

# The Corinthian Letters

Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches



# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

## 1 Corinthians

The fragmentation of the gospel in Corinthian churches

Building on One foundation: the traditions

Schisms resulting from that fragmentation

The centrality of the gathering (Lord's Supper) in adhering to the traditions

Back to the gospel as apostolic tradition

## 2 Corinthians

The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts: Without and Fears Within

Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

The Importance of Apostolic Authority in Preserving the Traditions

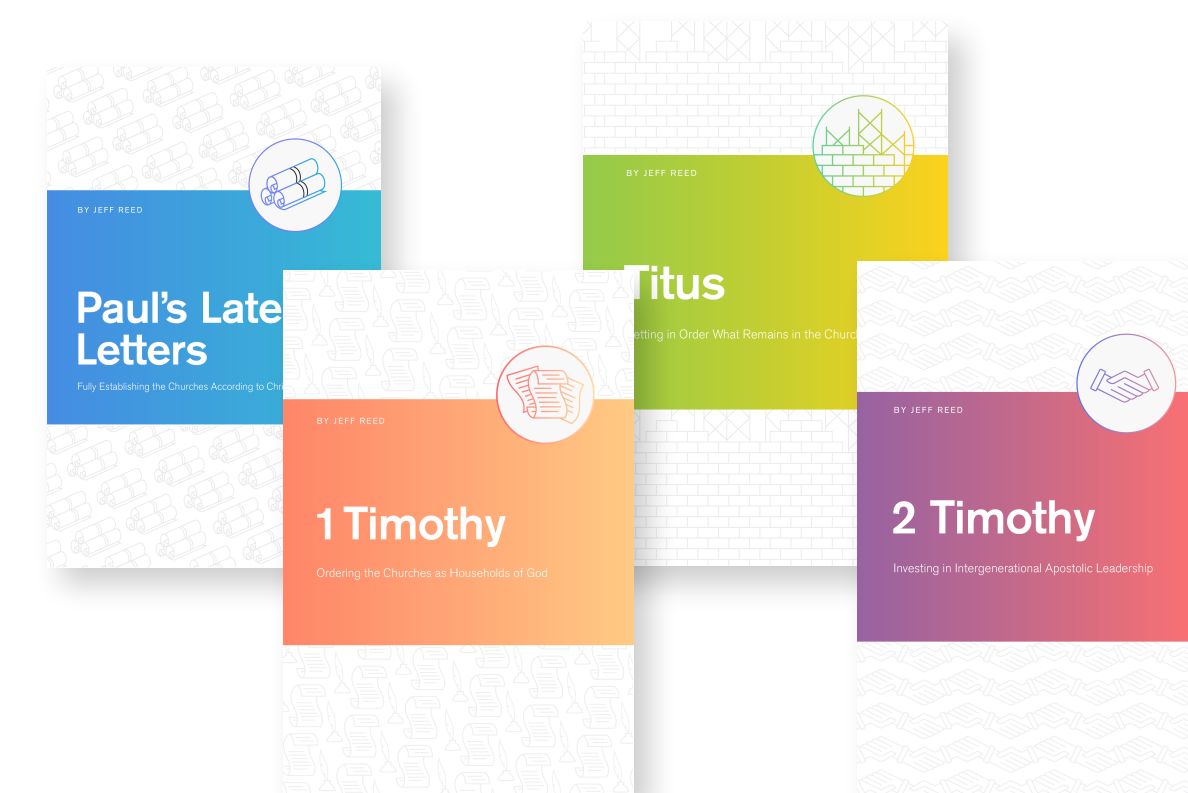
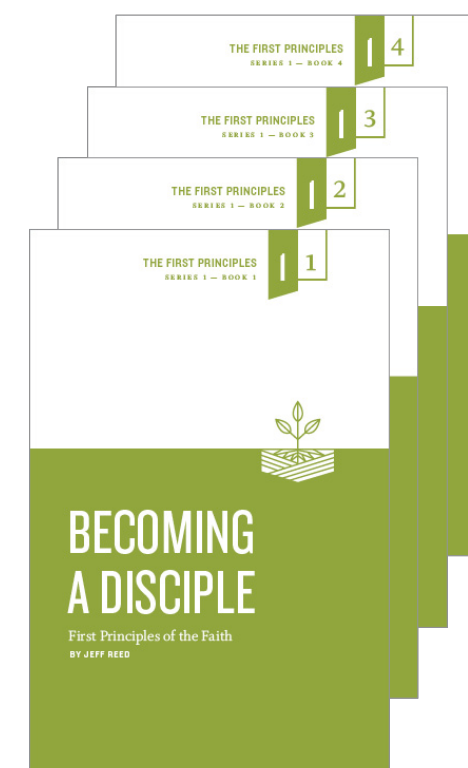
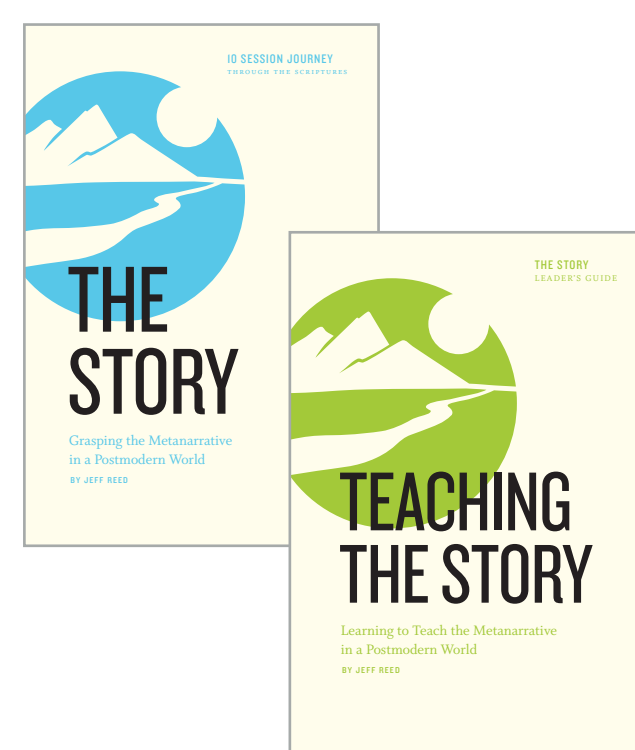
The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Questions:

