

# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Albania/Kosovo





# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Albania/Kosovo — “Jerusalem to Illycrium!!!”





# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



D.Min. in Little Rock Monday and Tuesday

- First inner city/urban cohort at this level: 6 churches 2,000 to 7,000—2 black, 3 white, 2 strategic, including meeting here at South City church.
- 2 years into D.Min. ready to launch Re:BUILD and Urban Bachelors.
- All amazed at how ill equipped but well positioned churches are.
- RADICAL restructuring needed—Ephesians 4 is the starting point.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

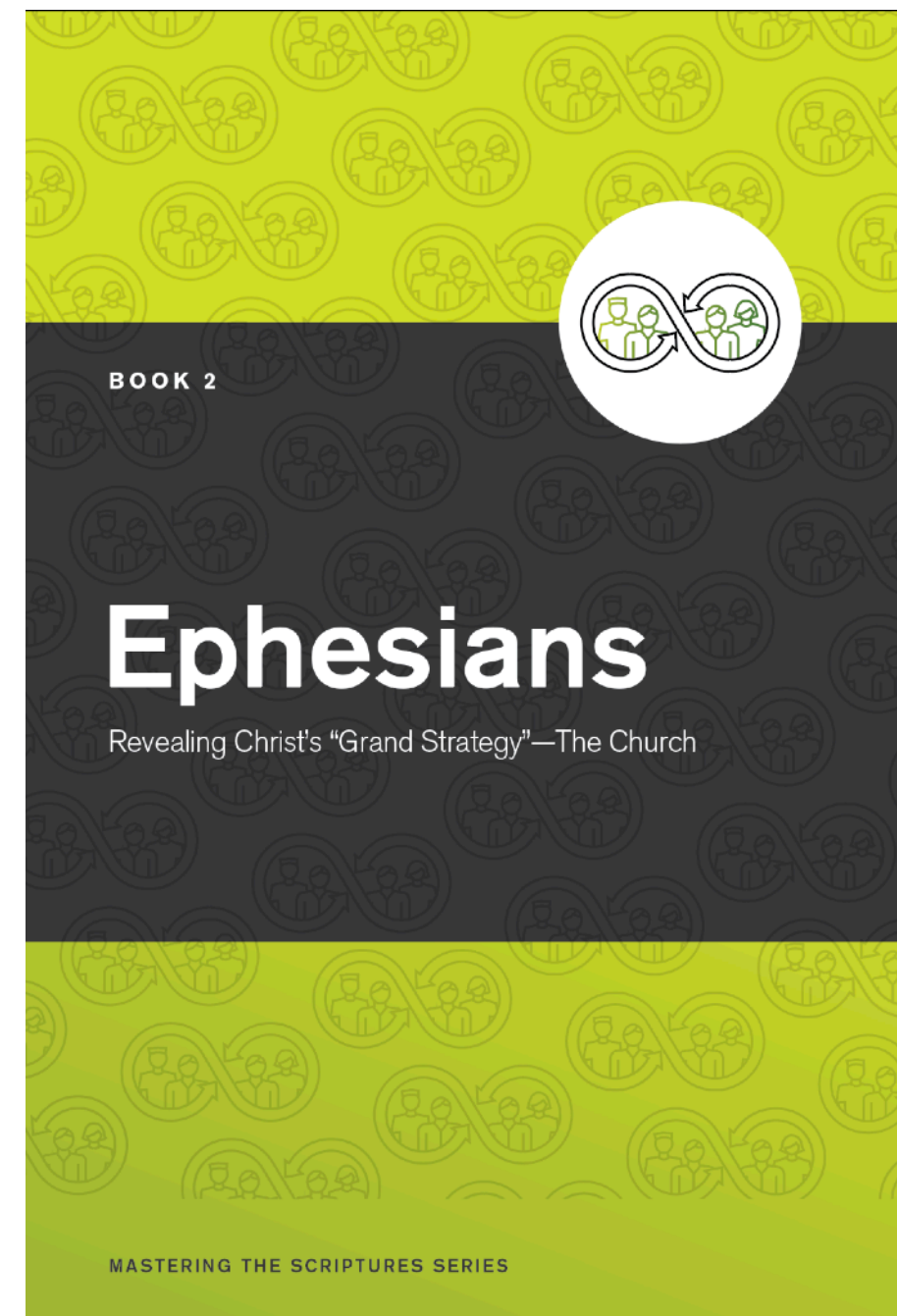
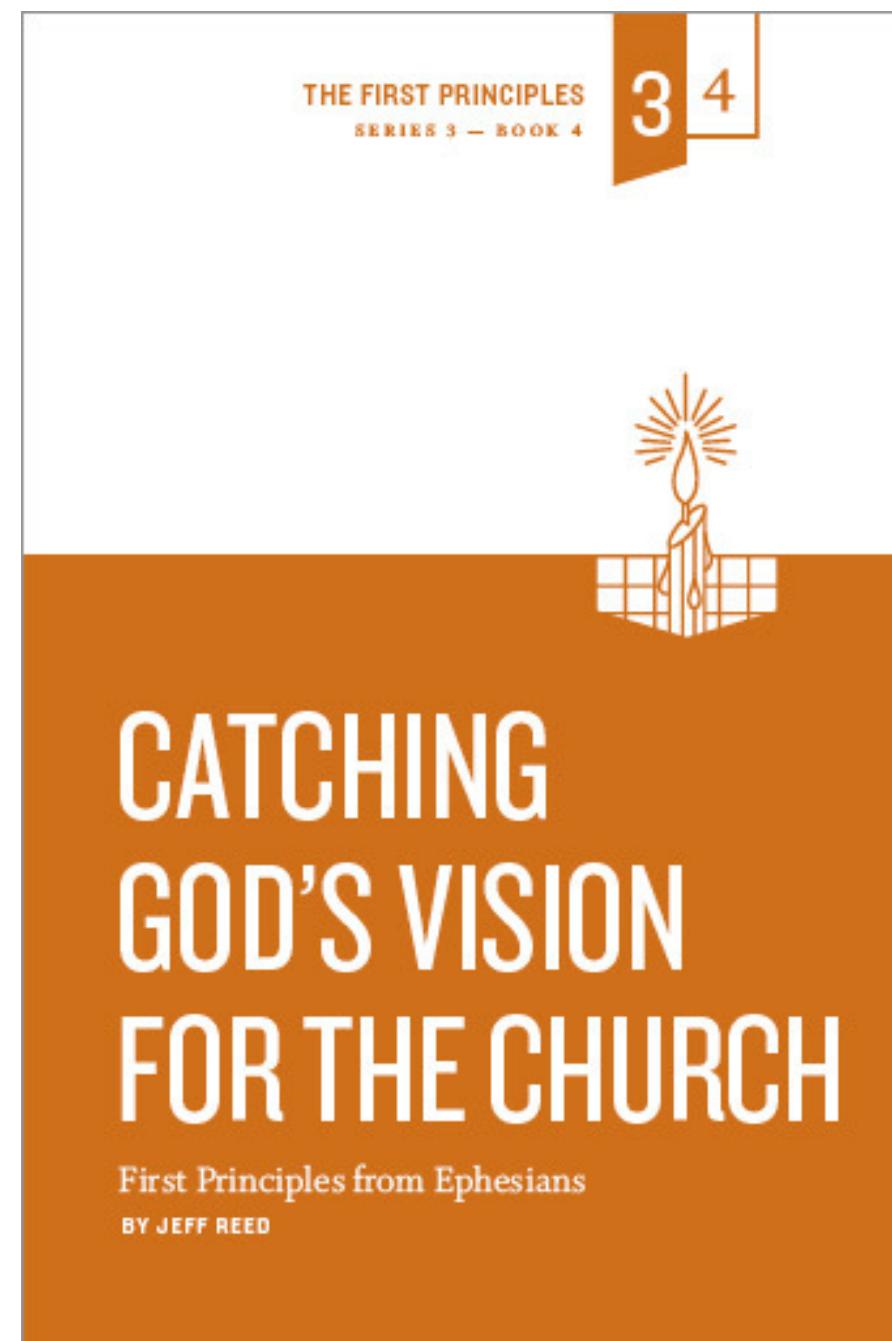


