

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

This week CGF, beyond my expectations

- Afraid not making progress
- Meet now, only once a Quarter
- Not sure what would keep them committed for next phase
- Only get part of the paradigm, but made a commitment to adopt Antioch
- Presented a proposal: put their 11 regional plans into one
- They said yes, if we can devote all Quarters — 3½-hour sessions all year — to building it
- Stakes are very high
- I know exactly what I am doing! Why?

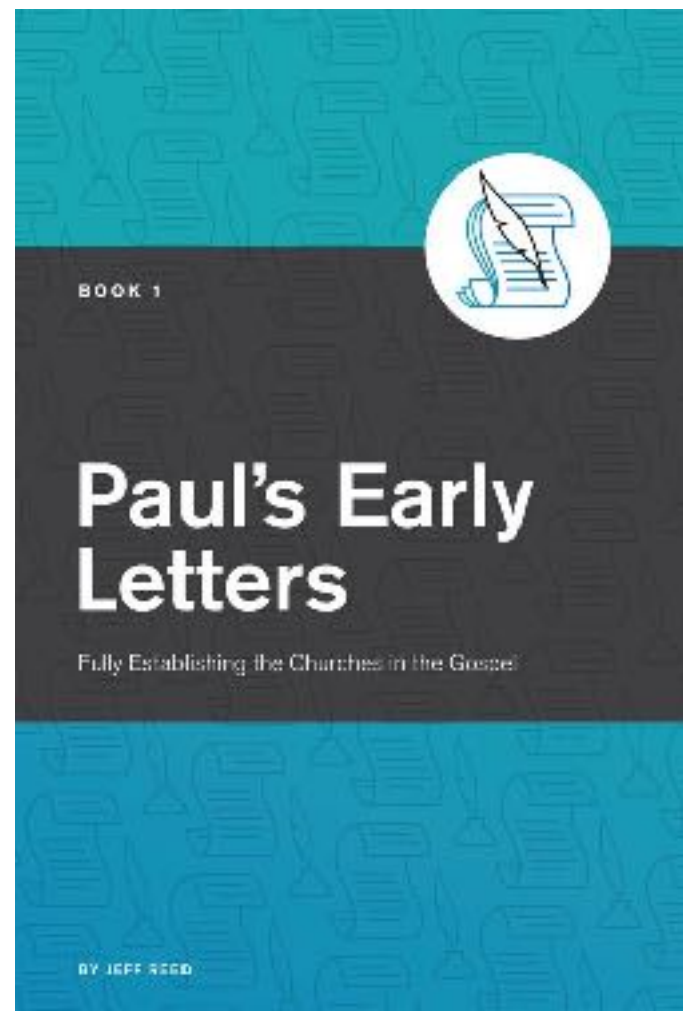
Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Issue: Participating with Paul's Complex Apostolic Network

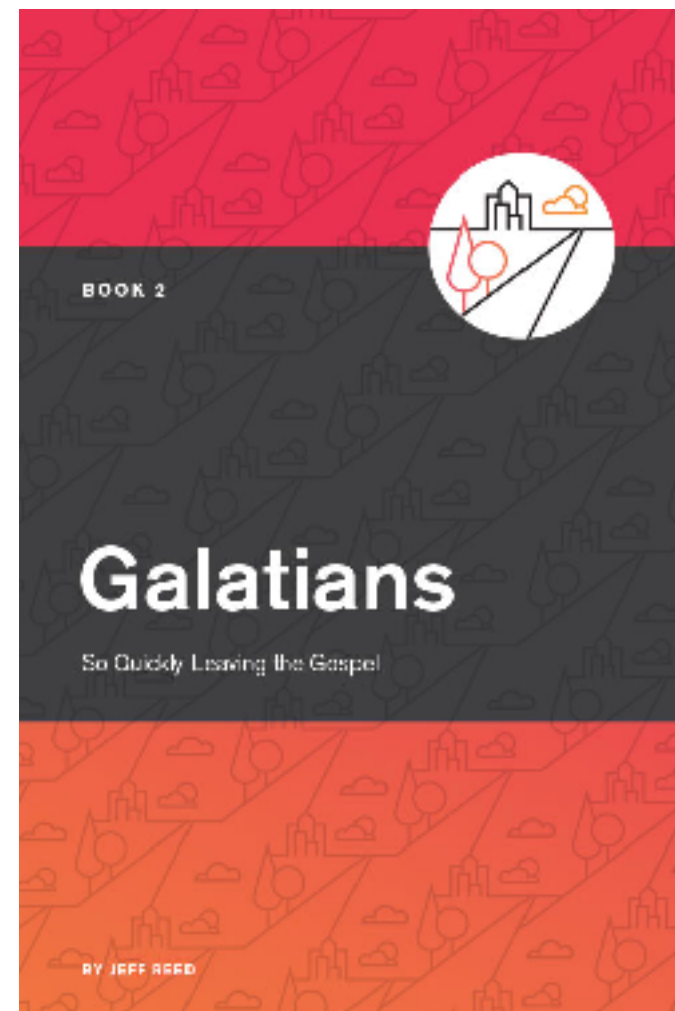
Questions:

1. As I have asked several times in this series, why does Paul include all these comments on his personal conversations with his churches, centered around specific people, both in the churches and on his team?
2. What can we conclude from these comments as they unfold across these 4 letters? How do they inform the process of establishing his churches, training his leaders, and building his network?
3. Why did Paul use such direct conversation, as seen in naming Euodia and Syntyche personally and asking someone to help them? What would motivate him to do this?
4. What was Paul thinking when he finished each of his prison epistles by personally addressing his co-workers and the churches? How does this integrate with his strategy of establishing his churches in Christ's grand strategy and encouraging them to fully participate with him?

