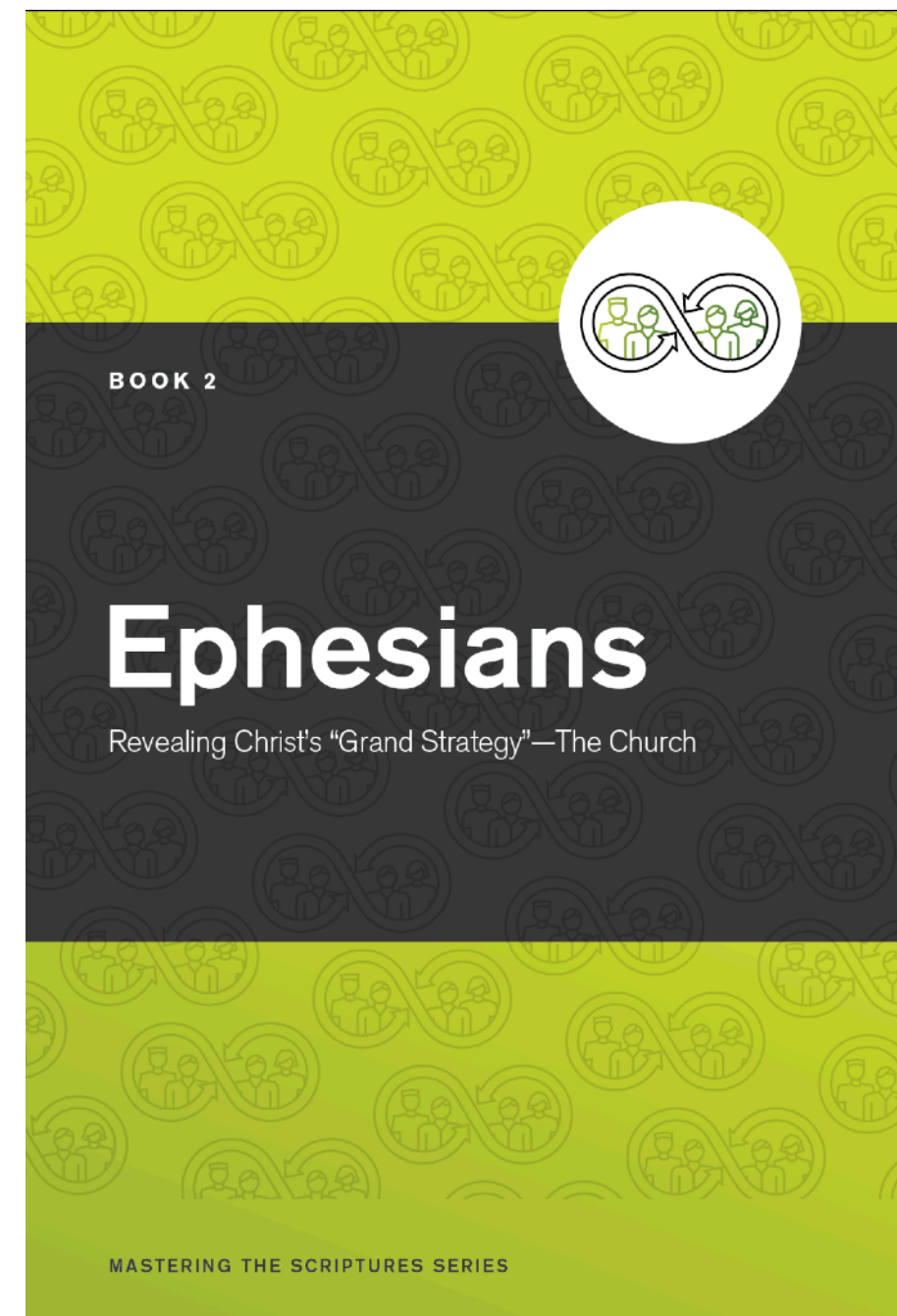
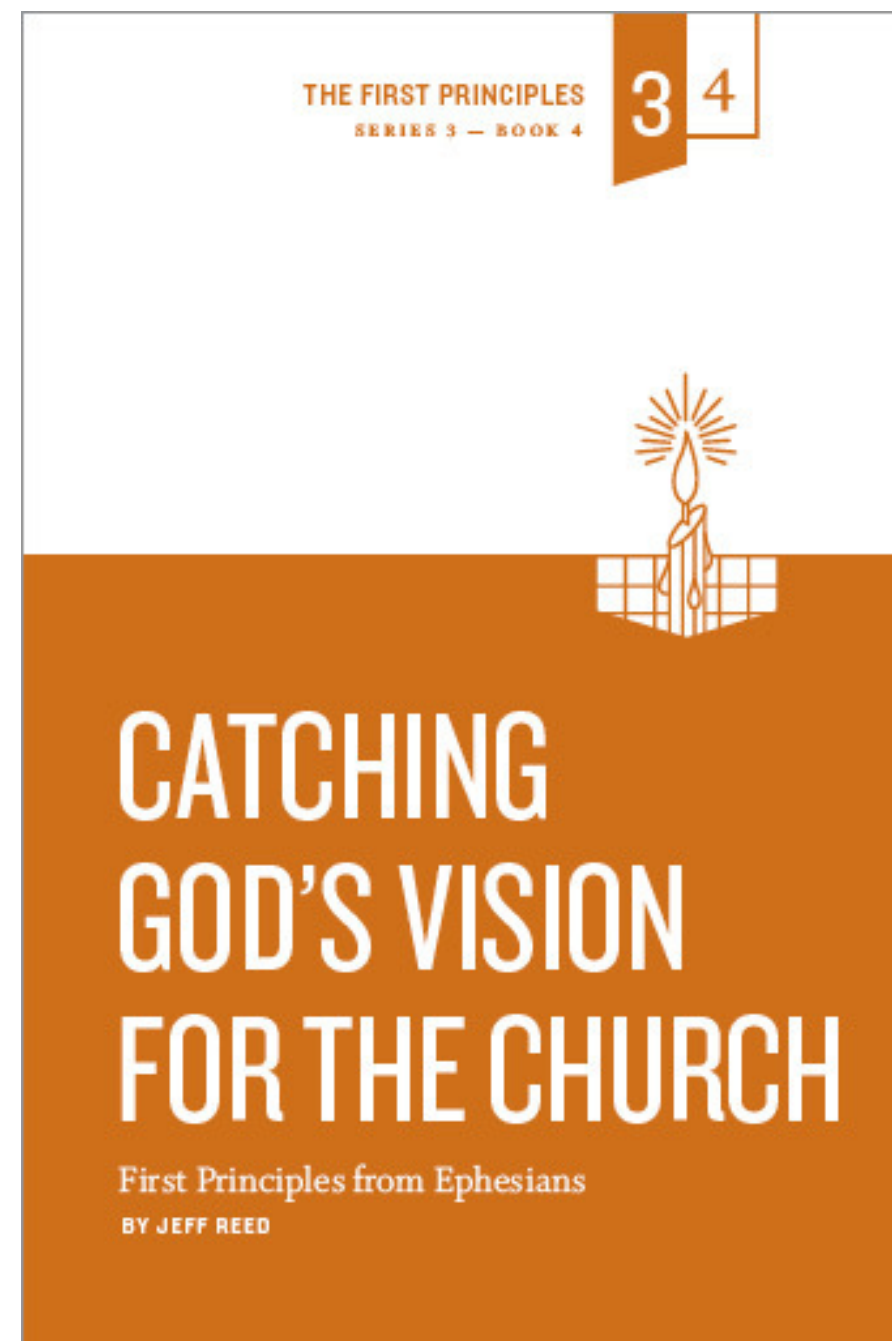


Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



Which one is right?

1 Timothy 4:15

“progress is evident to all” after 20 years!!!
(Keith and Carol)