What is going on here?!!!!

- I am in France and Albania, then back to Little Rock, Buffalo, and Charlotte this week Orlando and Paterson, NY, next week India. Michael is in China, Steve is in India, Bill is recently back from Indonesia
- What is happening here? You are doing the work of the ministry: Randy and Nancy (and teams of you) — 13 in Re:BUILD; Nate, James and Todd — excellent Sunday mornings; how many weddings?; 20 house churches and planting working at high level, etc. etc.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



I have said before—this book, especially Ephesians 4:1–16, set my whole philosophy in 1972 with Ray Stedman's book *Body Life* on Ephesians 4:1–16.

Now, once again, we turn to it.

It strikes at the center of Christ's plan for His church—a plan that has long been distorted by the Western Church and its institutionalization and professionalization.



# Ephesians

Revealing Christ's "Grand Strategy" — the Church





# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Issue: Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework of the Global Church—  
Ephesians 4:1–16

Questions:

1. In what sense is Ephesians 4:1–16 the framework for building Christ's Church on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone?
2. What are the core elements of the one foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets?
3. What should the church/churches look like once the Apostles and prophets laid the foundation and built the framework? globally? in each culture?
4. How does laying the foundation and framing in the building relate to the power being unleashed in the Ephesian churches?



# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1–6



# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

<sup>7</sup> But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it is said,

“When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”

<sup>9</sup> (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

Ephesians 4:7–9



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

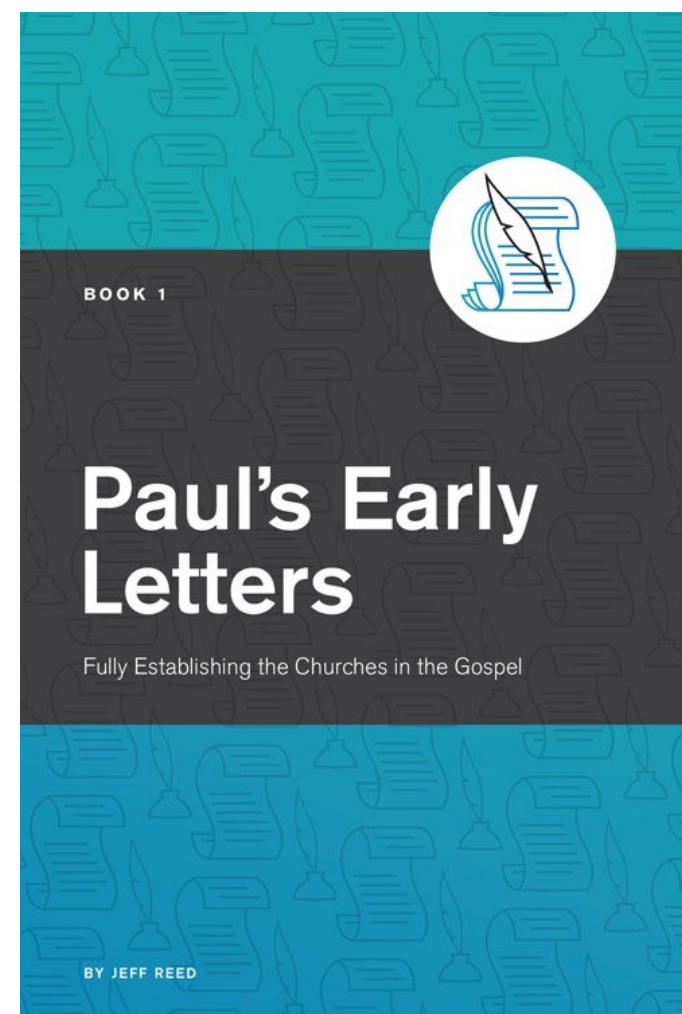
## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