1. Why would he devote a large letter to his relationship with the Corinthians?
2. Why would the Spirit include such a letter in the New Testament?
3. Why do you think Paul included so much personal information—his own depression, descriptions of his tireless work, defense of his credentials?
4. Why do you think he was so confrontational with the Corinthian churches?

# The New Perspective on Paul



# The New Perspective on Paul



## The Later Letters

Book 1: Paul's Later Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches According to Christ's Design

Book 2: 1 Timothy: Ordering the Churches as Households of God

Book 3: Titus: Setting in Order What Remains in the Churches

Book 4: 2 Timothy: Investing in Intergenerational Apostolic Leadership

# The New Perspective on Paul



## The Middle Letters

- Book 1: Paul's Middle Letters: Fully Revealing Christ's Grand Strategy
- Book 2: Ephesians: Revealing Christ's Grand Strategy—the Church
- Book 3: Colossians and Philemon: Implementing the New Church Paradigm
- Book 4: Philippians: Participating with One Mind for the Progress of the Gospel

# The New Perspective on Paul



## The Early Letters

Book 1: Paul's Early Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches in the Gospel

Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence: Solid Conversion to the Gospel

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Book 6: Romans: Complete Treatise of Paul's Gospel

# The New Perspective on Paul

## Teaching Mastering the Scriptures

Session 1: The New Perspective on Paul: Rethinking Western Hermeneutics

Session 2: Canonical Structure and the New Perspective on Paul

Session 3: Paul's Traditioning Process: Schematic for Setting Churches in Order

Session 4: Paul's Process of Doing Theology in Culture Within the Grand Strategy Schema

Session 5: Paul's Letters as Tools for Building Complex Apostolic Networks

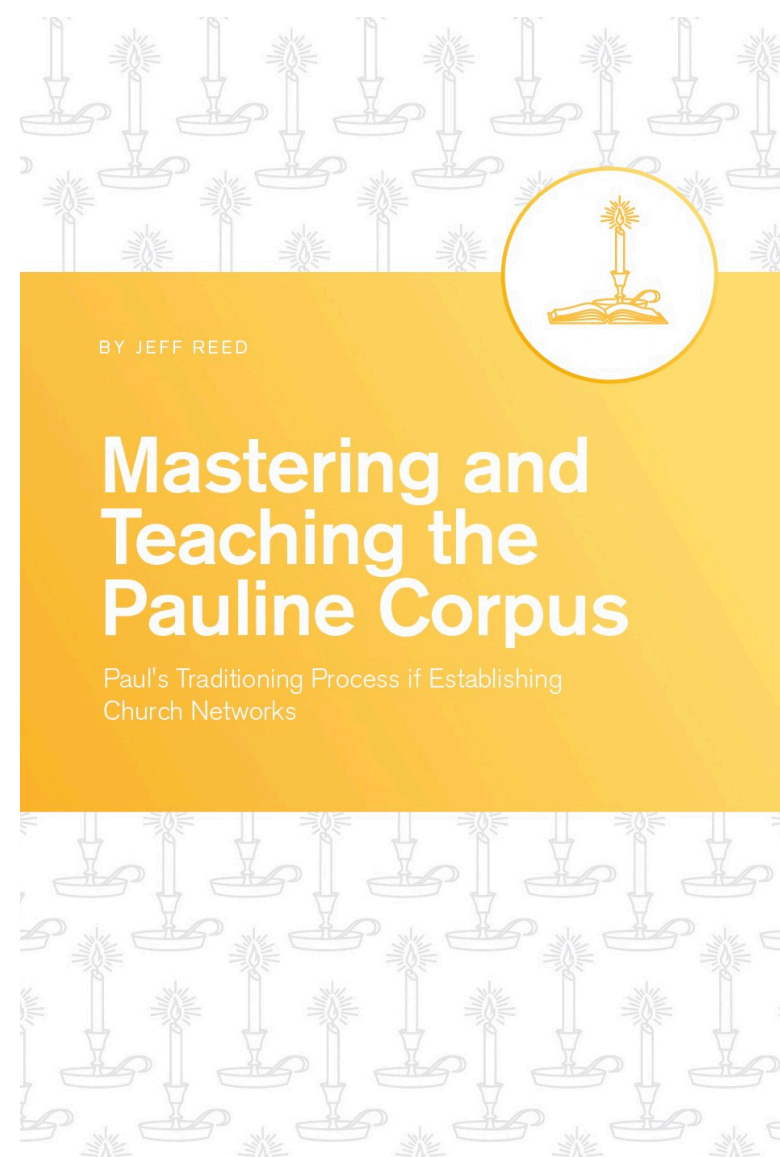
Session 6: The New Perspective on Paul and the Gospels