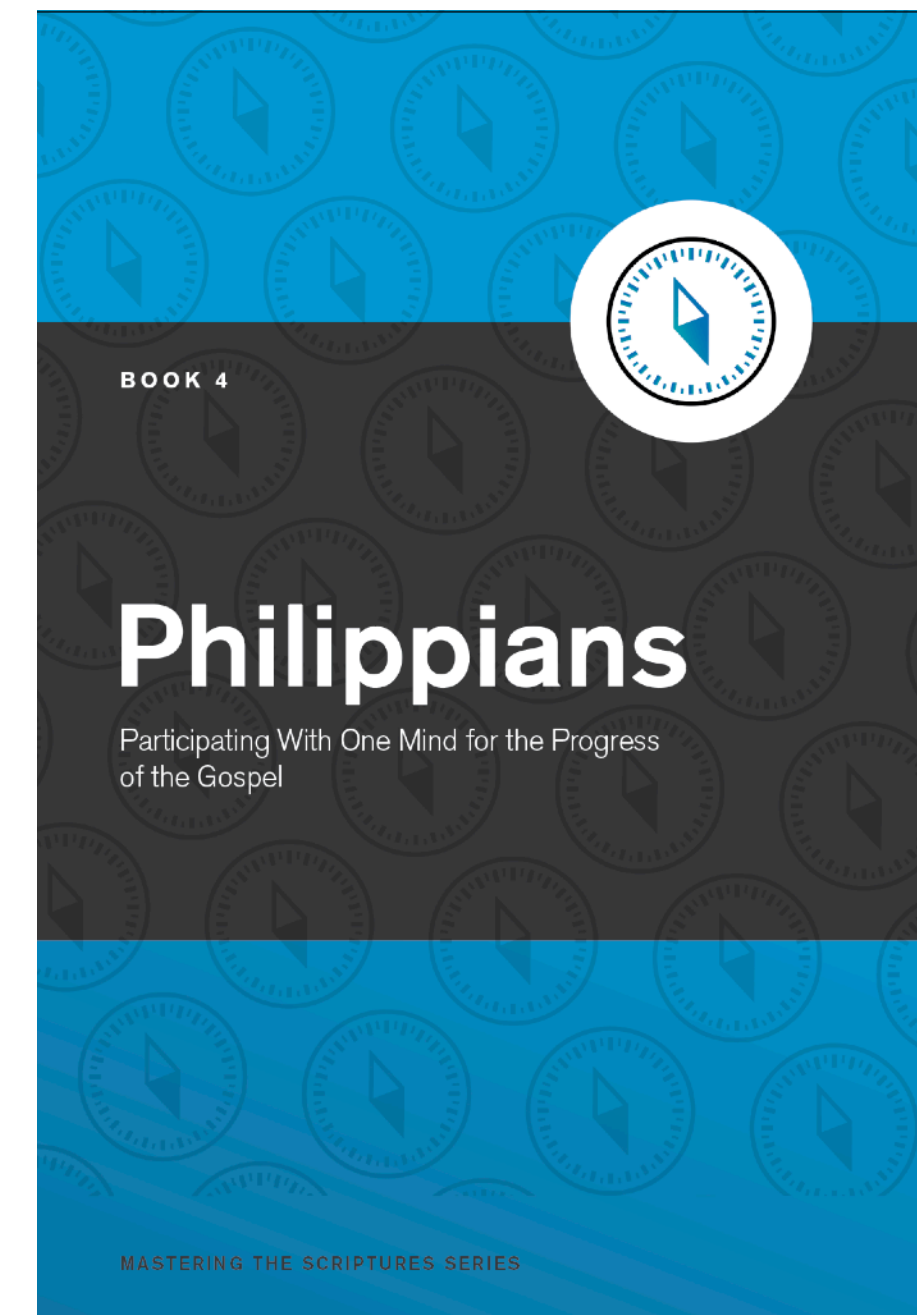
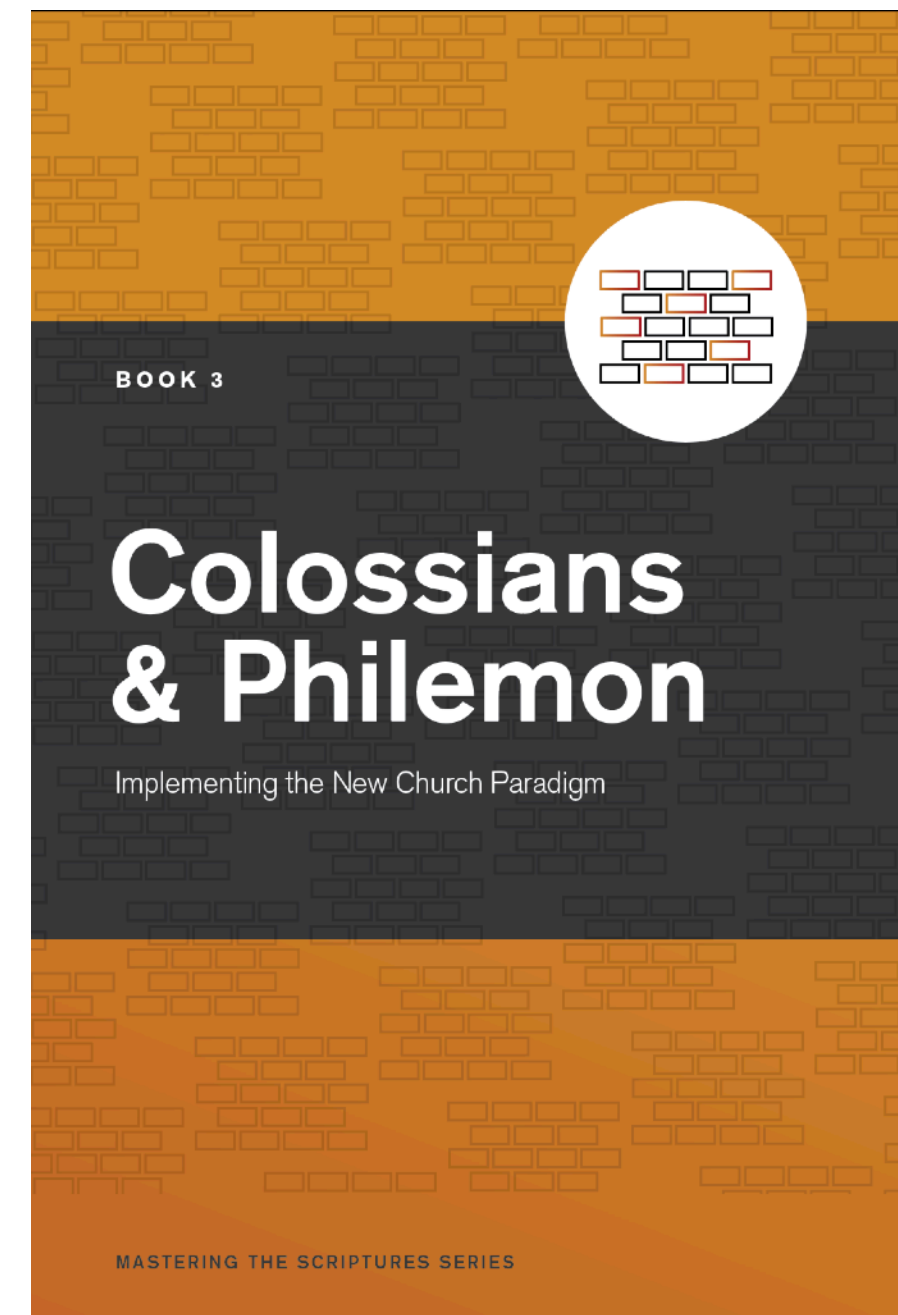
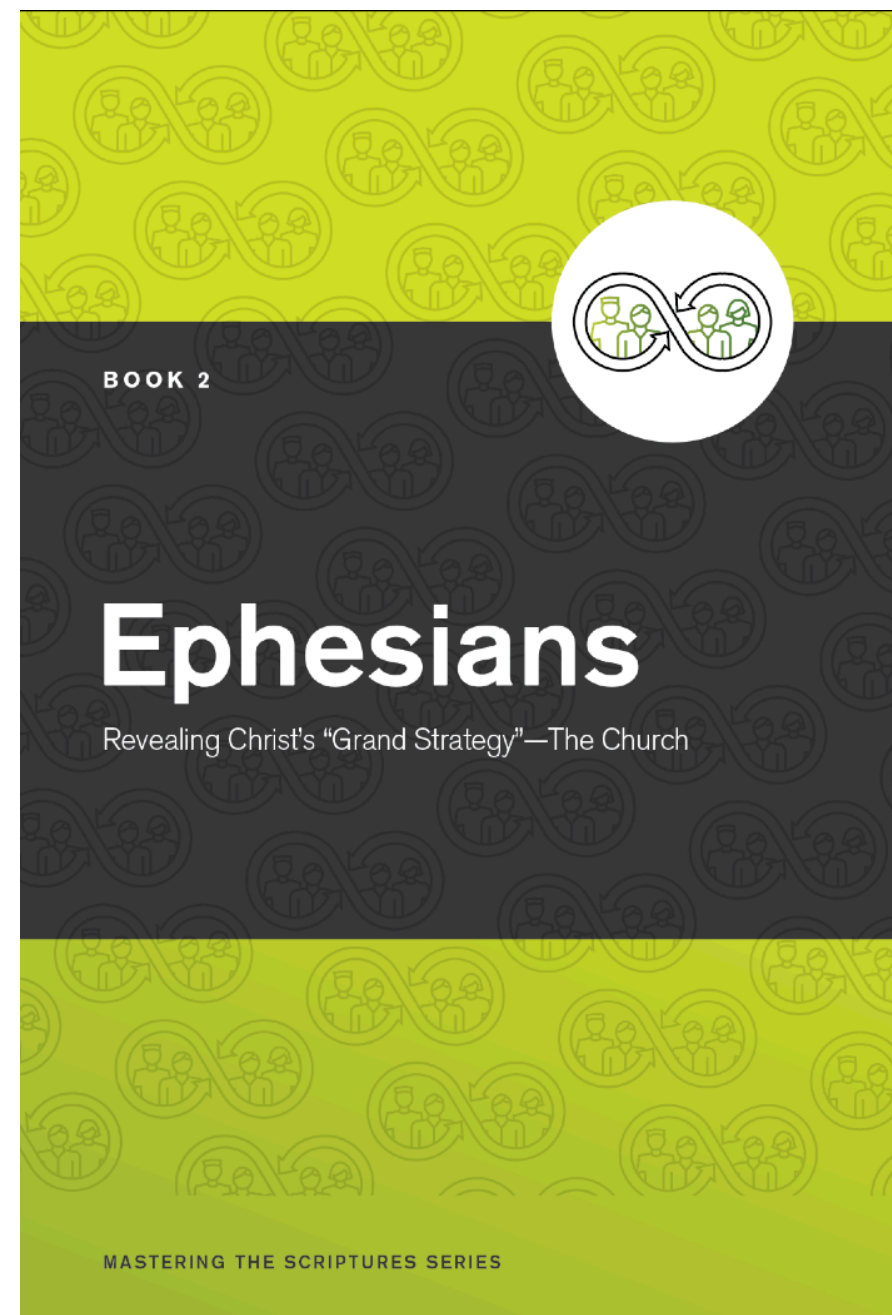
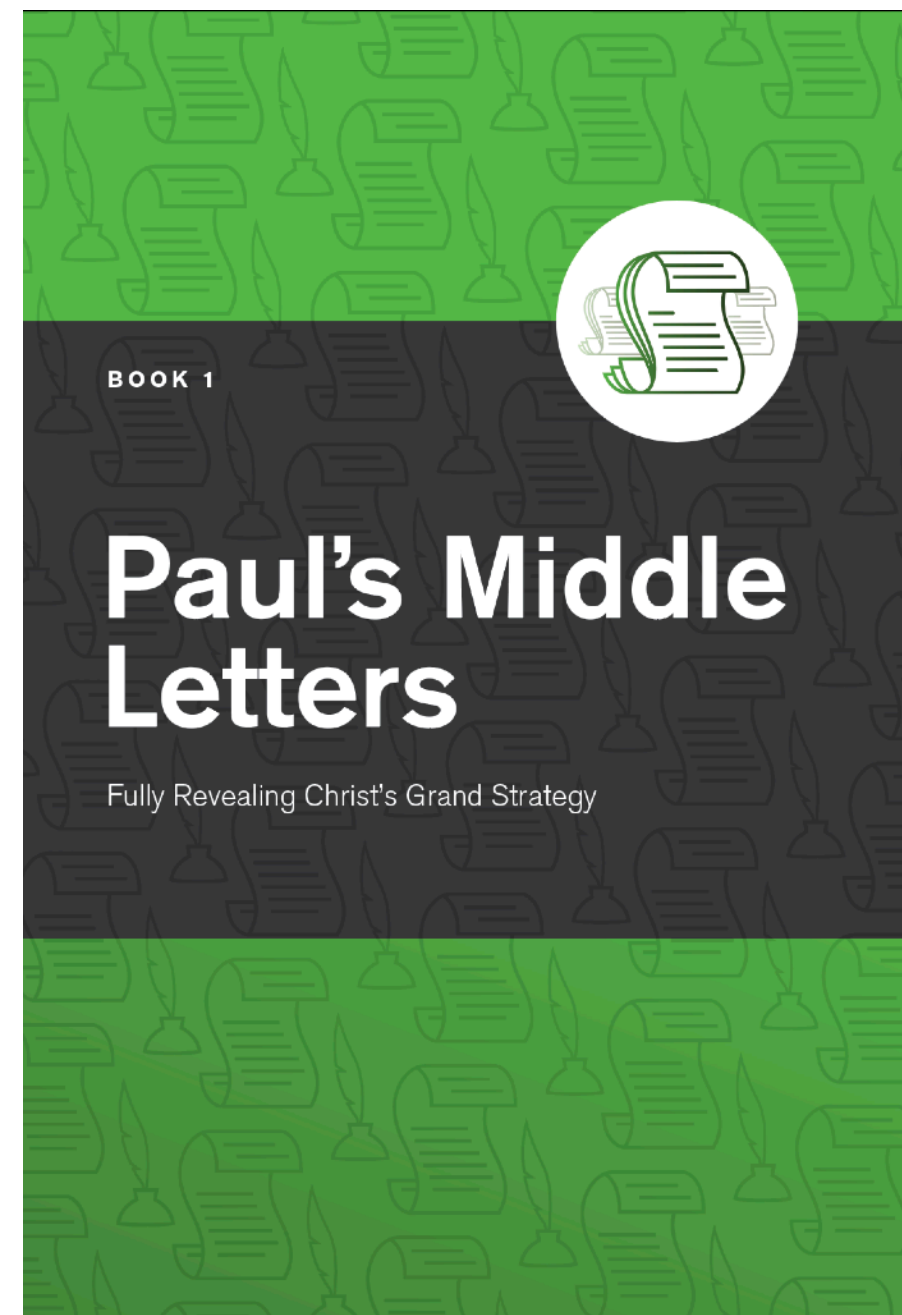
Acts 1978, 1983, India
1984, Acts course 1987

Ephesians

Revealing Christ's "Grand Strategy" — the Church



Paul's Middle Letters



Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Issue: Paul's Intention for Writing Ephesians

Questions:

1. In what sense is Ephesians more of a manifesto than Paul's other letters?
2. What new revelation is contained in Ephesians? How significant is that new revelation?
3. Why was Paul so concerned that the Ephesian churches fully grasp this new revelation?
4. What is the relationship between them being fully enlightened and having the power to carry out their calling?