<sup>11</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

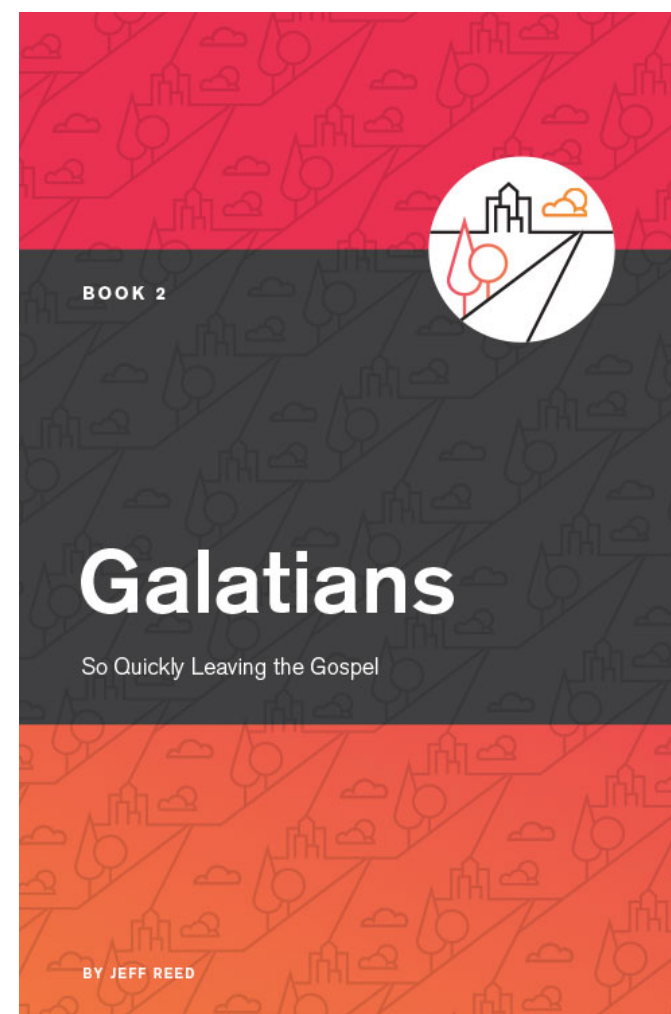
Ephesians 4:11–16



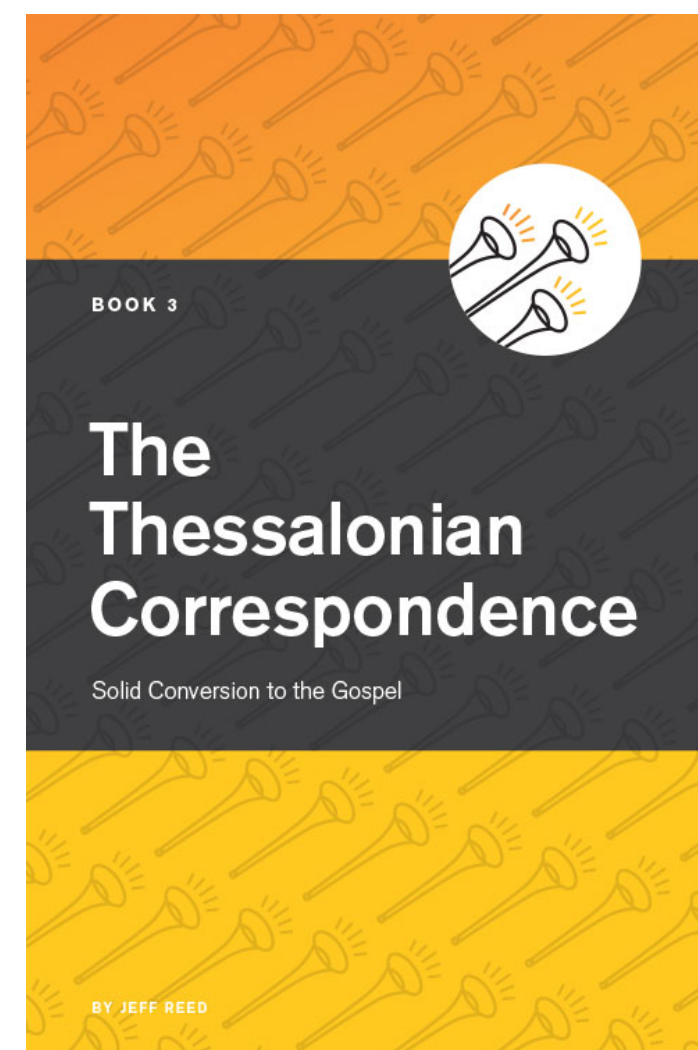
# Paul's Middle Letters