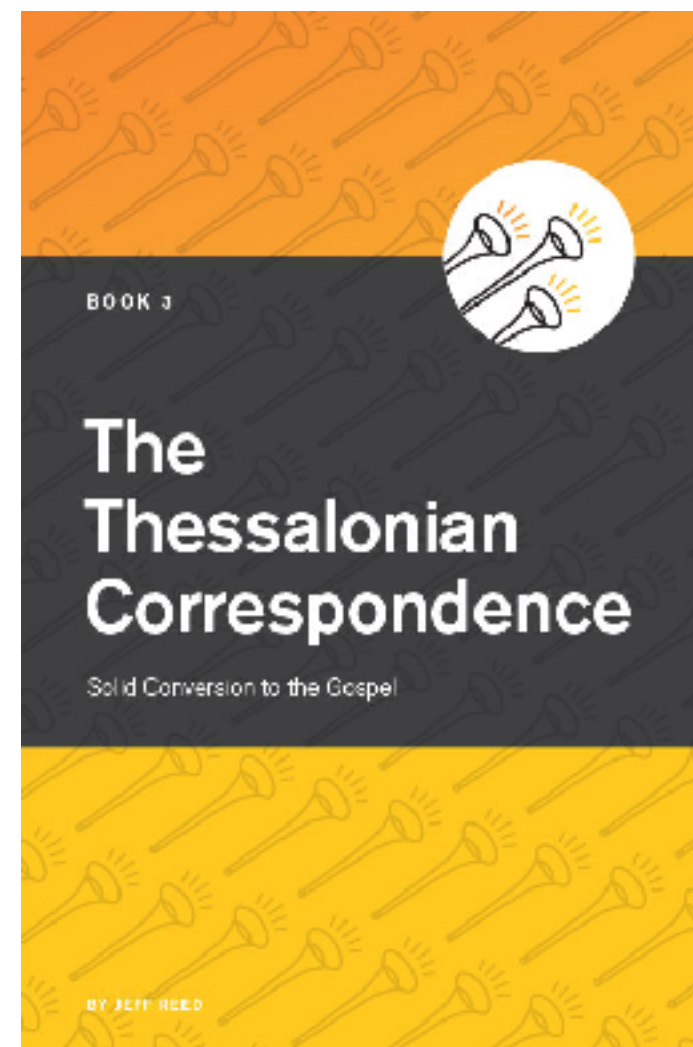
Paul's Early Letters



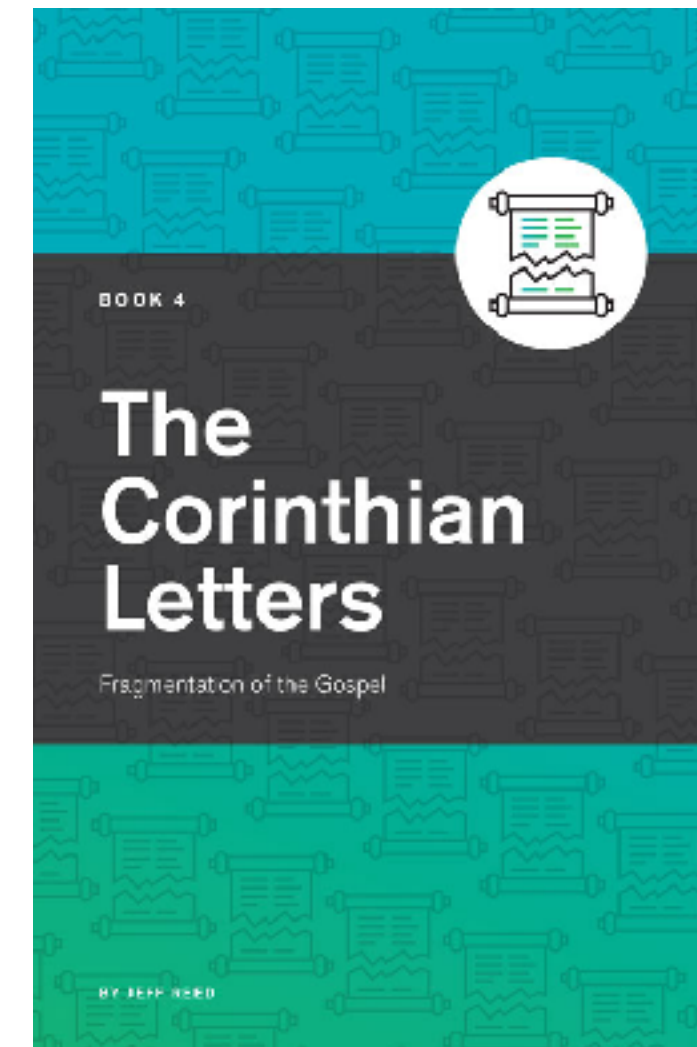
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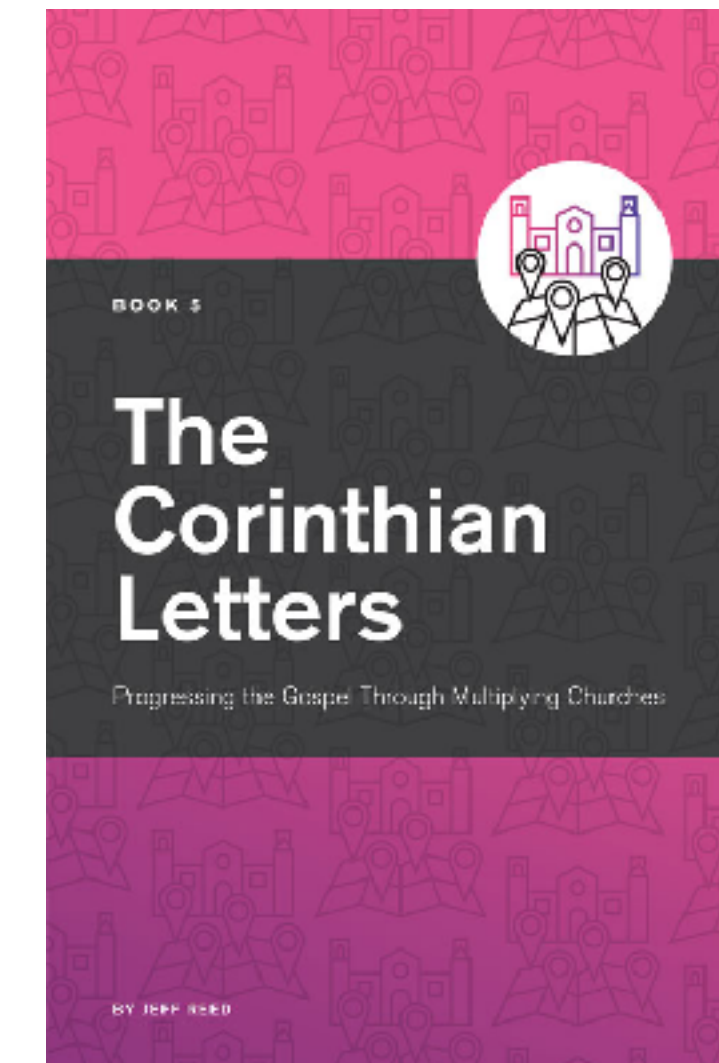
Autumn 49