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:15–23

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21

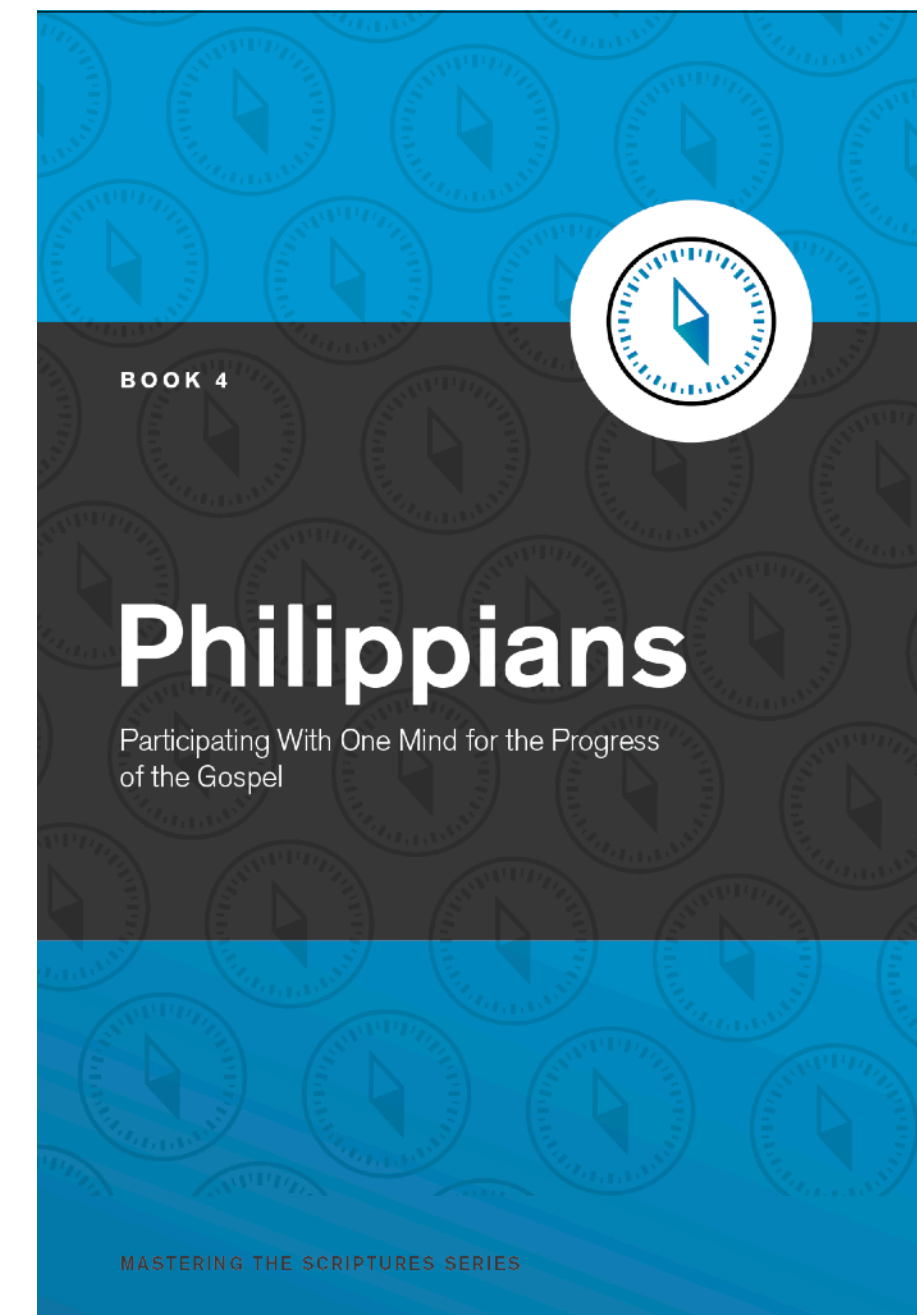
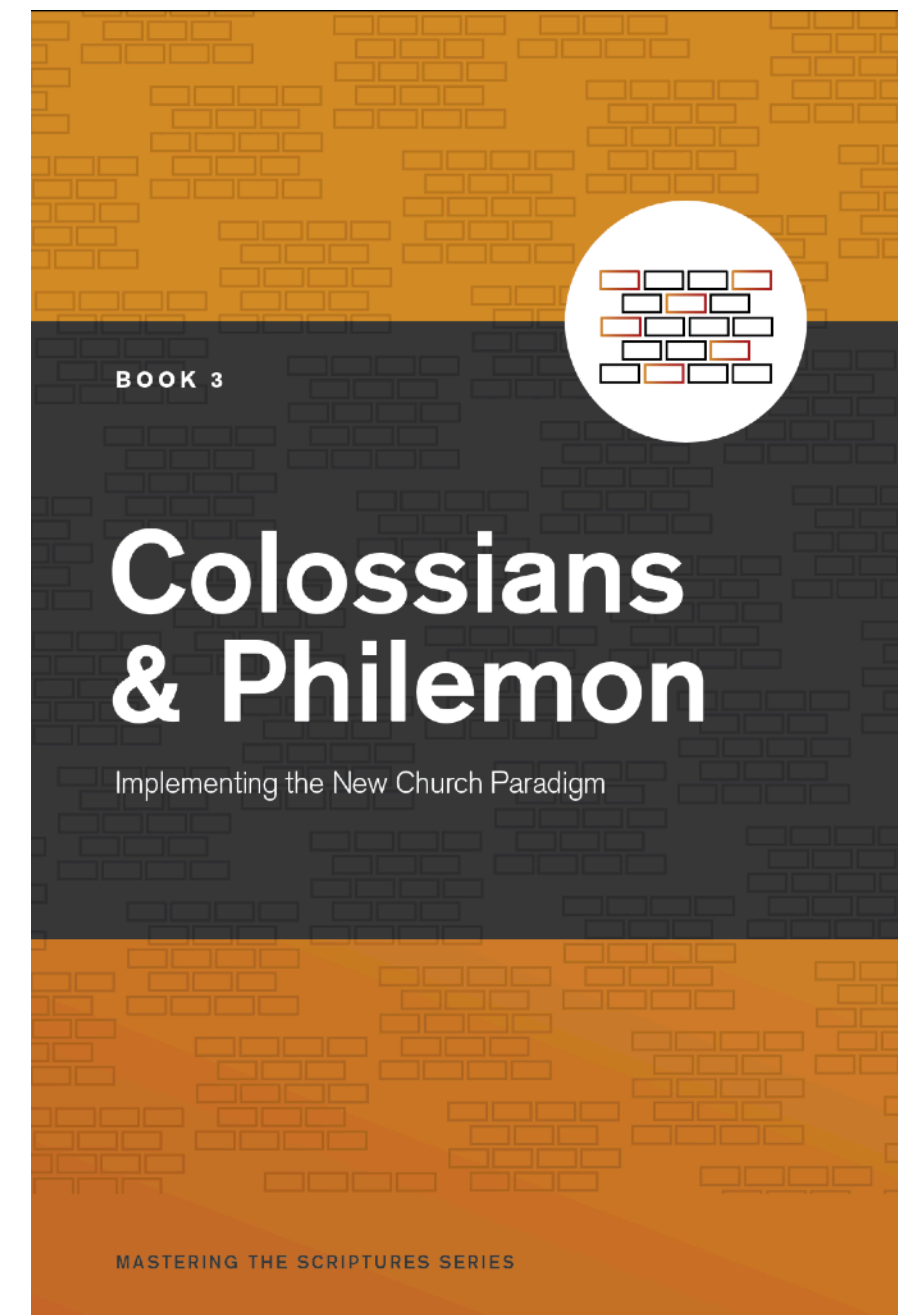
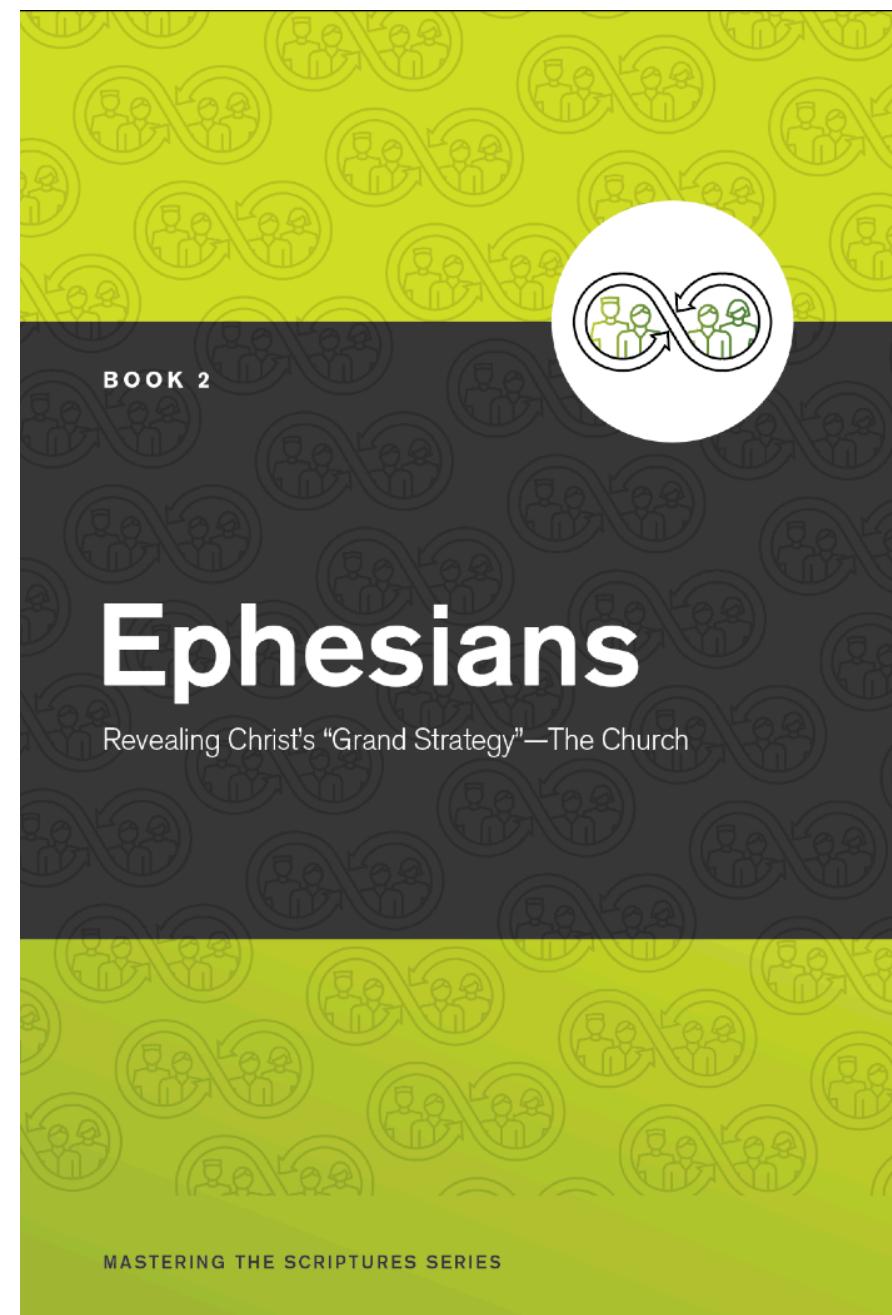
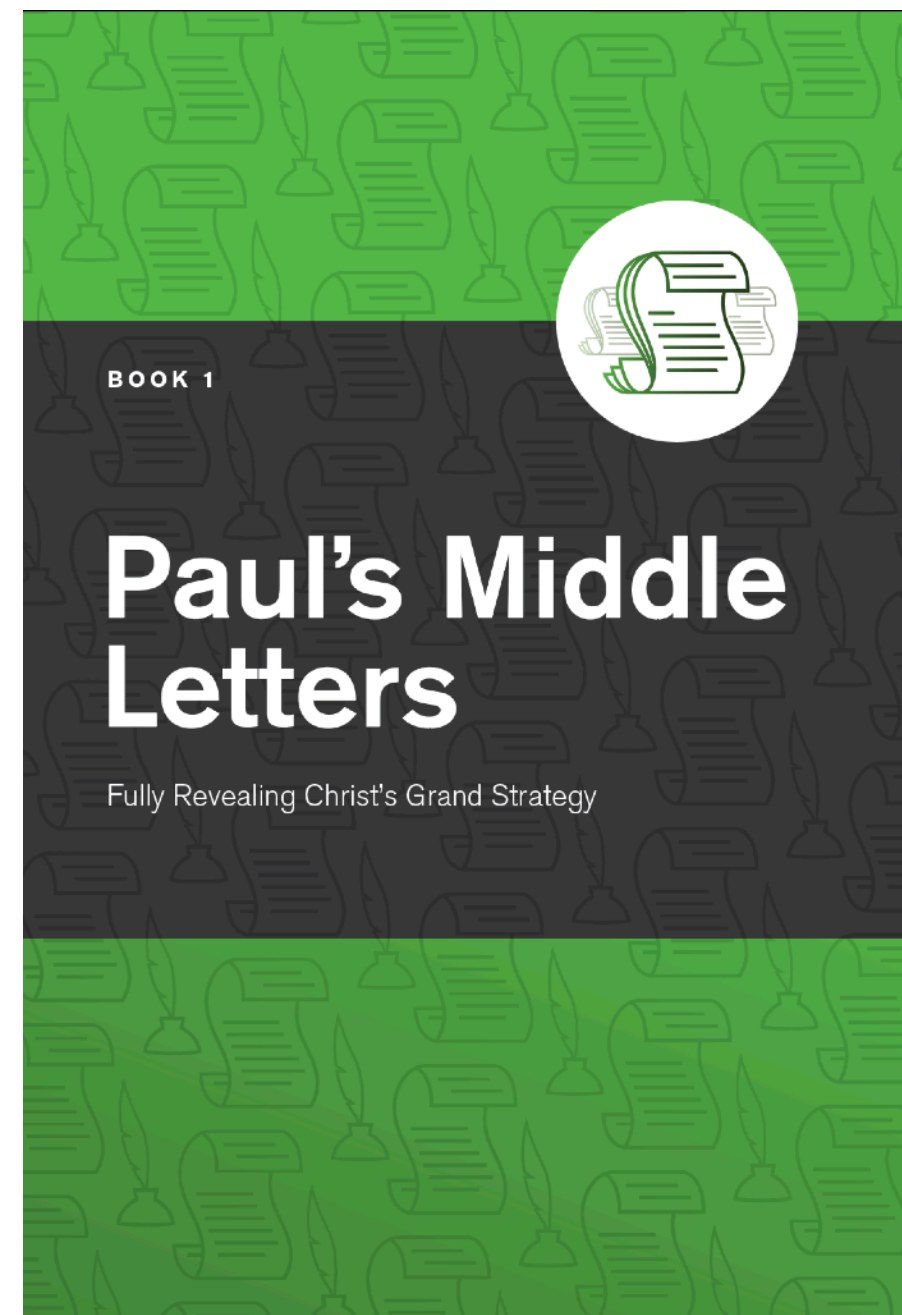
Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Ephesians — Hub Churches

