units)
Summer 2006 (May 8, 10-12, 15-18, 22-25)
MBBS: Fresno
1:30-4:30 PM

Instructor: Jon Isaak, Ph.D.
Office: Room 11, Faculty Wing
Office Phone: 559-452-1721
Email: <jisaak@mbseminary.edu>
Fax: 559-452-1752

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the structure, background, themes, and theology of First Corinthians. Special attention is given to the significance of Paul's Corinthian correspondence for the life of the church today.

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

Few of those acquainted with Paul of Tarsus, the early Christian missionary, are neutral about him. Some see Paul as a male chauvinist and primary corrupter of the simple religion of Jesus. Others, see Paul as a brilliant theologian who took the message of Jesus from its Hebraic context and successfully translated it for a non-Jewish setting. While I side with the second view, the point is that most readers will bring some notions about Paul to the reading of his letters and in this case, to the reading of his letter known as *First Corinthians*.

First Corinthians is well known to be Paul's most vigorous discussion about ethics and behavior. Some have called it practical ecclesiology at its best. Why? Apparently the various house-churches in Corinth are being pulled in one direction or another based on the teaching of strong and influential leaders. Paul's aim is to unify this hodge-podge of diverse opinions and behavior around a center of what it means to be part of the body of the risen Lord. The genius of Paul's instruction is that rather than be content to address only the behavioral issues, he goes deeper to reshape their *moral vision* of who they are in Christ. While people often turn to Romans or Galatians for Paul's theological reflection, in First Corinthians all of Paul's efforts to address behavior are rooted implicitly in theology. Make no mistake; this is a very theological letter!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through a variety of activities (close readings of First Corinthians, readings from secondary sources, class discussions, presentations, and interpretive assignments), we are invited to engage personally and critically Paul's pastoral instruction to the young church in Corinth. At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Outline and discuss the literary, thematic, theological, and rhetorical structure of First Corinthians (*Knowledge Objective*).
2. Confess and value this ancient letter addressed to one particular tension-filled first-century Christian community as one that transcends its immediate context (an appeal for unity) and

continues to give witness to God's people-gathering activity in the world (*Values Objective*).

3. Explore and articulate imaginative analogies and metaphorical bridges between Paul's symbolic world and the world we inhabit (*Skills Objective*).

MBBS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This course contributes to the larger goals of the Seminary program in that it will help the student to:

1. Discern with greater precision the subject matter to which the biblical text gives witness, both its foreignness as well as its power to draw, to claim, and to transform life (*Biblical Formation*).

2. Engage in the theological task of exploring ways that the symbolic world out of which the biblical text emerged can inform, form, and reform the cultural norms which shape our present faith communities (*Ecclesial Formation*).

3. Nurture interpersonal and personal formation by interacting with those (scholars, instructors, and fellow classmates) who represent viewpoints that differ from one's own, and by integrating those insights that are useful (*Character Formation*).

4. Develop skills in sound biblical exegesis and theological interpretation for preaching, teaching, social advocacy, personal enrichment, and our life together (*Ministry/Mission Formation*).

TEXTBOOKS

The number of books published on Paul and on First Corinthians is enormous (see *Appendix A* for a small sampling). I have chosen three "textbooks" to read together for the course. These three will make up the Required Readings. You will have an opportunity to work through other commentaries, journal articles, and monographs while working on your Research Paper. The three "textbooks" are the following:

The First Letter to the Corinthians in a contemporary translation of the Bible that aims at dynamic equivalence (e.g., *RSV* 1952, *NRSV* 1989, *NIV* 1984, *TNIV* 2002). For comparison, it is often useful to consult more literal translations (e.g., *NASB* 1977, 1995) as well as the more paraphrastic single-translator versions (e.g., Peterson's *Message* 1993). This kind of comparative study can be facilitated by the use of either a "parallel" Bible (e.g., *The Precise Parallel New Testament* [Oxford, 1995], *The Contemporary Parallel New Testament* [Oxford, 1998]) or a Bible software program (e.g., *Bible Works*, *WordSearch*, *Logos*, *Quick Verse*, *PC Study Bible*, *Accordance*). For Bible students who cannot read Greek, the next best way to get close to the peculiar nuance of a Greek word or phrase is to analyze how different translators have attempted to render it in English.

Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. John Knox Press, 1997. This commentary distinguishes itself in several ways. Hays pays close attention to both the literary character of First Corinthians and to its theological significance for the life of

the church today. Commentators usually do only one of these well; Hays does both. In addition, Hays's writing style is remarkably accessible, while at the same time exploring the implications of the most current scholarly work on Paul and Corinthians.

Sanders, E.P. *Paul*. Oxford University Press, 1991. This small book is a popular edition of Sanders's watershed book entitled, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Fortress, 1977). Sanders is credited with launching the "New Perspective on Paul" which reversed centuries of Pauline theology that was based on the notion that Paul operated out of an antithesis between the Law (Judaism) and the Gospel (Christianity). Sanders successfully demonstrated that the traditional view of Judaism (i.e., as a religion of "works righteousness") was seriously flawed and owed more to Reformation polemics than to serious study of Jewish texts. Sanders showed that Judaism from the start was based on grace and election. Thus, the law was conceived not as the "way in" but the "way to maintain" the covenantal relation of those who already were God's people by guiding them in the way they should live. Sanders goes on to show how this pattern of religion was significantly modified by Paul's encounter with the risen Lord.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

May 8 (Meeting #1) *Introduction to Paul and the First Letter to the Corinthians*

-introduce course aims, objectives, methods, and expectations

-set out social setting of first-century Corinth

-sketch the occasion, purpose, genre, composition, and content of First Corinthians

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians ("skim" through in one sitting).
- First Corinthians 1.1-2.5 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1-39.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapters 1-2.

May 10 (Meeting #2) *Call for Unity in the Community—Part One (1.1-2.5)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 1.1-3 Salutation
- 1.4-9 Thanksgiving
- 1.10-17 Factions in the Community
- 1.18-2.5 Foolishness of the Cross Excludes Boasting

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 2.6-3.23 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 39-64.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapters 3-4.

May 11 (Meeting #3) *Call for Unity in the Community—Part Two (2.6-3.23)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 2.6-3.4 Wisdom for the Mature

3.5-23 The Community and its Leaders Belong to God

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 4.1-5.13 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 64-92.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 10.

May 12 (Meeting #4) *Call for Unity in the Community—Part Three (4.1-21) and Call for Community Discipline—Part One (5.1-13)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 4.1-21 Direct Confrontation with Corinthian Boasters
- 5.1-13 “Drive out the wicked person from among you”

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 6.1-20 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 92-109.
- First close reading due Monday at class time (see guidelines below).

May 15 (Meeting #5) *Call for Community Discipline—Part Two (6.1-20)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 6.1-11 Legal Disputes Should be Handled within Community
- 6.12-20 “Glorify God in your body”

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 7.1-40 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 110-134.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 5.

May 16 (Meeting #6) *Contested Issue #1: Sex and Marriage at the Turn of the Ages (7.1-40)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 7.1-16 Counsel for Various Marital Statuses
- 7.17-24 General Rule: Remain as You Were When Called
- 7.25-38 Counsel for Engaged Couples
- 7.39-40 Counsel for Wives and Widows

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 8.1-9.27 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 134-158.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 6.

May 17 (Meeting #7) *Contested Issue #2: Idol Meat—Part One (8.1-9.27)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 8.1-13 Knowledge Puffs Up, But Love Builds Up
- 9.1-27 Apostolic Example of Renouncing Rights

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 10.1-11.1 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 159-181.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 7.

May 18 (Meeting #8) *Contested Issue #2: Idol Meat—Part Two (10.1-11.1)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 10.1-10.22 Warning against Idolatry
- 10.23-11.1 Conclusion: Use your freedom for the Glory of God

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 11.2-34 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 181-206.
- Second close reading due Monday at class time (see guidelines below).

May 22 (Meeting #9) *Contested Issue #3: Community Worship—Part One (11.2-34)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 11.2-16 Hairstyles and Gender Distinction
- 11.17-34 The Lord's Supper: Discerning the Body

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 12.1-13.13 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 206-233.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 8.

May 23 (Meeting #10) *Contested Issue #3: Community Worship—Part Two (12.1-13.13)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 12.1-31a Varieties of Gifts, But the Same Spirit
- 12.31b-13.13 The Preeminence of Love

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 14.1-40 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 233-252.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 9.

May 24 (Meeting #11) *Contested Issue #3: Community Worship—Part Three (14.1-40)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 14.1-25 Prophecy Builds Up the Community
- 14.26-40 Order in the Assembly

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the order given):

- First Corinthians 15.1-16.24 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 252-296.

- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 11.

May 25 (Meeting #12) Contested Issue #4: Resurrection Body (15.1-58) and Concluding Matters (16.1-24)

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

15.1-34	Resurrection of Dead is Constitutive of the Gospel
15.35-58	Resurrection Means Transformation of the Body
16.1-12	Collection and Travel Plans
16.13-24	Farewell

-post-meeting assignment: complete the following:

- Do research on exegetical paper and write paper (due August 7)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXPECTATIONS

The assignments are designed to promote the course and degree objectives listed above. The assignment expectations, anticipated minimum time requirements, and percentages of the final grade are listed below.

I expect that students will:

1. Prepare for, attend, and participate in class discussions. Consult the *Course Schedule* (above) for the texts to be read and the assignments to be completed. Be prepared to contribute your discoveries, evaluations, questions, concerns, and reflections during the class discussion. This is an important part of the learning experience. After all the written assignments have been graded, your final score will be adjusted down (3%) for each absence that is not made up.

Course Meetings time requirement = 12 mtgs × 3 hrs/mtg = 36 hrs

Required Readings (Bible, Hays, and Sanders) time requirement = 450 pp × 2 min/p = 15 hrs

2. Write a two-page, single-spaced, Close Reading interpretive assignment on a key passage in First Corinthians. This is the first of two such assignments. The aim here is to develop and to measure your observation skills and your question-asking skills, both of which are essential for sound interpretation. **This is not a research paper**. The kind of “close reading” of the text in view here cannot be achieved through interaction with commentaries, journal articles, monographs, and other secondary sources. Choose one of the following texts (or propose another) for your study and complete the Close Reading assignment as set out in *Appendix B* (see sample distributed in class).

6.1-11 6.12-20 7.1-16 7.17-40 8.1-13 9.1-27 10.1-22

The first Close Reading assignment is **due on Monday, May 15, at the beginning of class**.

Grading of the Close Reading will be out of 10 points and based on clarity, comprehensiveness, and creativity. Late assignments will have one point deducted for each day they are late.

Close Reading time requirement = 2 pp × 2 hrs/p = 4 hrs
Value of final grade = 10%

3. Complete eleven, one-page, single-spaced, Daily Reading Assignments. The *first part* of each assignment (½ page) is devoted to listing the insights derived from the textbook readings. Here you identify the features, themes, or ideas that “struck a chord” with you or that you would like to process further. Pay careful attention to how the author’s presentation interacts with the “place” you are currently occupying (i.e., ministry, personal formation, community development, church, Senior Seminar, thesis, etc.).

The *second part* of each assignment (½ page) is reserved for interaction with the author. Identify at least **two issues** on which you would like further clarification or about which you would like to challenge the author or the class. Put each issue in the form of a question. Include a several-sentence paragraph of rationale explaining why the question is significant to you.

The Daily Reading Assignments are **due at 11:00 AM on the days we have class.** You may email or fax your assignment to me.

Each assignment will be graded at one of four levels: “exceller” (≥ 9 pts), “good” (≥ 8 pts), “passable” (≥ 7 pts), or “unsatisfactory” (< 7 pts). Assignments rated “good,” will give evidence of careful and thorough reading (with personal interaction) and of thoughtful and engaging questions—this is my “baseline” expectation. Assignments will lose a point, if submitted after the 11:00 AM deadline and be worth a maximum of 4 pts regardless of assessment, if submitted after our meeting begins.

These assignments will be returned to you at the start of each meeting and will form a major part of our in-class discussion. I will call on you during our meeting time to present your question (if it is one of the five selected) and to join the discussion around your question and the others that have been selected.

Daily Reading Assignments time requirement = 11 pp × 1 hr/p = 11 hrs
Value of final grade = 11 × 10 points ÷ 2.5 = 44%

4. Complete a second Close Reading assignment on another First Corinthians text. Select from one of the following (or propose another). Use the same guidelines as outlined in Activity #2 above and in *Appendix B*.

11.2-16 11.17-34 12.1-31a 12.31b-13.13 14.26-40 15.1-34

The second Close Reading assignment is **due on Monday, May 22, at the beginning of class.**

Grading of the Close Reading will be out of 10 points and based on clarity, comprehensiveness, and creativity. Late assignments will have one point deducted for each day they are late.

