

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

This year we are studying Paul's middle letters and will fully publish the previous series—6 booklets of Paul's Early Letters.

The middle letters are: Ephesians, Colossians–Philemon, and Philippians.

We are in the process of an overview of these letters in book 1. This morning the focus is on Ephesians.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

This week I met with leaders of our 3 key city initiatives—Little Rock, Chattanooga, and Paterson.

I had to do them on Zoom from my office—each 3 hour meetings, because of the weather. They are all going to work! (Wednesday morning)

Little Rock—with Ray Williams—8 key churches; top team doing the D.Min.; almost ready to launch Re:BUILD and an Urban degree bachelors cohort in the inner city —they integrate

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Chattanooga—Oliver Richmond with Kingdom Partners, a network of over 60 Black Churches in Chattanooga—ready to launch. Apostolic team emerging—Oliver, Randy Kennedy, and Christopher Klapp.

Paterson—Matt Andersen and Star of Hope, with Jay Sinclair and Steve Galegor; they have mapped the Paterson–Newark corridor; 100 churches in their network. Also Joe Mattera will sit in on the D.Min. cohort. He has a network of 200 churches in the greater NYC area. There's tremendous potential with a key team emerging and significant programs have started.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

RE:BUILD
Life Rebuilding Programs



Re:BUILD excites them the most.

Why is Re:BUILD so engaging? So attractive to churches?

We will find out today.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Issue: Significance of 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. What is the purpose of the church? What is the "work of the ministry" that the church is to do?
4. When churches mature, what do they look like?

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ 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.

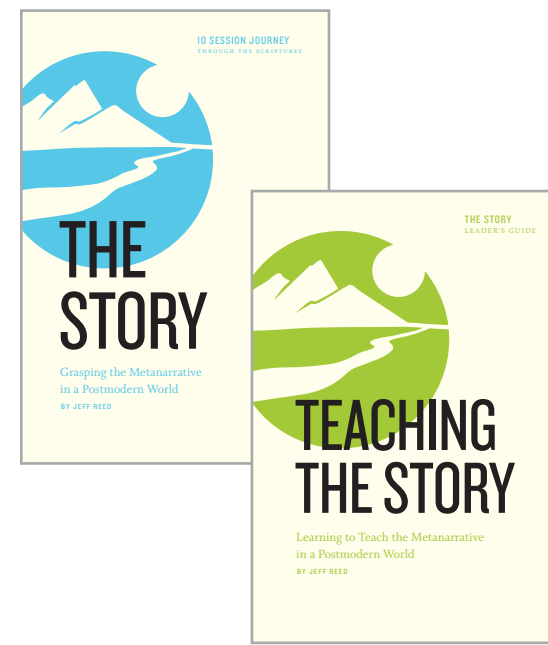
Ephesians 4:11–16



Paul's Middle Letters

The Church Comes into Full View

Paul's Early Letters



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

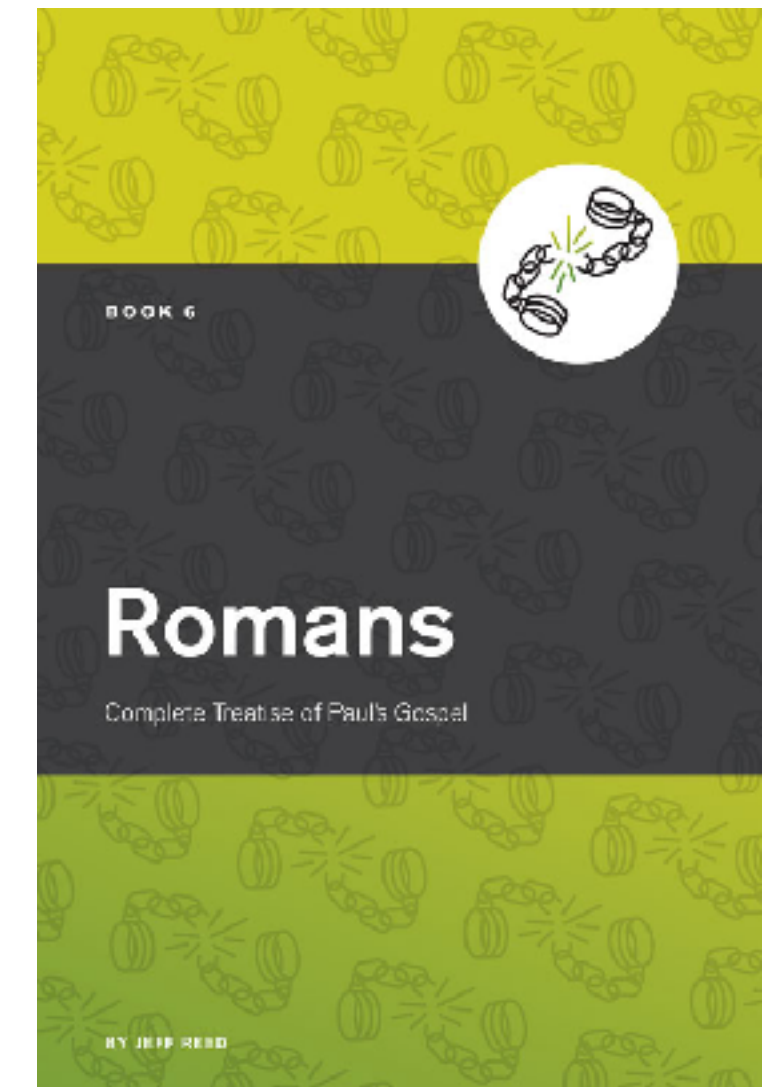
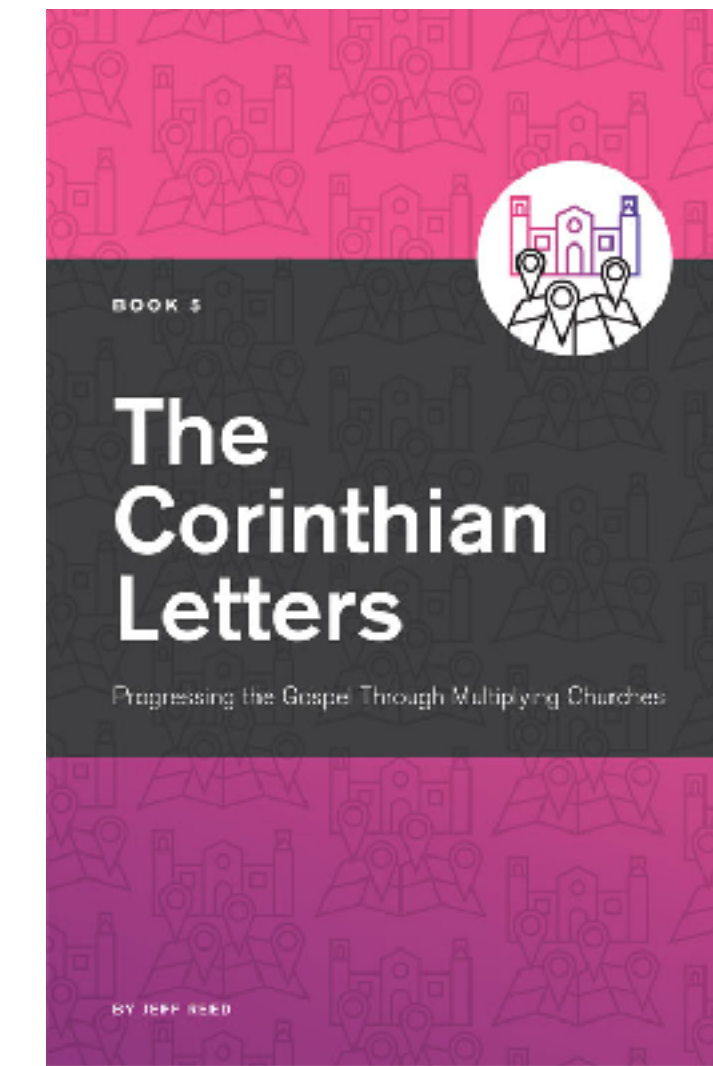
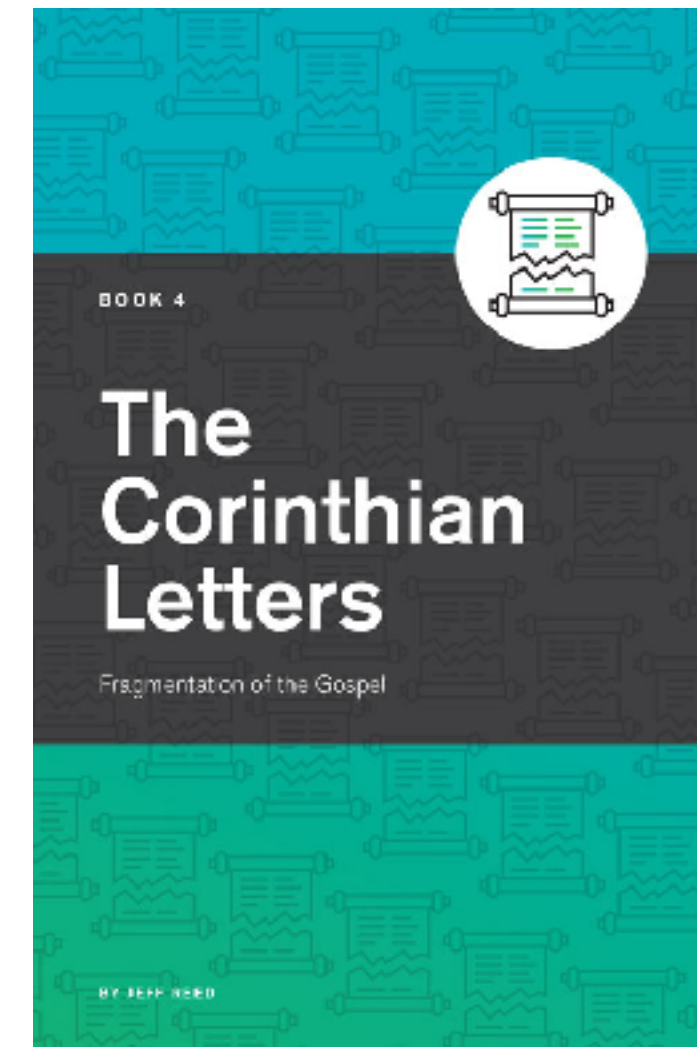
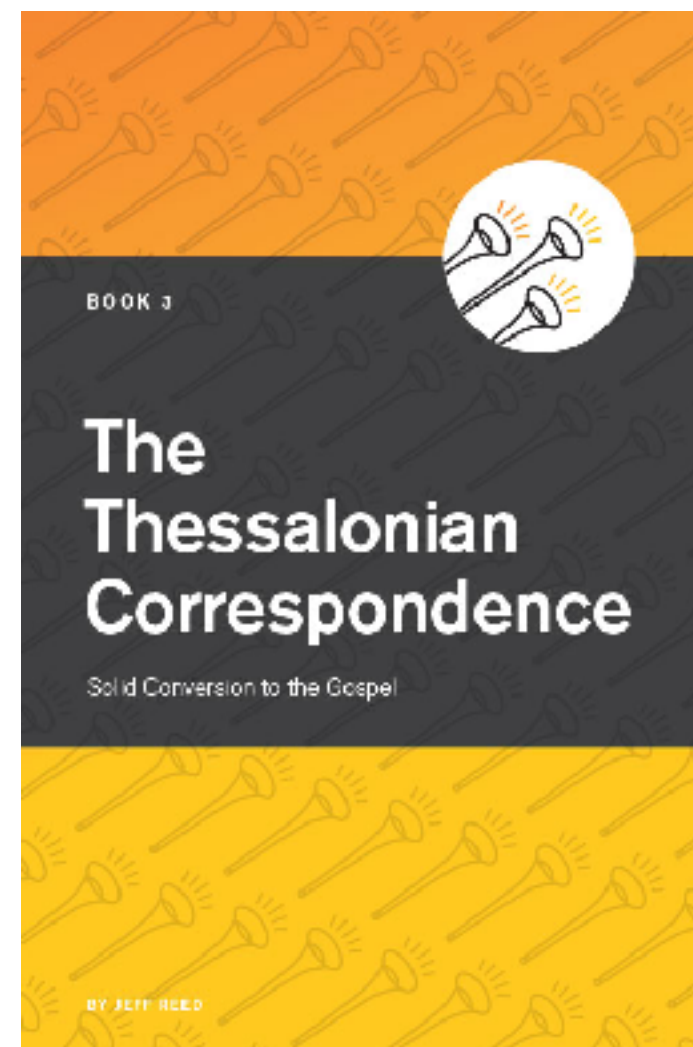
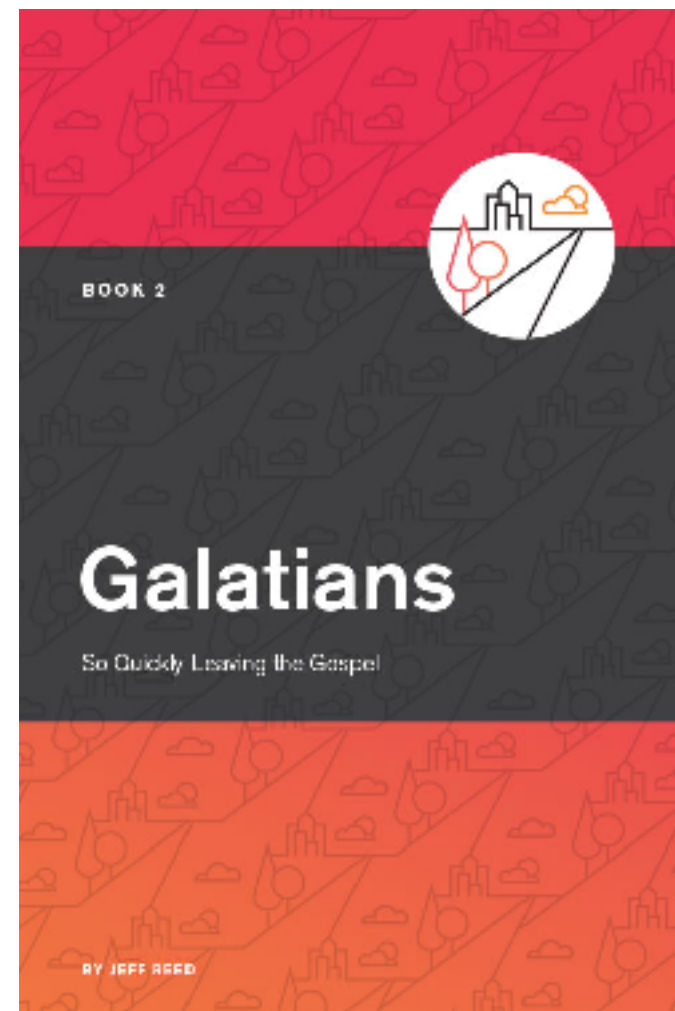
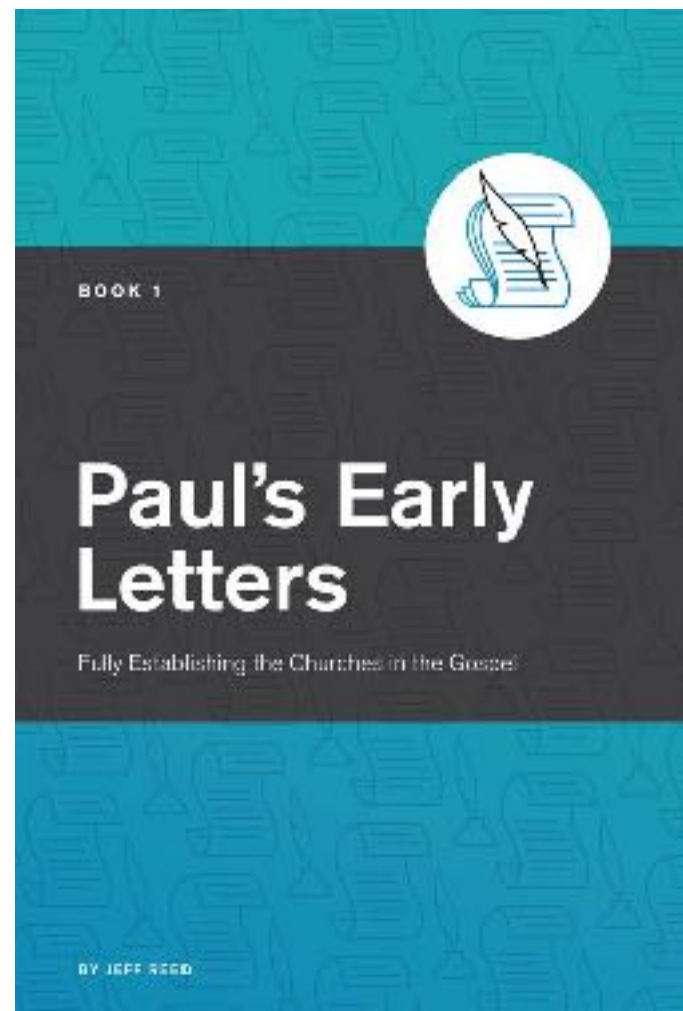


Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years

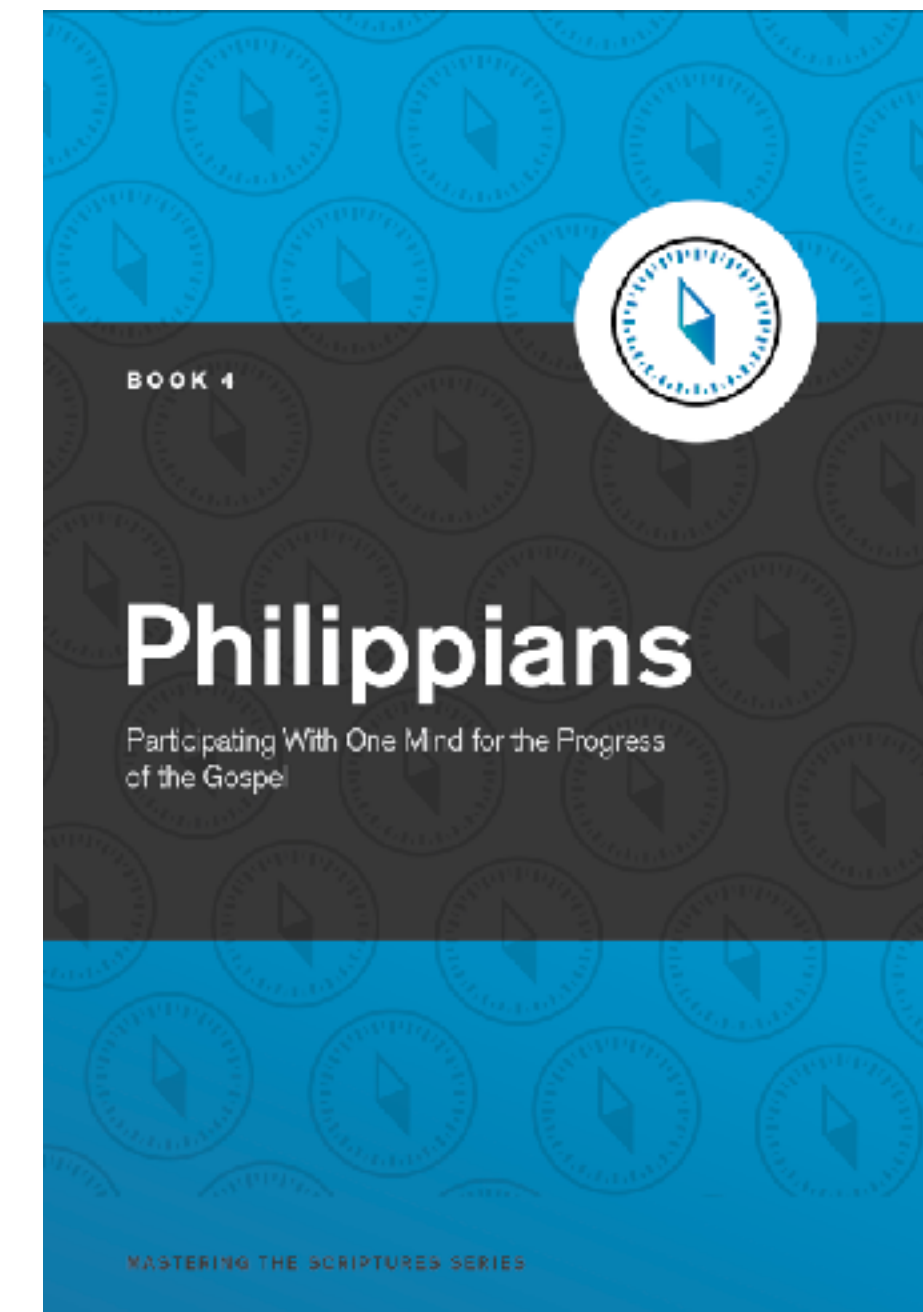
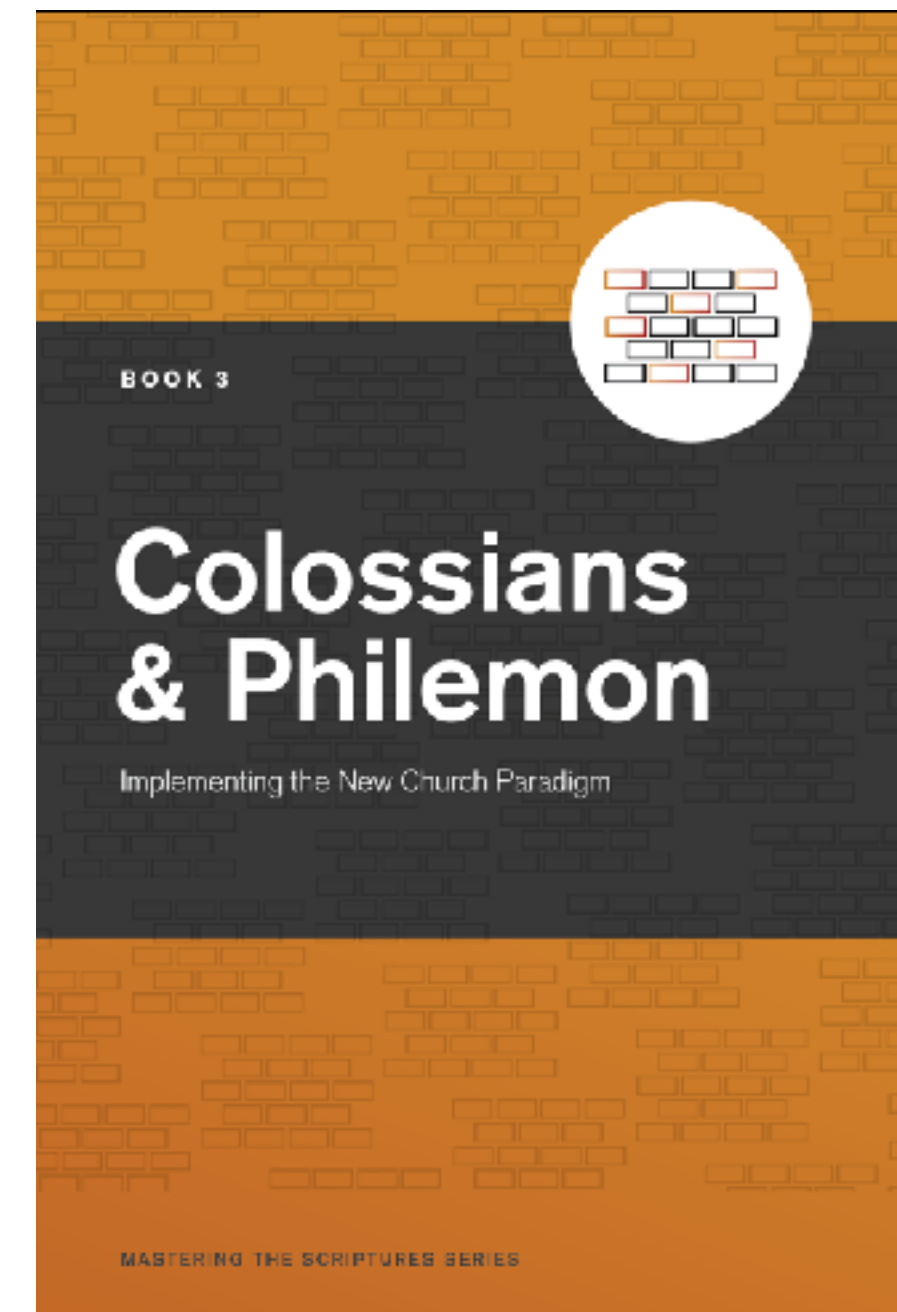
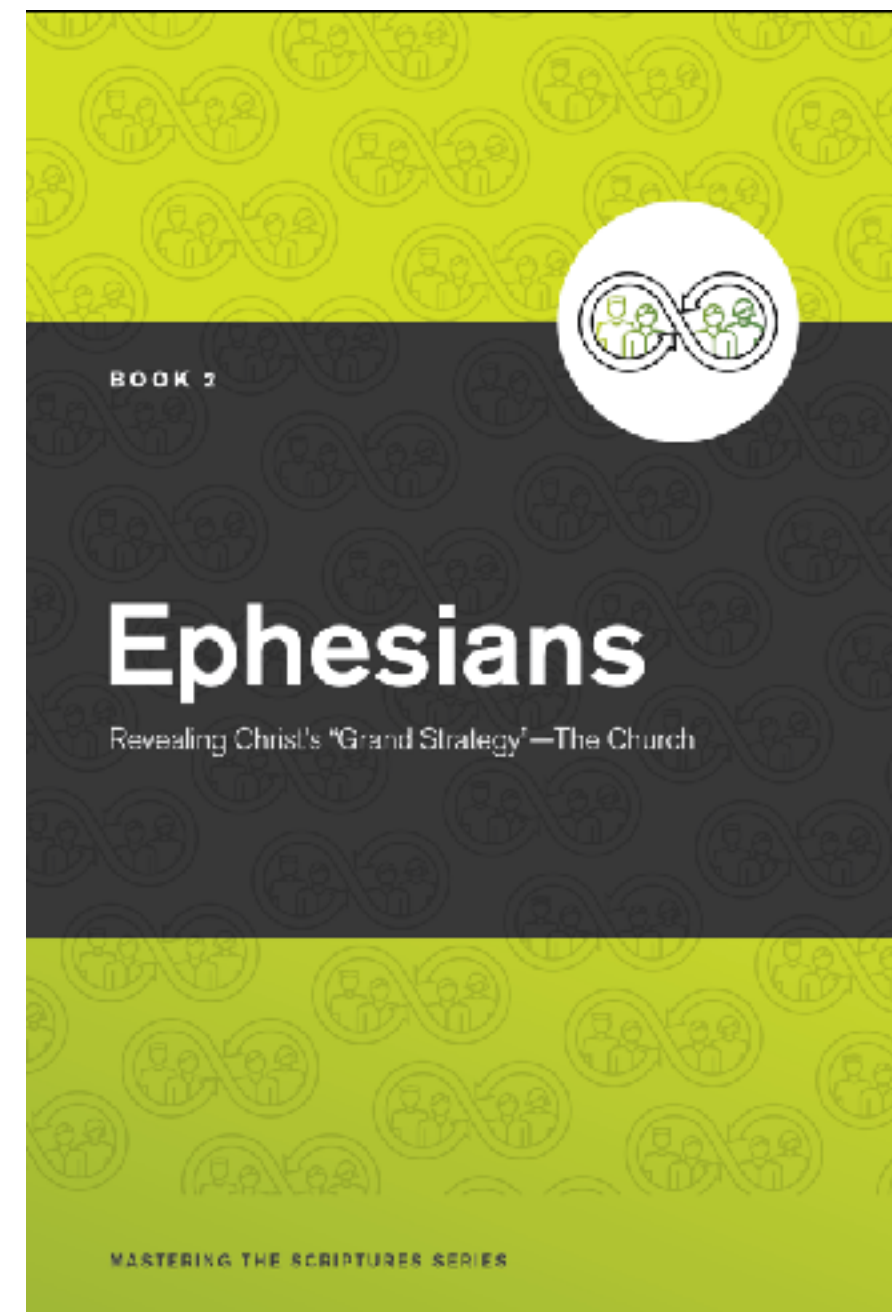
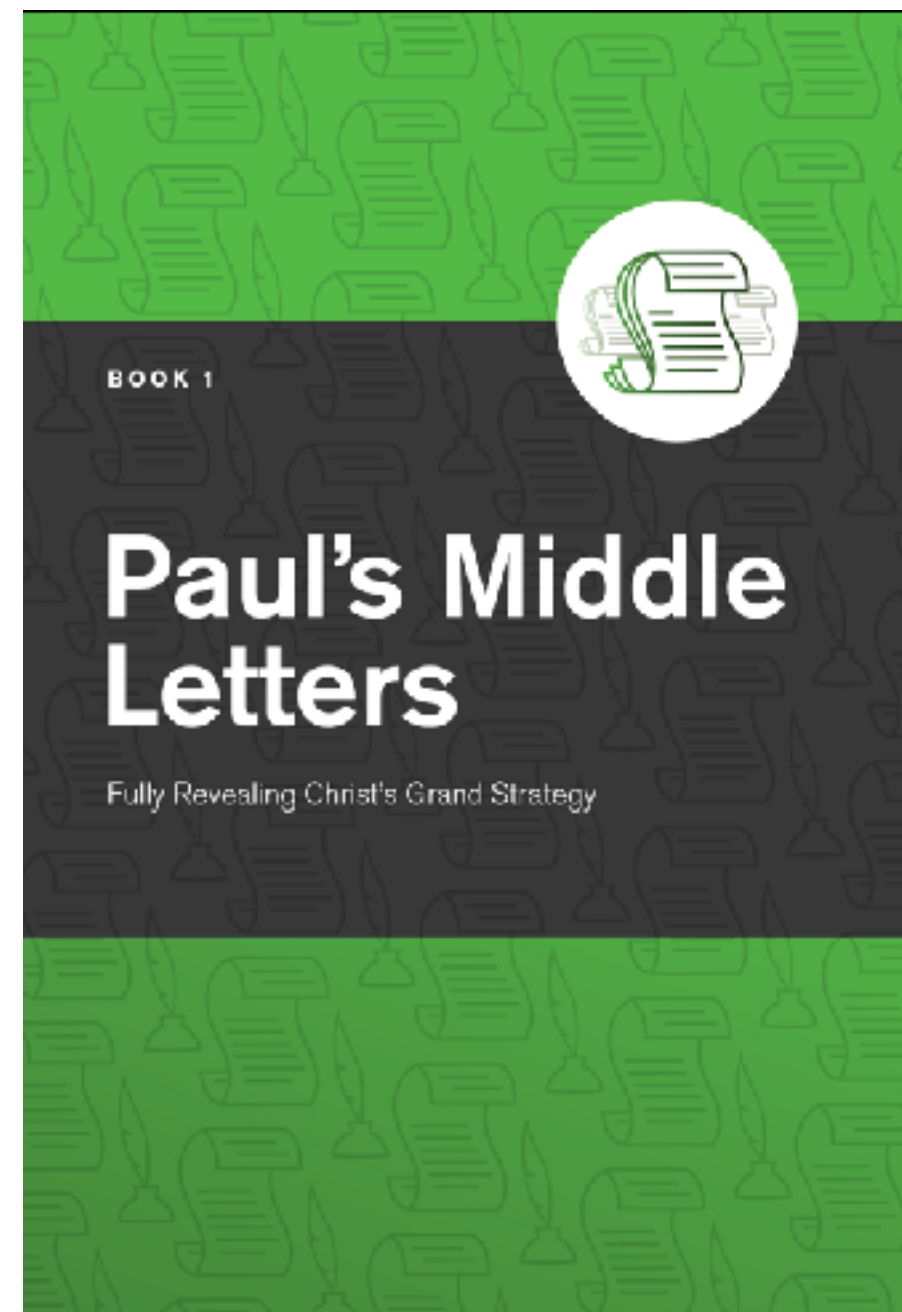


Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year

Paul's Early Letters



Paul's Middle Letters



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In the middle letters, we get a full revelation of Christ's grand strategy after He inaugurated the Kingdom—that is the Church.