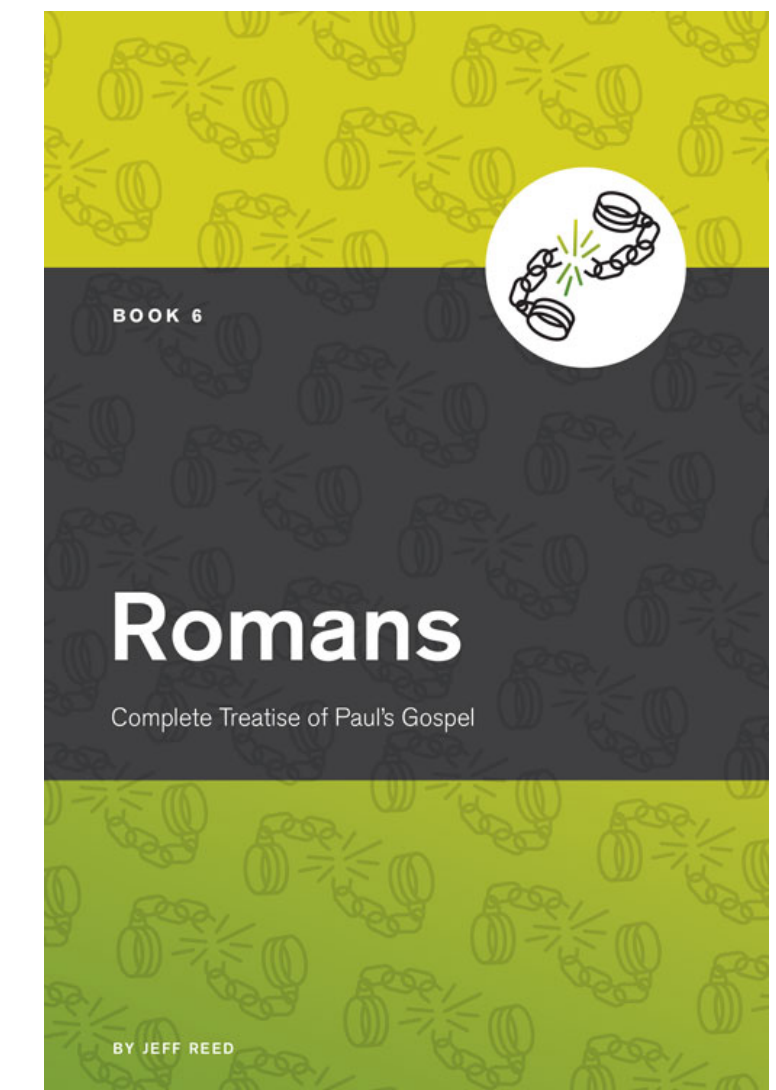
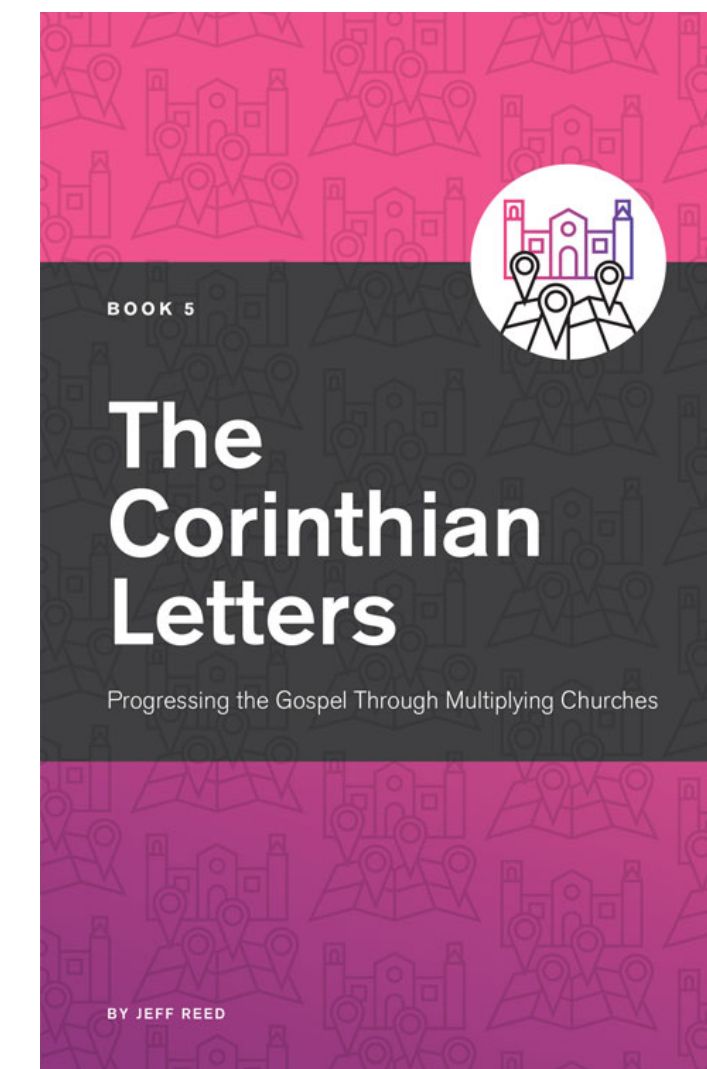
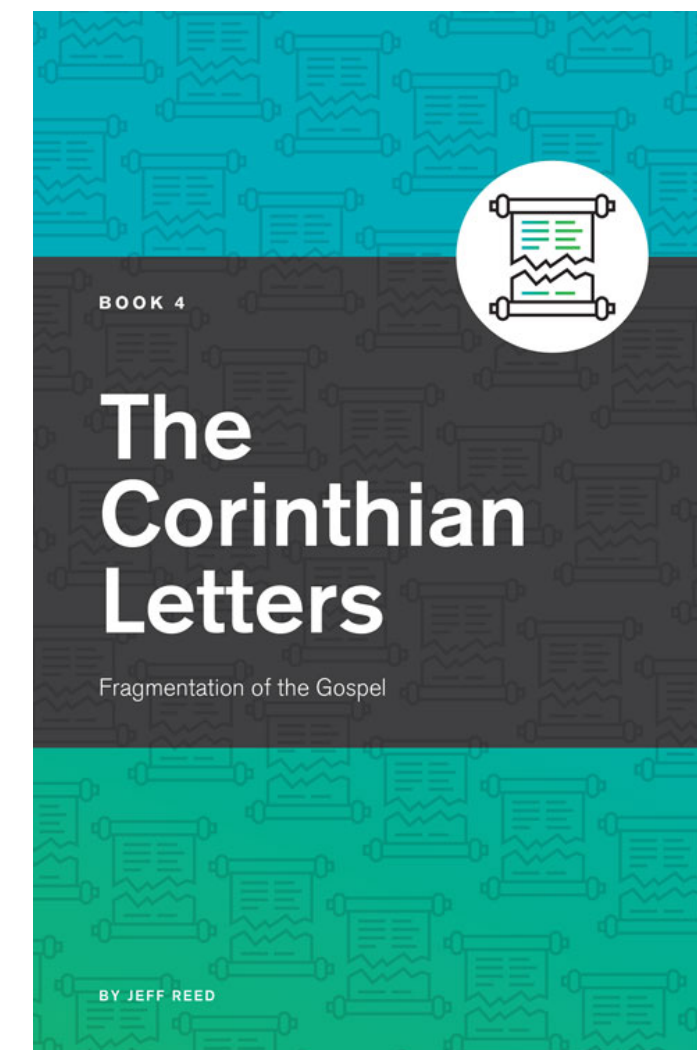
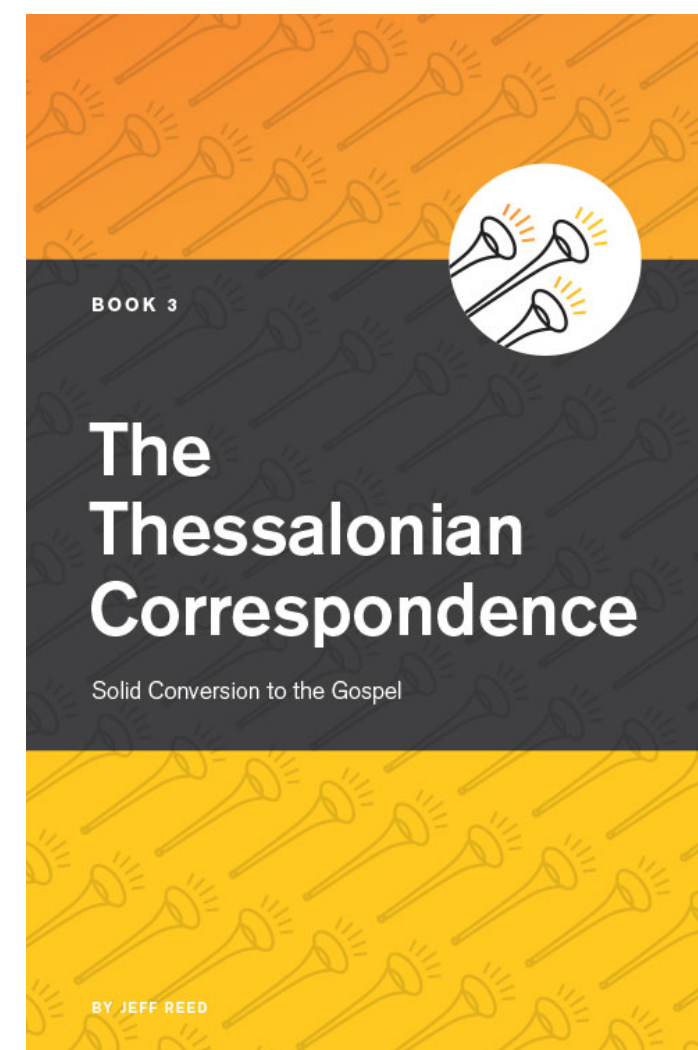
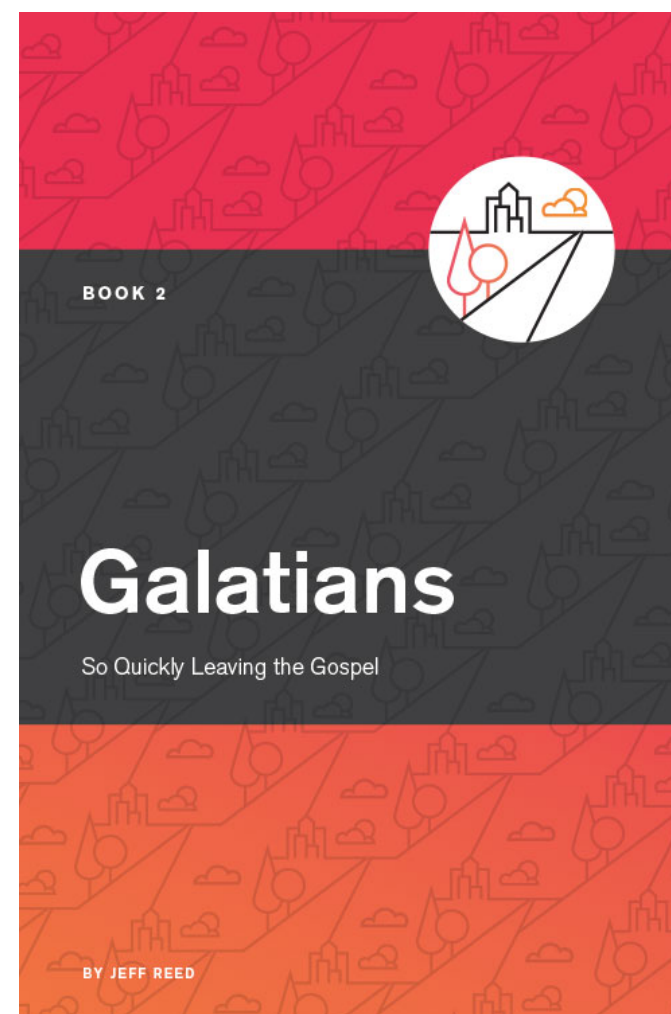
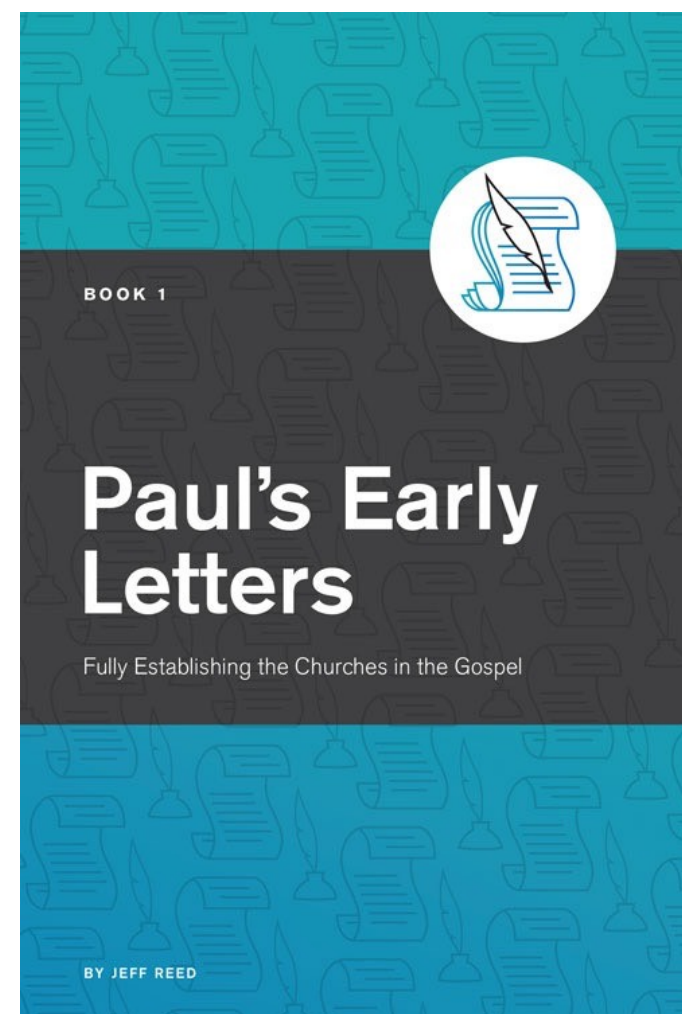
Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with a special challenge for the Ephesian churches to fully grasp the significance of their calling and to fully carry out all God intends for them.