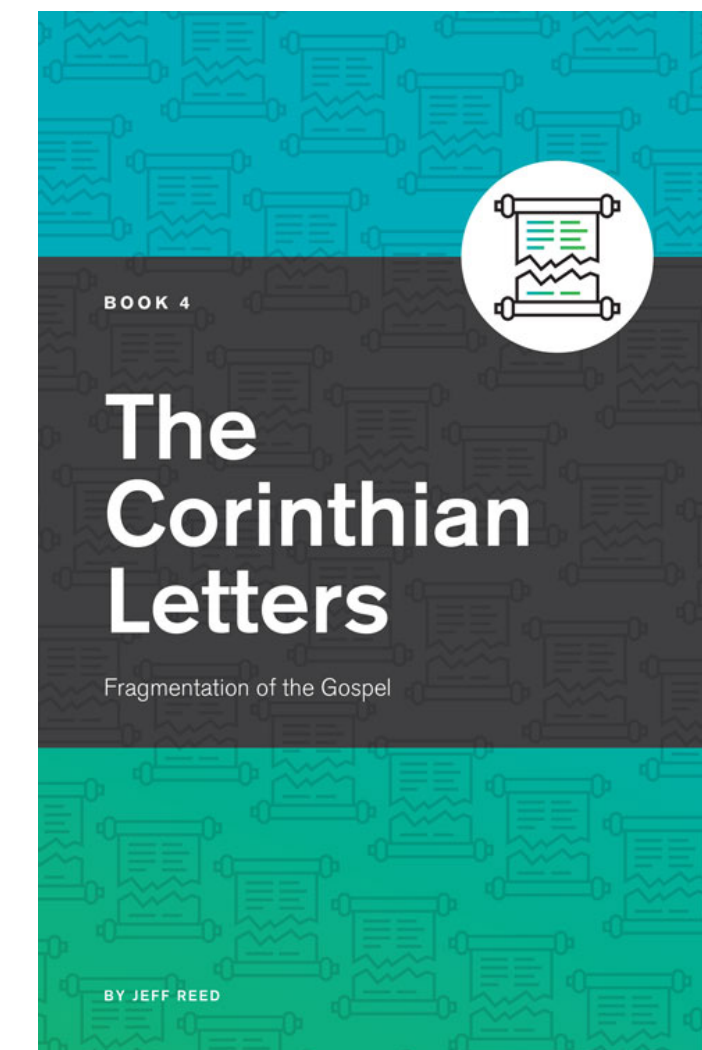
49–56 AD



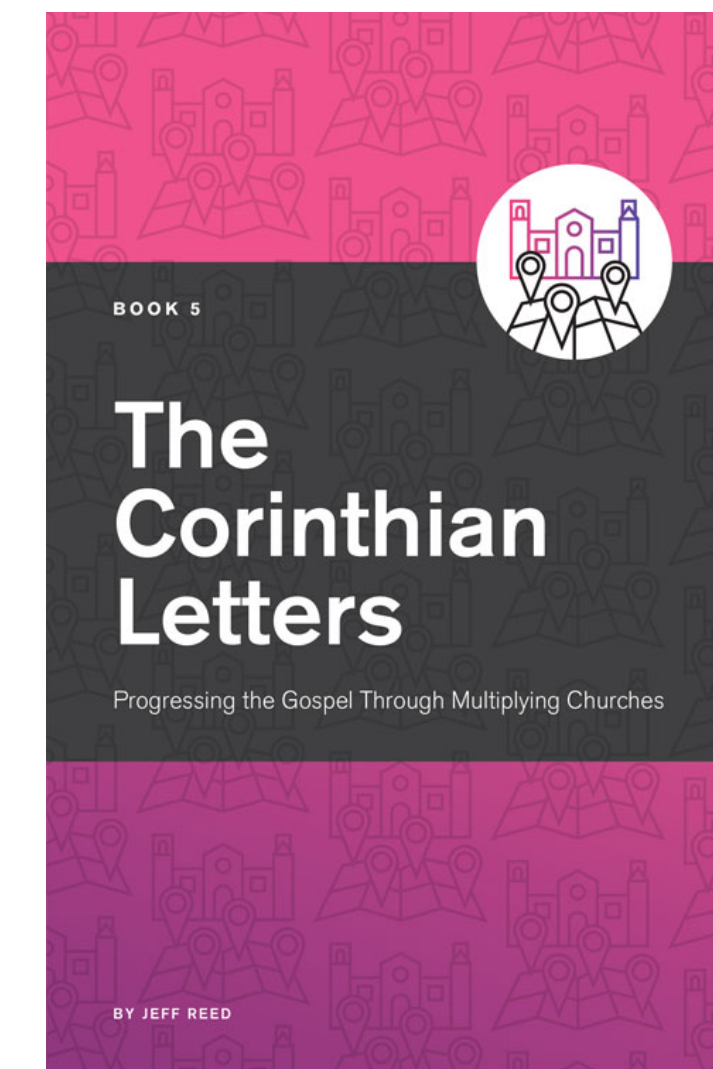
Autumn, 49



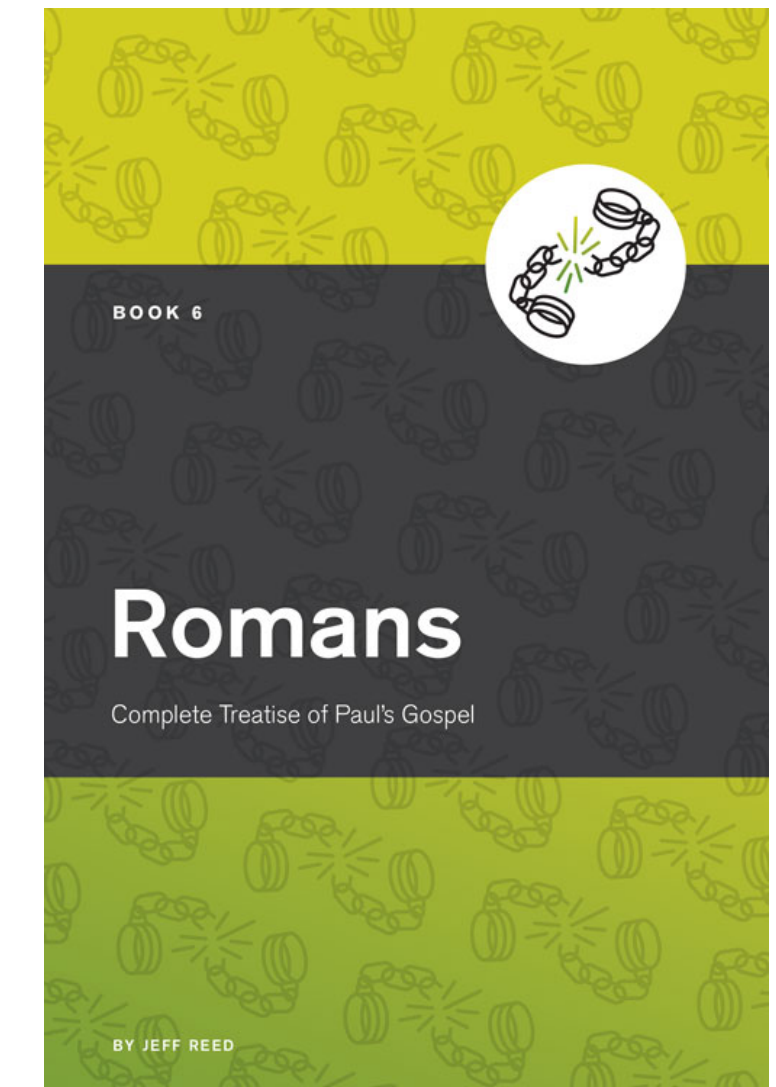
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Sept, 53



