

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Ideas:

Massive Tension

- Our whole Western system is screwed up about giving money.
- True apostolic/senior eldership boards have been replaced with business boards.
- Foundations rely on financial investors, bankers, and lawyers to grant monies.
- Western strings are attached—a colonial system.

Last year

- Our China experience, gift

Last 2 weeks

- Foundation loss
- Abraham, last 2 sessions
- Ukraine gift

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Issue: The Philippian Churches Participating with Paul in the Progress of the Gospel

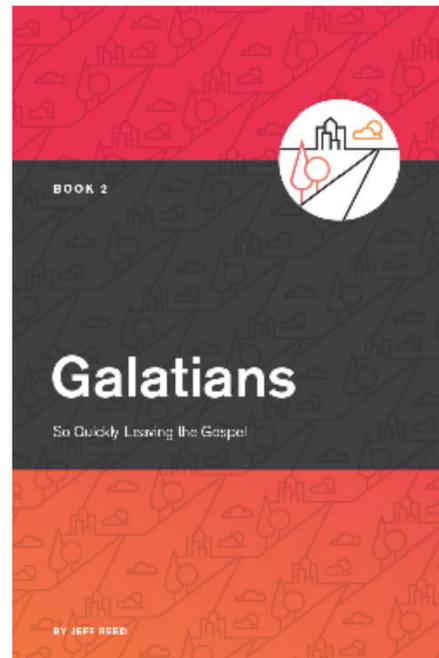
Questions:

1. How did Paul think about the Philippians participating with him financially toward the progress of the gospel? How did Paul think about his own support and the support as an apostolic leader? How did the Philippians think about who Paul was and why they were sending him gifts?
2. What does it mean to give to Paul and his team toward the progress of the gospel? What strings did they attach to Paul's use of their gift?
3. Why was it important that the Philippian churches and wealthy benefactors actively and generally participated in the progress of the gospel beyond their own local expansion?
4. What was the real financial value of the Philippian churches' participation, beyond their financial gift?