Session 7: Mastering, Teaching, and Using the Mastering the Scriptures

Appendix 1: Comprehensive Assessment of Complex Apostolic Networks

Appendix 2: Annotated Greco–Roman Research Library

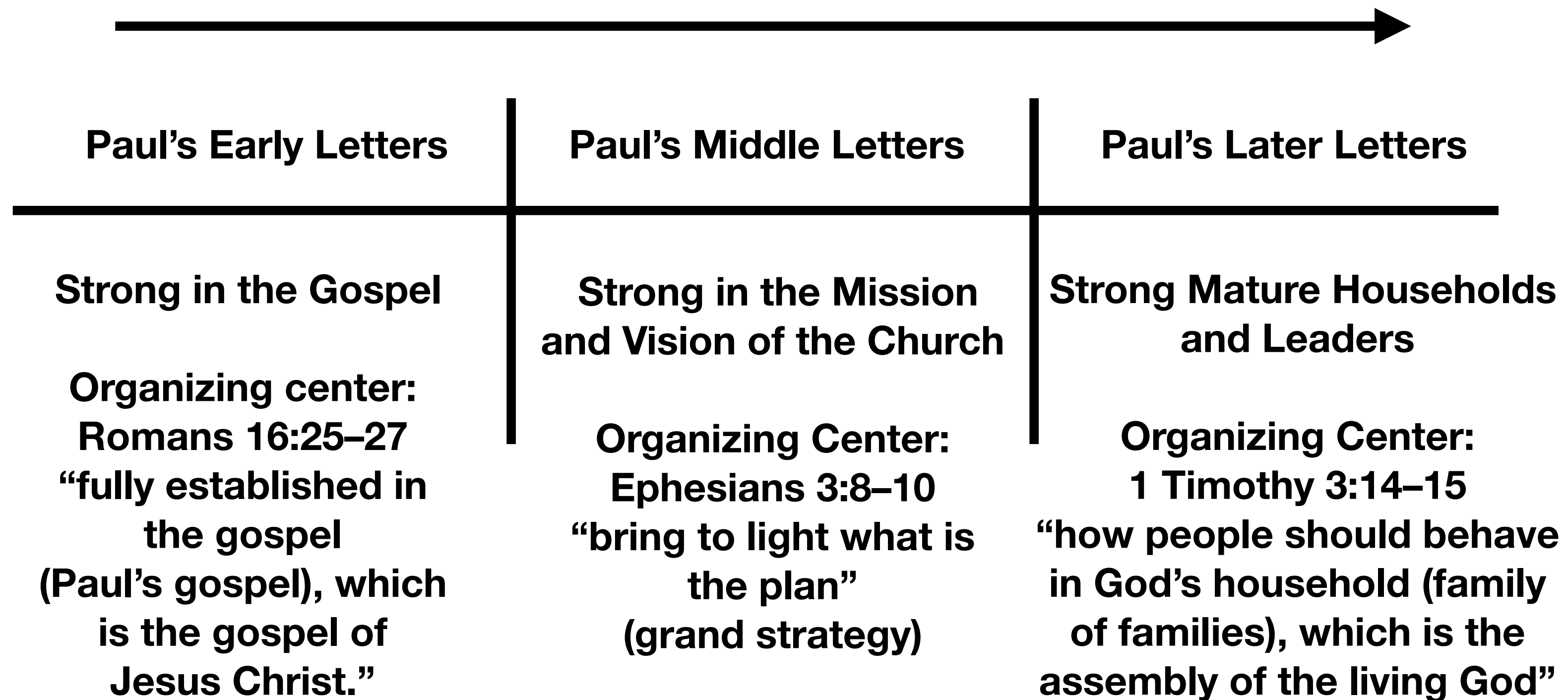
Appendix 3: Glossary of Key Biblical Terms and Concepts





# The New Perspective on Paul

Topos Schematic (Overall Framework): Establishing Church Networks (Traditioning Paul)