We will also look at the letters from the viewpoint of Paul building his global apostolic network, as we began to do in his early letters.

I will try to be here 20 Sundays to teach the series. Between those times, the apostolic team, under Michael, will mix in other teaching from these letters.

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, 60

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn, 61

Philippians—early Spring, 62

These letters give us the full revelation of the church. But think of the battles that were fought before this.

Introduction to Paul's Early 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)

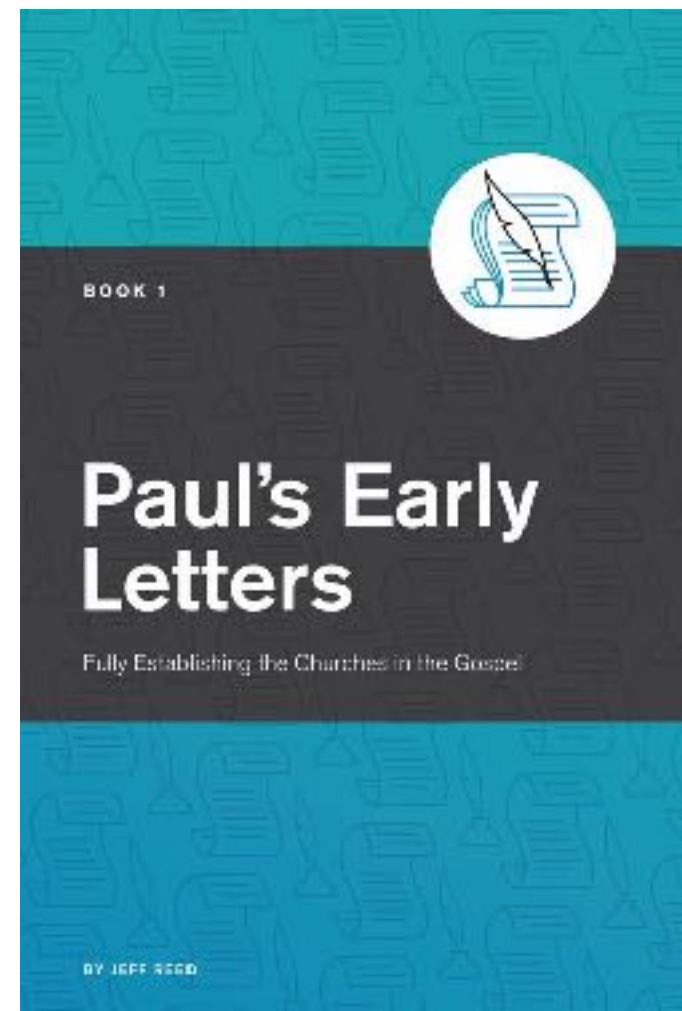
Jerusalem Council—Autumn, 49 AD

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

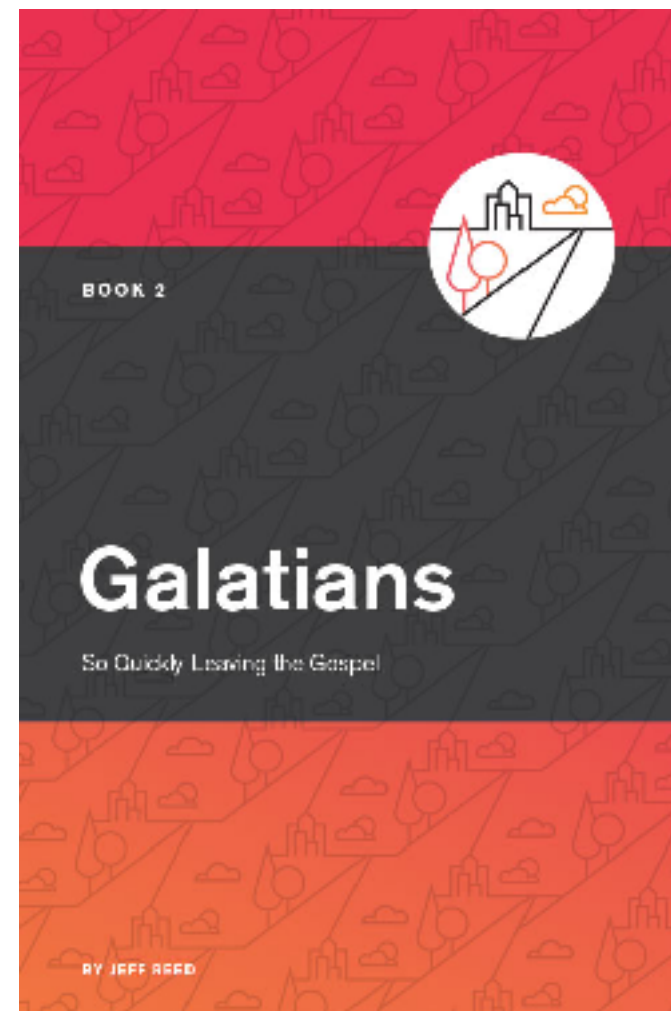
It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he completed with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