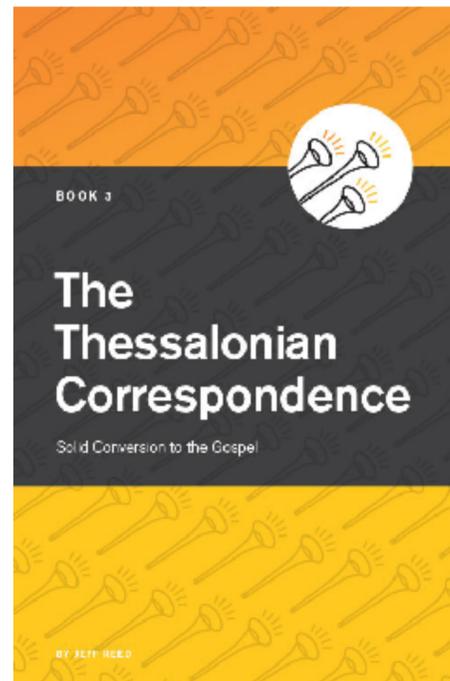
Paul's Early Letters



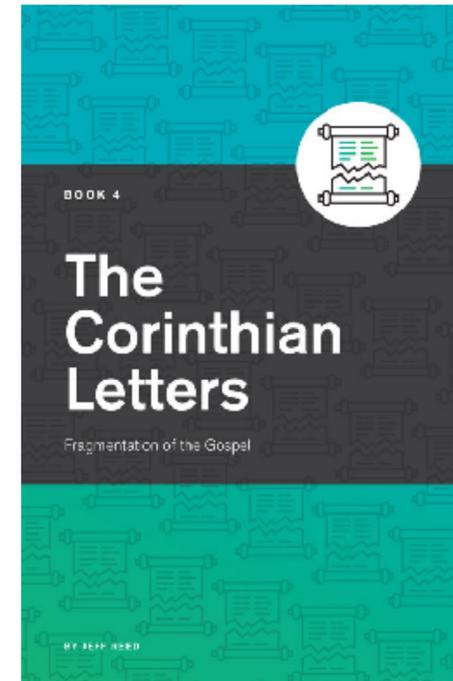
AD 49–56



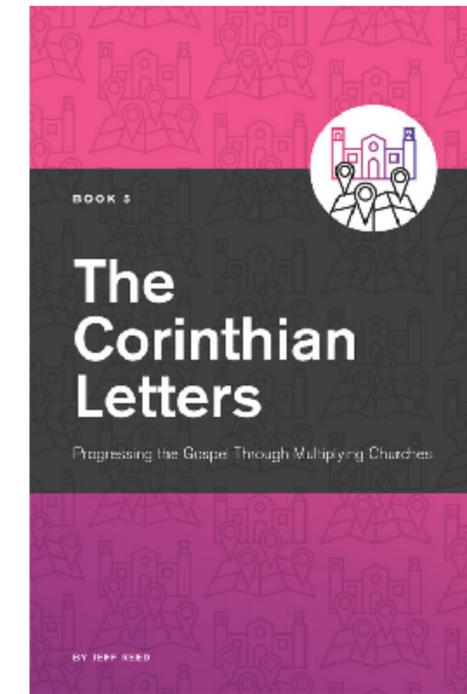
Autumn 49



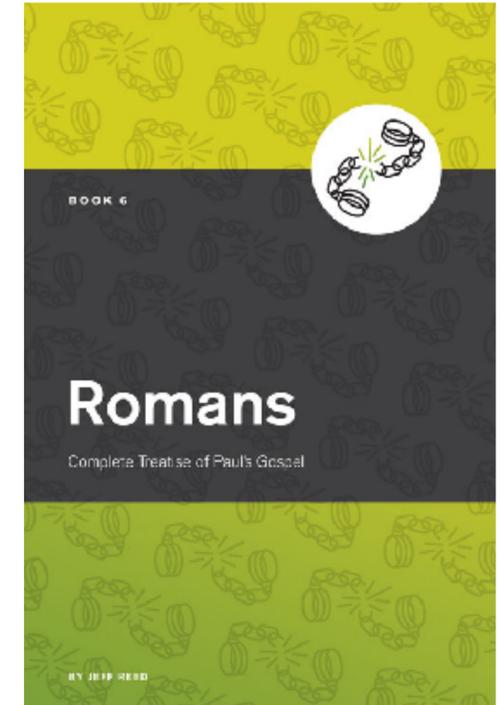
Winter/Sum. 51



Sept. 53



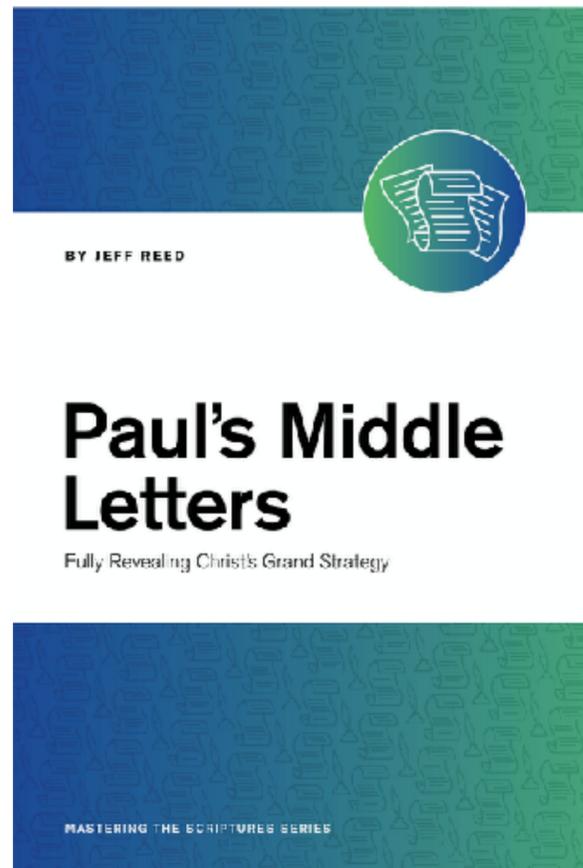
June 56



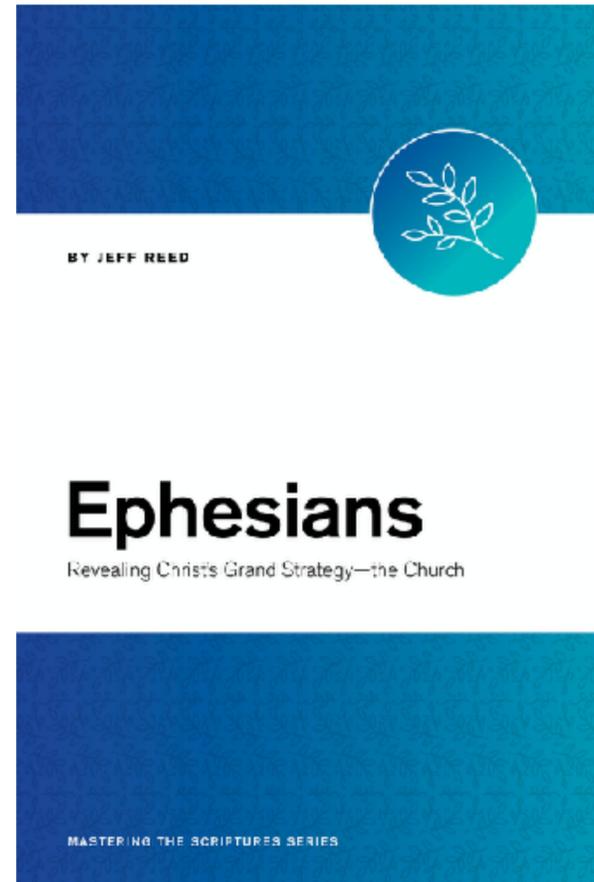
Nov. 56



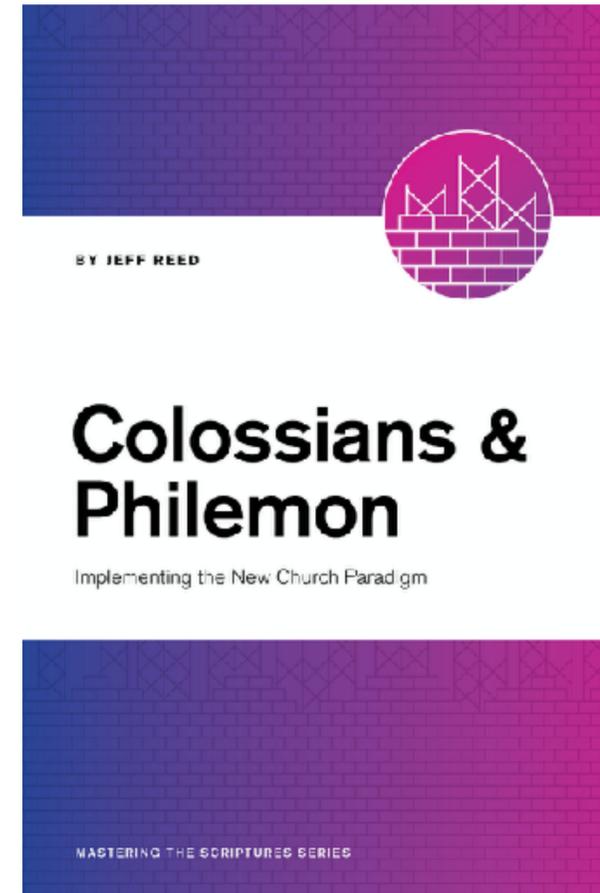