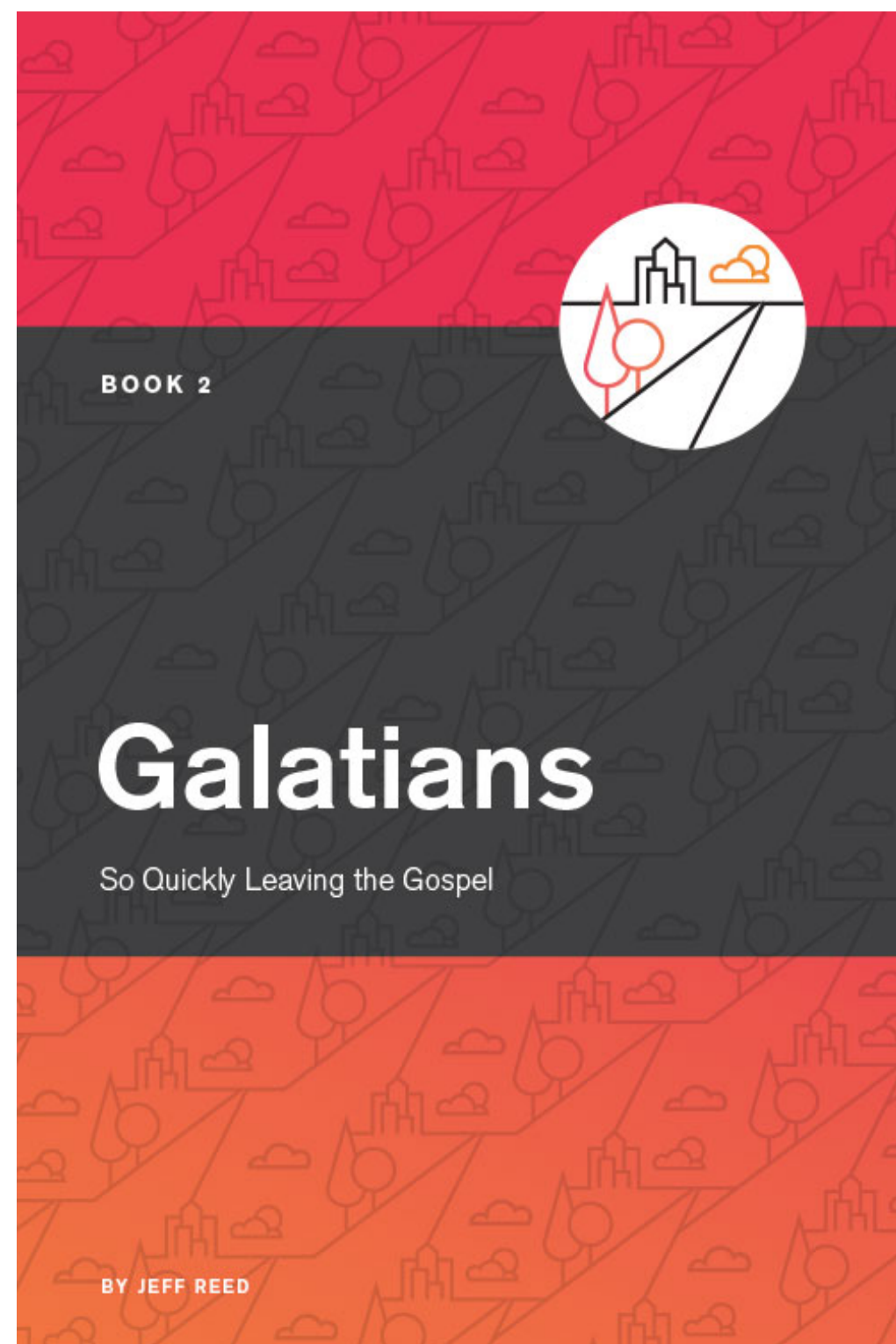


## Literary Design: Complex Network Establishing (Encoding) Benchmarks (Traditioning of Paul)



Paul's Early Letters	Paul's Middle Letters	Paul's Later Letters
The Gospel	Mission/Vision of the Church	Mature Households and Leaders
Gospel Formula: 1 Cor. 15:1–6 Peter's 5 sermons, Galatians	Christ's grand strategy Eph. 3:8–10	Churches set in order (household topos) 1 Timothy 3:14–16
Solid conversion: 1 & 2 Thess.	One mature church: equipping saints Ephesians 4:1–16	Solid senior eldership Titus 1:5–9 elders, deacons, women: 1 Timothy 3
"Now concerning..." List of schisms: 1 Corinthians	Household texts (family): Ephesians 5:22–6:9 Colossians 3:18–4:1	Household texts (family of families): 1 Timothy 5:1–6:2 Titus 2:1–21
Gathering Topos: Lord's Supper- Symposium: 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:40	Theology in culture: Philemon	Key, intergenerational apostolic leaders and teams
Perspective of ministry: conflicts without, fears within: 2 Cor. 2:14–7:5	Participation in progress of the gospel: Philippians' model (teams, finances)	Training process, stewardship responsibilities: 2 Timothy
Paul's complete treatise of the gospel: Romans	Network churches: hub (Ephesus), cluster (Lycus Valley), strategic (Philippi)	Leadership virtue/vice cluster lists: 1 Timothy 3:2–4, 8–12; 6:3–5; Titus 1:6–9; 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:2–5
"Pauline cycle" duly recognized gatherings		