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

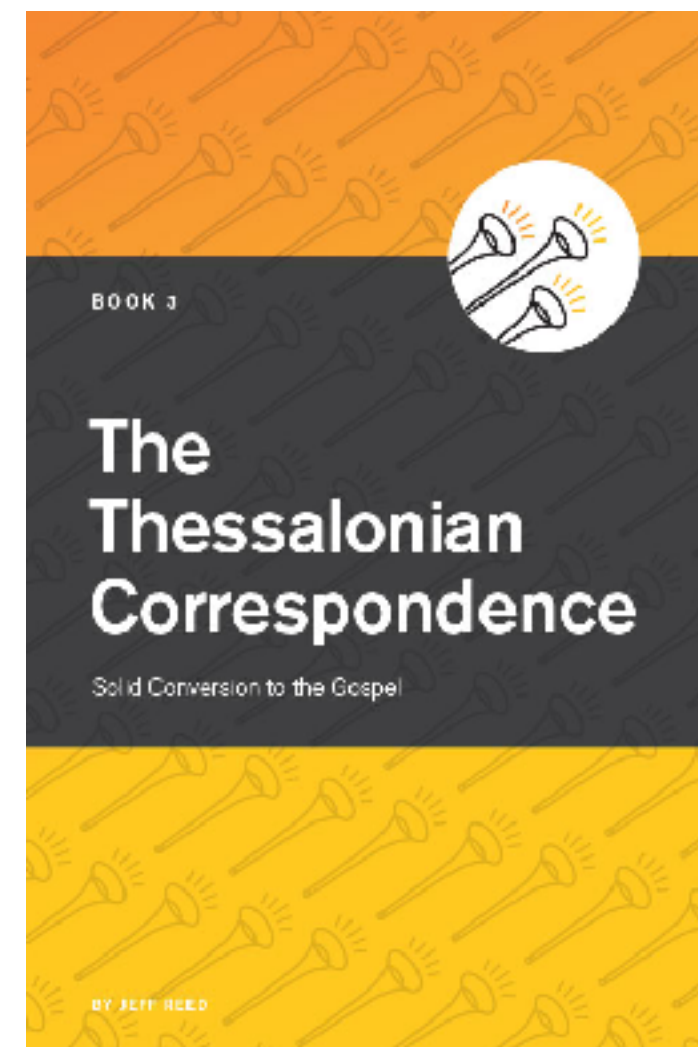
Paul's Early Letters



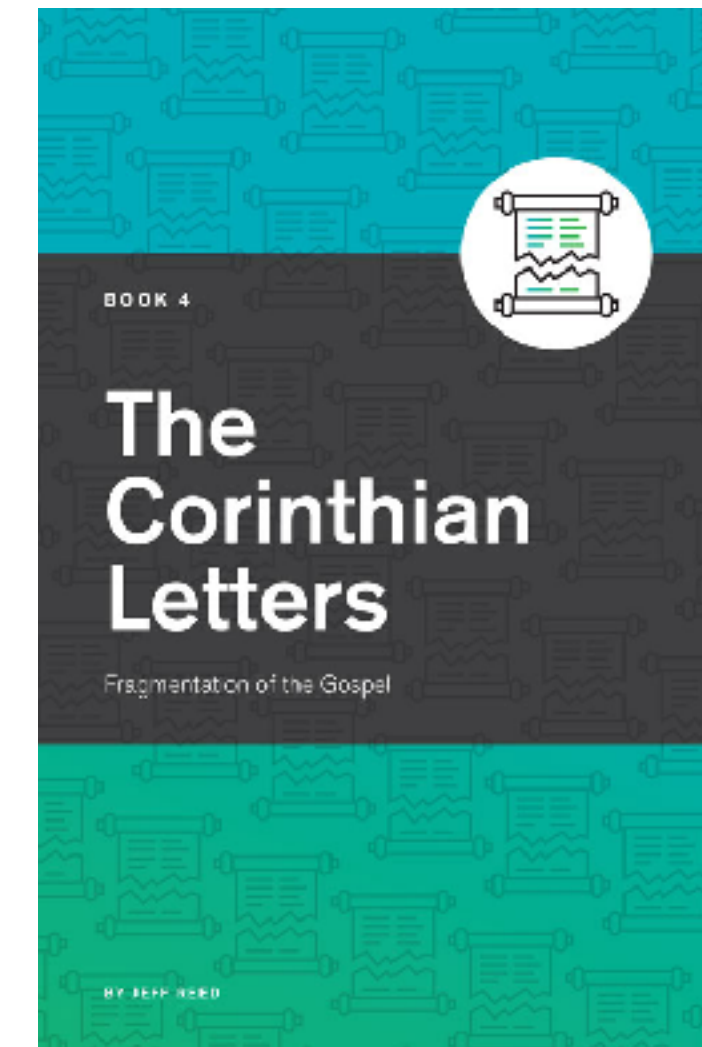
49–56 AD



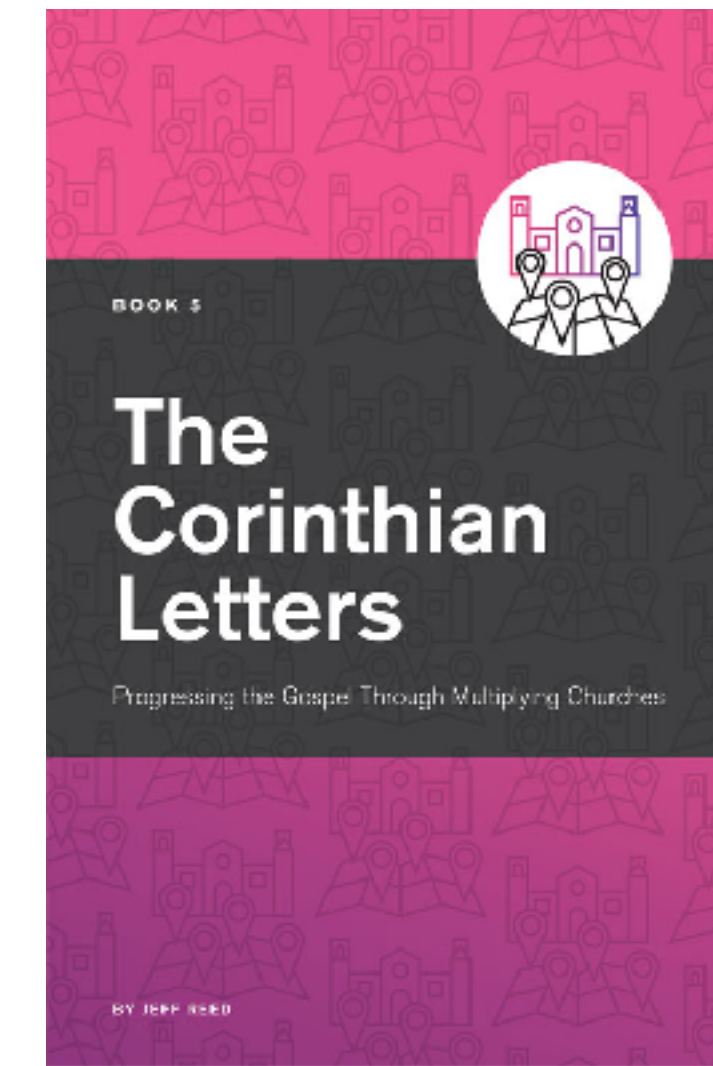
Autumn, 49



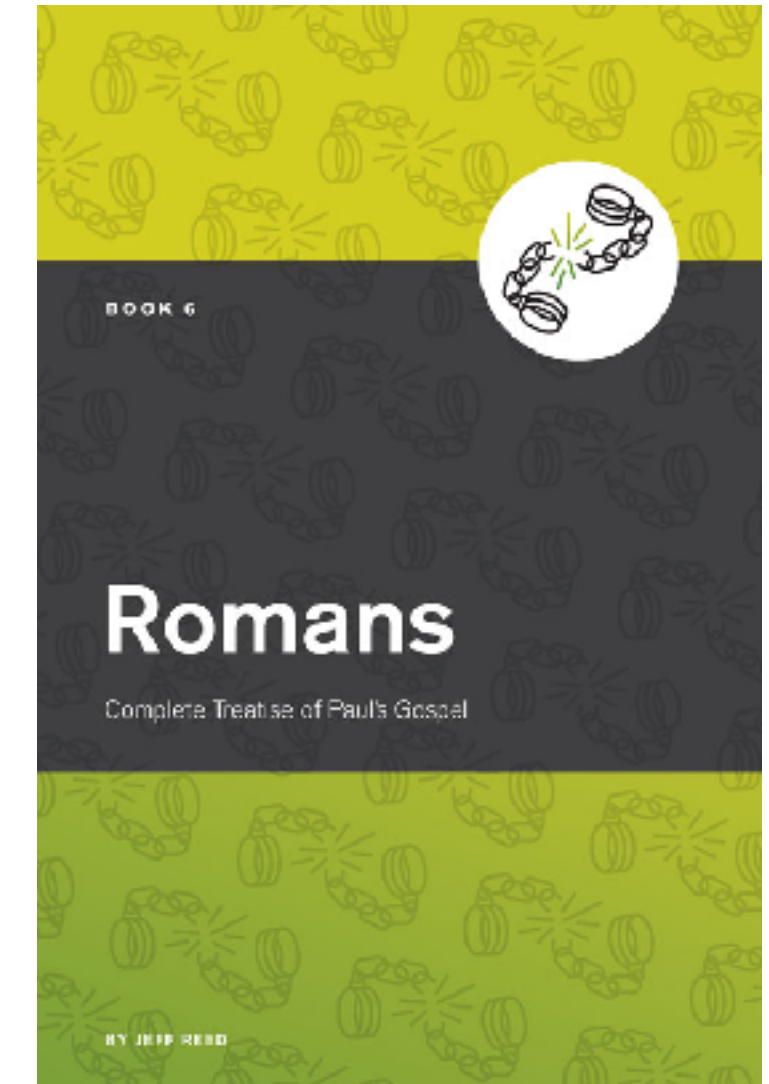
Winter/Sum, 51 AD



Sept, 53

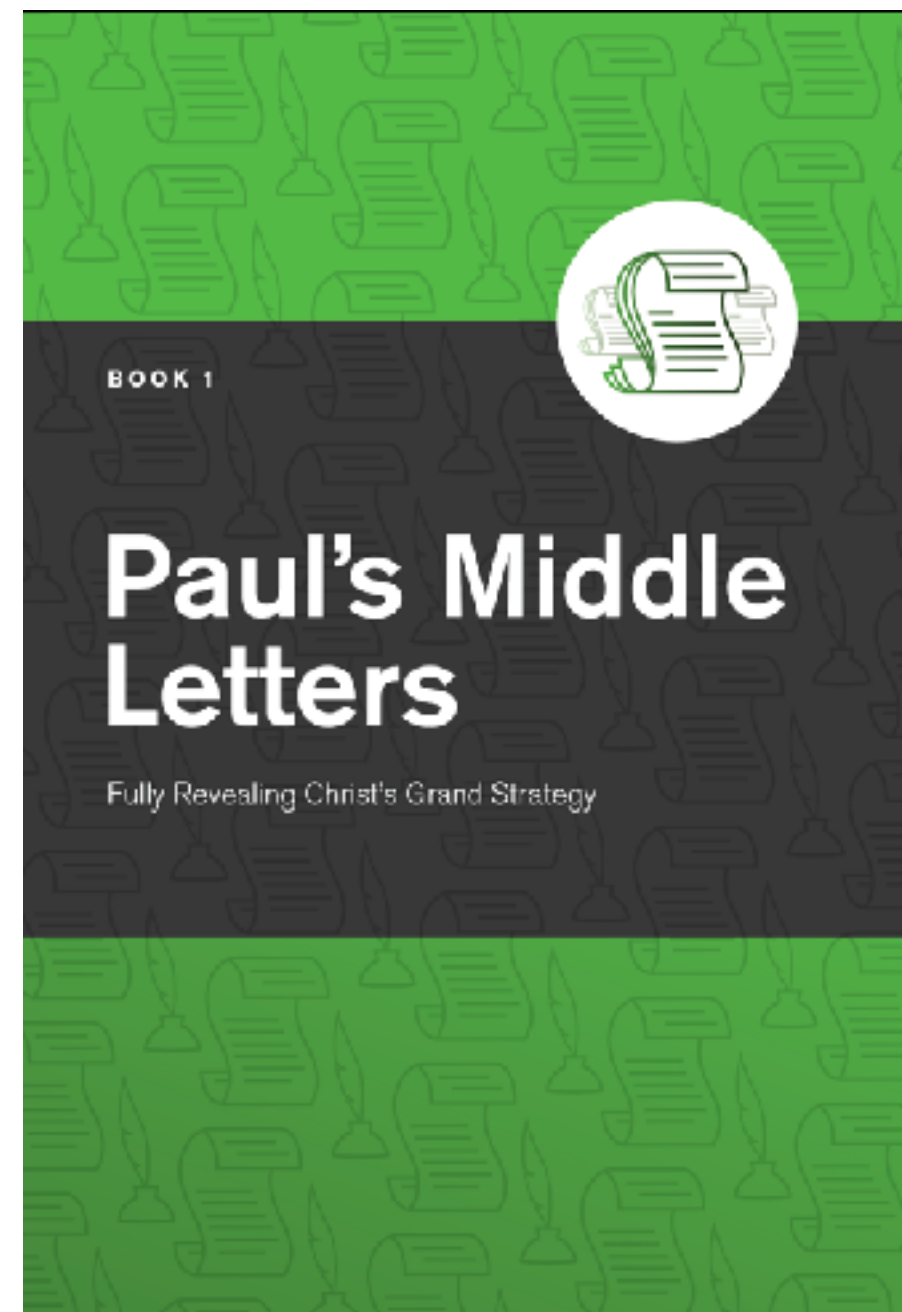


June, 56