Close Reading time requirement = 2 pp × 2 hrs/p = 4 hrs

Value of final grade = 10%

5. Write a twenty page, double-spaced, Exegetical Paper on the text that you've chosen to research. This assignment provides an opportunity to expand on one of your Close Reading assignments in a thoroughgoing Exegetical Research Paper. **This is a research paper**, not a sermon nor a personal reflection paper.

Proceed in the following way. First, decide which Close Reading assignment you want to explore further.

Second, read how the major commentators besides Hays (i.e., Barrett, Conzelmann, Fee, Thiselton, Witherington) deal with your text and make notes on each one's contribution. You are welcome to use others, but you must at least consult these five which are on one-day Reserve @ Hiebert Library (see *Appendix A*). Pay special attention to the assumptions from which each commentator is writing. Also make note of important journal articles or monographs that the commentators cite approvingly as well as those with which they differ. Track down and skim those that seem most promising. Make notes on what they have to offer. The advantage of beginning with these commentators (after you have done your own Close Reading) is that they will sketch out the "burning issues" (at least for them) and the possible implications just in case you missed these in your own "close reading" of the text.

Third, use the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) On-Line database to locate five articles that appear to relate to your text and topic and make notes on each one. Use the field "Scripture Citation" to find the records related to your text (e.g., type "Corinthians, 1st 7" to get all the records that have 1 Cor 7 "something," anywhere in the record). These articles provide the most recent peer-reviewed research (of course, not all equally valid) and usually an extensive bibliography that you can use to track down other potentially useful sources.

Fourth, try to situate your paper within a context that raises vocational, social, ministry, or personal issues of significance for you. Construct an introductory paragraph that will launch your study into the text that you have chosen and will show why it is significant for this particular context.

Fifth, after you have done your research and conceptualized its significance, prepare an outline that begins with your introductory paragraph and moves through the four basic steps of an Exegetical & Hermeneutical paper (see *Appendix C*) in order to address this particular issue from the standpoint of the selected text. Note: the template in *Appendix C* is designed to be a generic, one that can be used with any text. However, be sure to use the four headings (i.e., descriptive task, synthetic task, hermeneutical task, and pragmatic task) in your paper, so that I can see when you are moving from one task to the next. Conclude by referring to the context described in your introduction, showing how your exegesis and hermeneutical reflection relates to this situation.

The Exegetical Research Paper is **due on Monday, August 7**. You may email or fax your paper.

Be aware of the grading criteria while you are preparing your final draft (see *Appendix D*). In addition, please note that “A” grade papers will give evidence of having consulted and interacted with the six commentators indicated and with five academic articles

Research Reading time requirement = 500 pp × 2 min/p = 17 hrs
Research Paper writing time requirement = 20 pp × 2 hrs/p = 40 hrs
Value of final grade = 36%

Total activity/assignment load = 127 hrs

It is only fair and right that you have equally high expectations of me as well. My commitment to you is that I will endeavor to:

1. Join you in our mutual aim of encountering more deeply the disturbing and inspiring presence of Jesus that Paul writes about in First Corinthians. While I function as “supervisor” in guiding your reading and writing, I am committed to participate with you as a “co-journeyer” in our common quest to bring/nourish life and healing in a broken world—which is the mission of God.

2. Foster a learning community atmosphere during our seminar sessions where ideas can be discussed and explored freely without fear of ridicule or attack. Many people have thought deeply on the subject of Paul’s gospel proclamation and what it signifies. While each of these “visions” or “constructions” is not equally valid or defensible, each deserves to be heard and explored before evaluative decisions are made.

3. Provide careful and helpful feedback. I believe that it is pedagogically most helpful to have constructive criticism throughout the learning process. Therefore, I am open to visiting with you about your writing projects so that you can test, clarify, and expand your ideas. Stop by my office and let’s talk. I also aim to give useful feedback on the papers that you turn in and to do so in a timely fashion.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

Monday	May 15	First Close Reading assignment due
Monday	May 22	Second Close Reading assignment due
Monday	August 7	Exegetical Research Paper due

SUMMARY OF GRADING SCHEME

Daily Reading Assignments (11 × 10 ÷ 2.5)	44%
First Close Reading Assignment	10%
Second Close Reading Assignment	10%
Exegetical Research Paper	36%
Absences not made up (3% deduction per absence)	

NOTES

1. Academic Policies. MBBS academic policies (as well as other school policies) are described at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies>. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar or Academic Dean.