# The New Perspective on Paul



Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the Gospel, Book 2

Session 1: The Galatian Problem

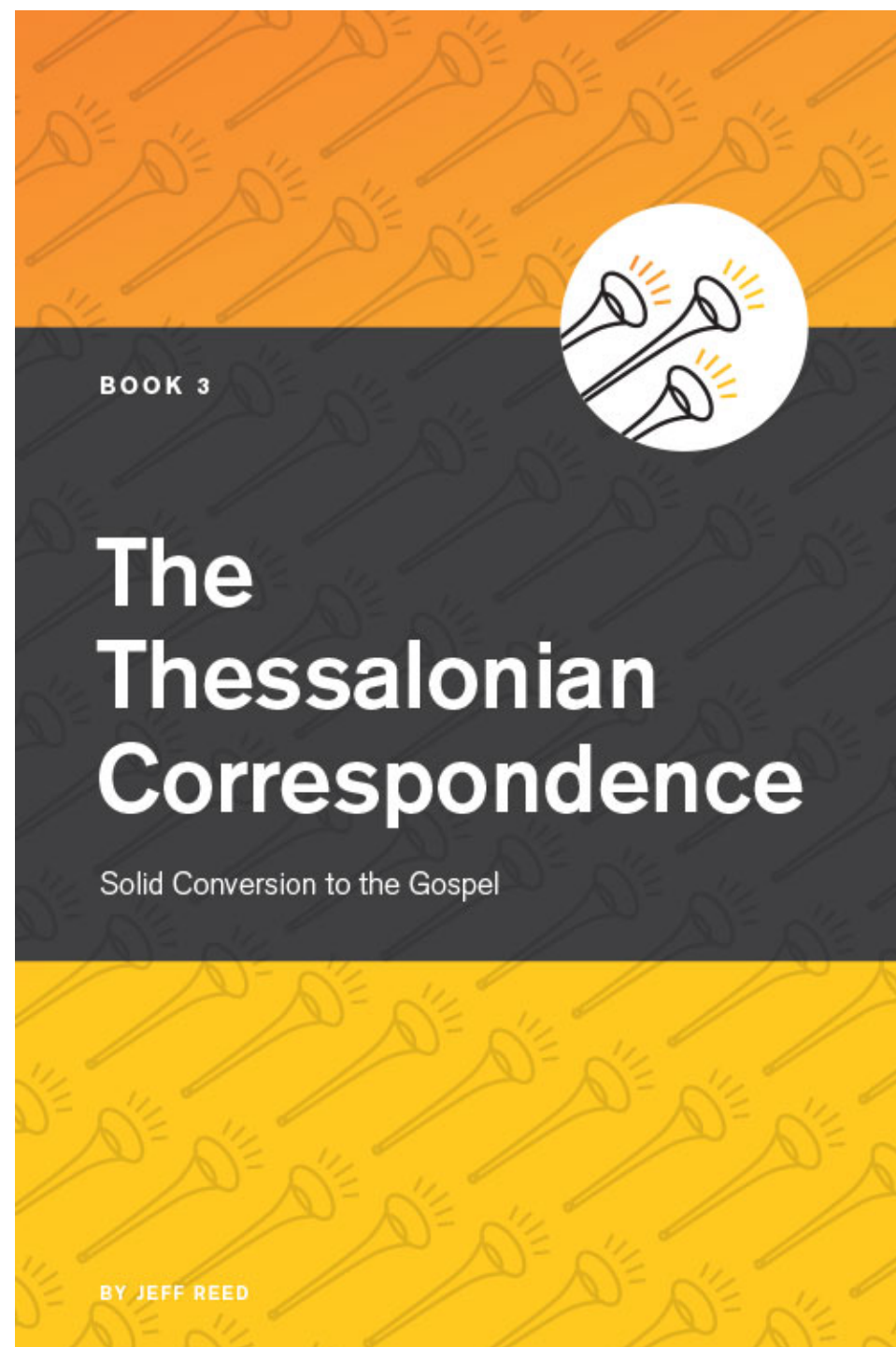
Session 2: The Pure Gospel

Session 3: The Gospel as a System of Living

Session 4: The Gospel and Walking in the Spirit

Session 5: The Gospel and Respecting Leaders

# The New Perspective on Paul



The Thessalonian Correspondence: Solid Conversion to the Gospel, Book 3

Session 1: Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians

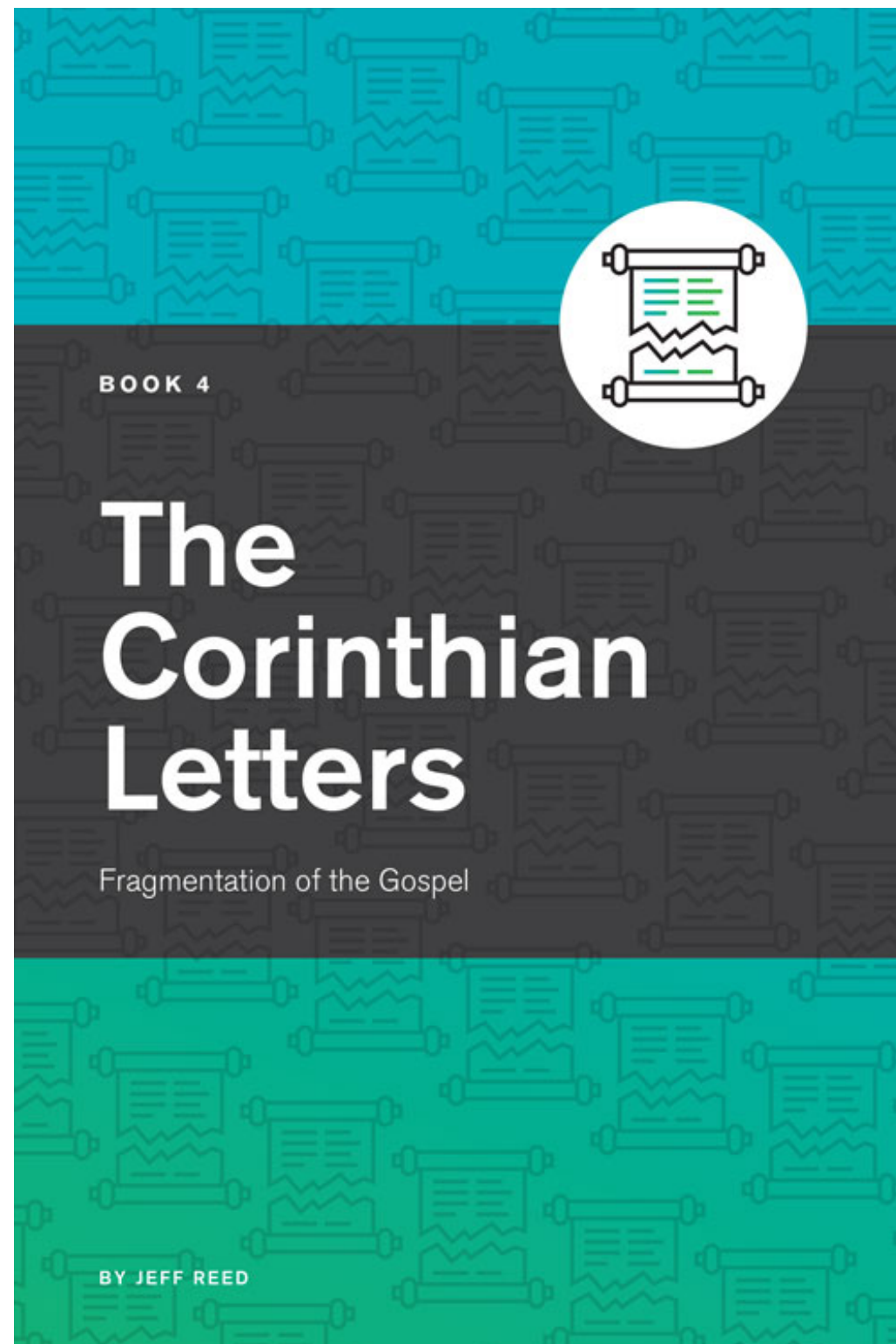
Session 2: Their Dramatic Conversion

Session 3: Three Emerging Problems — Letter 1

Session 4: Further Clarification — Letter 2

Session 5: Solidifying Their Conversion

# The New Perspective on Paul



The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel,  
Book 4

Session 1: The Fragmentation of the Gospel

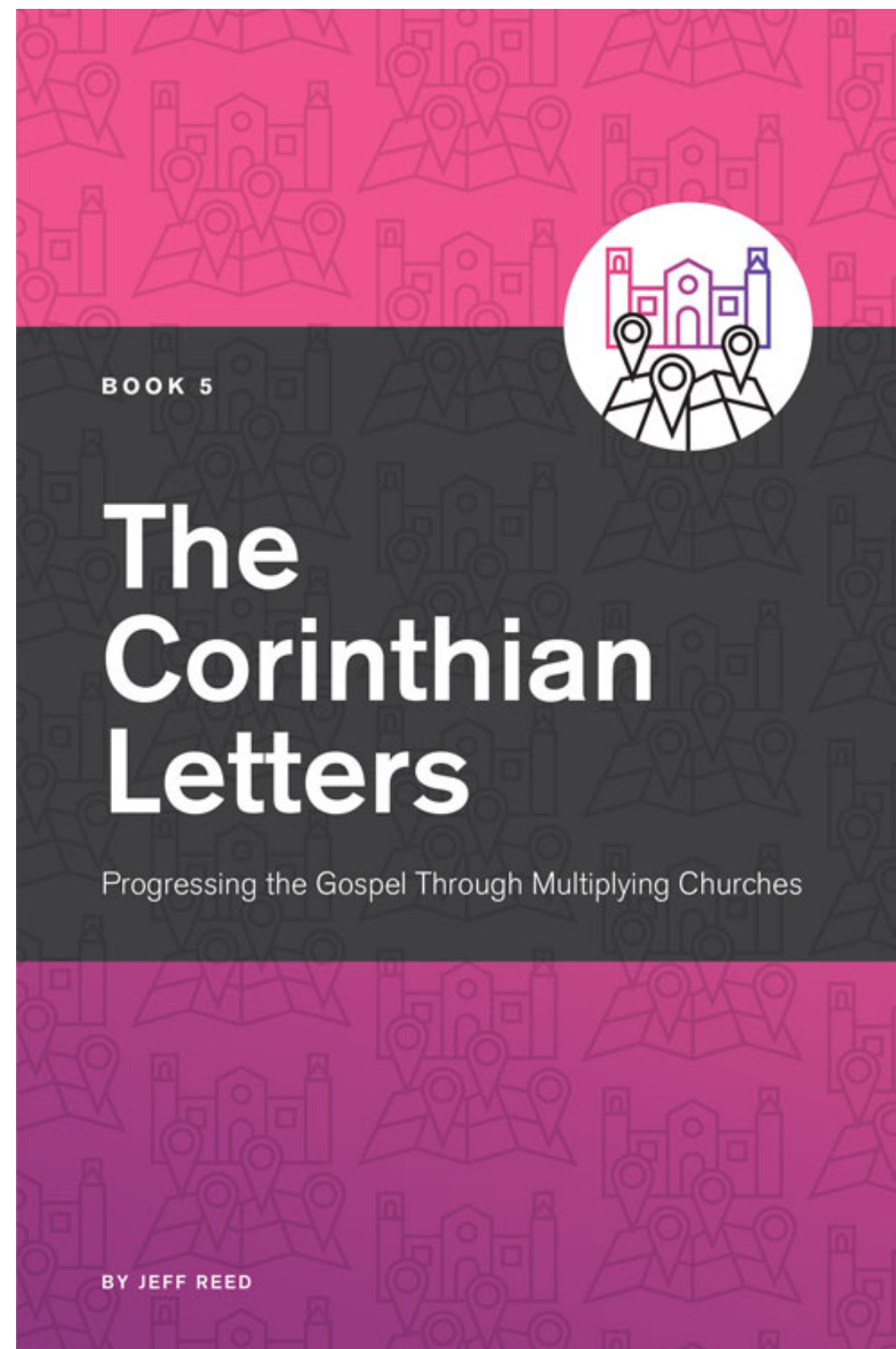
Session 2: Building on One Foundation: The Traditions