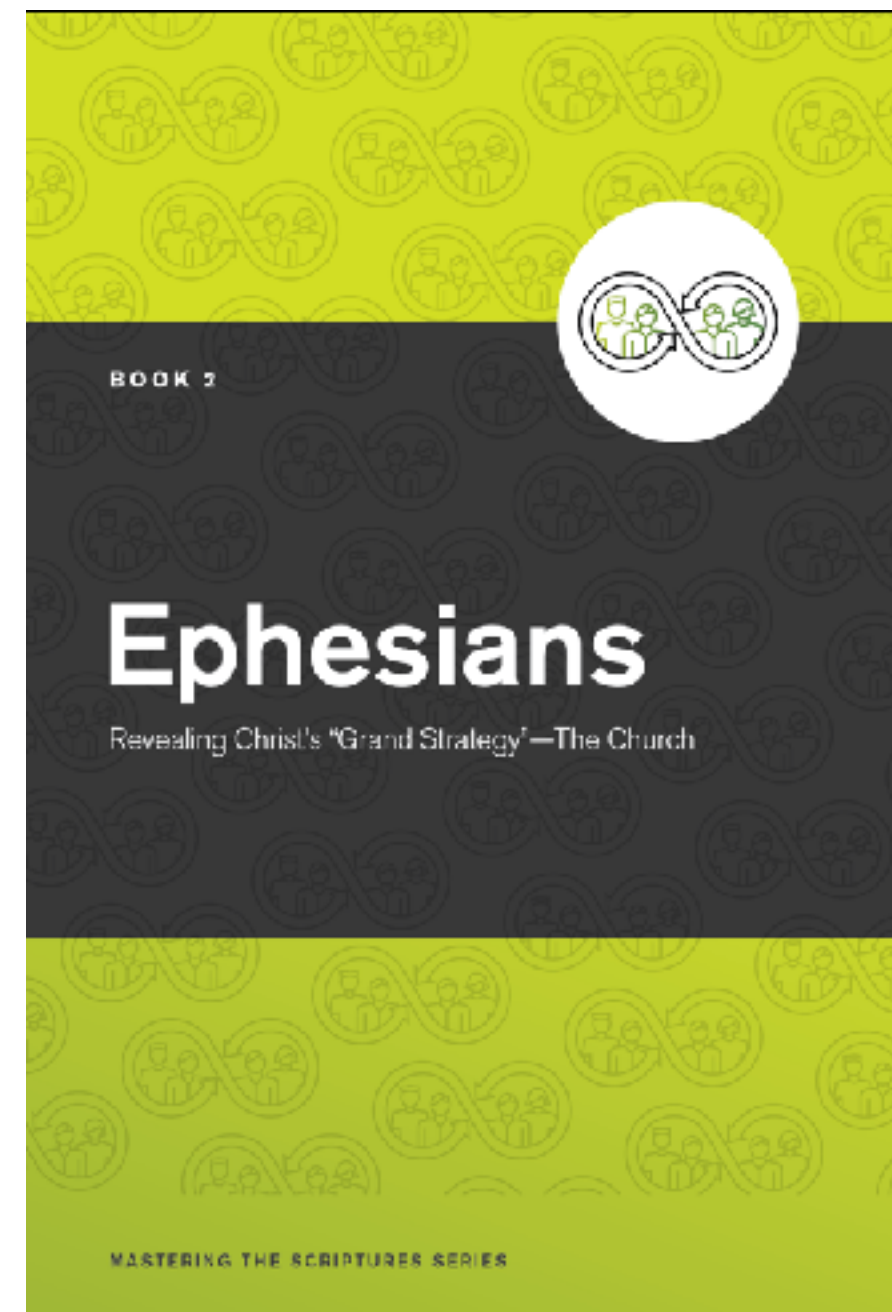


Nov, 56

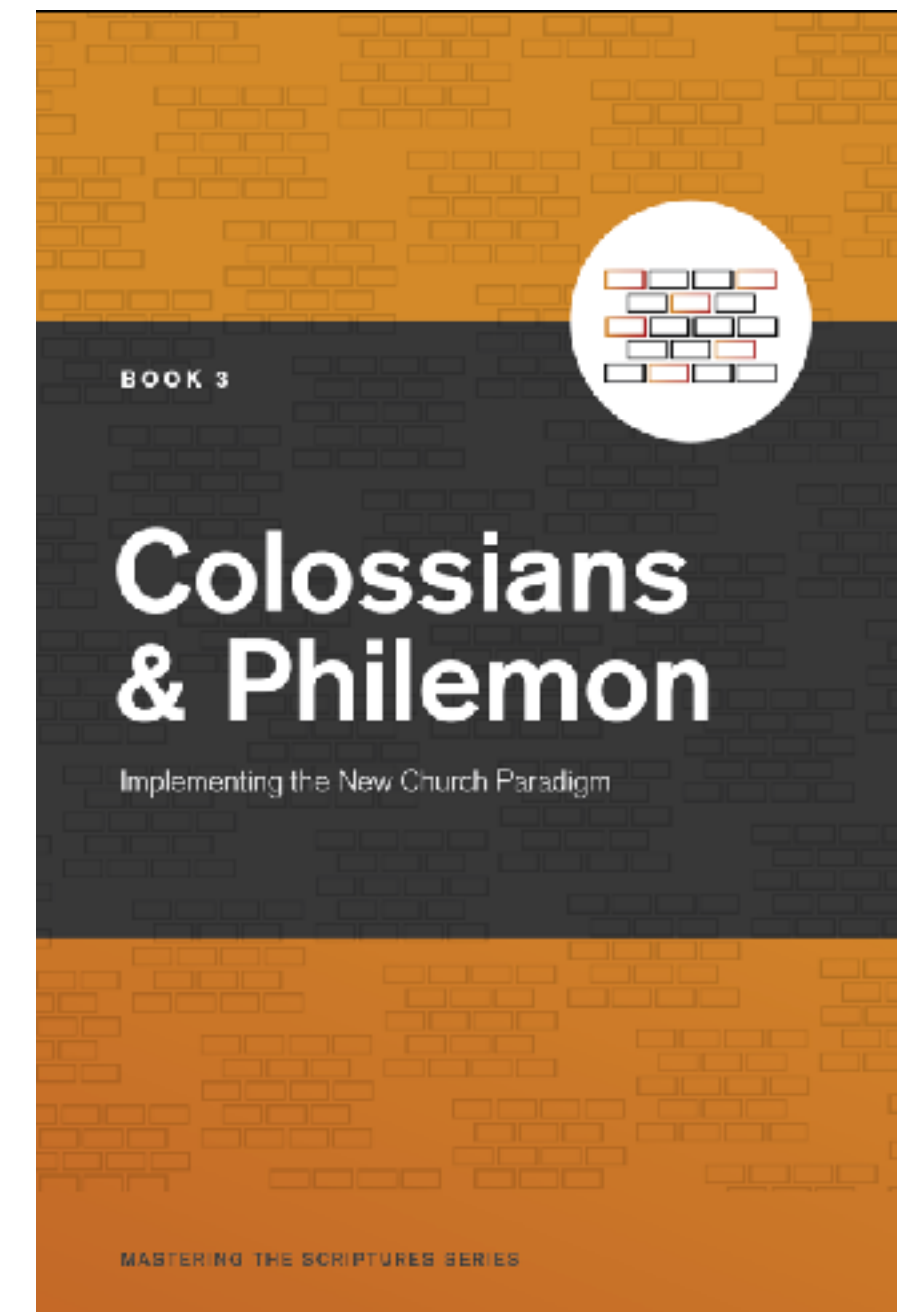
Paul's Middle Letters



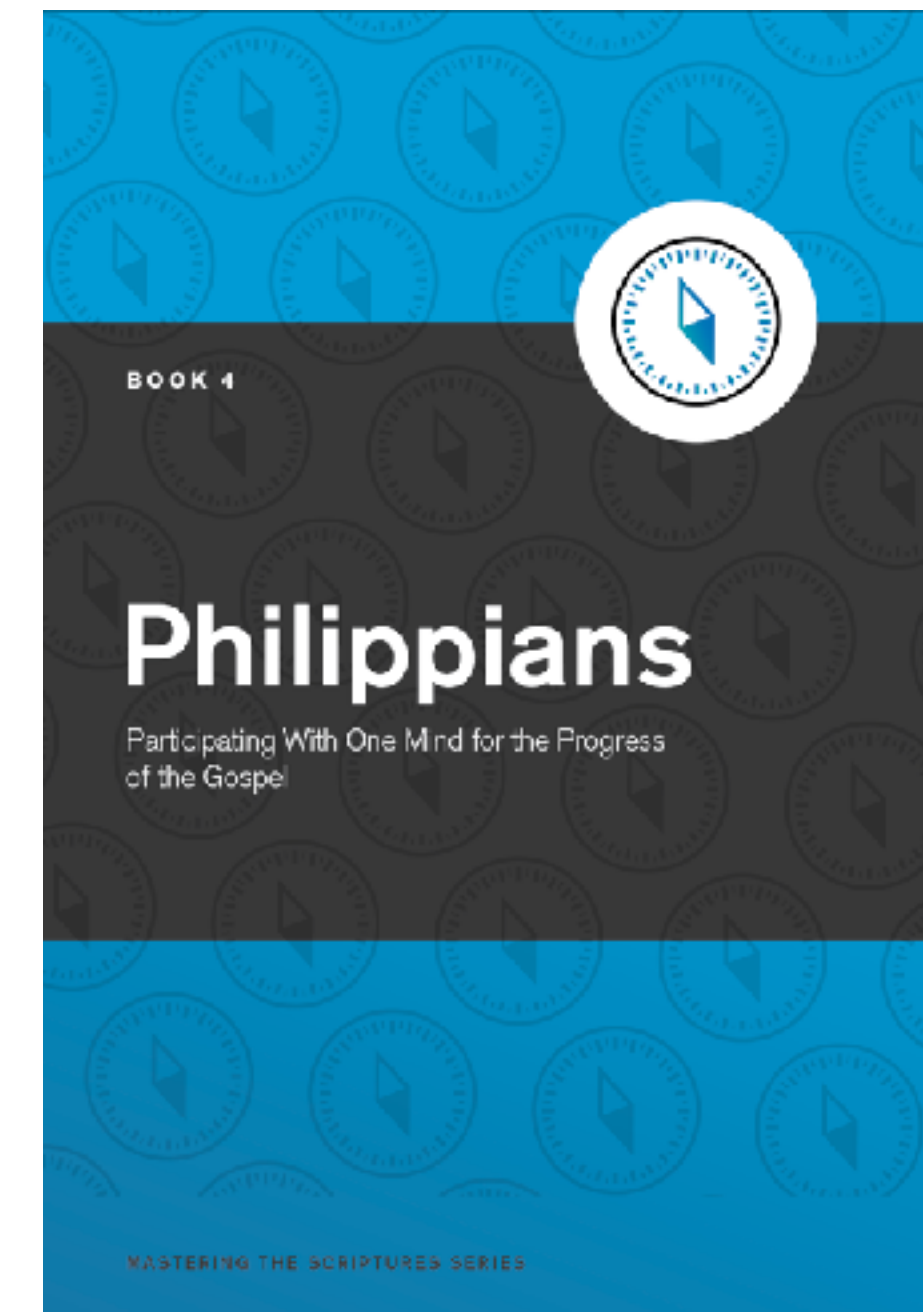
Feb, 60 to March, 62



Autumn, 60



Autumn, 61



Spring, 62

Introduction to Paul's Early Letters

As we learned in Paul's early letters, the gospel is not fully understood in Western Christianity today.

