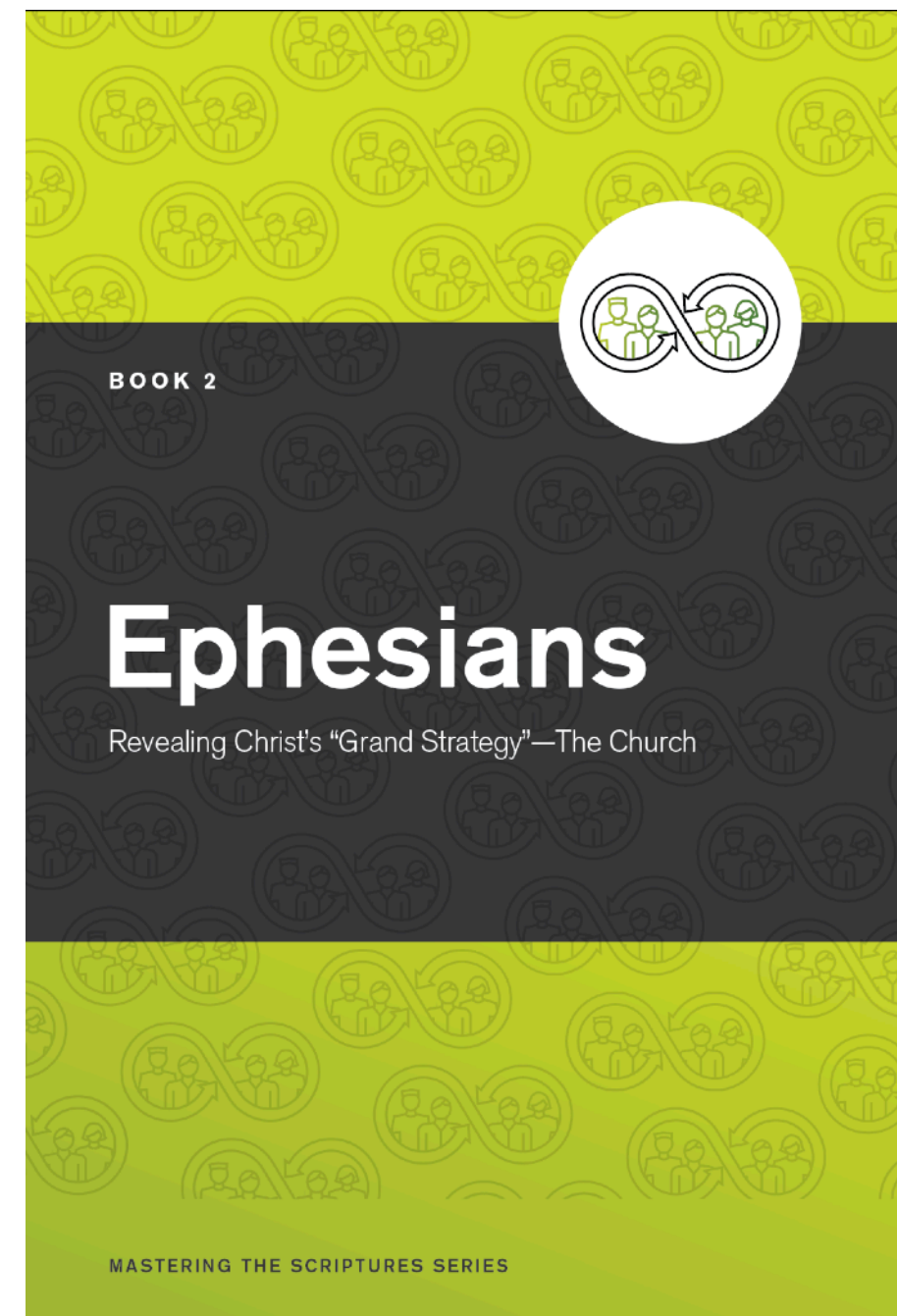
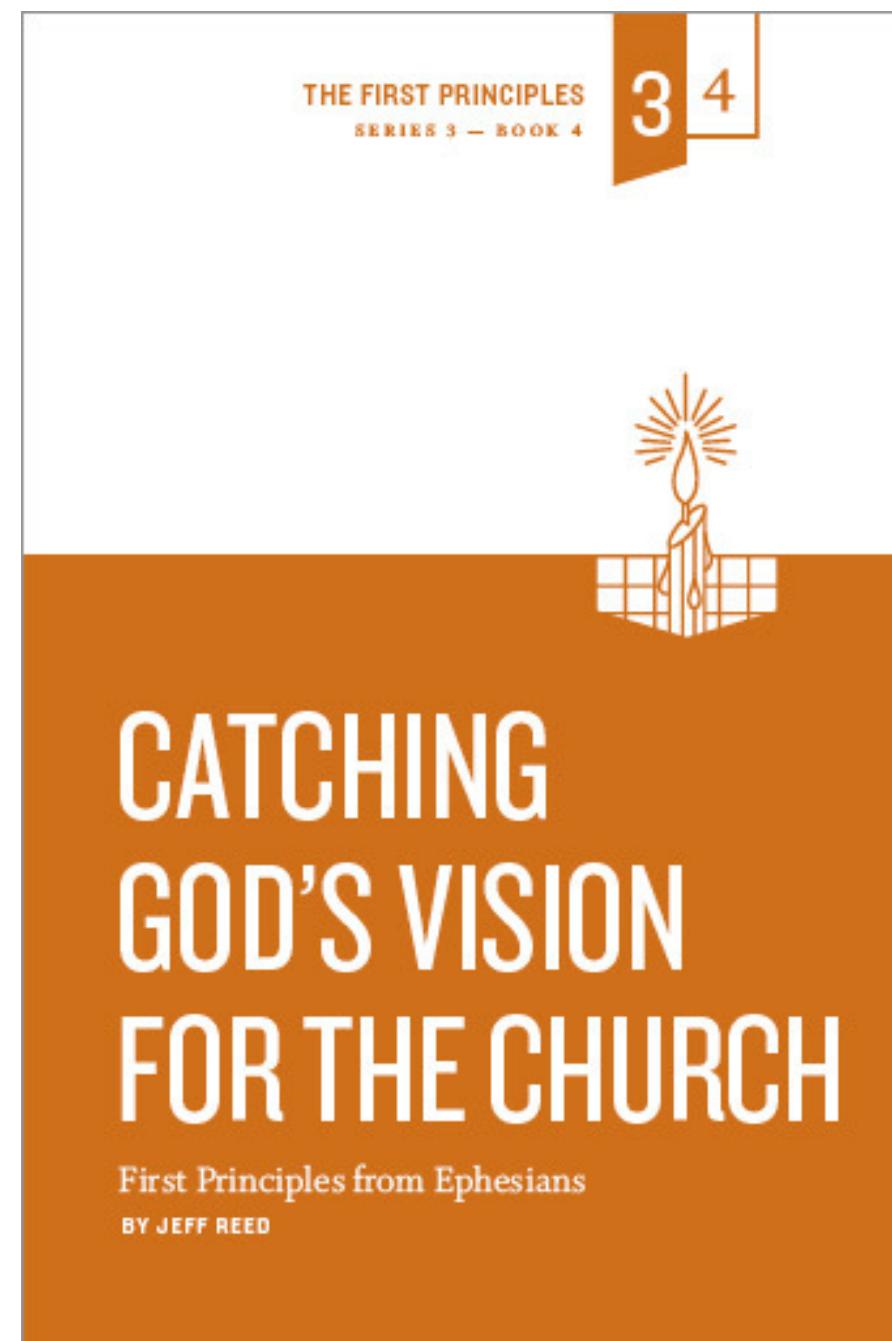


Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians



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 — Ephesians

Issue: The calling of the Ephesian churches — Ephesians 1–3

Questions:

1. In what sense is Ephesians 1–3 the big picture of the calling of the Ephesian churches? of each individual in the churches?
2. What are the core elements of our calling? How do these elements make up one big picture?
3. In what way does this big picture and these elements relate to Paul's prayer that they become fully enlightened?
4. How does fully grasping their calling relate to power being unleashed in the churches and the individual believers?

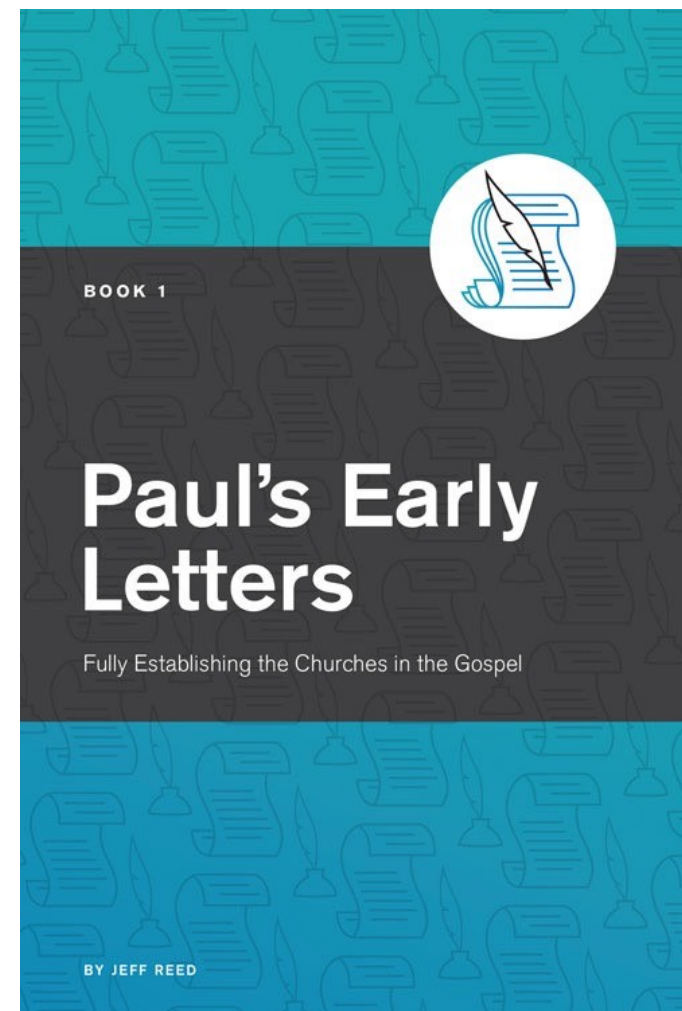
Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

Key to Paul's first section – 1:3–3:21

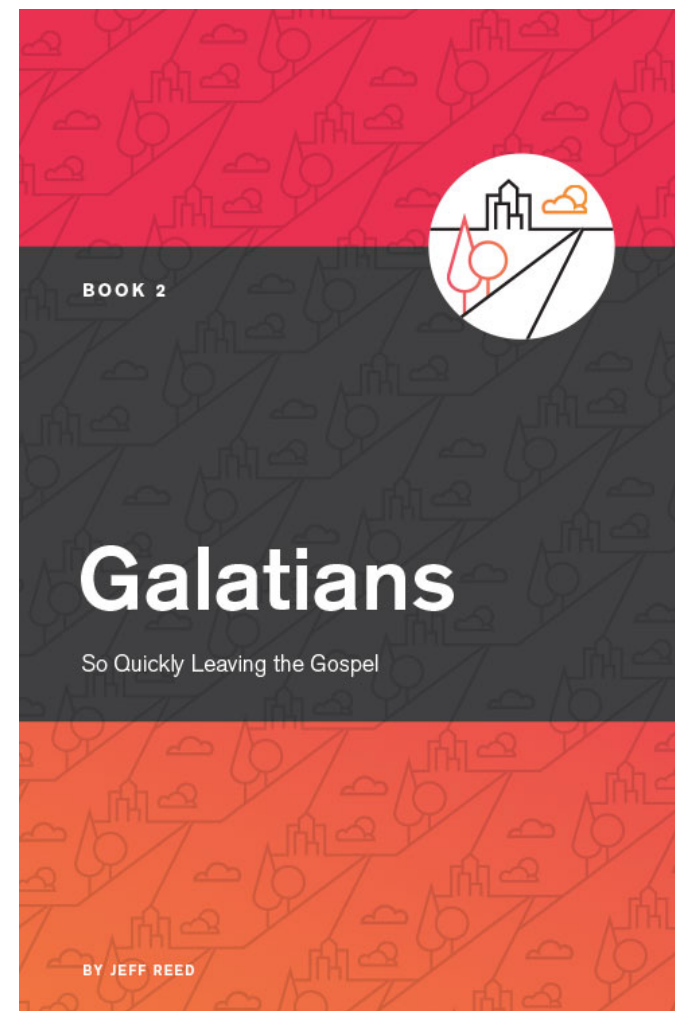
I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called