Now let's set the context for fully understanding what Paul was intending by writing this letter at this time.

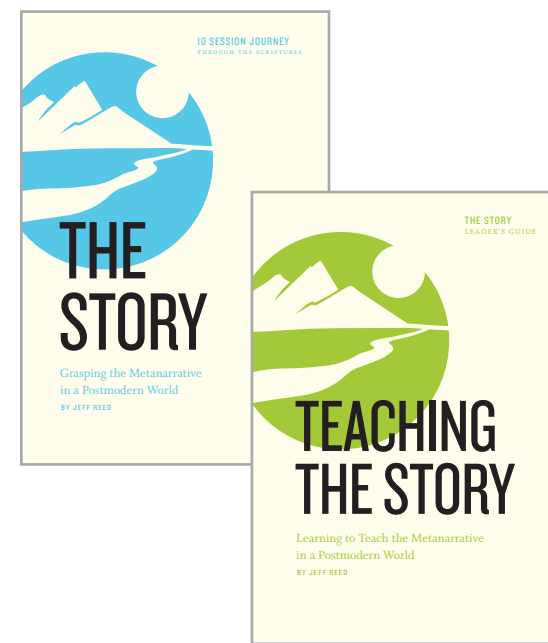
Paul's Middle Letters



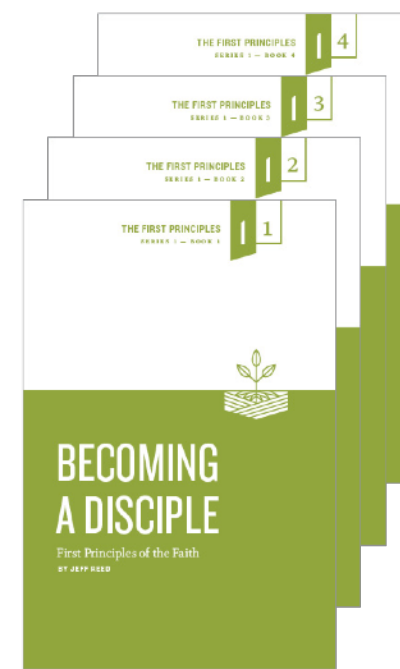
Paul's Early Letters



Paul's Early Letters



Kerygma
Early Acts
Apostles' Teaching
6 months
Paul: 3 years "night and day"



Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years



Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year

Paul's Middle Letters

The battle for the gospel went from Autumn, 47 AD, until the writing of Romans in the middle of November, 56 AD—10 years

Paul's first confrontation with Peter—Autumn, 47 AD (Gal. 2:1–10)

Peter in Antioch—Autumn, 49 AD (Gal. 2:11–16)

Jerusalem Council—Autumn, 49 AD

Then the early letters of Paul—Autumn, 49 AD to Romans in 56 AD

It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he completed with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

Now on to his rather compact, full unveiling of the church.

Paul's Middle Letters

These letters were all written close together (at the end of Acts—20:30), during the 2 years Paul was under house arrest—from February, 60, to March, 62. Most likely...

Ephesians was written Autumn, 60 AD

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn, 61 AD

Philippians—early Spring, 62 AD

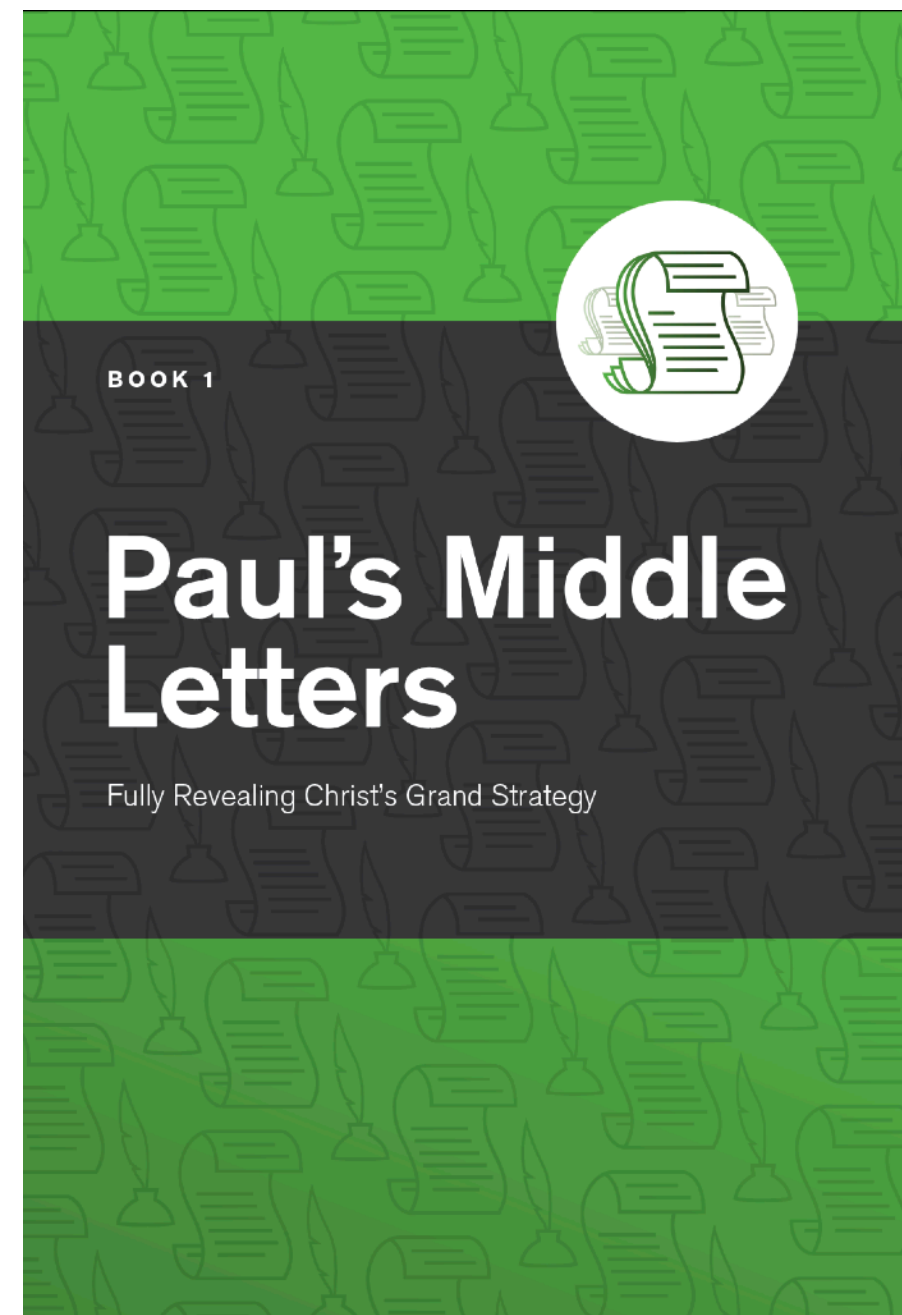
Here we are looking into the heart of Paul's network