Session 3: Divisions in Their Community Life

Session 4: Divisions in Their Community Gatherings

Session 5: Back to the Gospel as Apostolic Tradition

# The New Perspective on Paul



The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches, Book 5

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

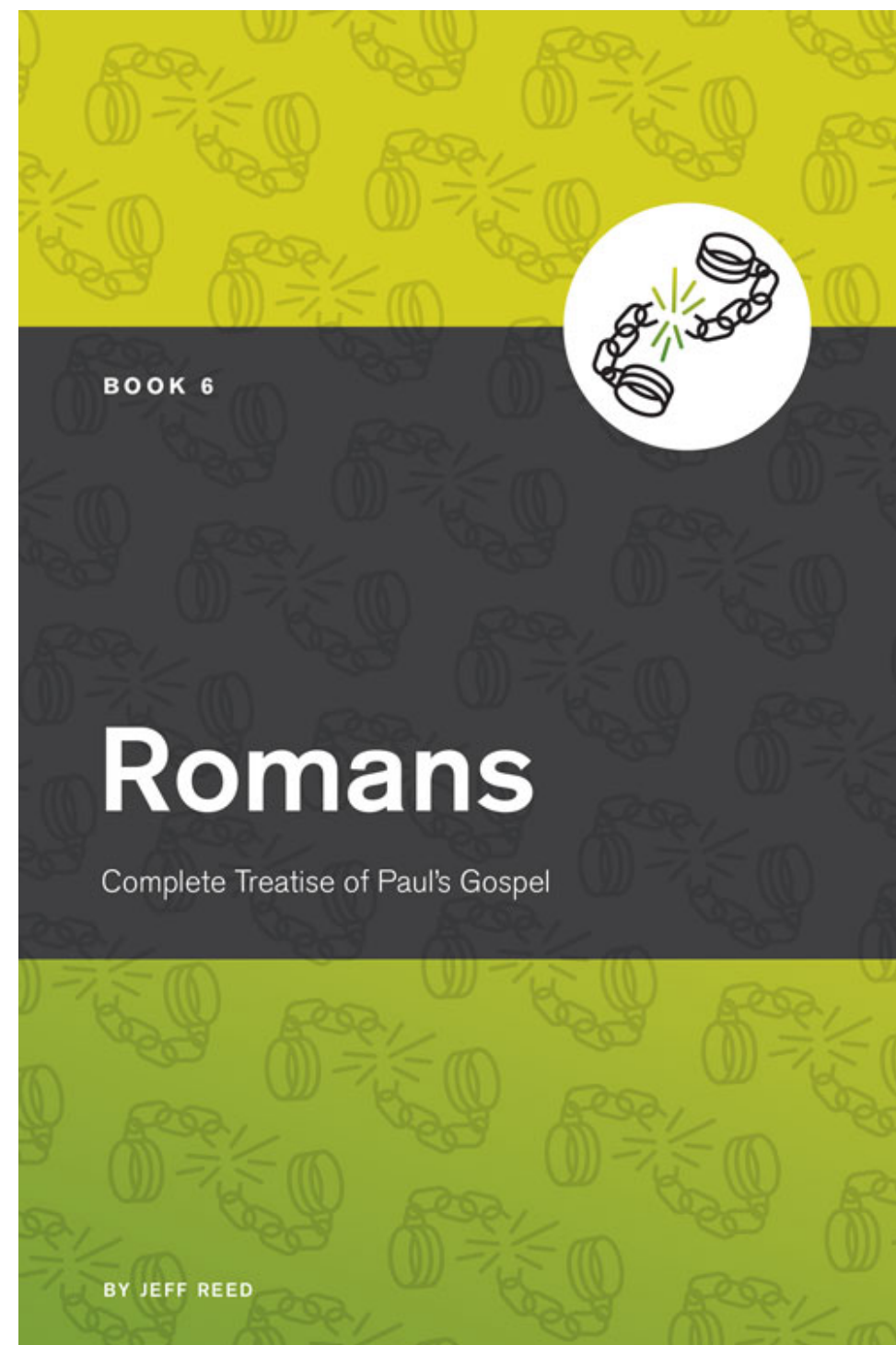
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Leadership