Ephesians 4:1

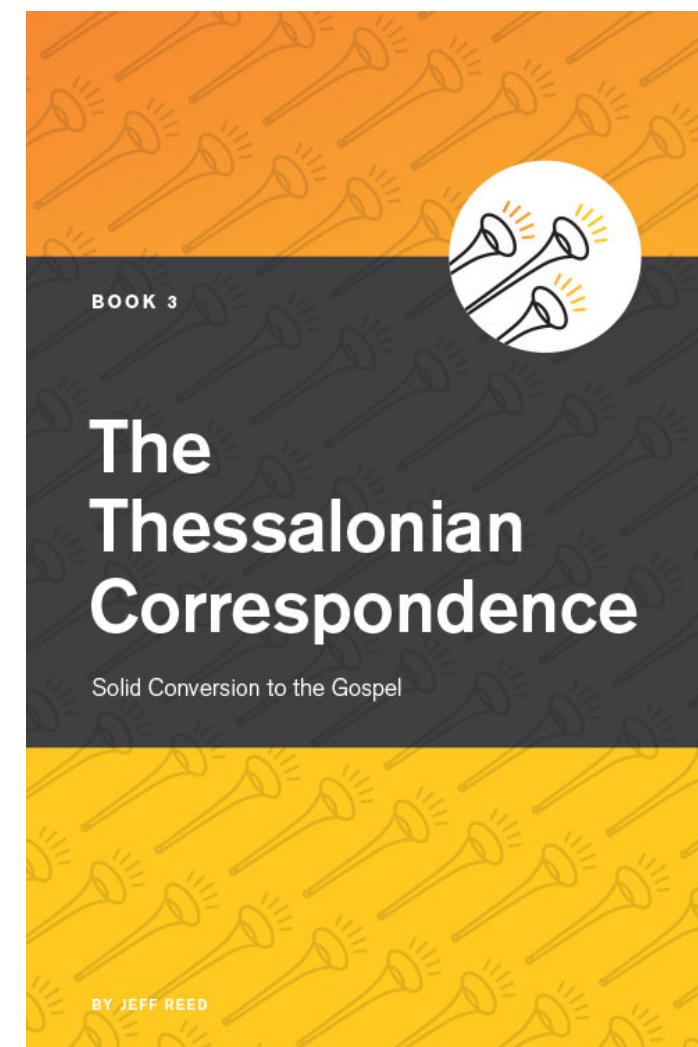
Paul's Middle Letters



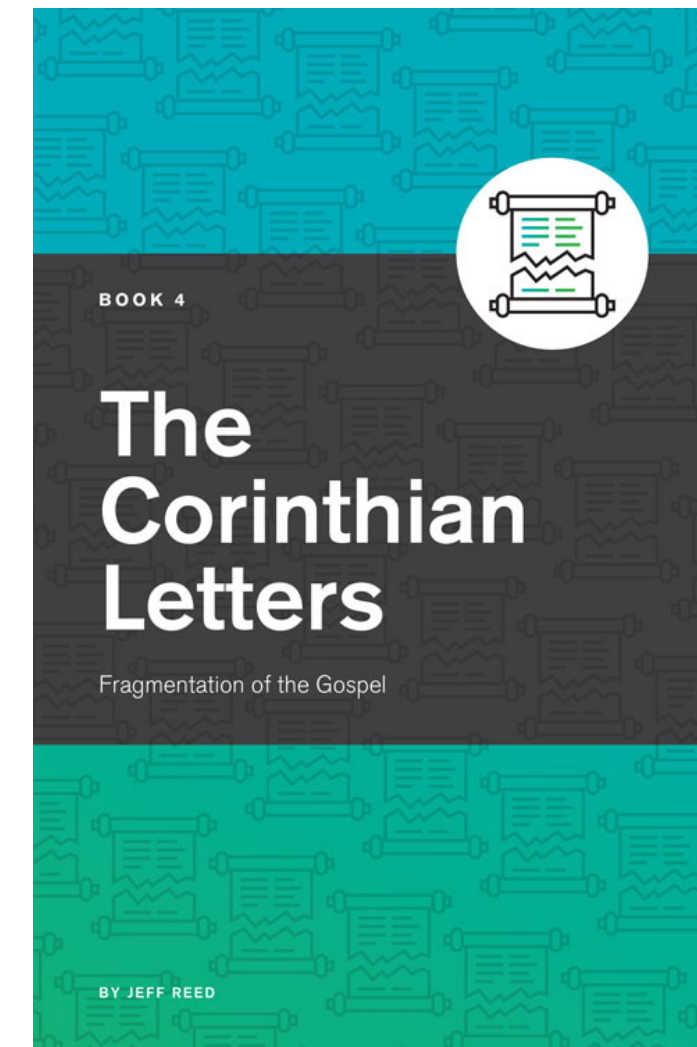
49–56 AD



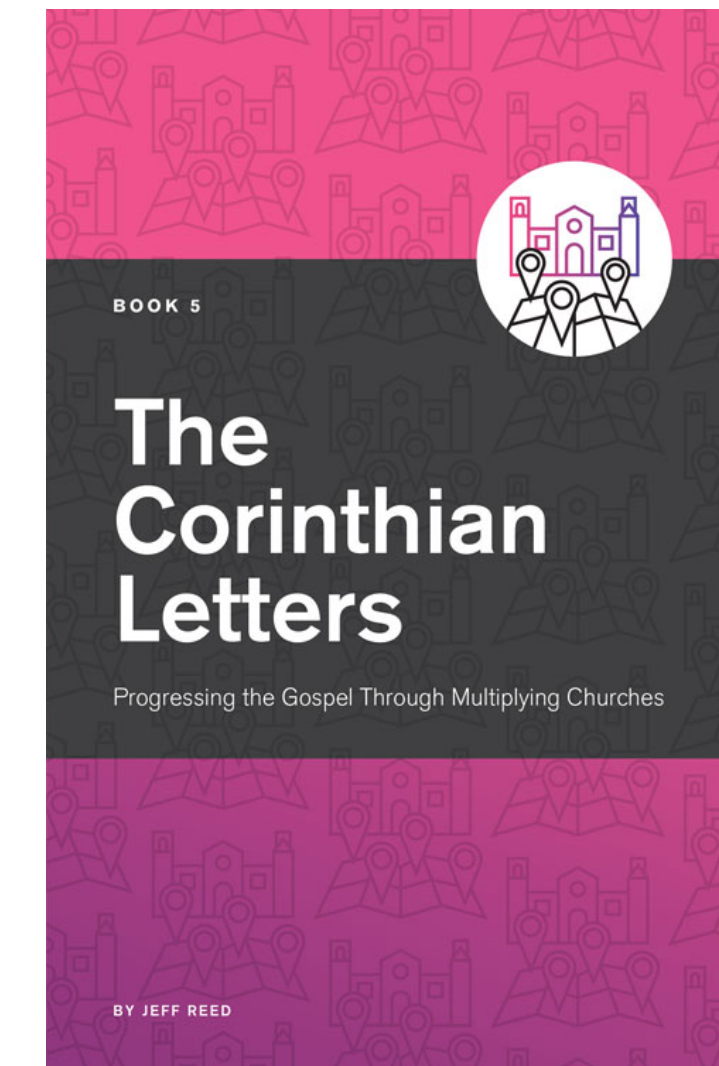
Autumn, 49



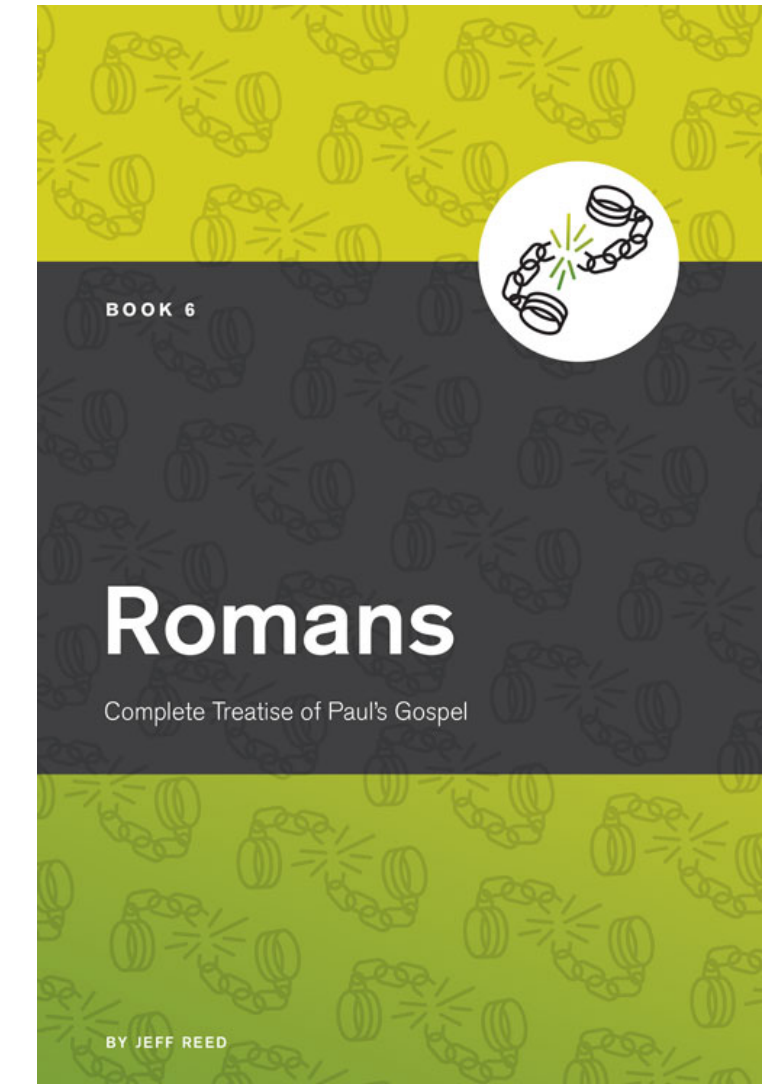
Winter/Sum, 51 AD



Sept, 53



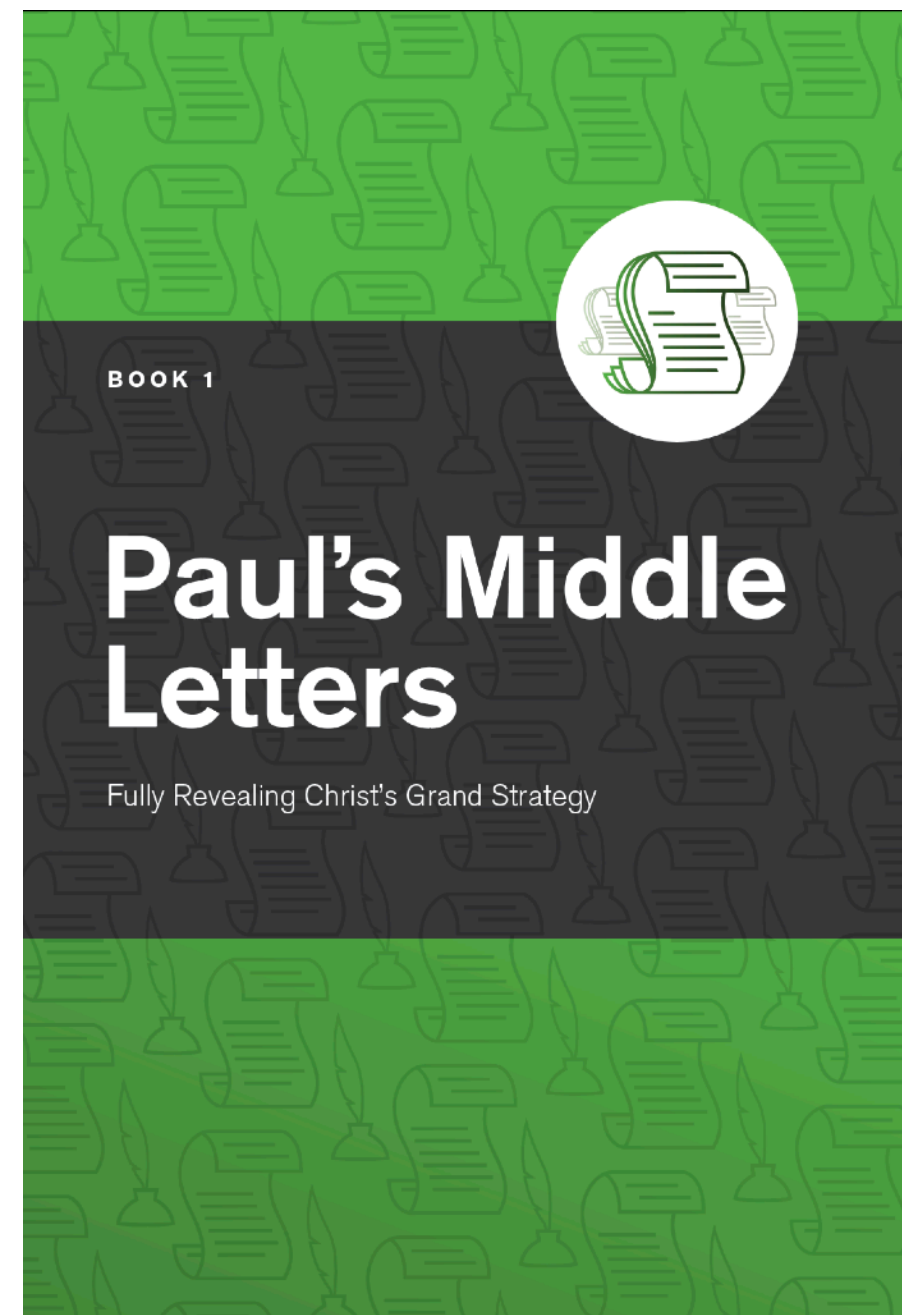
June, 56