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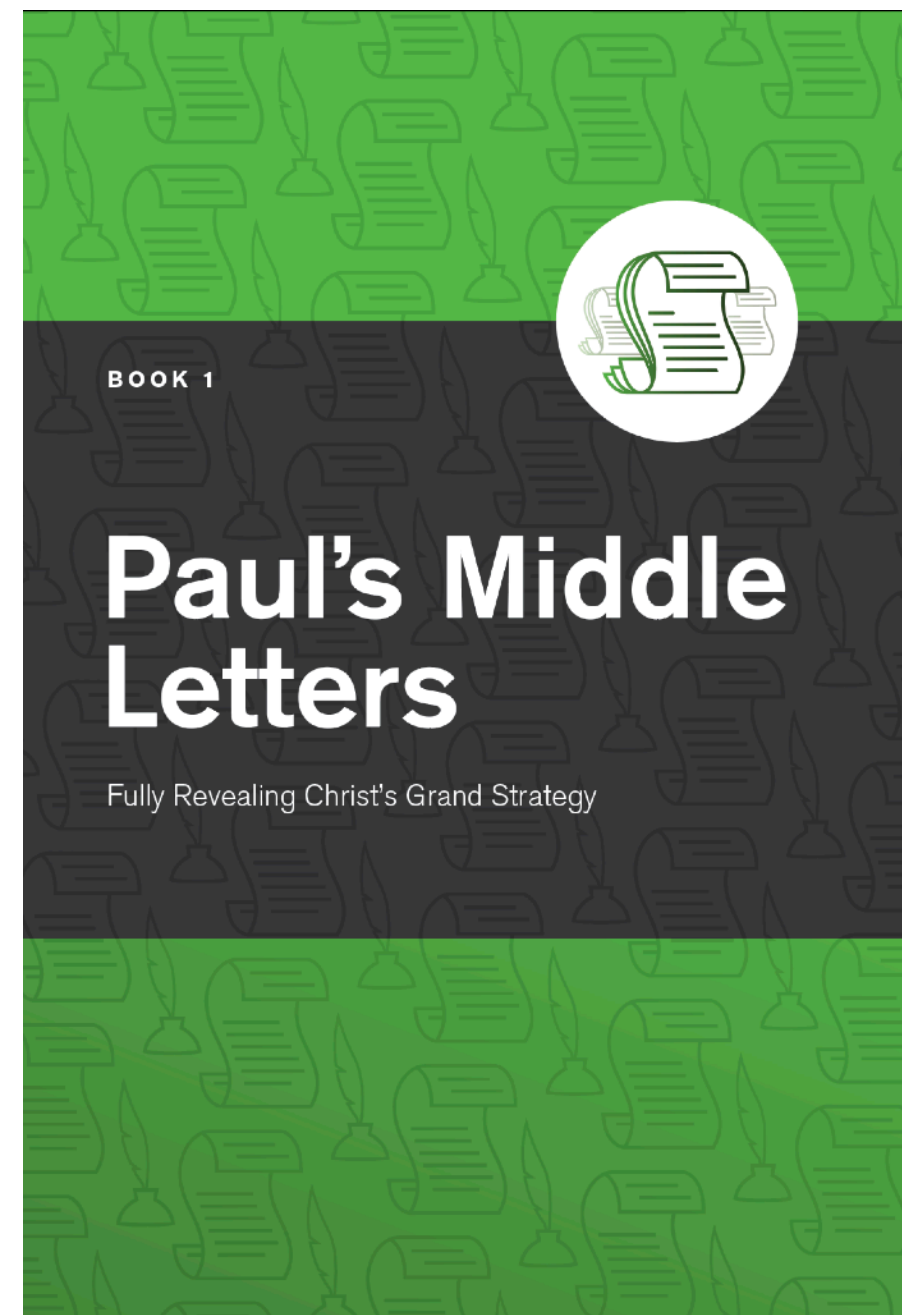


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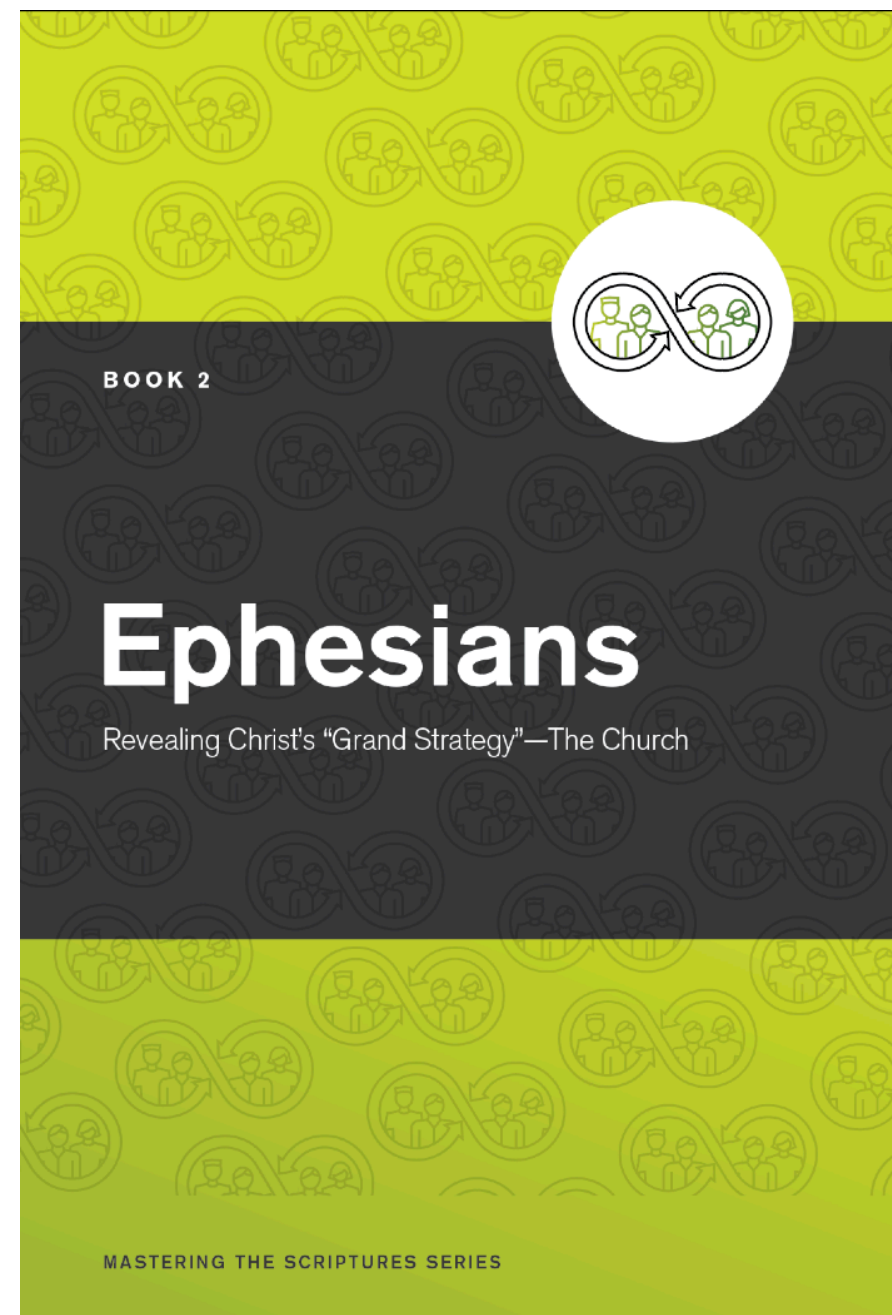