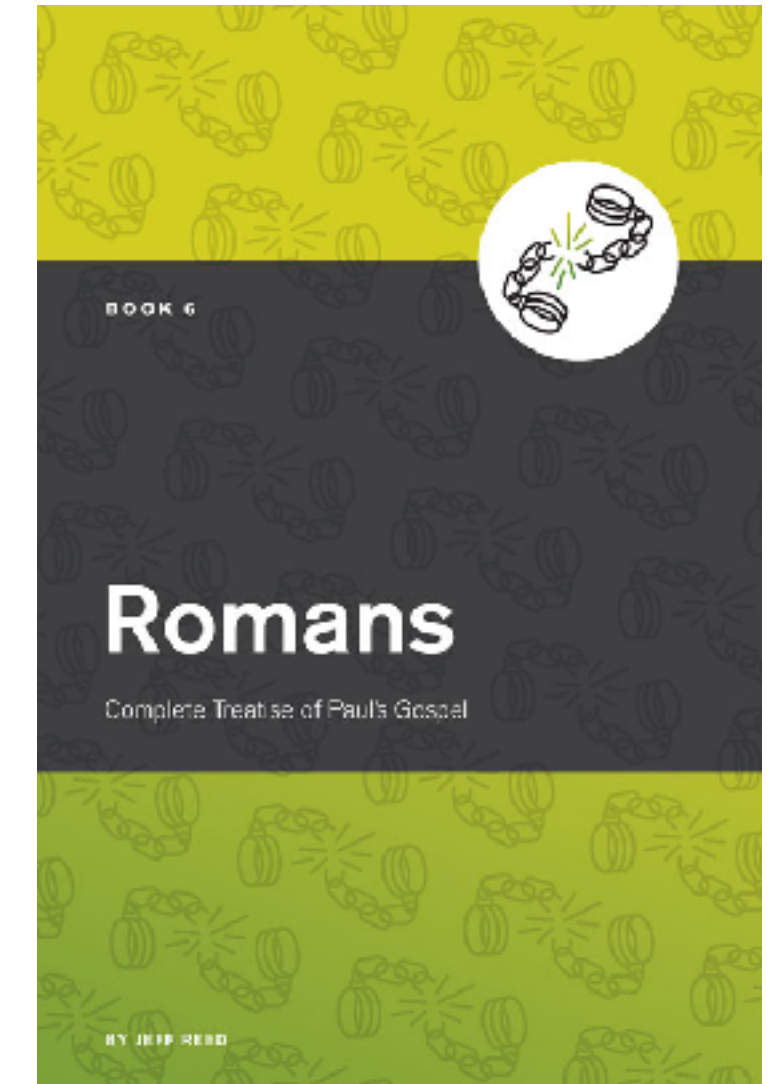
Winter/Sum. 51



Sept. 53



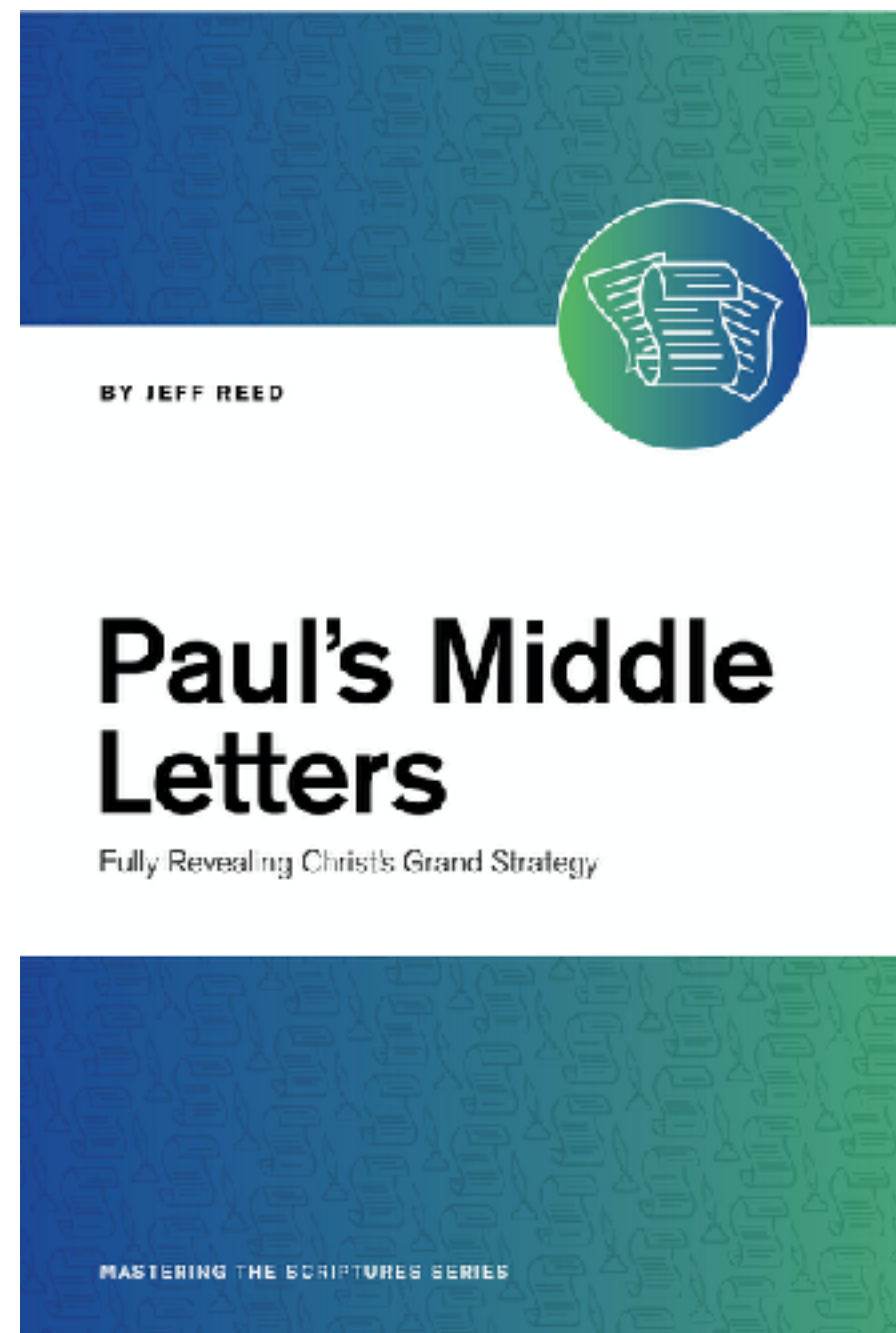
June 56



Nov. 56



Paul's Middle Letters



Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



Autumn 61



Spring 62



Paul's Middle Letters

New Testament Theology

It is critical that we treat these letters as a collection within Paul's larger collection.

These letters build on each other as they unfold. And while each stands alone as a letter to a particular set of churches, they all deal with similar issues that together present a very clear picture of establishing churches in Christ's grand strategy, including a full picture of the centrality of church networks in that strategy.