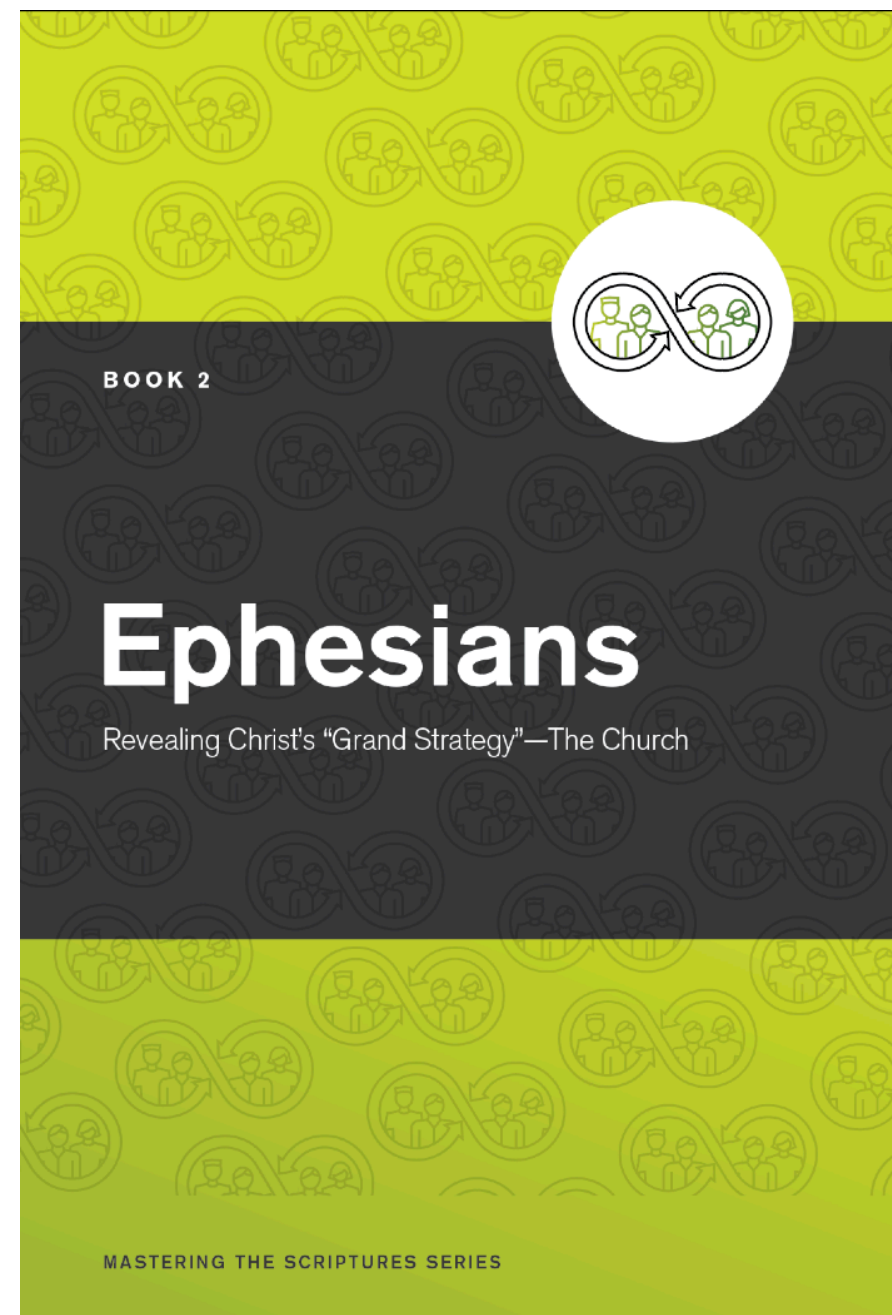
Nov, 56



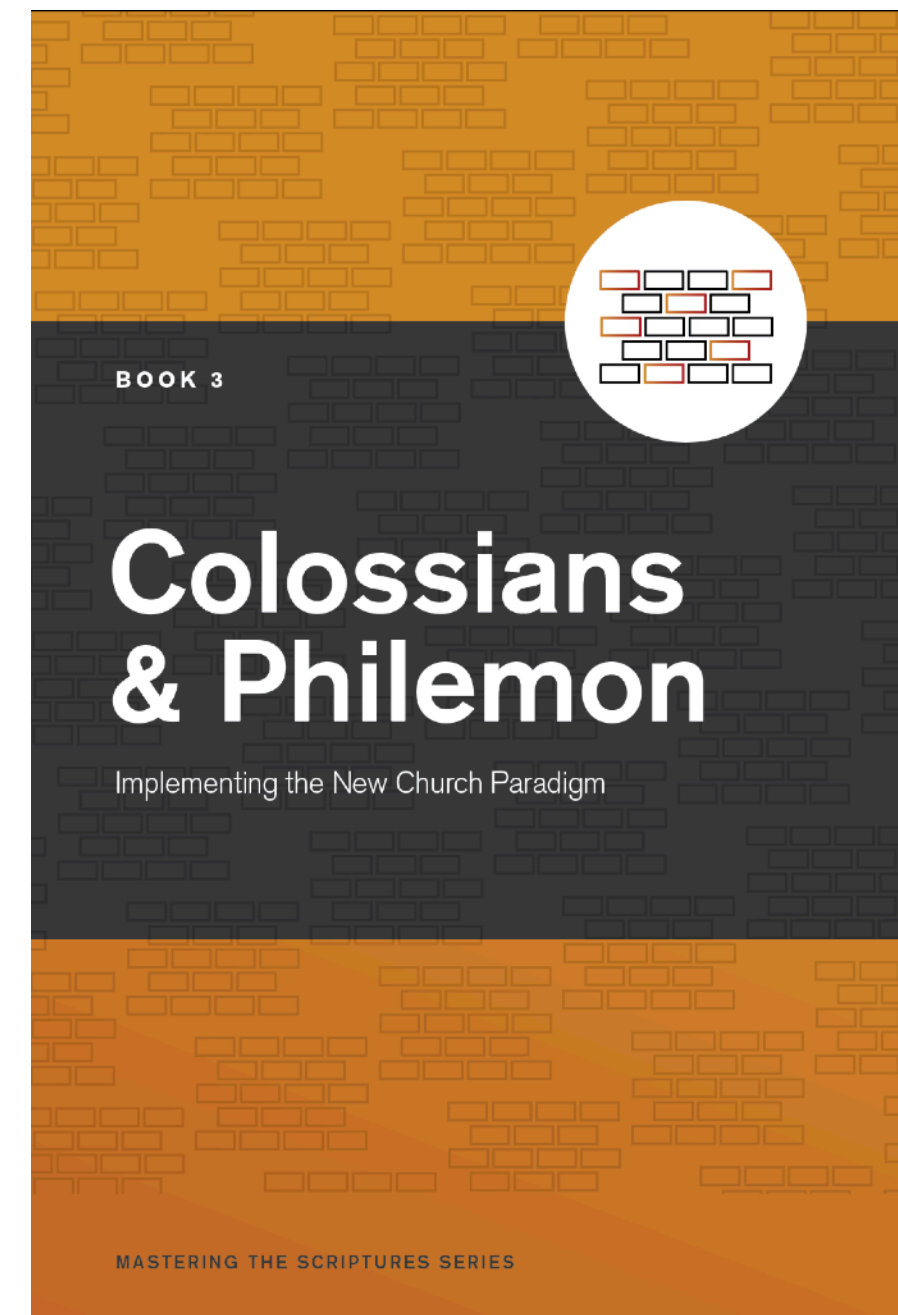
Paul's Middle Letters



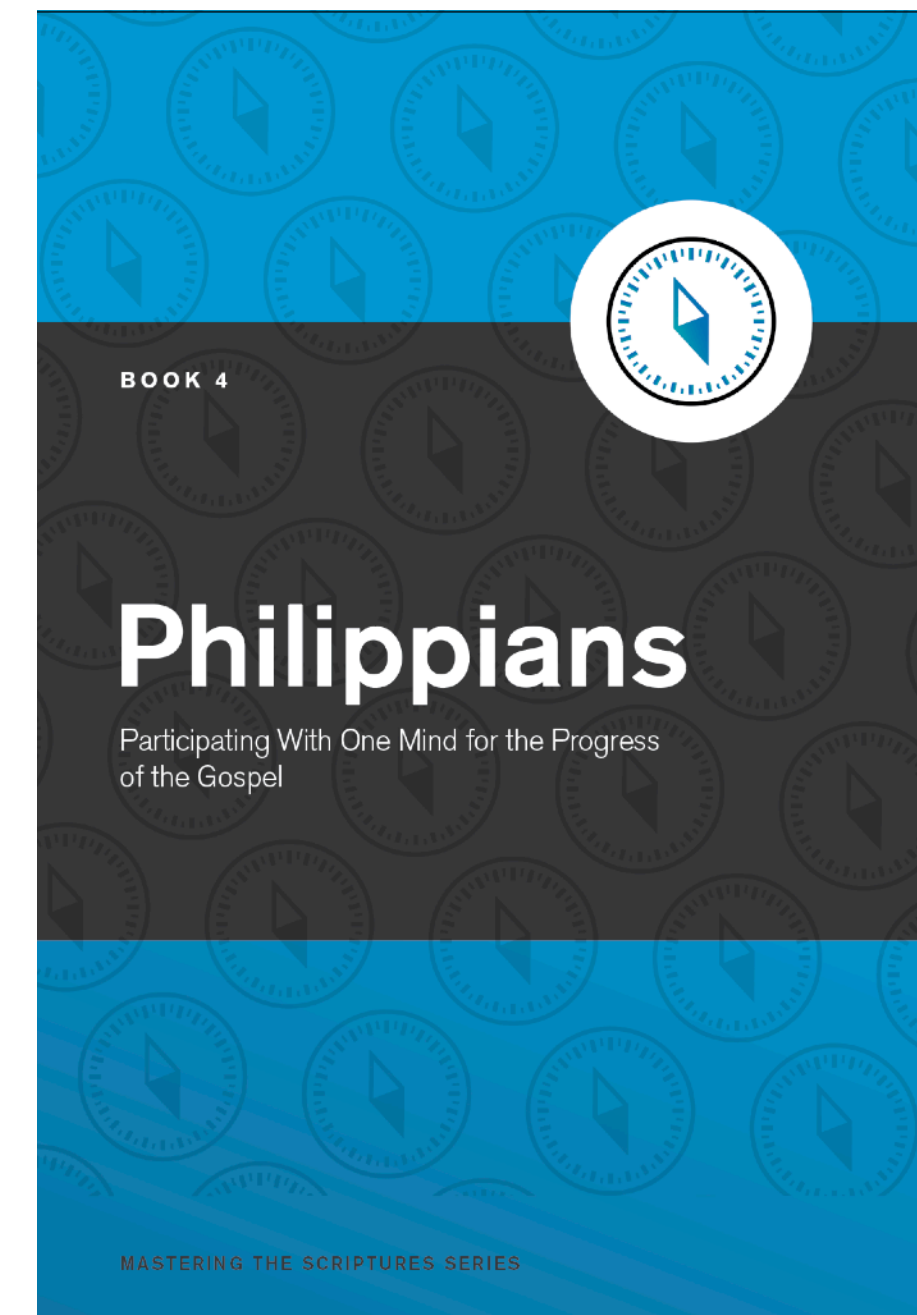
Feb, 60 to March, 62



Autumn, 60



Autumn, 61



Spring, 62

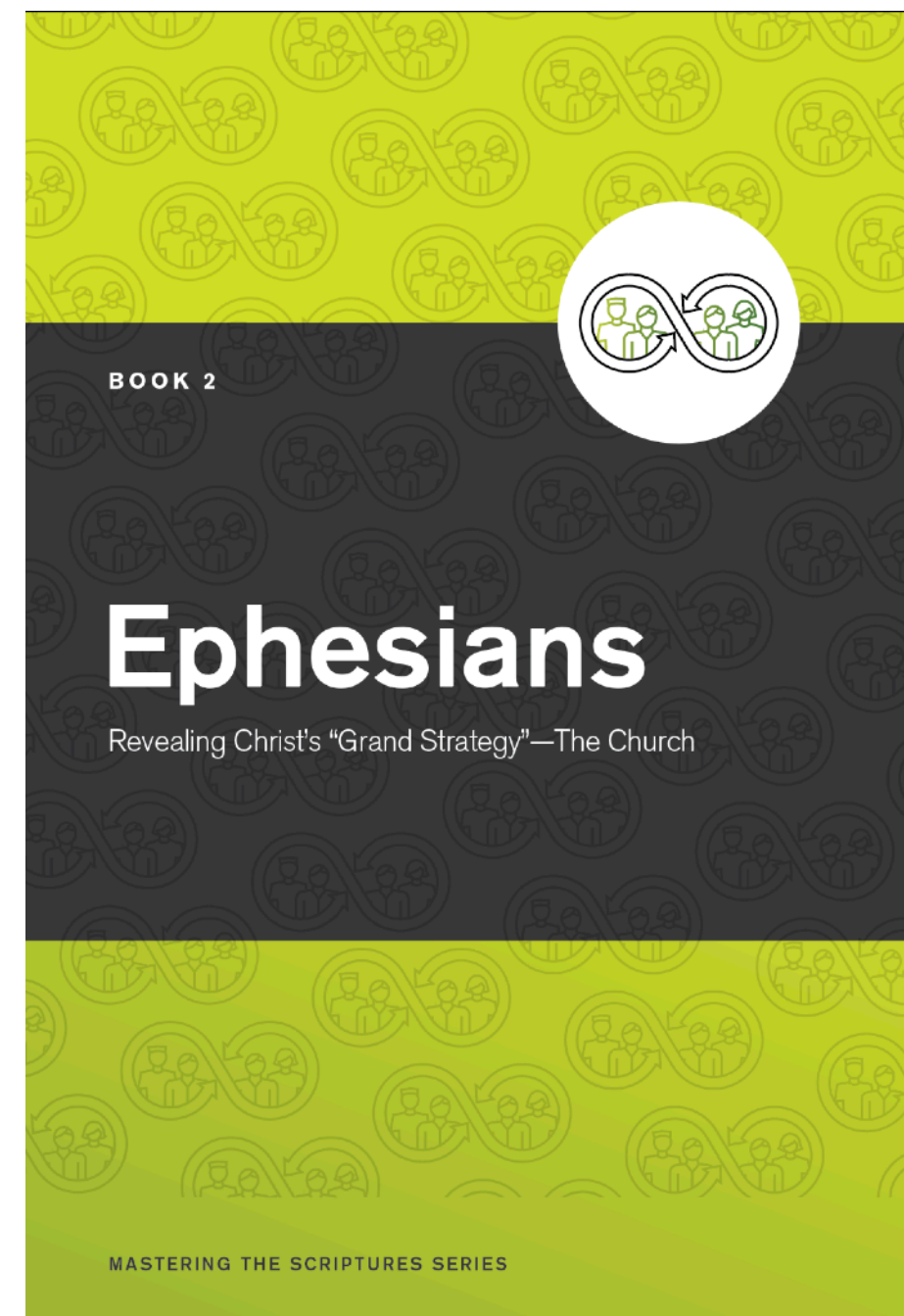
Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Ephesians — Hub Churches

Last week we began the second book in the series — Ephesians

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:

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 — 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

Last week we looked at Paul's two large, similar prayers which almost bookend the first major section of the letter—1:3–3:21

This week we are going to revisit this section and look 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

Last week we saw 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 — 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

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

calling = klesis; the semantic range meaning your role, your station of life, one's status or position in life, vocation

According to Kittling, it is of the same family as ekklesia—assemble, church

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

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.