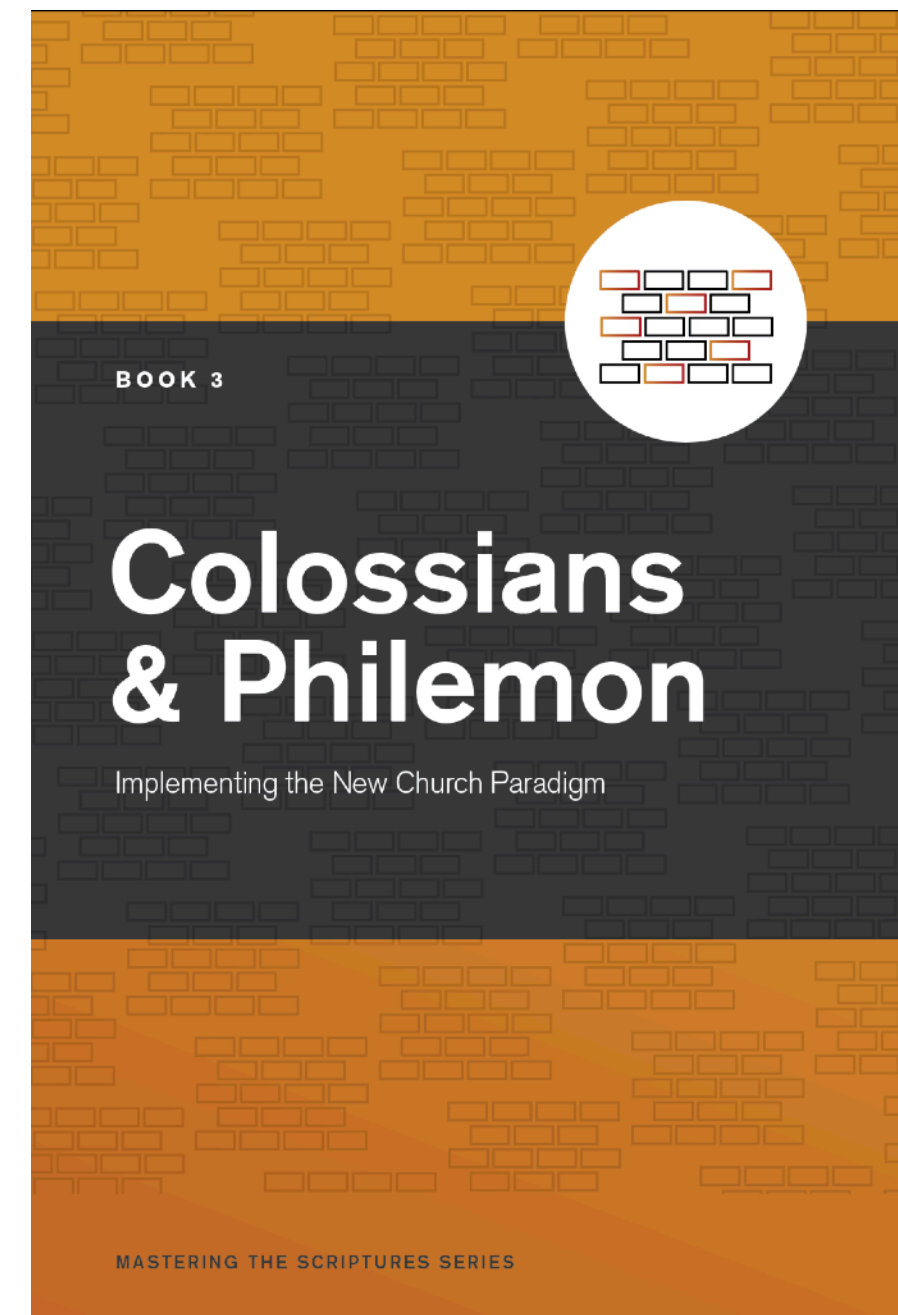
# Paul's Middle Letters



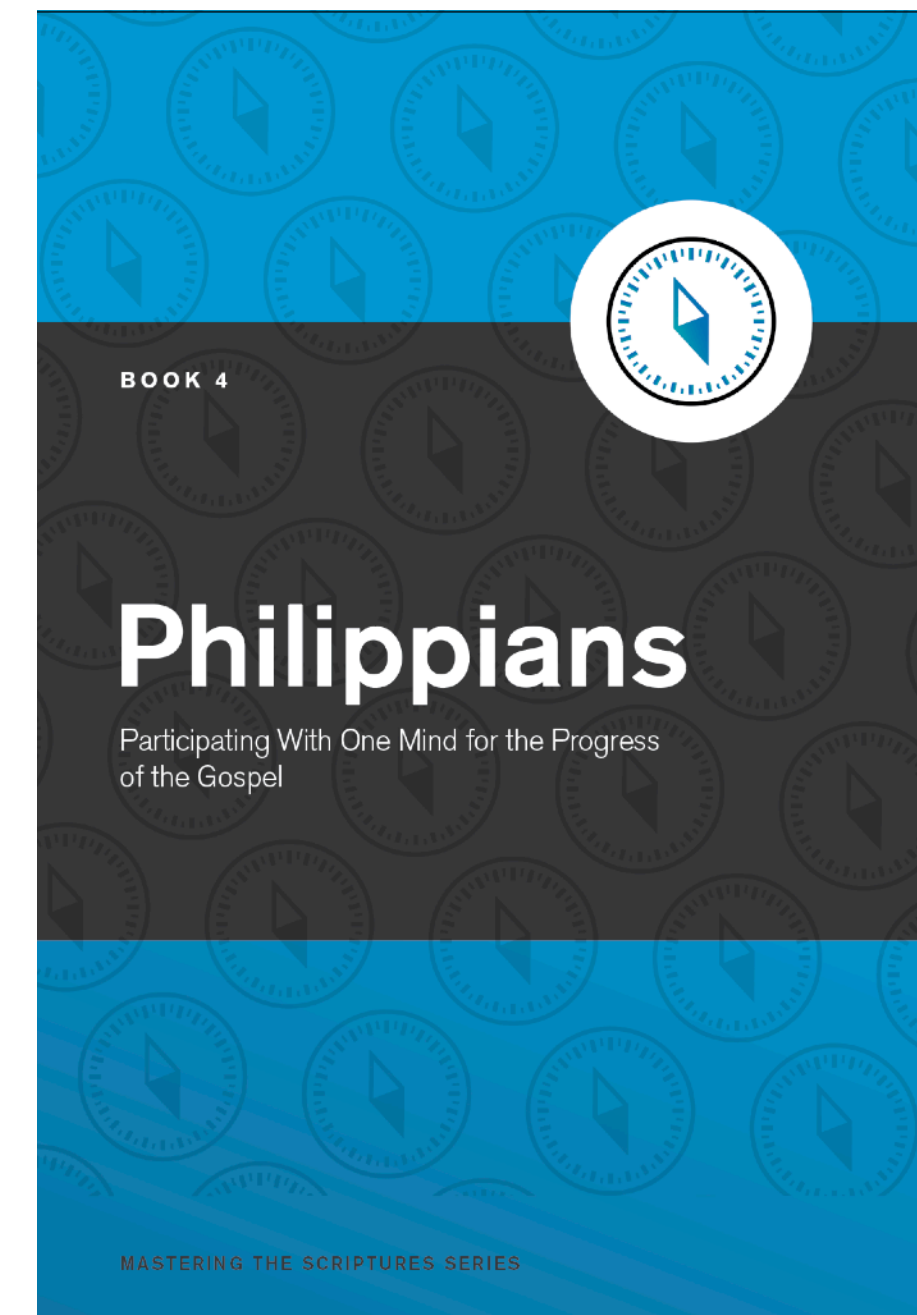
Feb, 60 to March, 62



Autumn, 60



Autumn, 61



Spring, 62



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

## Ephesians — Hub Churches

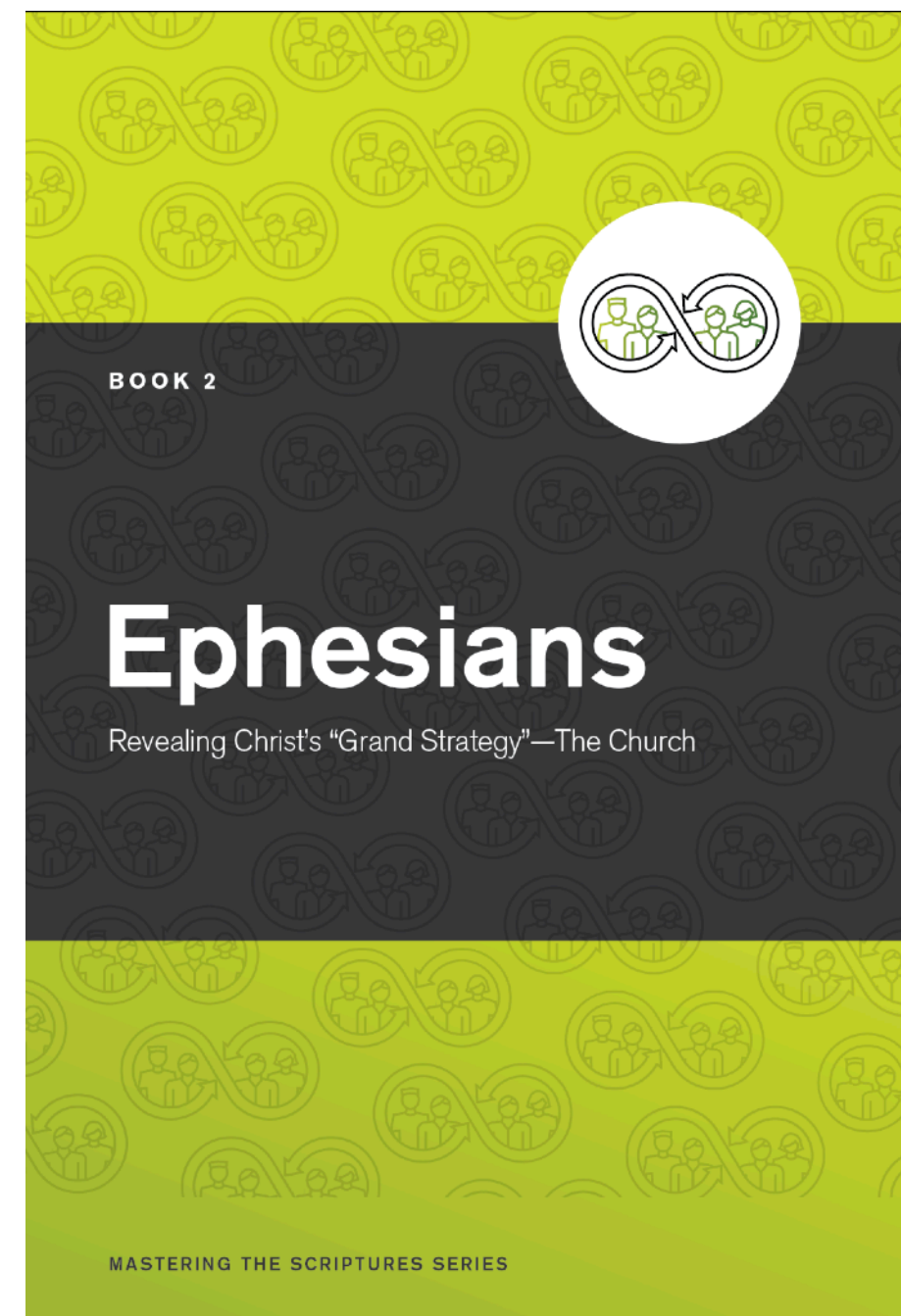
We began the second book in the series — Ephesians, in May.

It is very strategic — both in Paul's strategy and in these Middle Letters. It is the first of the four and contains the organizing center for the theology of the four together.





# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



Session 1: Fully 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

## 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.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

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:

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup> 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 — Ephesians

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—Ephesians

Then we looked at Paul's two large, similar prayers that almost bookend the first major section of the letter—1:3–3:21. Then we revisited that section and looked at both the big picture of our calling and the core elements.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

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—Ephesians

We saw the whole argument go 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 — Ephesians

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 being 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—Ephesians

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 — Ephesians

Now we are going to visit the section— 1:3–3:21 from the perspective of the big picture of our calling.

How do we know this should all be treated as one section?

1. Ephesians 4:1 treats it that way.
2. Structurally (literary design), Paul strategically frames the section with the two prayers.



# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Key to Paul's first section—1:3–3:21

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

With the “therefore,” Paul is saying “in light of everything I just said in 1:3–3:21.”

So 1:3–3:21, in essence, is “the calling to which you have been called.”



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

So what is the big picture of our calling, and what are its key elements?

What is our role, our station in life, one's status or position in life, vocation?

Remember, fully realizing this big picture and these core elements is key to His power being unleashed in our churches.