New Perspective on Paul

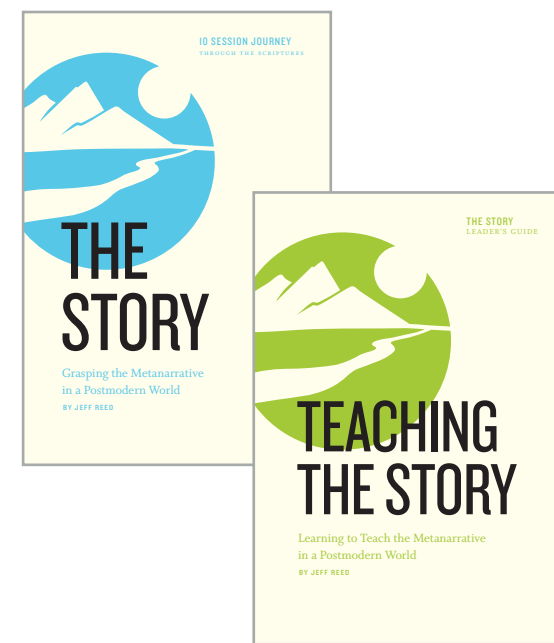
Old Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters contain miscellaneous, often unrelated topics that would be useful for future believers, especially in dealing with sin, salvation, and living the Christian life. These topics are a significant part of today's ever growing systematic theologies.

New Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters form a coherent, interlocking shape, foundational for churches in any generation to fully understand Christ's grand strategy of the Church being central to His unfolding kingdom and to living in full alignment of that grand strategy.