Paul's Middle Letters



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

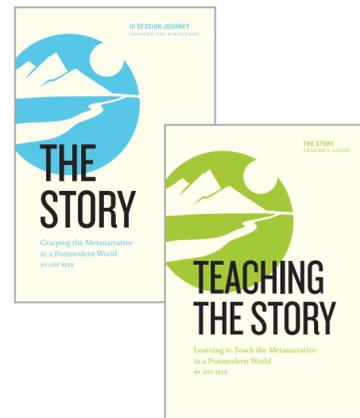
Old Perspective on Paul

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

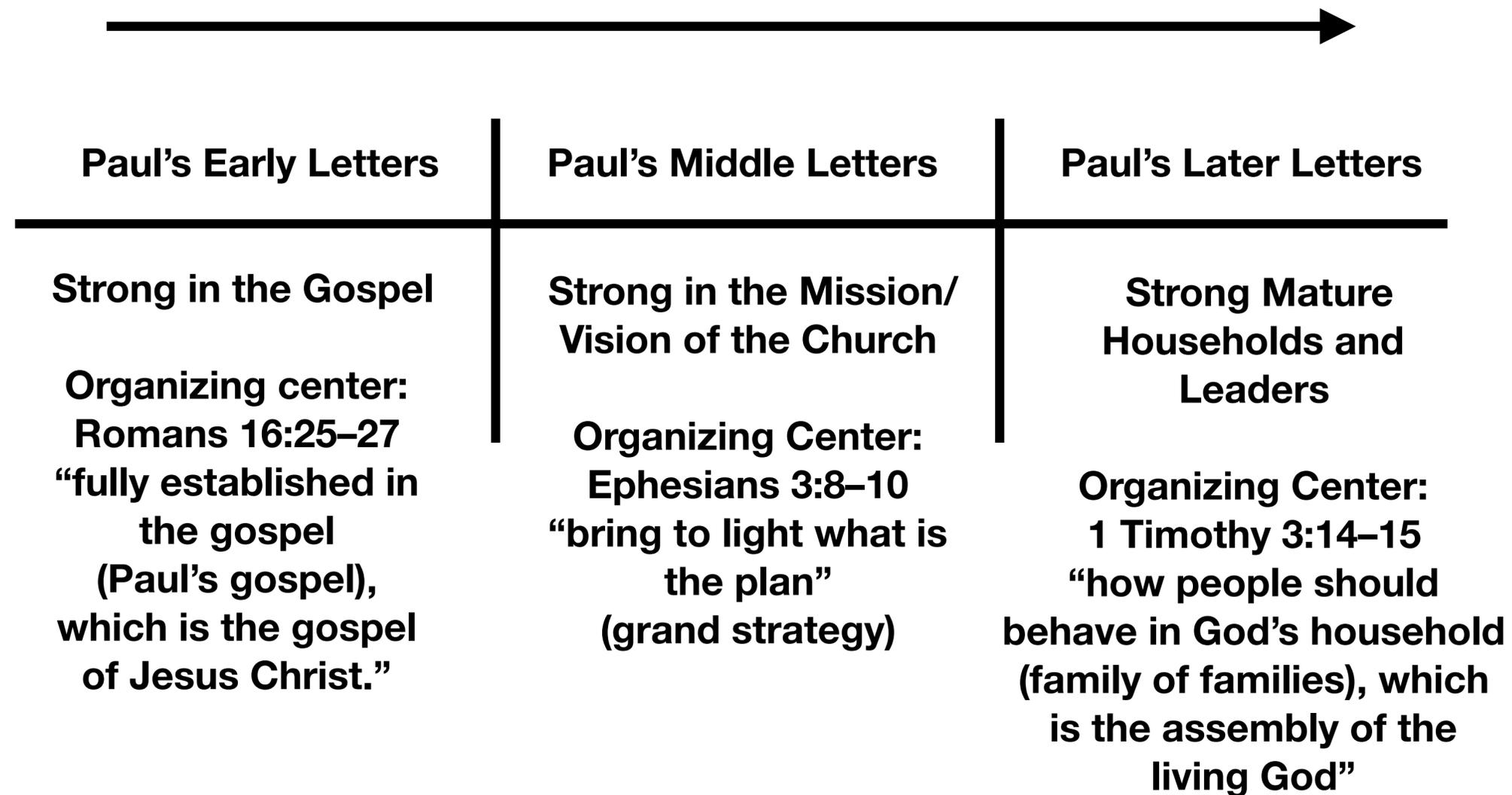


Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year



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 Organizing center: Romans 16:25–27 “fully established in the gospel (Paul's gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”	Strong in the Mission/ Vision of the Church Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10 “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)	Strong Mature Households and Leaders 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”

2021

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.