Ephesians—hub churches

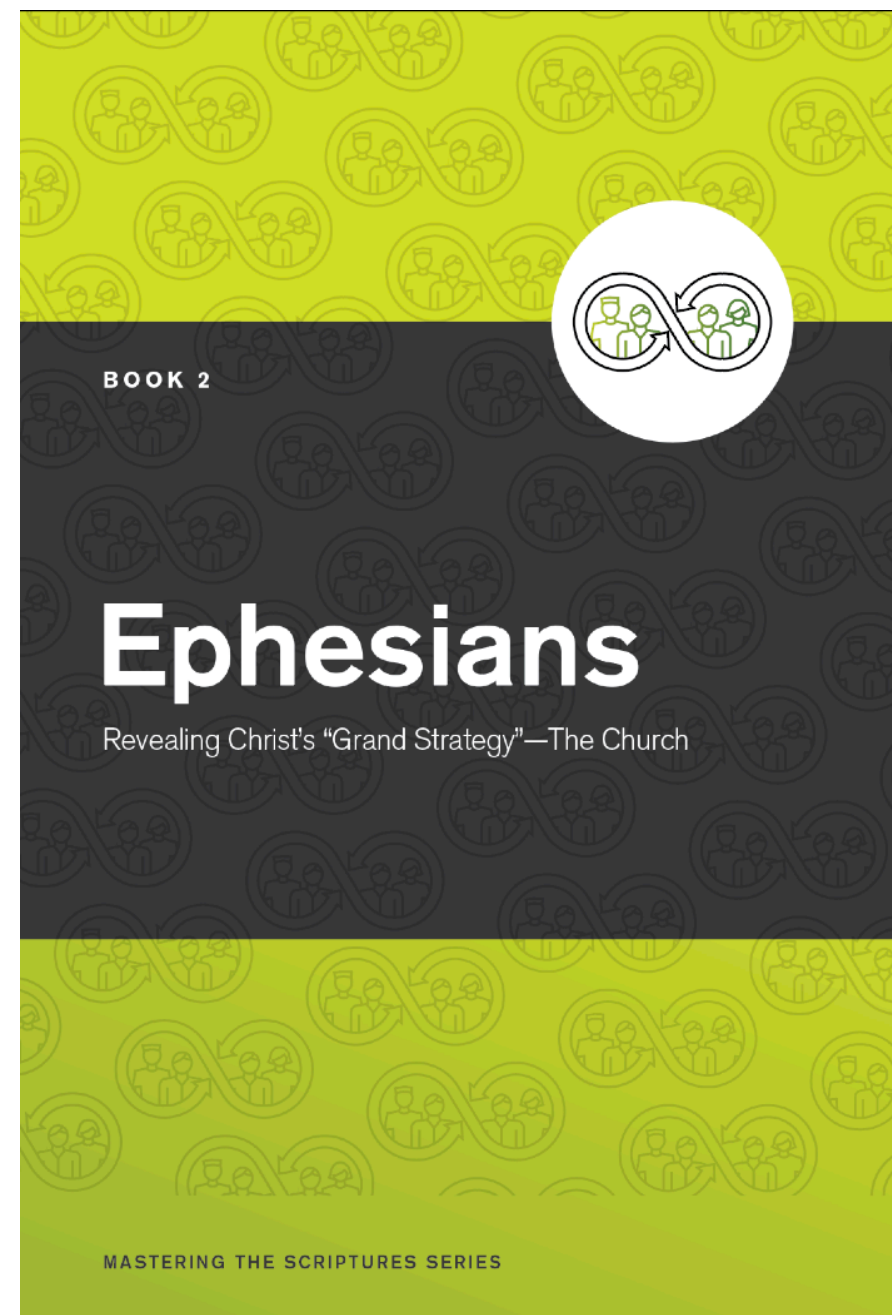
Colossians and Philemon—cluster churches