New Perspective on Paul



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 Early, Middle, and Later Letters

The Process of Building Strong Churches

Paul's Early Letters	Paul's Middle Letters	Paul's Later Letters
Strong in the Gospel	Strong in the Mission/ Vision of the Church	Strong Mature Households and Leaders
Organizing center: Romans 16:25–27 “fully established in the gospel (Paul’s gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”	Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10 “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)	Organizing Center: 1 Timothy 3:14–15 “how people should behave in God’s household (family of families), which is the assembly of the living God”

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Ephesians – Hub Churches

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub churches" in Ephesus, with special attention to training the elders of this strategic city in the whole plan of Christ for an entire 3-year period.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Colossians—Cluster Churches

Colossians: An almost identical letter to Ephesians (along with Philemon), written to the house churches scattered throughout the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis) one year after writing his “manifesto” to the Ephesian churches, to help them, at a very practical level, to implement the new church paradigm in their network of churches—a model as a framework for the entire history of clusters of churches down through the centuries.

Philemon: Written to the network of churches in the Lycus Valley to practically illustrate the importance of Christ's grand strategy of the kingdom through the Church and to restructure all their social relationships—including slavery—around the church as a family of families, the household social structure of the church, which was evident in the Greek “republic” ideal of the day but fully realized in the emerging kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Philippi—A Strategic Partner Church

Philippi: a strategic network of churches in Philippi that participated with Paul from its inception. After Paul's full and mature presentation in his letter to the Ephesians of the centrality of the Church as the heart of Christ's grand strategy for bringing in the kingdom, Philippians illustrates the importance of churches participating with one mind in the progress of the gospel through His grand strategy—the Church.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

As you will see,

Ephesians—is mostly Christ's grand strategy and has a little on Paul's network.

Colossians–Philemon—is similar on Christ's grand strategy and has a lot on Paul's network.

Philippians—is mostly on participating in Christ's grand strategy through Paul's network.

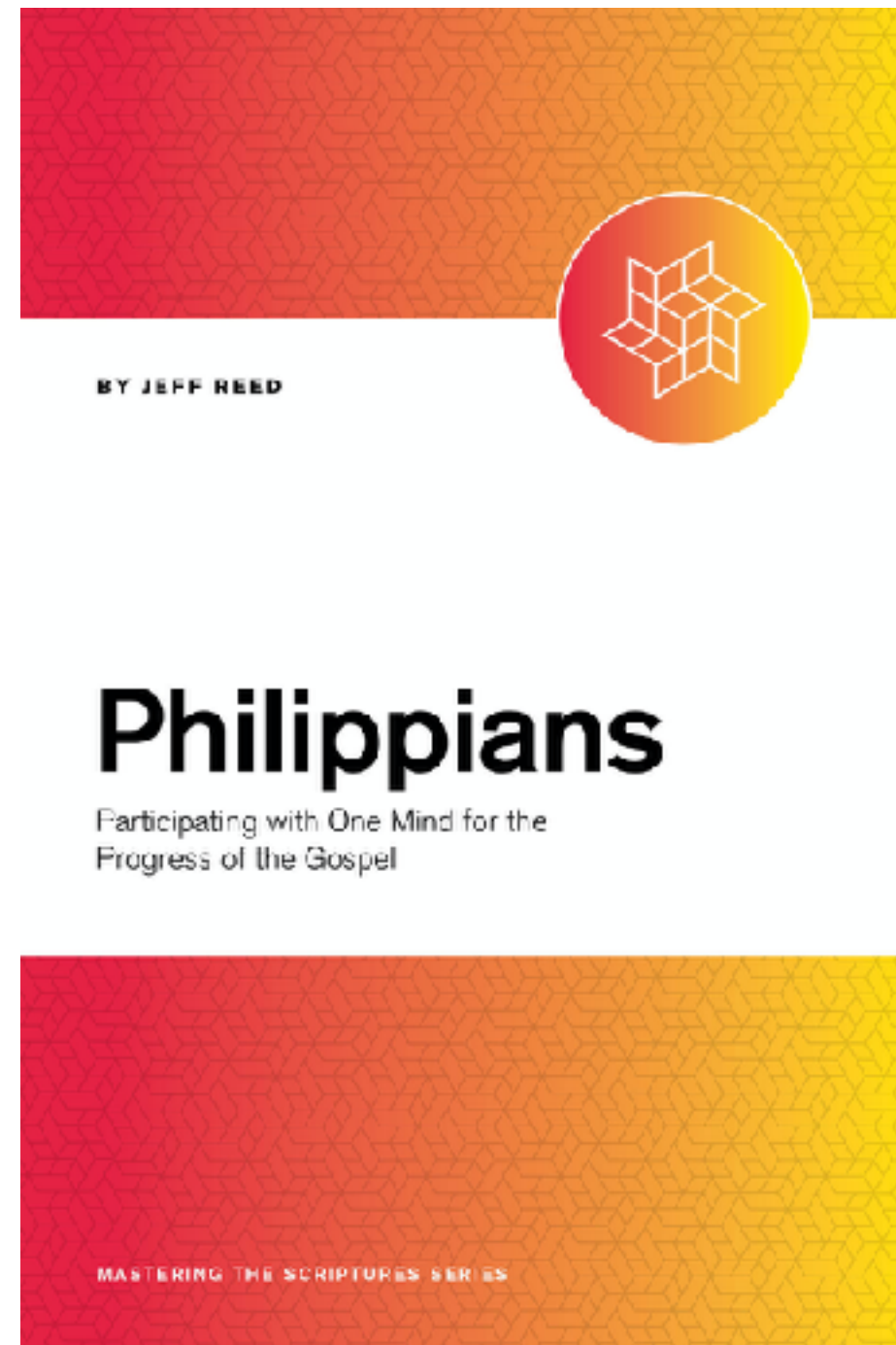
All 4 letters use similar terminology and sort of work as one growing theology of Christ's vision and mission for His churches.