2. Evaluation. Each of the assignments has specific grading criteria (see descriptions above).

All assignments must be completed to be eligible to earn a passing grade for the course.

Please note that “student work will be evaluated by two standards: a) by what is considered the appropriate level of graduate performance, and b) by comparison with work submitted in a given class” (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

The letter grade conversions follow the MBBS Grading Template: A (100-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%), B (86-83%), B- (82-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), and F (69-0%) (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

The performance expectations are as follows: “A ‘B’ grade is the baseline. A ‘B’ grade means the student is doing satisfactory work. The ‘B+’ or higher grade indicates that the student has exceeded the baseline performance standard. The ‘C’ grade indicates that the student has not achieved the baseline level” (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

3. Credit/No Credit. Students who elect to take the course on a “Credit/No Credit” basis and expect to earn a “pass” must complete each assignment, earn an overall average of $\geq 70\%$, and have no unmade-up absences (see notes below on *Attendance*).

4. Due Dates. Students are expected to submit written assignments on time. Late submissions will be penalized as outlined above in the descriptions for each assignment. However, penalties may not apply to students who have a documented emergency that prevents them from submitting the assignment on the due date. Check with me to see if alternative arrangements can be made. You may send your assignments to me by fax or email.

5. Attendance. Students are expected to attend and participate in class. Each class is important. Students may propose various ways to “make up” an absence (e.g., taping, viewing, and reporting on missed lecture, doing extra reading and writing, etc.). Please see me about your proposal for how to “make up” an absence. Absences not “made up” will result in a 3% reduction from the final grade for each absence.

6. **Formatting specifications.** For questions of citation form, consult *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Hendricksen Publishers, 1999), which is available at the Library in the Reference Section (Ref PN 147.S26). For more general questions of writing technique and style consult the style manual approved by the Seminary, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses*, 11th ed. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).

Appendix A: Selected Bibliography for First Corinthians

Note: Items marked with and asterisk (*) are on one day reserve @ Hiebert Library

- *Barrett, C.K. *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Harper & Row, 1968.
- Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. Eerdmans, 1971.
- *Conzelmann, Hans. *1 Corinthians*. Fortress Press, 1975.
- Deming, Will. *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*. Cambridge UP, 1995 [monograph on 1 Cor 7].
- *Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Fee, Gordon D. "Toward a Theology of 1 Corinthians." In *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2, ed. D.M. Hay. Fortress Press, 1993, pp. 37-58.
- *Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*. UP of America, 1982 [monograph].
- *Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians*. John Knox Press, 1997.
- Kuck, David W. *Judgement & Community Conflict*. E.J. Brill, 1992 [monograph on 1 Cor 3 and 4].
- Martin, Dale B. *The Corinthian Body*. Yale UP, 1995 [monograph].
- Mitchell, Margaret M. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*. J.C.B. Mohr, 1991 [monograph].
- Rosner, Brian S. *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*. E.J. Brill, 1994 [monograph on 1 Cor 5-7].
- *Sanders, E.P., *Paul*. Oxford UP, 1991.
- Snyder, Graydon. *First Corinthians: A Faith Community Commentary*. Mercer, 1992.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Fortress Press, 1982.
- *Thiselton, Anthony. *The First Corinthians*. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Willis, Wendell L. *Idol Meat in Corinth*. Scholars Press, 1985 [monograph on 1 Cor 8 and 10].
- Wire, Antoinette Clark. *The Corinthian Women Prophets*. Fortress Press, 1990 [monograph].
- *Witherington, Ben. *Conflict and Community in Corinth*. Eerdmans, 1995.

Appendix B: Guidelines for doing a "close reading"

Note: The following guidelines are an adaptation of a document produced by Joel B. Green and they are reproduced here with permission from the author.