Philippians—node churches

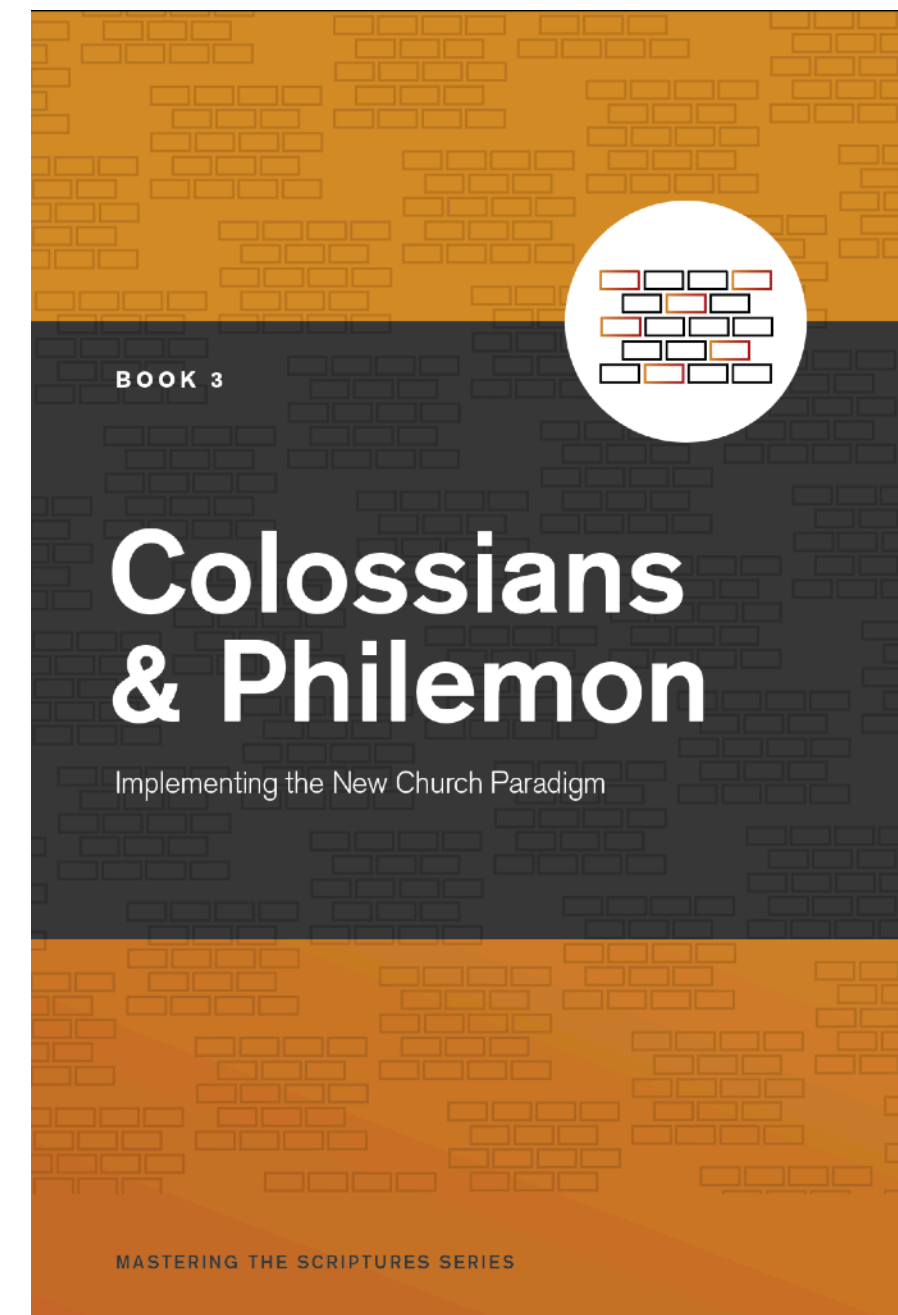
Paul's Middle Letters



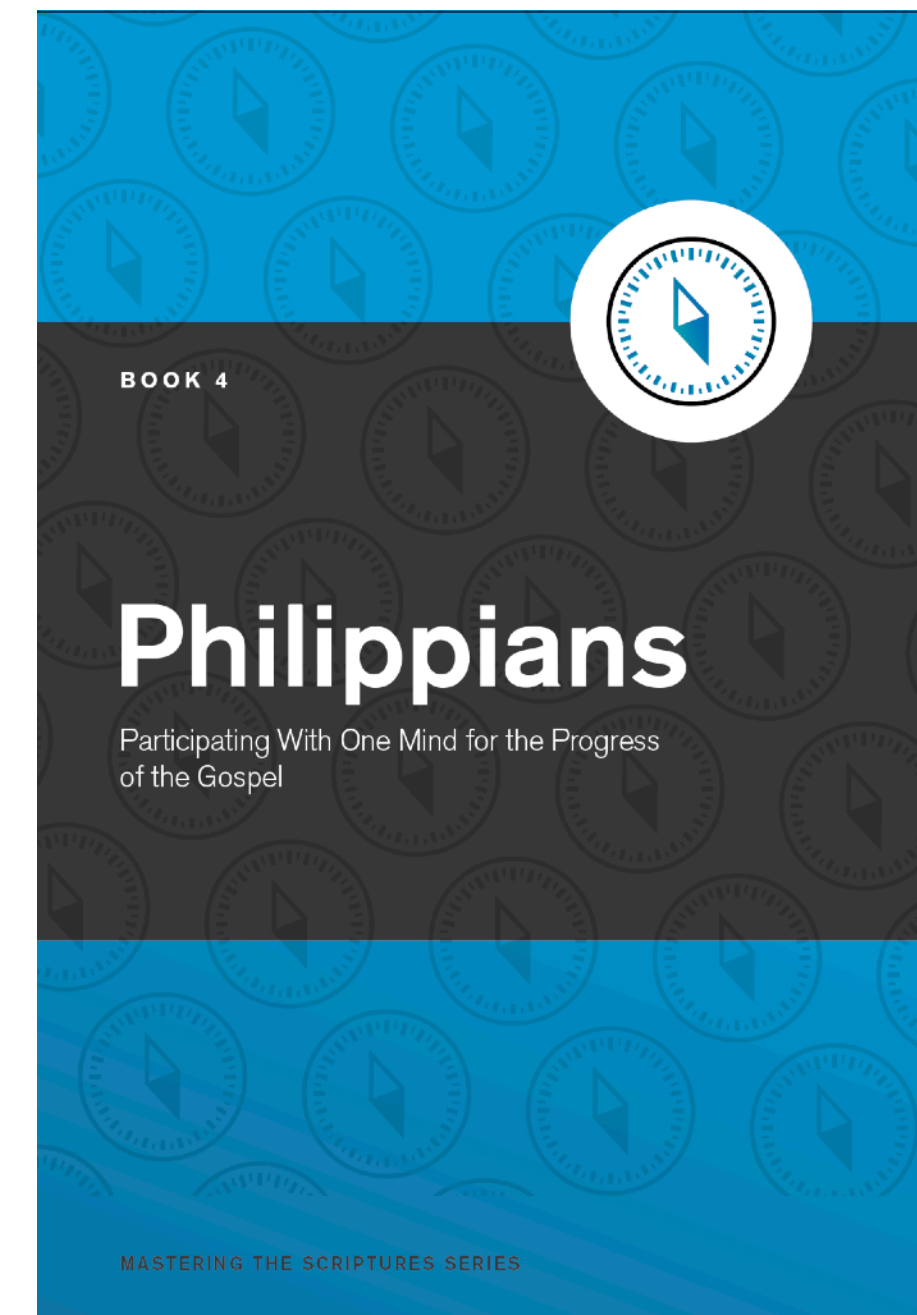
Feb, 60 to March, 62



Autumn, 60

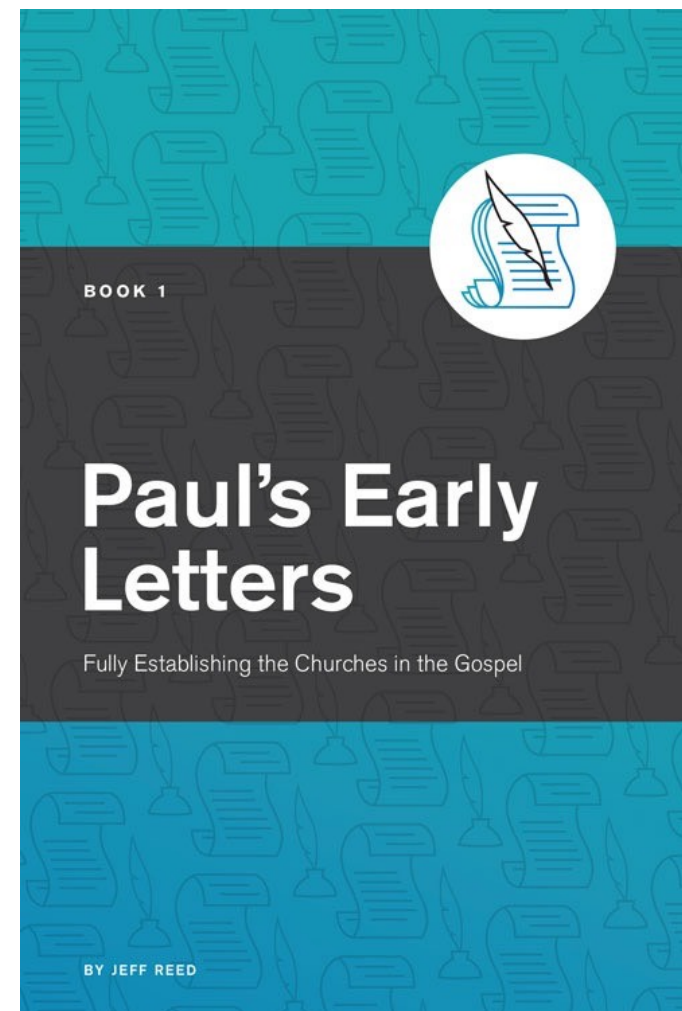


Autumn, 61



Spring, 62

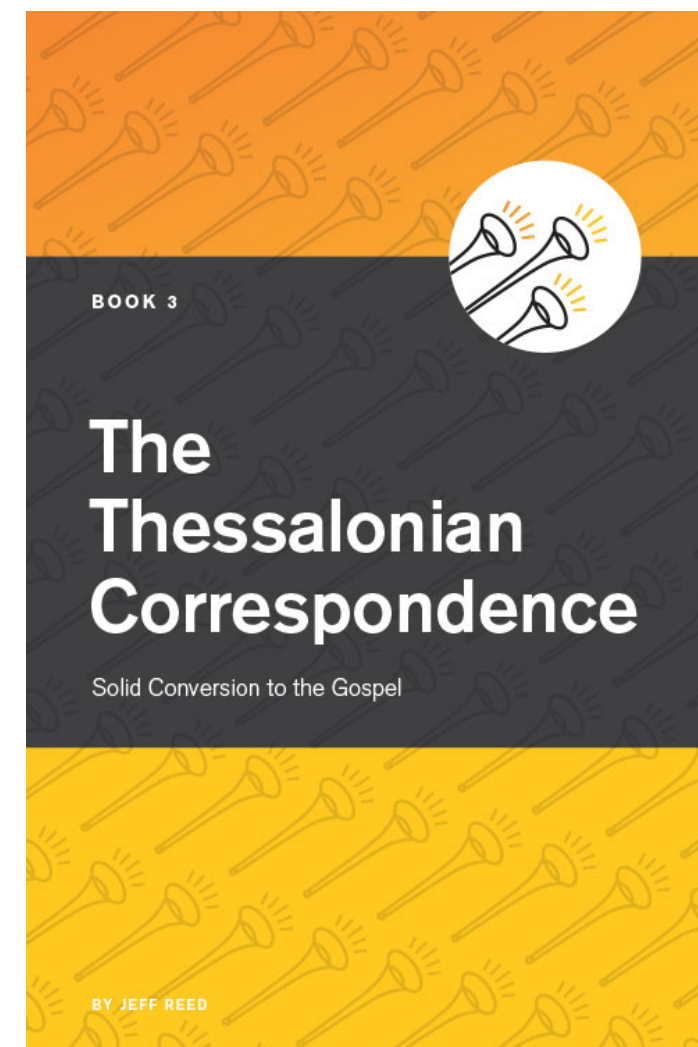
Paul's Middle Letters



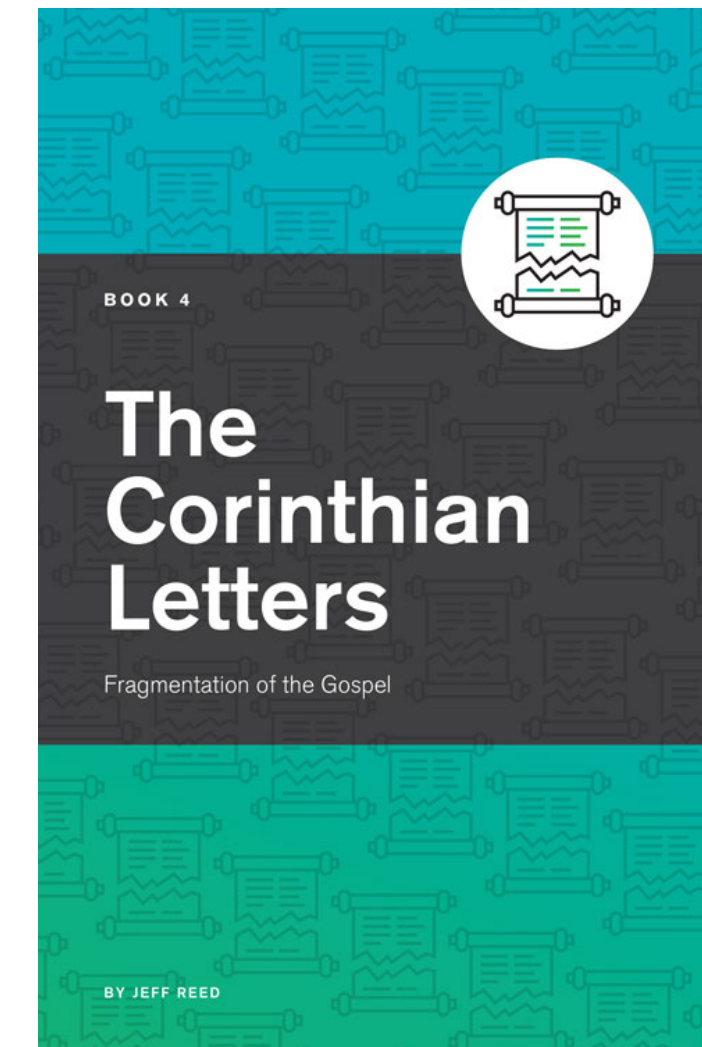
49–56 AD



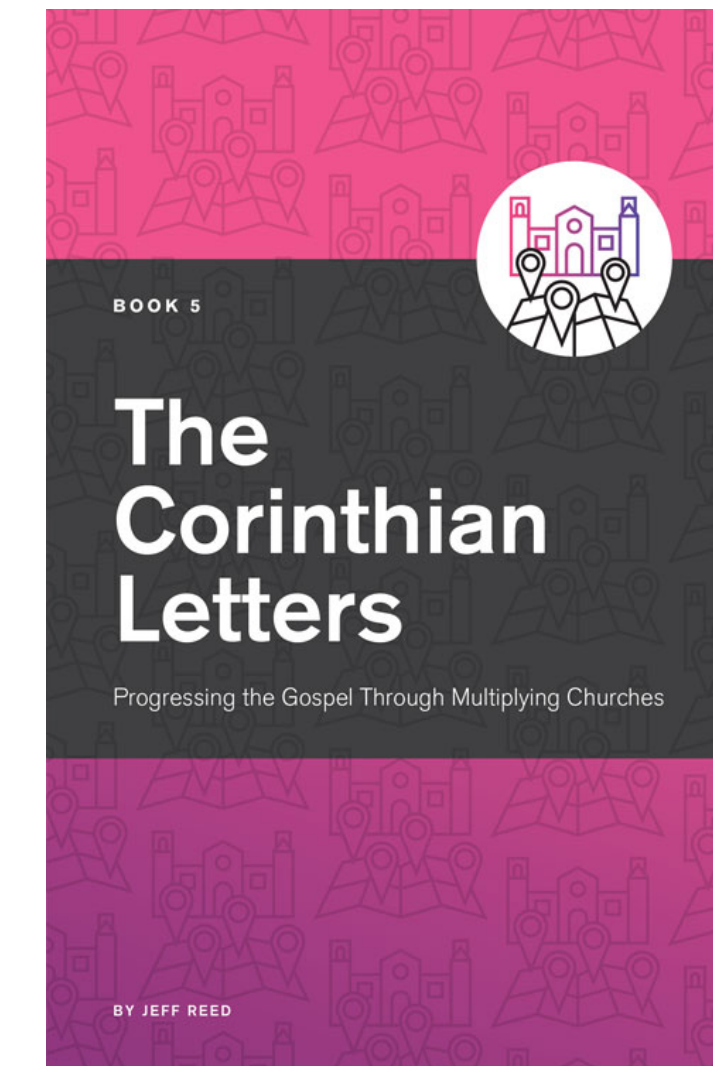
Autumn, 49



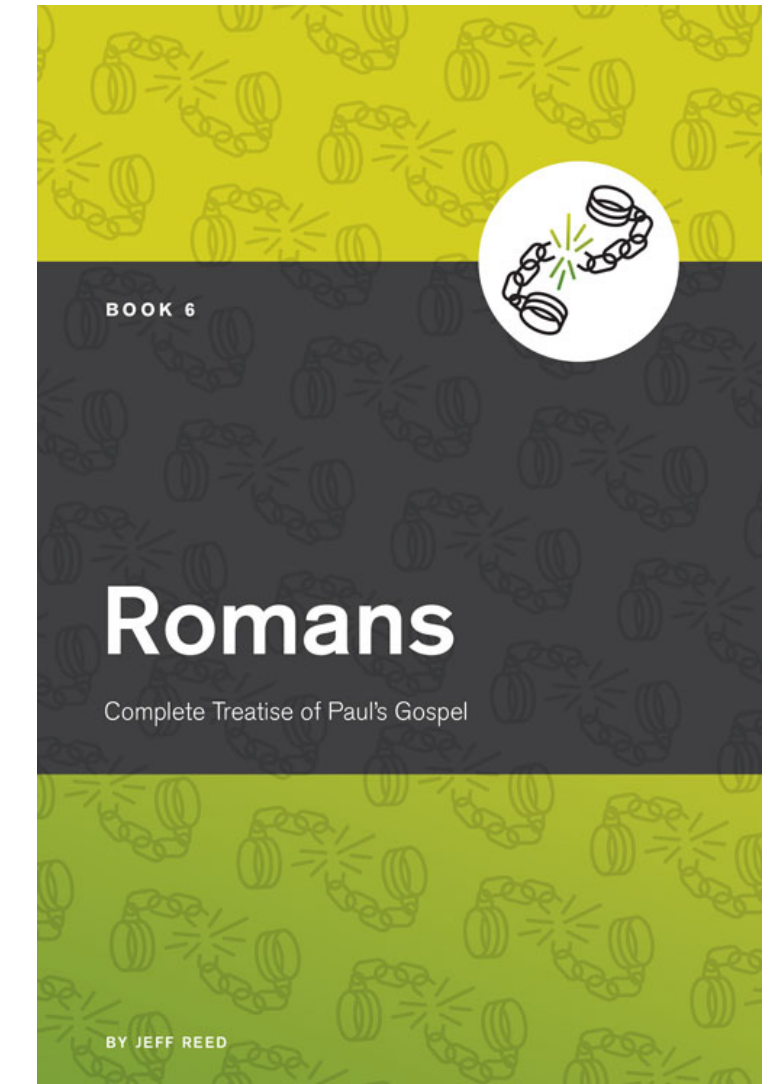
Winter/Sum, 51 AD



Sept, 53



June, 56



Nov, 56



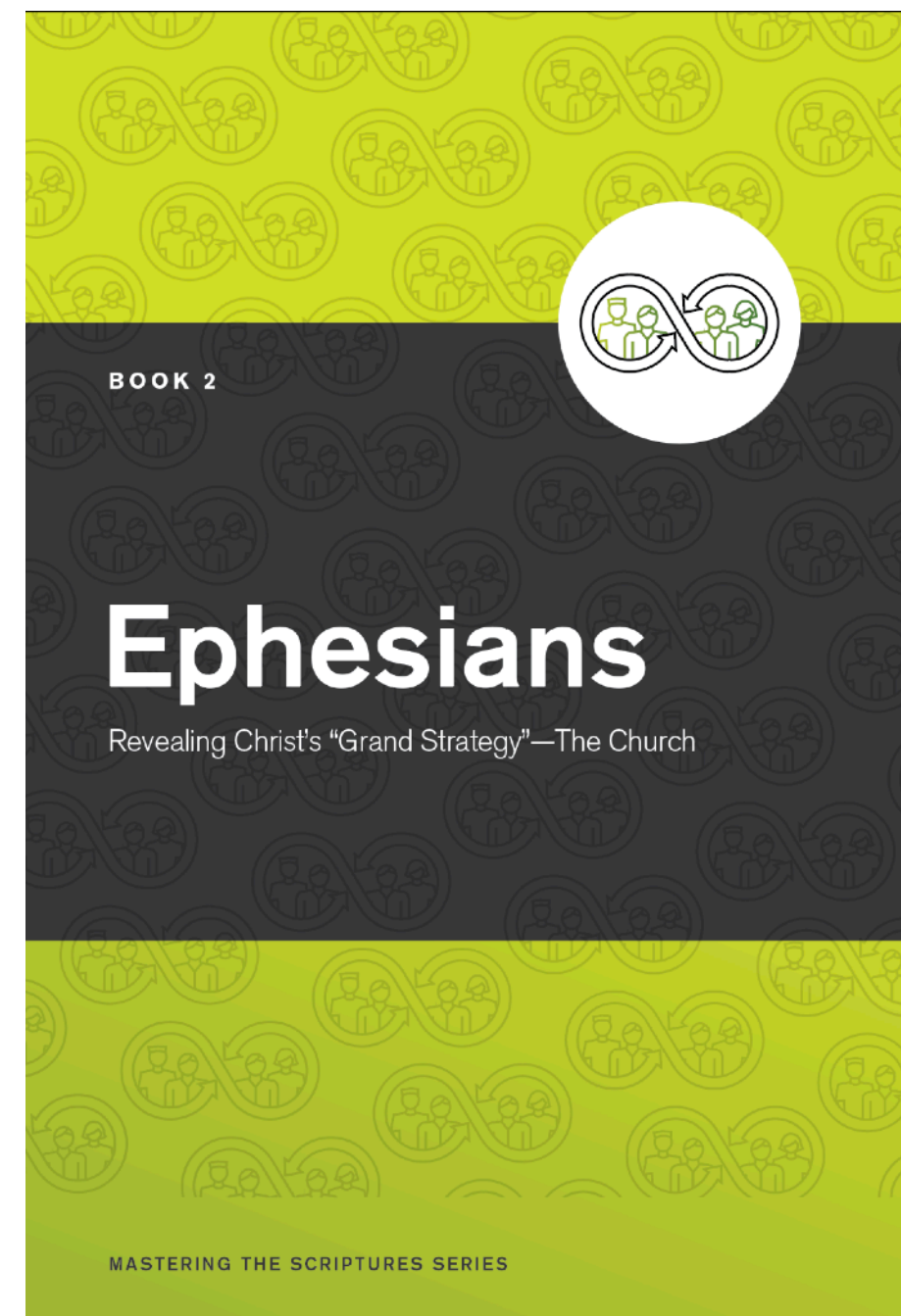
Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Ephesians — Hub Churches

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with a special challenge for the Ephesian churches to fully grasp the significance of their calling and to fully carry out all God intends for them.

First, it is very strategic.

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



Session 1: Grasping the “Grand Strategy”

Session 2: Understanding Our Calling (Our Stewardship)

Session 3: Building the Framework of the Global Church

Session 4: The Essence of the Didache

Session 5: Unleashing the Power of the Churches

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

²⁰ I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house.... ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears.

Acts 20:20, 31

⁸ He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:8–10

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

We know that Ephesus was strategic for many reasons. The biggest reason was Paul's own investment of time.

1. He taught out of the hall of Tyrannus for 2 years and established many churches in the surrounding area: 11 churches were started to the east, north, and west of Ephesus.
2. He spent night and day for a period of 3 years teaching the elders "the whole plan of God."

Paul's Middle Letters

This letter is strategic in this collection of Paul's four middle letters. In this passage we see that the Church is the center of Christ's plan—His grand strategy after inaugurating the kingdom.

The organizing center of these letters:

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:7–10

Paul's Middle Letters

Paul lays out his job description very clearly.

Paul's 2-fold job description:

1. Preach the gospel to the Gentiles (a 10-year battle for the gospel)
2. Fully reveal the heart of Christ's grand strategy—the Church

It is Christ's strategy for progressing the gospel. It will be the heart of his unfolding kingdom, and it will stun the rulers and authorities even in the heavenly places. It was a mystery (hidden) until this time.

Paul's Middle Letters

Now let's return to the two key prayers that frame in the entire first section of the letter.

The section really goes from 1:3–3:21

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:15–23

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21

Paul's Middle Letters

First Prayer: 1:15–23

Main idea: To be fully enlightened to truly know our calling and the power available to Christ and His church to accomplish God's purposes.

Second Prayer: 3:14–21

Main idea: To have the power to comprehend God's plan (Christ and His church), that God might be glorified in the Church and in Christ.

Paul's Middle Letters

Now, let me throw in a few key verses before and after these prayers to construct Paul's full argument in this rather large section.

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

1:7–10

Paul's Middle Letters

²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 1:20–22

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.
2:19–22

Paul's Middle Letters

3:1 This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—² for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you,³ and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words,⁴ a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ.⁵ In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:⁶ that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

3:1–6

Paul's Middle Letters

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 3:7–10

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations 3:20-21

Paul's Middle Letters

Notice plan is used 2 times

God's plan—1:10

God's hidden plan was Christ being raised from the dead and placed as head over the Church.

Christ's plan—3:9

Paul's job is to reveal Christ's plan for the Church, since He is head over everything, but it is embedded in the broad stroke of God's plan.