Paul's Middle Letters

Fully Revealing Christ's Grand Strategy

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians



Session 1: Fully Participating with Paul in the Progress of the Gospel

Session 2: Participating with a One-Minded Focus

Session 3: Participating in the Power of the Resurrection

Session 4: Participating with Our Financial Resources

Session 5: Participating with Paul's Complex Apostolic Network

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Let's go back to our outline. What does it mean for this strategic church to fully participate with Paul? As you will see as this letter unfolds, that participation was to be a huge focus of the Philippian churches.

Fully Participating with Paul in the Progress of the Gospel 1:1–26

In these first verses, Paul lays the foundation for challenging them to more fully participate with him in the progress of the gospel. After praising them for their unique, focused participation with him, he reflects on his imprisonment as being key to that progress as he defends and proclaims the gospel.

He is very frank about his role and the importance of his imprisonment.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Participating with a One-Minded Focus 1:27–2:30a

In this section of the letter, Paul challenges them to strive together with a focused, one minded, total commitment, participating with him in the progress of the gospel. He gives four examples of a focused, self-sacrificing, total commitment: Christ, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

Participating in the Power of the Resurrection 2:30b–4:9

Then Paul turns to that commitment being a life focus or goal, as citizens of heaven, to “attain to the full power of the resurrection.” He builds on the power he wants for the Ephesian church, while acknowledging that he himself has not fully attained it, a focus he models for them by everything in his life.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Participating with Our Financial Resources 4:10–20

He then turns to an aspect of their financial gifts to him, showing how his total commitment shapes how he thinks about his own resources and providing a framework for their continued total commitment of their resources as well, which he has commented on throughout the letter up to this point.

Participating with Paul's Complex Apostolic Network 4:21–23

In this final section, though only a short 3 verses, he ties the Philippians into the network he has unfolded in the first 3 letters. And assuming that teaching about the network, in this letter, he expands it enormously by completely focusing on the network participating with him in the progress of the gospel, tying it all together.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

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These are the last 3 verses in Paul's middle letters. They need to be put in the context of what has unfolded throughout the entire canonical section.

Introduction to 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, A.D. 60

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn 61

Philippians—early Spring 62

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—Colossians

As we have seen

Ephesians—is mostly Christ's grand strategy and has a little on Paul's network.

Colossians–Philemon—is similar on Christ's grand strategy and has a lot on Paul's network.

Philippians—is mostly on participating in Christ's grand strategy through Paul's network.

All 4 letters use similar terminology and sort of work as one growing theology of Christ's vision and mission for His churches.

Let's begin by reviewing Paul's final comments in each letter: a network conversation.

Final Network Conversation in Ephesians

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:21–24

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Insights into Paul's Network Strategy

1. Paul invested 3 years with the Ephesian elders, teaching them the whole counsel of God, even in their homes, because Ephesus was so strategic.
2. Paul prayed they would fully grasp Christ's grand strategy, which he revealed to them, and become a powerful hub participating with him in the progress of the gospel.
3. He knew they had to stand firm, or there would be a huge hole in his "complex apostolic network." So he challenged them to prepare for major conflict by being clothed in this teaching, like a soldier preparing for battle.

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Insights into Paul's Network Strategy

4. Paul went out of his way to keep them up to date on his situation and progress in the gospel. He asked them to pray fervently for him, again reinforcing the key nature of these churches.

Final Network Conversation in Colossians

Next, Paul's final comments in Colossians and Philemon: a network conversation.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹ he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him.

¹¹ And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. ¹³ For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Colossians 4:7–13

Final Network Conversation in Colossians

¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, “See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord.” ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Colossians 4:14–18

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Philemon 23–25

Paul's Network and the Lycus Valley Churches

What was Paul doing at the end of these letters?

1. He was introducing them to his team: Mark, Luke, etc.
2. He was building a relationship with them by all his greetings, including writing the last section by his own hand.
3. He was building a cluster network with the 3 cities by the letter exchange and by greetings from the churches of Laodicea.
4. He was establishing the practical authority of his team by giving his instructions to his team members for Colossae.

This all becomes a model for building future complex apostolic networks.

Paul's Network and the Ephesus Hub, Lycus Valley Cluster

What is the essence of the contributions of the Middle Letters (before the addition of Phillipians)?

These actually sit at the heart of his emerging global apostolic network.

1. Paul's 3-fold strategy becomes clear: build your base (Ephesus), expand churches in the regional area around a hub church (hall of Tyrannus), and establish clusters as they emerge (Colossae, Heripolis, Laodecia)—a very simple strategy.
2. Paul paid close attention to doing strategic practical theology amongst the churches, dealing with issues like slavery, based on pushing up the first principles in every issue.
3. Paul kept his heart for the churches pure, which includes a balance between frank speech and constant love for the churches (Ephesian elders, Onesimus and Philemon examples).
4. Paul was willing to pay an inexhaustible price, constantly asking for prayer and support of the network (especially seen in Phillipians).
5. Paul was not afraid to exercise apostolic authority in the churches, even amongst his strategic eldership.