Some build legalistic systems, and others build a social gospel. But most importantly, the gospel is to be lined up with a set of teachings for the churches. Those teachings are not understood and often not practiced by our churches today.

In this series, we will now get a fuller picture of the church as Christ's grand strategy. And we will see that the Western church, which is in decline everywhere in the West, is even further from Christ's strategy.

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, 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

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 for an entire 3-year period, in the whole plan of Christ.

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

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

Networking Insights from Paul's Middle Letters

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."

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 for an entire 3-year period, in the whole plan of Christ.

We will look briefly at 4 key passages in Ephesians this morning:

2:19–21; 3:7–10; 4:1–6; 4:11–16

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

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.

Ephesians 2:19–21

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this passage, we begin to build the picture of the Church.

- It is a large household—one big global family
- It has one foundation built by the Apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone.
- The whole structure is built by Christ—His tools are the Apostles and prophets, an idea we will expand on in a moment.

Introduction to Paul's 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

Introduction to 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.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

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, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1–6

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this passage we see more about that foundation

- There is just one foundation being laid—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God—weaving it all together in His great plan for fully realizing His kingdom with Christ on the throne.
- The one hope and one faith are essentially overlapping concepts referring to *the kerygma*—the gospel story, the core of our hope; and *the didache*—the faith, the teaching, the deposit, the sound doctrine.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ 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

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this final passage, we see how the Church is built and what it does.

- It is built by those gifted leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers. They equip the saints in the churches to do the work of the ministry—service
- The saints do the work of the ministry (not hired ministers); and when they are equipped and doing the ministry, the church will mature; and when the church matures fully in Christ—the watching world will see Christ.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

This is worked out in networks of churches—remember Paul is writing these letters to churches in the extended network he was building around Ephesus—11 churches.

Remember what he said later in his letter to Titus:

- He left him in Crete to set in order the churches on the island of Crete
- And when they are set in order—built correctly—he finishes with “let our people engage in good occupations and meet pressing needs.”

That leads us back to Re:BUILD.

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 entailed in "the work of the ministry"? Who is to be doing the work of the ministry?
4. How do we know if we are becoming mature churches? What is the criteria?

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



How does Re:BUILD work?

It is a 3-year program.

Ideally, some in our churches invite individuals or broken families into their homes for 3 years.

We build a core team around them from our churches and clusters. (God has given us all gifts.)

Each needs a champion.

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RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs

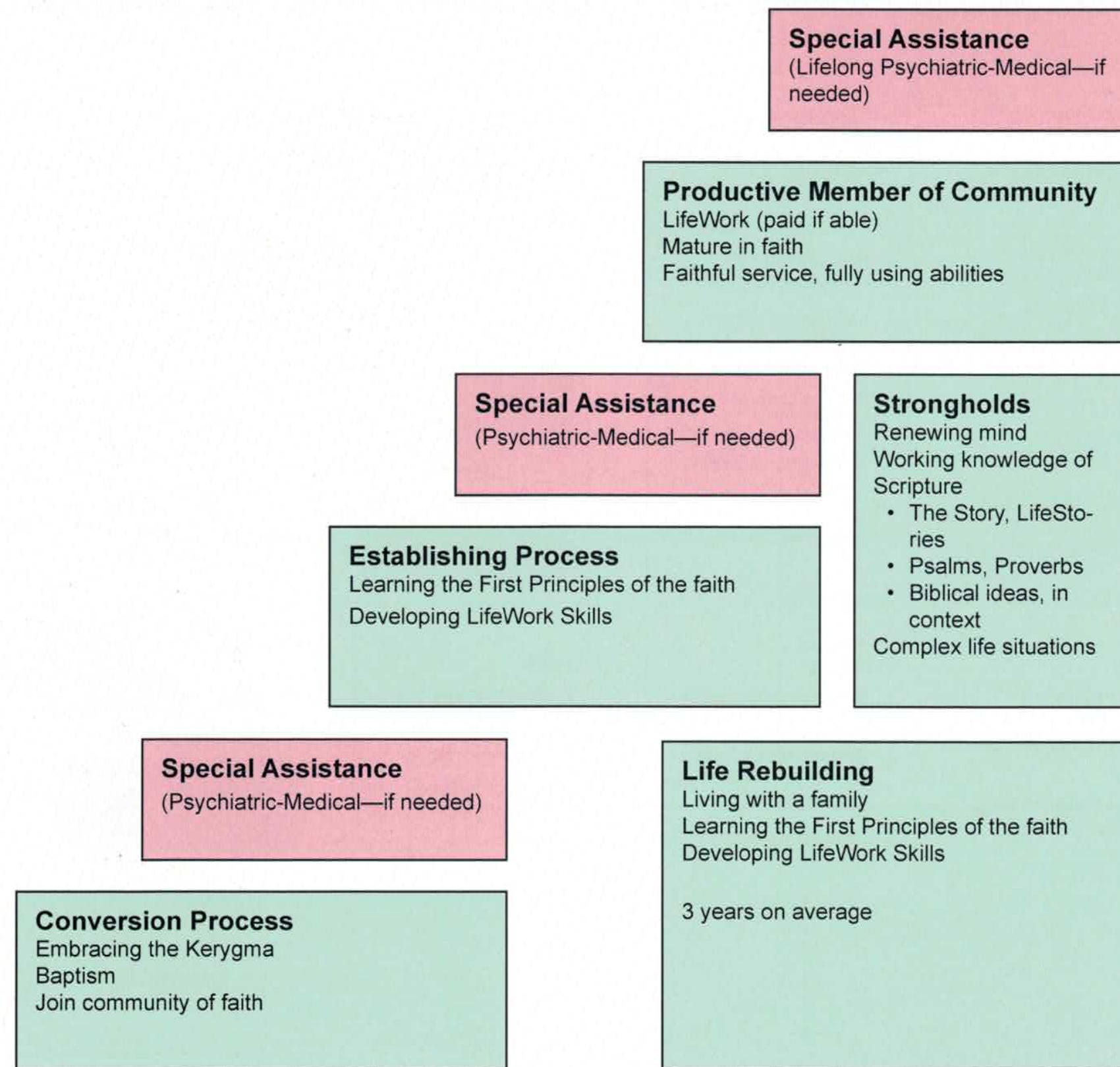


In order to scale this in tough inner cities and especially shadow cities with not many good homes (Mumbai 70% slums), there are 3 options:

- 3 years in our homes (Nancy and I, 27 years)
- halfway house (can be a profit enterprise)
- home confinement (Families Against Mandatory Minimums); Trump bill

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Pastoral Care Taxonomy



Build on a taxonomy that integrates

- shepherding
- churches and clusters in our network
- a counseling process
- Re:BUILD
- all designed to help everyone “engage in good occupations”

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Pre:BUILD

“3 Day Needs” - Short term needs that can be met immediately.

- Examples
 - Gas
 - Food
 - Utilities

“3 Month Needs” - Slightly longer term needs that help “bridge the gap” in an individual's life.

- Examples
 - Short-term financial shortfall
 - Housing availability
 - Personal crisis

Re:BUILD

“3 Year Program” - Multi-year program for individuals who want to rebuild their lives.

- Examples
 - Home
 - Team
 - Life and job skills

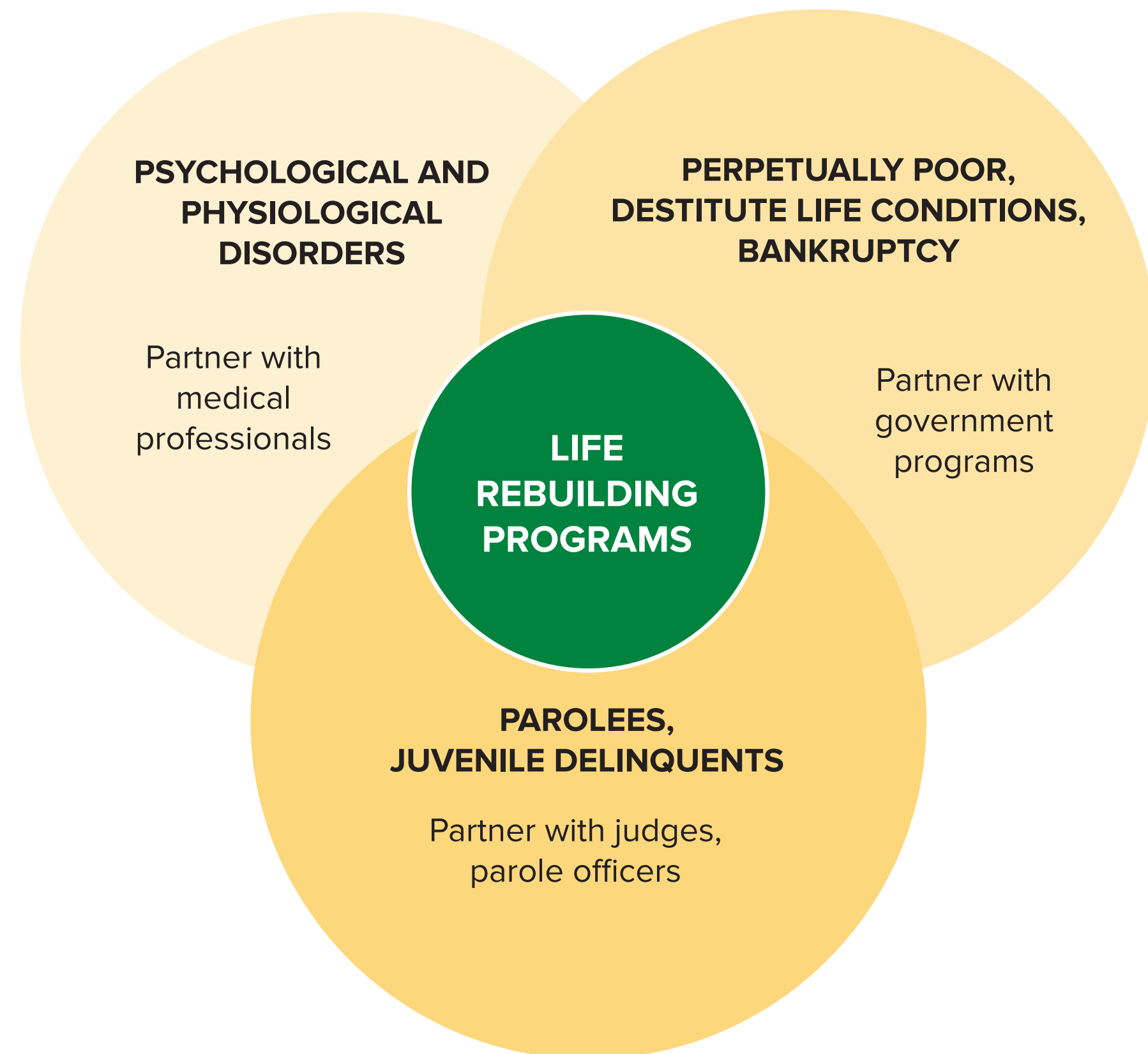
Open homes are needed at 3 different levels.