Paul's Middle Letters

So what exactly is the mystery—what was not revealed before?

It is not Christ, because as Jesus said on the road to Damascus—the entire Old Testament pointed to Him.

The surprise is that He is given authority over and power to an entirely new community—the Church.

And Paul's job is to reveal the administration of this mystery.

The word *plan* is “oikonomia,” which means house-law; or administration, plan, etc.

Paul's Middle Letters

Key words

plan (oikonomia)—management, plan, scheme, stewardship 1:10; 3:9

purpose (prothesis)—plan, proposal, intention 1:11

The idea seems to be that God set out a strategic intent; Jesus, as head of the Church, set out the plan for His administration; and Paul revealed it accurately to the churches.

Paul's Middle Letters

Example of power of a “grand strategy.”

China's BRI—Belt Road Initiative

One economic belt—to Africa (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda)

One road—maritime “silk road” Asia

125 “Global South” countries signed on.

Huge “power,” but it is nothing in comparison to Christ's Church.

Persucution everywhere, but it will only grow the Church.

Paul's Middle Letters

The whole argument goes like this:

- God developed a plan in Christ and His Church to accomplish His eternal purposes. 1:3–7
- God put His power to work in Christ, raising Him from the dead, putting Him over His coming kingdom and as head over the Church, which is now where God's power to accomplish His purposes resides. 1:15–23
- We are now created for good works, as we become part of Christ and His Church. 2:1–10
- We are now members of God's household with one foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone, and the whole structure of a global Church being built upon that foundation. 2:11–22

Paul's Middle Letters

The whole argument goes like this

- This mystery—of Christ and His church as God's secret plan—has been hidden until now. But God chose Paul to make this plan clear, that through Christ and His Church God's wisdom would become clear to everyone—even the rulers and authorities in heavenly places 3:1–13
- It is necessary for the Ephesians churches to fully understand this mystery—of Christ and His Church as central to God's plan—for the power to be unleashed in their churches and lives and for God to be glorified in the Church and in Christ Jesus 3:14–21

Paul's Middle Letters

Paul's whole point then is this:

The Ephesian churches must fully understand Christ and His plan—the Church—in the context of God's plan empowering Christ (inaugurated through His resurrection and appointment as head of the Church), if they are going to experience this power in their churches.

This has huge implications for the Ephesian churches and for all churches built on this one foundation.

Paul's Middle Letters

Implications:

1. The Ephesian churches needed supernatural enlightening to fully comprehend Christ and His administration—the Church. The heart of this full understanding is unfolded in these four middle letters beginning with Ephesians.
2. This includes our individual empowering, which cannot be experienced fully outside of Christ and His plan.
3. We become part of Christ and His Church only by grace, accomplished by the power of His resurrection that now resides in the churches, which, generation by generation, culture by culture, is in the form of networks of churches.
4. These two prayers should be prayed regularly as we work our way through these four middle letters of Paul.

Significance of Ephesians

Issue: Significance of Ephesians for us today

Questions:

1. Why is Paul's letter to Ephesus so significant for our churches today?
2. In what way does it establish the centrality of the Church in Christ's grand strategy?
3. What is the relationship between fully grasping this new revelation of the Church and us having the power to carry out our calling?
4. How would you describe our calling today? What does it look like?

Paul's Middle Letters

What is this idea of “power unleashed” when we follow Christ’s “plan for His Church”?

Recent examples:

- This year: \$80,000 for conference, benefactor team \$150,000, our ADSMCC Initiative
- Universal sodal–modal participation—everyone using their gifts, time, and resources.
- Impacting heart of massive house church movement of China—the greatest expansion of the Church since the first 300 years.
- Great “apostolic team” impacting 8 of 9 civilizations.