1. **Introductory comments:** Many find a "close reading" assignment one of the most difficult exercises undertaken at seminary. The reason for this is that the kind of "close reading" required for this assignment cannot be achieved by interacting with commentaries, monographs, dictionaries, journal articles, etc. Instead, a "close reading" assignment aims to measure your observation skills and your question-asking skills. So, what is it?

a) A "close reading" is not

- *a research paper*—no secondary sources should be consulted as you prepare your paper
- *a finished product*—it should be written using good grammar and spelling, but there is no expectation that you "answer" the questions you raise while interacting with the assigned text; hence, no "introduction" or "conclusion" is required
- *a sermon or application paper*—it is simply too early in the interpretative process to be

asserting issues of relevance or appropriation

b) A “close reading” is

- *a series of observations and questions*—looking at your text from multiple vantage points (see list below), should raise a wide range of interpretive issues; some questions may be more relevant to certain texts than to others
- *a research agenda*—a thoroughgoing “close reading” of the text provides the interpretive questions and hunches that you can then take to the reference materials, the next stage in the interpretive process
- *a community event*—you are encouraged to discuss your preliminary thoughts and questions with others as you prepare to write your observations

2. Questions for a “Close Reading” of the text: The following questions are divided into categories that you might bring with you to the task of “close reading.” Not all questions are equally important to every biblical text, and other questions may emerge as you wrestle with the text. You will need to exercise your judgment in discerning which are relevant. Work through the relevant questions from each of the four main blocks—text, co-text, context, intertext—and then write up your observations in prose form.

a) The Text

- Textual Criticism—*Through the use of the Greek apparatus, have you indicated potentially problematic readings and their significance?*
- Genre and Form—*Have you identified “what this text is” and/or to what larger genre it belongs, and suggested the significance of this identification?*
- Determination of Boundaries—*On what basis do you agree or disagree with the demarcation of the assigned pericope? What textual markers support your analysis?*
- Exploration of the Text’s Internal Development and Argument—*Have you been able to identify the structure and/or other strategies by which the author attempts to communicate with the reader?*
- The “About-ness” of the Text—*Can you summarize what you understand this text to be saying?*

b) The Co-Text

- Situation of Text in Larger Presentation—*Given that we read from “left to right,” have you been able to show how your reading of this text is informed by what went on before?*
- Development of Important Words/Themes—*What key words and/or themes are signaled in this text? How have you judged them to be key?*
- Openness to Interpretive Possibilities—*What other readings of this text are possible? What would we miss about the meaning of this text without having read further?*

c) Context

- Socio-Historical Setting—*In what socio-historical setting is this text communicated? How does our knowledge of this setting influence our reading?*
- Appeal to Particular Cultural Conventions/Cues—*In what ways does this text appeal to such cultural concerns or conventions as purity, distribution of power, social roles, household codes, honor and shame, patronage systems, etc. in order to communicate its message?*
- Interface of Contexts—*In what ways does this text appear to stand in tension with the world it addresses? In what ways does your own context intersect with the context of this*

text?

d) Intertext

- Sensitivity to OT/LXX/HB Citations and Echoes and their Significance—*What OT passages are explicitly cited in this text? Alluded to? What is their significance in their new setting within this text?*
- Sensitivity to other Inter-Canonical Echoes—*What other biblical passages are brought to mind by a reading of this one? How might these echoes inform a canonical reading of this text?*

3. Concluding remarks: There is no “right” way to do a “close reading” assignment—the essential thing is that somehow you bring to the surface the significance of the themes, motifs, details, etc. in the assigned text. Finally, the key thing is to allow yourself to be playful and imaginative as you engage the text from the four angles (text, co-text, context, and intertext).

Appendix C: Exegetical/Hermeneutical Template

Note: *The following guidelines are an adaptation of those I learned from my mentors, Elmer Martens, Allen Guenther, Tim Geddert, Brevard Childs, and Richard Hays.*

1. THE DESCRIPTIVE TASK: READING THE TEXT CAREFULLY

a) *Define the text.*

- Read the text in its larger context (this may mean reading several chapters or the whole book).
- Identify the type(s)/genre(s) of literature represented in the text (e.g., narrative, discourse, exhortation, poetry, apocalyptic, gospel, law, wisdom, etc.).
- Identify the beginning and end of the text (i.e., textual unit or *pericope*) to be exegeted (clues: shifts in grammar, genre, scene, and theme; certain literary conventions; etc.).

b) *Establish the text.*

- Read the text in multiple translations or translate from the original language (parse key words and analyze syntax).
- If possible, assess manuscript variants (if any) and decide on the “best” reading (give rationale).
- Decide on a “working translation” that best coheres with the meaning of the text as it is emerging in your interpretation (give rationale).

c) *Analyze the structure of the text.*

- Identify and label the major subdivisions using literary and grammatical clues in the text (i.e., use functional labels like: introduction, rationale, assertion, illustration, instruction, warning, conclusion, etc.).
- Outline the text, using indentation and spacing (etc.) to graphically show relationships at the “paragraph level” and, if possible, at the “sentence level” (i.e., grammatical and semantic diagramming).

d) *Exegete the text.*

- Determine the meanings of key words and phrases (use Strong’s numbers, if necessary, along with concordances, lexicons, and theological wordbooks to find the meaning of the underlying Hebrew or Greek word in your text).