Randy and Nancy are in charge of determining whether we can put a program together for them.

We need a home.

We need to build a team around them— with a champion for them.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters



We are making great progress in this area.

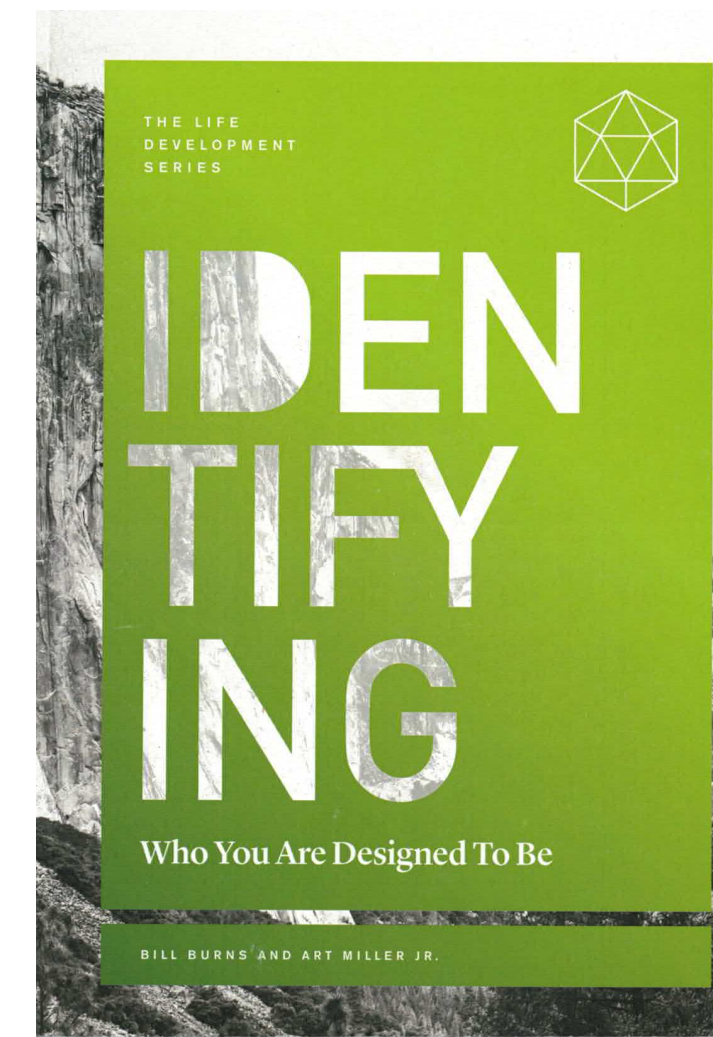
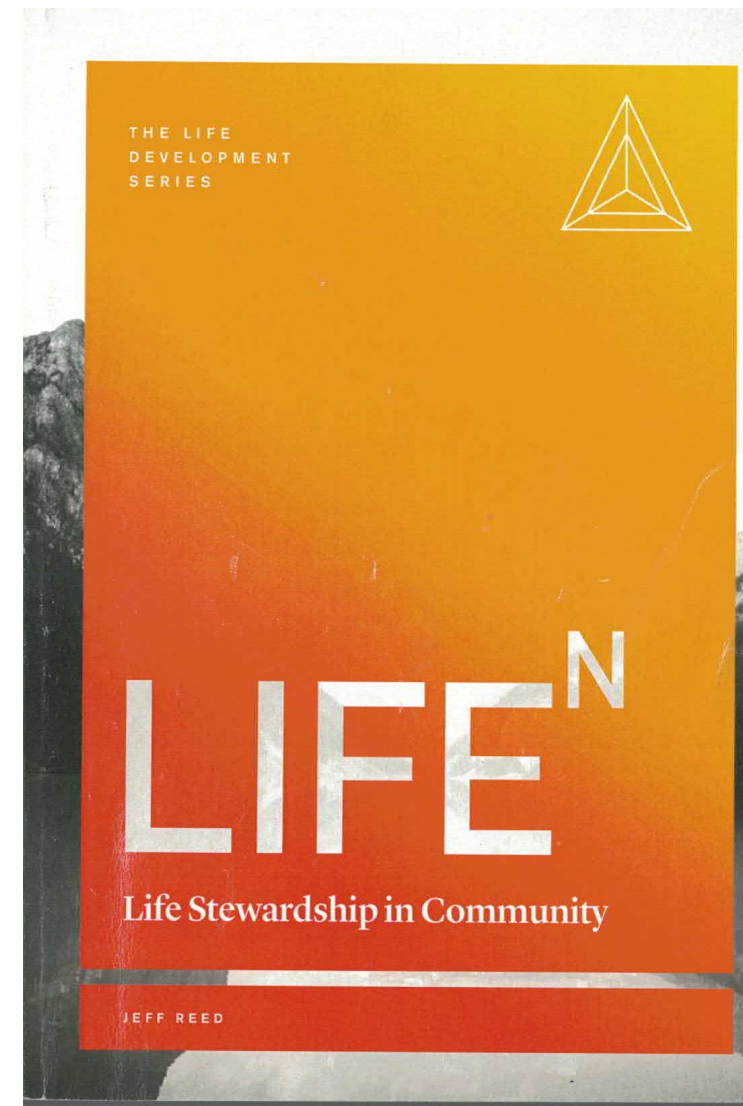
- School system and social services are very positive toward Re:BUILD.
- The Health Clinic, for those with health care barriers, really likes it.
- Randy is working on businesses and getting good response.
- The new Ames Healthy Life Center will fit perfectly, 2022

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Our tools

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Our tools

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



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New tools coming this year

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs

- Shepherding–Counseling manual
- Re:BUILD manual
- Re-publishing *Artisanship and the Lifelong Pursuit of Wisdom* for developing life skills



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



Our current situation

- about 8 in program
- 3 young men being released from prison this spring
- 2 examples
 - Mayte
 - Andrew Neal

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1 Corinthians 13:11

Mayte

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Hey there hope you're doing well. I type this letter to you in hopes for you to give me a shot to better myself. I want to say I am very grateful for in any way shape or form you have helped me in the past, and maybe in the past it seemed like I wasn't grateful. Which I will admit I may have come off that way but that is not my intention. I really look up to you guys and only dream to bring up my kids in a home like yours one day. In the past whenever I would do anything I would be ashamed. Or I was to do something, I felt that you guys wouldn't understand me, not just you guys but in general I felt that no one would understand me.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Since I've been on my own and since I've fallen off I've learned many things and failed many times. Mind you I didn't always fall short I did have good moments and proud moments. Example being, I learned I can actually afford to make ends meet, before I remember moving out and always thinking I never had enough, every time though, through the hardship I found myself in I did gravitate a lot towards God. Again I wasn't perfect with my relationship with him. we still aren't perfect but man I can for sure say is he's is my center of attention. I want him more than anything. I don't want to stray away from him no longer. I feel so much happier with him in my life. It's like all my depression goes away.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Andrew: gosh i dont know a lot about when i am getting out or when for sure iam in treatment right now and that means that i am going to be released soon as in a few months. soon in here is longer then most people would think. i would love to be with you out there but i dont know how it works with you at all and theres a chance i can go to the half way house in desmoines. its not ideal for me to be there i think i would do better in a house but with you taking as long as you did to get back to me i had to start looking other places to figure things out. but just so you know my sister did some digging on the program and your church and the reviews are all good across the board. i want to have my own place and job and be on my feet and providing for me in time. when i get out the most important things are job and place to go if the place to go is with you then all i have to do is find a good job and then work on all the other things that life brings.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

the best i know of when i get out is march. and thats happening fast. my counselor here would need to know i have a place to go soon to make it possible for me to go there instead of the half way house in desmoines. i have family there if this housing of yours doesnt work out immediately for me to parole there or if you want me to go through the half way house first to prove i deserve something like your offering. and i do plan on going through the program and learning from you and having you give the best chances you can for surviving out there.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters



Then Christ will be seen in the ministry of the churches

in inner cities in North America—those we are serving will see (“meeting pressing needs”)

and those watching the churches working and serving will see

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters



In North America, the secular society will be watching.

In the Global South, those following a world religion will be watching.

This is a practical way.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



Why is Re:BUILD so engaging? So attractive to churches?

In a practical way, it puts churches back in the game.

And it is at the center of meeting pressing needs in a way no other groups can do it, like the churches — a true family of families.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

There are many ways to impact the city
—Seeking the Welfare of the City:

RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs

John—mayor

Sam Schill—Startup Ames

Nancy Carrol—Heartland Senior Services

The new Healthy Life Center

With Re:BUILD at the center, we can
have a powerful impact!



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But we have to be following Christ's grand strategy for the church,

which Paul framed in for us in Ephesians and continues to unfold in the rest of the middle letters and in his final 3 later letters to Timothy and Titus.

Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

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Think about your home.

Think about your gifts and talents.

Let Nancy or Randy know of your availability.

Don't be hesitant — God will stretch you and use you.