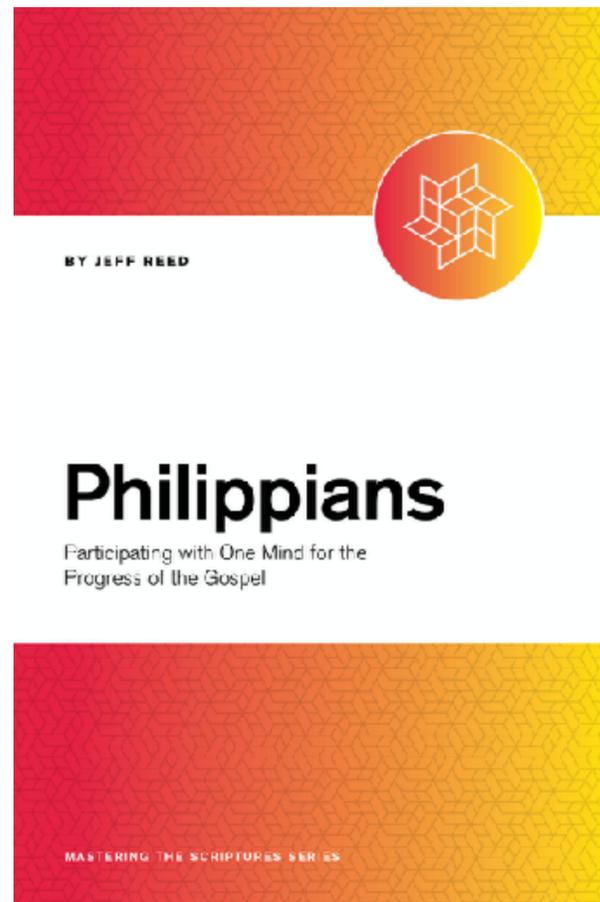
All 4 letters use similar terminology and sort of work as one growing theology of Christ's vision and mission for His churches.



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

Participating with Our Financial Resources 4:10–20

As we turn to this section, we need to realize how Paul used financial gifts and collections from churches and benefactors as they participated with him in the progress of the gospel.

Paul's concept of financially participating in the progress of the gospel is the heart of this session.

Let's review the concept of churches and benefactors participating with Paul in the progress of the gospel, which has been unfolding in his letters up to this point.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

I will just focus here on Paul's Early Letters, where he has two major sections in his letters to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 16:1–24

2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15

I am not going to read these passages here. Instead, I will simply include the conclusions from our study of books 4 and 5 of Paul's Early Letters, *The Corinthian Correspondence: Fragmentation of the Gospel* and *The Corinthian Correspondence: Progressing the Gospel Through the Multiplication of Churches*

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

In 1 Corinthians 16:1–24 we saw Paul guide his networks to collectively participate financially in the progress of the gospel.

1. He understood that building the foundation correctly meant that they, the Corinthian churches, were to be part of a network of churches progressing the gospel (open door in Ephesus).
2. The churches were expected to give towards the progress of the gospel (supporting Paul's team as needed and giving to other networks of churches in the complex network).
3. Paul's process of establishing churches involved extended personal visits, sending key members of his team, and cooperating with other legitimate teams working amongst his churches.
4. Paul worked hard at his churches becoming a genuine network that saw themselves as an extended, empire-wide family of families. He did this through giving, serving, hosting, family greetings, etc.
5. Paul also saw the teaching he delivered (the didache, rule of faith, see Galatians) as common authoritative traditions (faith, deposit, sound doctrine).

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

In 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15 (built on 1 Corinthians 16:1–24), we saw Paul guide his networks to collectively participate financially in the progress of the gospel.

1. Networks of churches, even if they were poor (Macedonian example), need to sacrificially give to the progress of the gospel and to building networks of churches worldwide—a vital model and motivation to others.
2. We need to take collections as churches to contribute to the progress of the gospel, to support apostolic team work and to build the network of networks. (Paul received a gift from Ephesus via Titus, which freed him up, and Paul used the need of the Jerusalem churches to build the network of networks.)
3. Churches need to think in terms of themselves as networks (Macedonian churches, Galatian churches, Achaia churches; China 5 families, India networks, etc.).
4. Networks like Achaia (especially like Corinth), which had a wealth of gifts and resources, were not fully established if they did not excel in using their financial resources to progress the gospel.

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

5. It is easy for churches to begin strong in their commitments, yet fail to follow through. Evidently, it is even easier for churches to fail (and of course individuals) if they have significant wealth.
6. There is a sort of “movement balancing” that takes place when churches that are wealthy support church networks and movements, as may be the case of wealthy networks in the future.
7. Part of the job of apostolic leaders is to keep networks motivated around these ideas to make and follow through on commitments and to see they are used in accountable ways.
8. The proof that we mean business — that we are serious about the gospel and its progression in our own lives and churches — is to participate with our resources, specifically in giving money.