Let's look at a few key passages in this section to identify these core elements.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Elements of our calling (our role, our station in life, one's status or position in life, vocation)

1. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing—adoption as His children, forgiveness of our sins, made known to us His plans for the world, and giving us an incredible eternal inheritance, of which the down payment is the Spirit. 1:3–14
2. He has made us alive in Christ and seated us with Him (with our sins forgiven by grace), and He has specific works for us to do (collectively as churches and individually). 2:1–10
3. We are now the central part of this plan God has been unfolding (part of the “covenants of promise,” God's big story) and are members of His household (the foundation being laid by the Apostles and prophets; Christ as the cornerstone)—the place where God dwells at this time. 2:19–22



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Elements of our calling (our role, our station in life, one's status or position in life, vocation)

4. We are now part of God's plan (previously a mystery)—that is, part of Christ and His church—revealed through the apostles and prophets through the Spirit, sharers in the promise of Christ (“covenants of promise”), members of one body. 3:1–6
5. In the church, we are now part of Christ's “grand strategy” to accomplish God's plan. It is a plan so amazing that not only nations but rulers and authorities in heavenly places will be amazed—part of progressing the gospel worldwide in powerful and abundant accomplishments. 3:7–10, 20, 21



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

The “big picture” of our calling (our role, our station of life, one's status or position in life, vocation)

We are central to the fulfillment of God's unfolding plan (i.e. the “covenants of promise”) — now revealed as being accomplished through Christ and His “grand strategy” the Church — and He will accomplish His eternal purposes in a powerful way through us. Therefore, we need to fully understand and invest our lives in Christ and His “grand strategy.”



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Implications of our calling (our role, our station in life, one's status or position in life, vocation) This is part of being “enlightened” – fully understanding.

1. We have been given an incredible, eternal inheritance by being adopted into far more than an orphan into a rich family. We have been adopted into God's family with an inheritance of unlimited value, in this life and the life to come. Therefore, we need to see this as our core identity that shapes our life planning.
2. Each one of us has a special role to play and work to do. This has huge implications for our life planning (i.e – Life<sup>n</sup> and for shaping our identity).
3. In this confusing world, we are given the privilege and confidence of knowing God's plan, Christ's “grand strategy.” This has huge implications for understanding the political world in which we live and the choices we all need to make as citizens in that environment.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Implications of our calling (our role, our station in life, one's status or position in life, vocation): This is part of being “enlightened” — fully understanding.

4. Before we were not part of the “covenants of promise.” But now we are central to that plan and need to master the plan and play our part, as a lifetime stewardship.
5. We should expect God to demonstrate incredible power in our midst, far more than we could ever ask or expect.

# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Now we will look carefully at Ephesians 4:1–16  
and build on this foundation



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1–4

# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

The goal is to maintain unity of the Spirit on a carefully laid foundation.

Carefully laying the foundation

- One body and one Spirit—It is the Spirit's job to actually empower the Church as we follow Christ's plan.
- One hope—A future in Christ's kingdom when He returns to reign, the Spirit being the down payment.
- One Lord—Christ is head of the Church and everything is under His administration, His rule.
- One faith—One body of teaching: the faith, the deposit, the sound doctrine, the teaching.
- One baptism—Everyone identifies with Christ and His community of faith—the Church.
- One God and Father of all—It is God's overall plan and purpose, He integrates every part.



# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

<sup>7</sup> But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it is said,

“When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”

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Ephesians 4:7–9

# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

## Carefully laying the foundation and building the framework

<sup>11</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:11–16



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

Two key points — simple formula

He gave key leaders — apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers

To equip the believers for the work of ministry



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

Now let's think carefully through these two points.

Who are these leaders? And in what sense are they to equip the believers? What does this really mean?

Obviously, Paul and his team were working hard at ministry. We saw this in 2 Corinthians: conflicts without, fears within, sleepless nights, etc.

What did he and his team do?



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

What did he and his team do?

They evangelized strategic cities

Formed the believers into churches

Entrusted them to leaders

Then they worked with the churches until they were mature.

Key churches served them as a base for expansion: Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi.

# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

Let's take Titus for example

1. Paul left him on the island of Crete to “set in order what remains” — fully establish the churches — first senior elders who have a firm grasp of the teaching, can teach and can refute those who try to upset the churches.
2. Set in order the “family of families” — older men, older women, younger women, younger men — intergenerational households.
3. Then engage in good occupations and meet pressing needs, so the gospel is adorned and churches locally multiply — the work of the ministry.



# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

Let's go back to Ephesians 4:11–16

<sup>11</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. Ephesians 4:11–16

# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

Key points of Ephesians 4:11–16

1. The apostolic team (5-fold gifts) equips the saints for the ongoing work of the ministry—good occupations, pressing needs in community, local, spontaneous expansion of churches.
2. The apostolic team continues to build a “complex apostolic network”—giving local churches opportunity for global participation.
3. Key apostolic teams hubbing in key cities/churches for ongoing equipping and to solve problems/correct local leaders as needed.



# Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Building the framework on the one foundation

So in the Acts–Ephesians context, here is the picture.

1. The apostolic team equips the believers for the ongoing work of the ministry.
2. This involves engaging in good occupations, meeting pressing needs, engaging in local spontaneous expansion of churches, and participating sacrificially in the global progress of the gospel.
3. The apostolic team, supported by the churches in the network, expands the gospel locally with an ever expanding network.

# Significance of Ephesians

Issue: Implications of carefully laying the foundation and building the Framework of the Global Church—Ephesians 4:1–16

Questions:

1. Why is it so critical that we carefully lay foundations and build the framework of the church today as we plant and establish churches?
2. How do you compare the core elements of the foundation and framework of Christ's design for His churches with our churches today?
3. What are some of the implications of ignoring Christ's design for His churches? How does it drain the power?
4. What fundamental changes do our churches need to make to re-lay the foundations and rebuild the framework?



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Which do you think has more power?

Me as “your pastor” — weddings, funerals, hospital visitations, “pastoral” counseling

Or my team in China, India, Indonesia, and Little Rock this week and almost 100 leaders/20 churches shepherding, leading churches, engaged in good occupations, and meeting pressing needs?

# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Which do you think has more power?

Reflection on my D.Min. 2-day conversation of the “key inner city churches”: 8 churches, 6 which were 2,000 to 7,000 people

Senior pastor as “your pastor” (and “first lady”)— weddings, funerals, hospital visitations, “pastoral” counseling

Or an apostolic team for the city: Re:BUILD, leading his team to plant network of churches around “resource center” church, equipping his top leaders and helping in East African community—involving his churches and key leaders?



# Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Which do you think has more power?

In China—mega churches, government opposition, seminaries, Western denominations and “underground” mission agencies—or Al-Qaeda

Persecution shutdown vs. accelerates

# Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Which do you think has more power?

1972—Ray Stedman

“Have you seen Jesus my Lord? He’s here in plain view”—the church in all its power!!!