- Determine the relationship of the parts to the whole (outline the flow of the argument or narrative).
- Locate the text in its historical, literary, and social context (use a Bible dictionary).
- State the central issue, message, or thrust of the text, in a sentence.

2. THE SYNTHETIC TASK: PLACING THE TEXT IN CANONICAL CONTEXT

a) *Explore the theology of the text.*

- Compare with parallel canonical texts (i.e., other related texts in the Christian Bible) and note differences and similarities.
- Discern the coherent theological message that holds together, but does not reduce, the canonical tensions.
- State the underlying theological vision that drives the text, in a sentence.

b) *Test your theological interpretation with others.*

- Consult commentaries, monographs, journal articles, dictionary articles, etc. (use ATLA's "scripture search" feature to find publications on your text).
- Discuss your findings and interpretation with others in your faith community.
- Examine alternative interpretations and make revisions and modifications, as needed.

3. THE HERMENEUTICAL TASK: RELATING THE TEXT TO THE PRESENT

a) *Evaluate the temporal/cultural gap between the textual world and the contemporary world.*

- Research the effect the text has had in other Christian communities over time and across cultures.
- Explore ways to "bridge the gap" so that the text's contemporary effect, while differing, could still bear a "familial resemblance" to its effect in other faith communities.

b) *Articulate the on-going message of the text.*

- Decide on the text's "mode of discourse" (e.g., rule, principle, paradigm, or symbolic world) and how it will function for contemporary appropriation. Give rationale.
- Discern the role (if any) of other sources of authority (e.g., tradition, reason, experience, etc.) and how they will contribute to "building a bridge that spans the gap."
- Construct imaginative analogies and metaphors that could place your contemporary faith community within the theological vision expressed by the text. (Note: The aim here is not to make the text relevant to us, but to be "drawn into" the text so that it reshapes the norms of our present faith community.)

4. THE PRAGMATIC TASK: LIVING THE TEXT

a) *Appropriate the message of text in ways that resonate with its theological vision (i.e., "walk over the bridge that spans the gap between the textual world and our own").*

b) *Identify spheres of life and particular circumstances where the theological truth(s) of the text (i.e., its subject matter) could be embodied and actualized. (Note: While advocating for changed "actions" is good, these may be a sham or at most superficial, unless transformation is rooted at a deeper level—in a changed "way of seeing" ourselves, others, and God.)*

c) *Develop and test pragmatic applications in your life and in your faith community so that the theological message of the text is proclaimed in an invitational and clear way.*

d) *Surround the whole process, from reading the text to its application, in prayer.*

Appendix D: Evaluation Template

EVALUATION of *Research Paper* for _____ (student)

_____ APPROPRIATENESS (re: compliance with assignment criteria)

irrelevant/unrelated/improper [1 <-----> 20] suitable/fitting/apropos

_____ ARGUMENTATION (re: development of topic/arrangement of critique)

rambles/disjointed/illogical [1 <-----> 20] reasonable/coherent/sequential

_____ CLARITY (re: style of writing)

broken/obscure/repetitive [1 <-----> 20] flowing/lucid/succinct

_____ COMPREHENSIVENESS (re: coverage of topic or depth of analysis)

superficial/sketchy/shallow [1 <-----> 10] thorough/extensive/deep

_____ CREATIVITY (re: reader reception)

ordinary/average/routine [1 <-----> 10] novel/fresh/innovative

_____ FORM (re: spelling, grammar, diction, and citation conventions)

incorrect/sloppy/inappropriate [1 <-----> 10] correct/accurate/appropriate

_____ CARE (re: quality of presentation)

untidy/illegible/distracting [1 <-----> 10] tidy/legible/impressive

_____ /100 = _____ (reader)

Note: Late assignments will be penalized 2% for each day (or part thereof) after due date.