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

9. Commitments to give in significant collections is contagious and motivates others; so key, more wealthy churches and church networks need to take the lead.
10. Paul saw part of his “business” (the ministry is not run like a “profit” business), and that of his team, was motivating these more wealthy networks.
11. Churches need to understand (this applies to individual households as well) that when we give in this way to the progress of the gospel, we are “enriched in every way.” So the apostolic leadership’s motivation to the churches to give in a major way is actually for their own benefit.
12. The truest, fullest motivation, though, is really coming to grips with the gift we have received from Jesus—the gospel and all its benefits, an indescribable gift—which is all part of becoming fully established in the gospel through the giving of our own gifts.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul also gives us more insight later in 2 Corinthians and at the end of Romans

⁷ Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed God's good news to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way. 2 Corinthians 11:7–9 NRSV

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

Romans 16:1–2 NRSV

You can see that financially participating in the progress of the gospel, especially focused on apostolic teams, was a constant discussion in Paul's letters up to this point in Philippians.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Participating with Our Financial Resources 4:10–20

As we turn to this section, we see Paul thanking the Philippians for participating financially with him in the progress of the gospel.

He sees the value of this gift to him and to them.

This then triggers comments on his philosophy of finances and the progress of the gospel.

We have to keep the principles from Paul's Early Letters in the back of our minds as we read these two paragraphs at the end of this letter to the Philippians

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

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. ¹¹ Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

Philippians 4:10–14 NRSV

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul's Philosophy (First Principles)—Paragraph 1 (4:10–14)

You can see that a whole philosophy begins to emerge. We can call this the philosophy of Christ, the first principles of Christ.

This philosophy is radically different from our Western institutional philosophy of giving to apostolic teams and the progress of the gospel today.

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

In the first paragraph, Paul reveals his own attitudes toward his constant financial pressure. What can we observe?

1. Paul had tremendous financial pressure his entire ministry. There were times he had abundance, but we see little of that; rather, the ups and downs ran the length of his ministry.
2. These ups and down did not slow him down; he pressed on towards the goal of accomplishing all he was called to do, forgetting what lies behind.
3. Actually, this constant pressure led to him experiencing Christ's power (endynomoo), making him the dynamo he was (sleepless nights, etc.). That's also why, in this letter, he is grateful for their gifts but also asks them to share in his suffering.
4. From his perspective, he was never in need in regards to whether he was able to fulfill his calling. Money was important, but he never saw his lack of resources as a reason to quit. He could accomplish more with full resources, but his tent-making was always in his strategy, even if it meant supporting part of his team.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul's Philosophy (First Principles)—Paragraph 2 (4:15–20)

You can see that a whole philosophy continues to emerge. Again, we can call this the philosophy of Christ, the first principles of Christ.

Now the focus turns to the Philippians' gift and its importance in their participation with him in the progress of the gospel.

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

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. ¹⁶ For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. ¹⁸ I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4:15–20 NRSV

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul's Philosophy (First Principles)—Paragraph 2 (4:15–20)

There are a couple of key word choices here.

giving and receiving: both the gift and the receiving of human assistance, the Philippians brought money and their service

profit: harvest, fruit (LSJ) v. 17

satisfy: to bring to completion, realize (like a ship fully manned) (EDNT) vv. 18–19

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

In the second paragraph, Paul focuses on the importance of the Philipppians financially participating with him in the progress of the gospel. What can we observe?

1. In the “early days of the gospel,” only the Philipppians sent him gifts. But now, even though the gospel is really progressing and Paul's network is maturing with more churches and benefactors participating financially, the Philipppians are expanding their gifts, also sending people.
2. Paul is excited: he is not pressed at the present time (he feels fully resourced for the next expansion), and he is excited about the profit (harvest, fruit) accumulating to their account, which is going to bring greater and greater satisfaction in every area of their lives and churches.
3. The real financial value of their participation now goes well beyond just their financial gifts, as seen in co-workers being sent like Epaphroditus and Euodia and Synteche. You get the sense that, as his network grows and more churches participate, Paul sees God as pleased and his ability to enlarge his sphere is increasing.
4. You get the sense that Paul is comparing this to the early days of the gospel, praising them in this letter as a model for other churches and anticipating greater expansion — expansion they are helping make happen.

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

I have written a lot on these ideas.

Seek the Welfare of the City grew out of a challenge from Tom McCallie to develop something that would develop future donors in the Acts paradigm rather than the Western institutional giving system.