Furthermore, you can see this in the phrase in Paul's first prayer in 1:18: "so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you"

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

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 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.

Ephesians 1:3–10

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:11–14

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Elements of our calling (our role, our station in life, our 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

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:4–10

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth... that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world... 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 2:11,12,19–22

Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Elements of our calling (our role, our station of 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

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 — Ephesians

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 — Ephesians

Elements of our calling (our role, our station of 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 of 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 – Lifeⁿ 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 of 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.

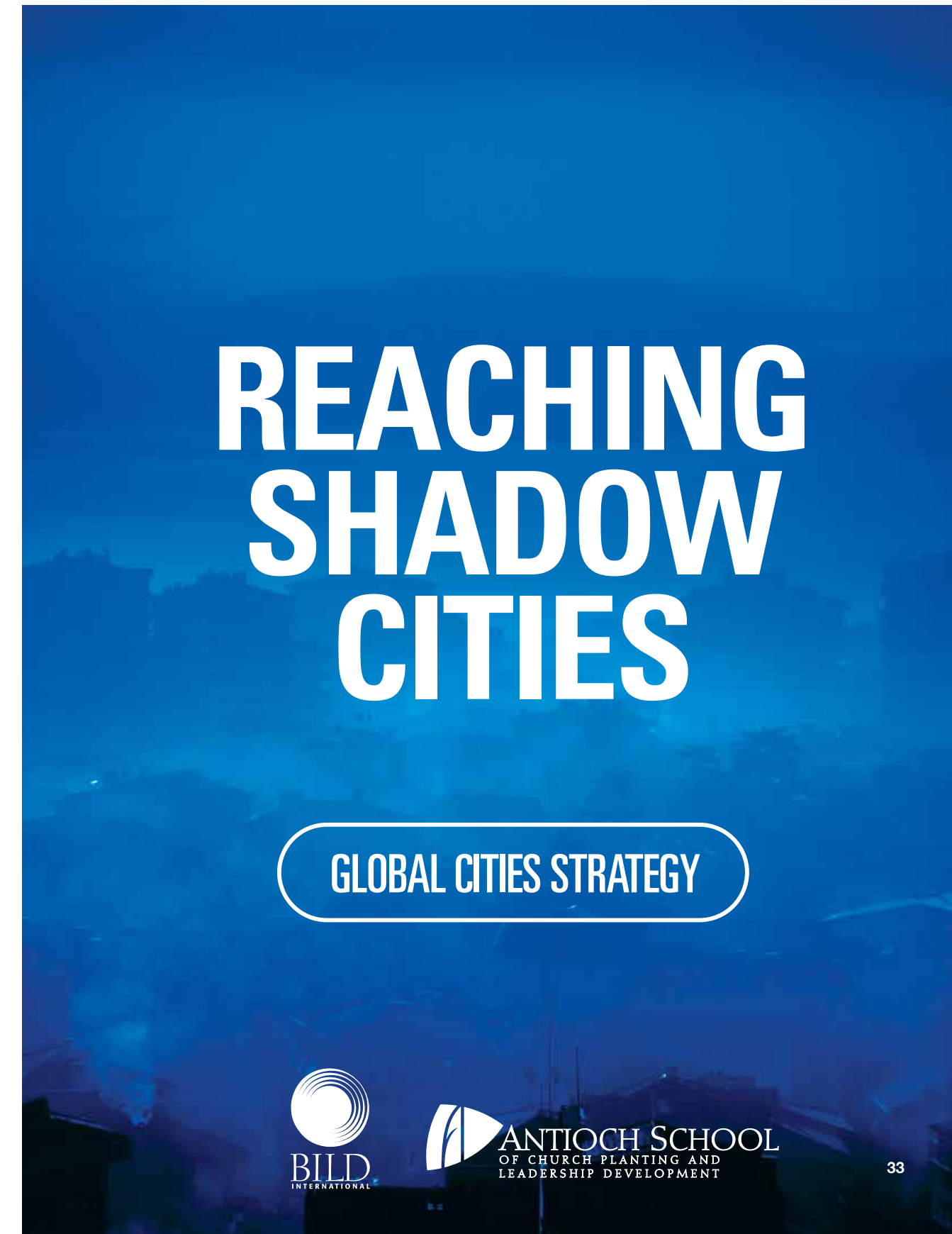
Significance of Ephesians

Issue: Implications of our calling for our churches today

Questions:

1. How does Paul's description to the Ephesus churches relate to our churches today?
2. In this section, how do Paul's two prayers to the Ephesians relate to our churches today? Is the same power available to us today?
3. What would that calling and power look like in the secular West today, where churches are in decline?
4. What would that calling and power look like in the Global South today, where churches are increasing like we saw in Acts and the early churches?

Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians



Paul's Middle Letters – Ephesians

URBAN CENTER DEGREE PROGRAMS

Ministry Practicum Tracks



RE:BUILD

Life Rebuilding Programs



GLOBAL CITY SHADOW CITY DEGREE PROGRAMS

Ministry Practicum Tracks



Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

You hear about these programs all the time.

We ask you to help all the time—money, open homes, volunteer time and use your gifts.

These initiatives and programs are just tools.

But think about what they grow from—part of fully understanding and participating in God's plan and Christ's "grand strategy"!



Paul's Middle Letters — Ephesians

Think about our calling—the secular West.

Little Rock: Imagine the 2,000 prisoners released over the next 2 years and the Re-BUILD program. It is not about rebuilding their lives, it is about them being adopted into God's family and sharing eternally in His full inheritance.

So much for the power of the New Jim Crow; this is true reparations.

Now that is real power!

Paul's Middle Letters—Ephesians

Think about our calling—the Global South

Mumbai: Imagine the 70% of the 20 million who live in Shadow Cities (Global Cities). It is not about the Shadow Cities strategy—it is about them being adopted into God's family and sharing eternally in His full inheritance.

So much for the power of the India nationalism and the JPP party—this is true hope of the future.

Now that is real power!