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Now let's at Paul's final words to the Philippian churches

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Philippians 4:21–23 NRSV

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

What can we conclude from this personal, very short conclusion?

It is short and without personal names. But the network is still in view.

1. The friends who are with Paul in Rome, from throughout his network, greet them; this implies they are part of Paul's entire network.
2. The saints in the churches in Rome greet them, especially those of the emperor's household.
3. So in 3 verses, Paul seals this letter and their participation in his whole, empire wide network.

But remember, the whole letter is a network letter involving participation with Paul. By this letter, Paul is modeling building the heart of his network, calling for a stepped up participation with him in light of this full revelation of the Church as the center of Christ's grand strategy.

Paul's Middle Letters — Philippians

What does a fully, stepped up participation with Paul look like?

1. “One-minded striving together” with Paul is expected of the Philippian churches and, by implication, his entire network.
2. Participation with him financially, on a regular basis, includes more than just money. It includes people as resources and, actually, the whole church being behind him.
3. Paul includes not only intense, one-minded participation but also a firm grasp of Christ's grand strategy, that will allow them to experience Christ's full resurrection power as they participate, which is also his prayer for the Ephesian and Colossian churches.
4. And finally, with these 3 small final verses, Paul asks this group of strategic churches in Philippi to become fully committed to Paul's entire network.

Paul's Frank Speech

Paul's role of shaping the churches and churches in his network demands "frank speech." Let's give this a little more attention, actually drawing on both his early and middle letters. Let's review a few passages.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:6–7

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; ¹² for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. ¹³ And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:11–13

Paul's Frank Speech

⁸ We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 2 Corinthians 1:8

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within. 2 Corinthians 7:5

¹⁷ For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. ¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. ²¹ What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? 1 Corinthians 4:17–21

⁹ I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. ¹⁰ For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” ¹¹ Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

2 Corinthians 10:9–11

Paul's Frank Speech

³ I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴ constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵ because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:3–6

¹⁰ I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it.... ¹⁵ You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone.

Philippians 4:10,15

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

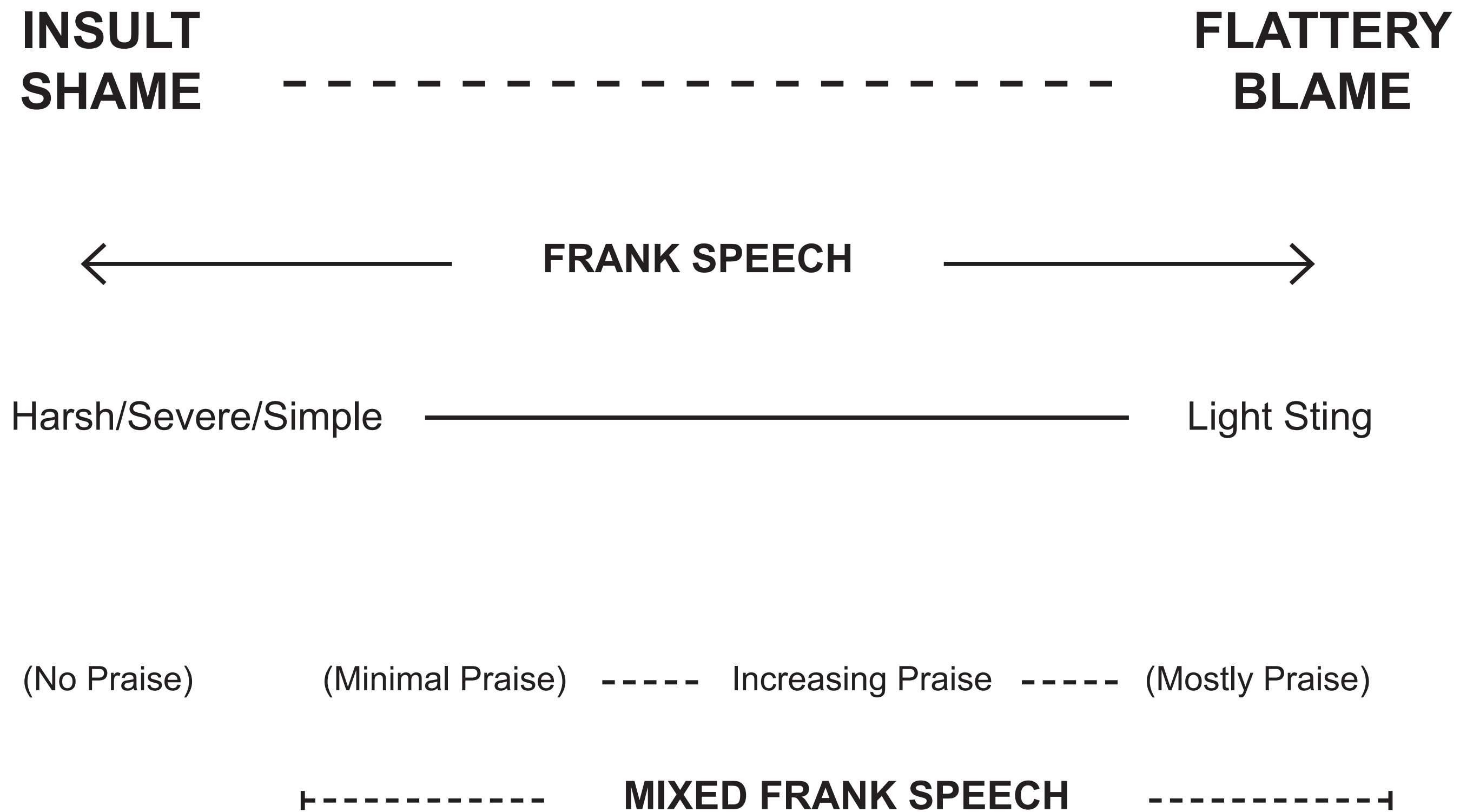
Philippians 4:2–3

Paul's Frank Speech

Paul's frank speech is clearly seen in Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Philippians. It was necessary to keep key leaders, co-workers, and churches aligned with the gospel and one-minded in their participation in the progress of the gospel in accordance with Christ's grand strategy. By Paul's frank speech we mean the following:

1. Paul was willing to engage in this level of conflict and frank speech to build a one-minded complex network of churches.
2. Paul confronted key leaders, co-workers, and churches themselves when it was necessary to keep the churches both in the network and solid on course.
3. This confrontation level was needed to keep the gospel pure and to keep the churches one-minded around Christ's grand strategy.
4. Part of Paul's frank speech included personally sharing the toll these conflicts took on him, appealing to the churches and leaders not to make it so difficult on him.

Paul's Frank Speech



Peter, 2 Corinthians—harsh, severe
{Philippians—light sting

Paul's Apostolic Network and His Middle Letters

What is the essence of the contributions of the Middle Letters (now including Philippians)?

These actually sit at the heart of his emerging global apostolic network.

1. Paul's 3-fold strategy becomes clear: build your base (Ephesus), expand churches in the region around a hub church (hall of Tyrannus), and establish clusters as they emerge (Colossae, Heripolis, and Laodecia) and strategic partner churches—a very simple strategy.
2. Paul paid close attention to doing strategic practical theology amongst the churches, dealing with issues like slavery, based on pushing up the first principles in every issue.
3. Paul was willing to use frank speech, at great personal expense, to keep his churches in line with the gospel and Christ's grand strategy; confronting key leaders, co-workers, and churches as needed.

Paul's Apostolic Network and His Middle Letters

What is the essence of the contributions of the Middle Letters (now including Philippians)?

These actually sit at the heart of his emerging global apostolic network.

4. A one-minded striving together for the progress of the gospel with Paul is expected of the Philippian churches and, by implication, his entire network.
5. This one-minded participation with Paul financially, on a regular basis, includes more than just money. It includes people as resources and, actually, whole churches being behind him and his team.
6. Paul expected not only intense one-minded participation but also a firm grasp of Christ's grand strategy, which would allow participants to experience Christ's full resurrection power as they worked together.

Building Complex Apostolic Networks Today

How do these letters shape how we build the heart of complex apostolic networks today?

1. We need to follow the heart of Paul's core 3-fold strategy: build our base (Ephesus), expand churches in the region around a hub church (hall of Tyrannus), establish clusters as they emerge (Colossae, Heripolis, and Laodecia) and build strategic partner churches—a very simple strategy.
2. Invest heavily in strategic churches, hubs, clusters, and key individual churches, carefully establishing them in Christ's grand strategy, philosophy, and first principles. Teach them to think biblically (strategic practical theology, Philemon example) and develop high level skill to handle the political, cultural, and religious issues that every generation of leaders and churches need to deal with.
3. Key apostolic leaders must be willing to use frank speech, at great personal expense, to keep their churches in line with the gospel and Christ's grand strategy, confronting key leaders, co-workers, and churches as needed.

Building Complex Apostolic Networks Today

How do these letters shape how we build complex apostolic networks today (cont.)?

4. “One-minded striving together for the progress of the gospel” with key apostolic leaders is expected of co-workers and key hub, cluster strategic partner churches, and by implication the entire network.
5. “One-minded participation” with key apostolic leaders is on a regular basis and includes more than just money. It also includes people as resources and, actually, the whole church being behind the key apostolic leaders.
6. Key apostolic leaders should expect not only intense one-minded participation but also a firm grasp of Christ’s grand strategy, which allows participants to experience Christ’s full resurrection power as they work together.

Building Complex Apostolic Networks Today

These Middle Letters, where we see Paul establishing the very heart of his complex apostolic network, has very specific application for us, as can be seen even this week.

1. Michael was in the Dominican Republic, working with our Latin American apostolic team, at least 8 networks, developing together their strategic plans for the next year.
2. I spent Thursday night with the most strategic of the 5 families in China, calling them to build one plan in partnership with us around “the way of Christ and His Apostles,” and they agreed to build it all year as we meet quarterly in 2022 in our Executive Education 2 program.
3. And Michael and I have spent the last few weeks building the core of 8 key teams in developing the heart of our own complex apostolic network.

And, guess what? We know exactly what to do as we finish Paul’s Middle Letters. Now on to his Later Letters.

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Issue: Participating with Apostolic Leaders in Building Complex Apostolic Networks Today

Questions:

1. How do our churches and church networks compare with Paul's churches in his Middle Letters? Are we participating in the progress of the gospel as Ephesus, Colossians, and Philippians did?
2. How can we use Paul's conversations and challenges to his co-workers and churches in the process of establishing our churches, training our leaders, and building our churches and networks?
3. Why should we practice "frank speech" in the process of establishing churches, training leaders, and building our churches and networks today? Why is it so critical to develop this kind of culture?
4. How can we begin building co-worker teams and establishing churches to participate in the progress of the gospel, built around Christ's grand strategy as we see laid out in Paul's model?