Encyclical: *Funding Spontaneous Expansion* grew out of frustration at the huge damage Western relief development and mission support paradigms were doing in the Global South.

Mastering the Scriptures: Paul's Letters have several major sections devoted to "giving and receiving" as Paul builds his network.

All these grew out of that conflict. Even *Lifeⁿ* and starting LearnCorp came out of developing entrepreneurial "tent-making" goals.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

It has been a battle, a huge pressure, involving a lot of conflict and personal criticism. These last few weeks it fully entered Michael's world.

- This week, Michael said he has “no more sides to be pressed.” Conflicts without, fears within” —no sides left!
- Devastating blow from a major foundation
- Treated like he's stupid—by bankers, lawyers, financial advisors (in this area it is reasonable to question me, but Michael?)
- Left an open door we have in Latin America

Have you ever felt that way getting a business loan?

Paul's Middle Letters – Philipppians

As I said earlier, we can see that Paul's whole philosophy begins to emerge. We call this the philosophy of Christ, the first principles of Christ. This philosophy is radically different from our Western institutional philosophy of giving to apostolic teams and the progress of the gospel today. Let's contrast them. How do foundations and most of their major donors giving toward missions, leadership development, and large world evangelism and church planting view things today?

- They view themselves (mostly lawyers, bankers and financial advisors) as experts and mission leaders as naive and lacking their skills of good planning, management, and accountability.
- They control exactly how gifts and grant monies are spent and on what, exactly, rather than trusting apostolic leaders and their international partners to prioritize and use resources as they see fit (a colonial-style system).
- They want boards to be made up of wealthy businessmen who can hire and fire apostolic leaders; they expect Western-style corporate management to be placed on all apostolic-type ministries.
- They believe their business skills are more important for success than apostolic leaders and senior elders of church networks.

Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Let's contrast that with Paul's (Christ's) philosophy and first principles of giving to apostolic teams, and partner apostolic networks:

- Paul's was building a *trust network* in which churches and benefactors trust apostolic leaders and partner networks, built around the catechetical framework of Acts, rather than upon Western business management systems.
- While carefully building in accountability of gifts to apostolic teams and networks, gifts were entrusted to them to be used as they saw the ministry unfold, rather than trying to control how and on what those monies were spent.
- Paul expected leadership teams (including boards as needed) to be made up of spiritual leaders: apostolic leaders, benefactors, senior elders—not Western businessmen with corporate skills but little if any apostolic team experience.
- Paul believed that Christ's grand strategy, philosophy and principles, and the Spirit opening and closing doors was the framework for strategic planning, not businessmen's "business" type plans, although he was greatly indebted to and respected and used successful businessmen and women.

Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

We are starting to see this work—a whole new global paradigm, clearly unfolding before our very eyes.

1. It began with our own church, now churches. The original benefactor team funded India, matching our general budget several years in a row. Now a second generation benefactor team has stepped up to follow their example, which is very key to allowing us to continue to be a global resource center church.
2. In 2021, our first global “collection” was taken by our China partner networks, collecting and sending over \$500,000 to our India church network partners. Days were spent shaping that around Paul's network collection principles.
3. These last 2 weeks, Michael and I have worked with Steve Galegor to shape a gift to a key Ukraine church, with the view of challenging our emerging Global Resource Team for Europe to respond to that need.
4. Also this last 2 weeks, we have conversed with Abraham and his emerging network and networks in how to avoid this Western paradigm, which is attempting to control this huge movement we are seeing unfold (12 networks, 55 leaders in EE2).
5. We are producing a paradigm insight paper that I will deliver in August of 2023 which, at a paradigm level, will shape this whole new global paradigm of “giving and receiving,” as Paul built in his network.

Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Issue: Participating with Apostolic Leaders in the Progress of the Gospel Today

Questions:

1. How is the Western system that is followed by foundations and their major donors different from the philosophy and principles Paul followed as he set up his network? Why does it matter?
2. How should we think about giving to apostolic team leaders and partner networks? Who are they? What strings do they attach to our gifts?
3. Why is it important for churches and wealthy benefactors to actively and generally participate in the progress of the gospel beyond their own local expansion?
4. If we participate with apostolic team leaders like the Philippian churches did, what is the real financial value of our participation beyond our financial gifts?