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

# The New Perspective on Paul



Romans: Complete Treatise of Paul's Gospel, Book 6

Session 1: The Intention of Romans

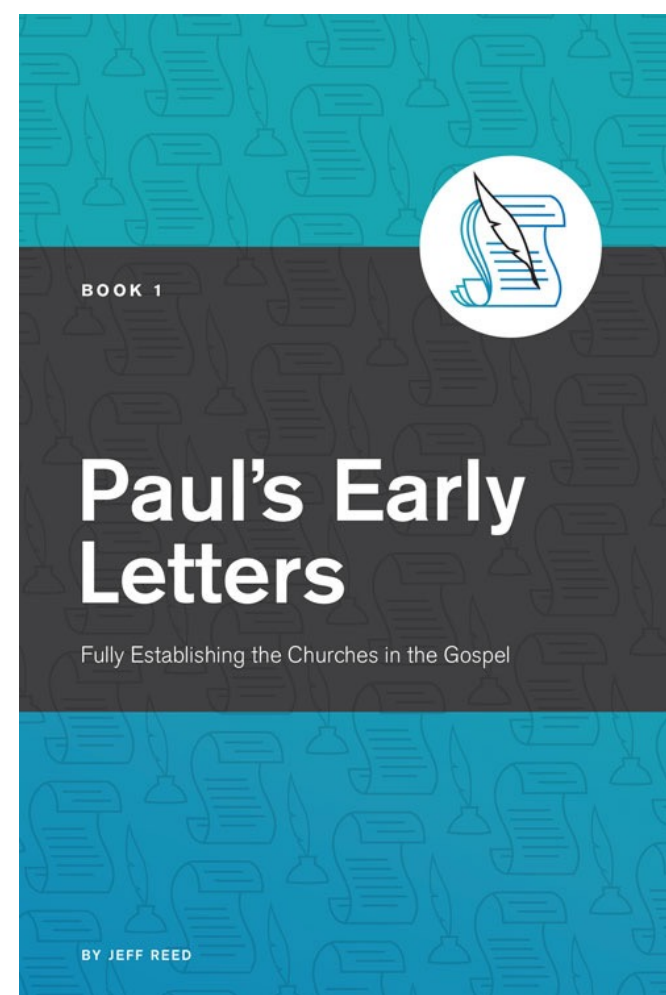
Session 2: The Gospel and The Story

Session 3: The New Gospel Worldview

Session 4: Reframing the Jewish Story

Session 5: The Gospel in Transformed Community

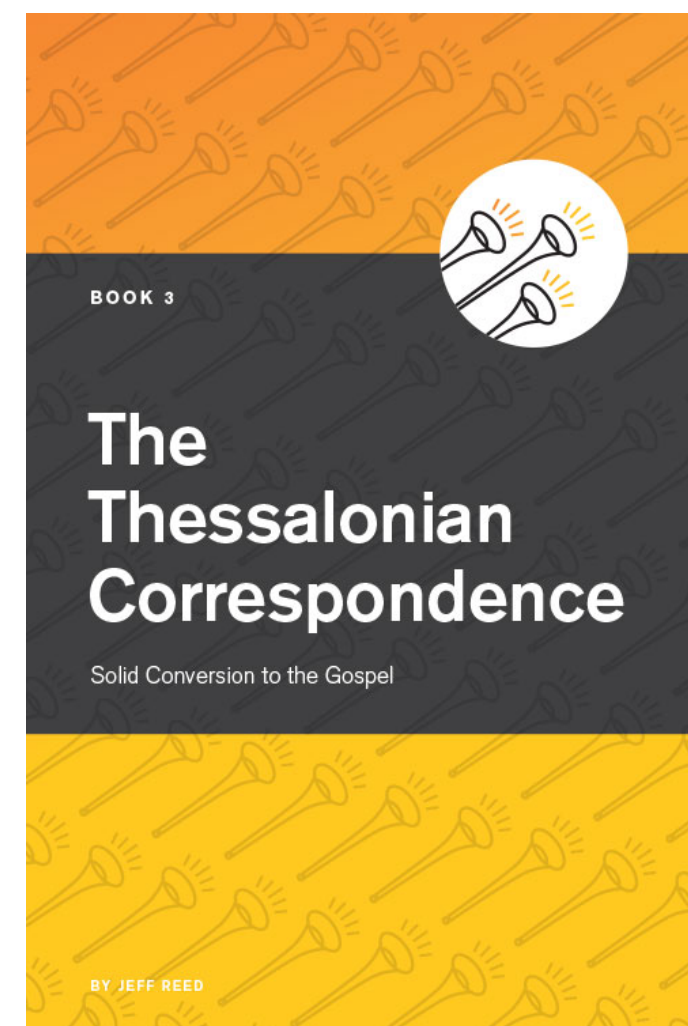
# The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel



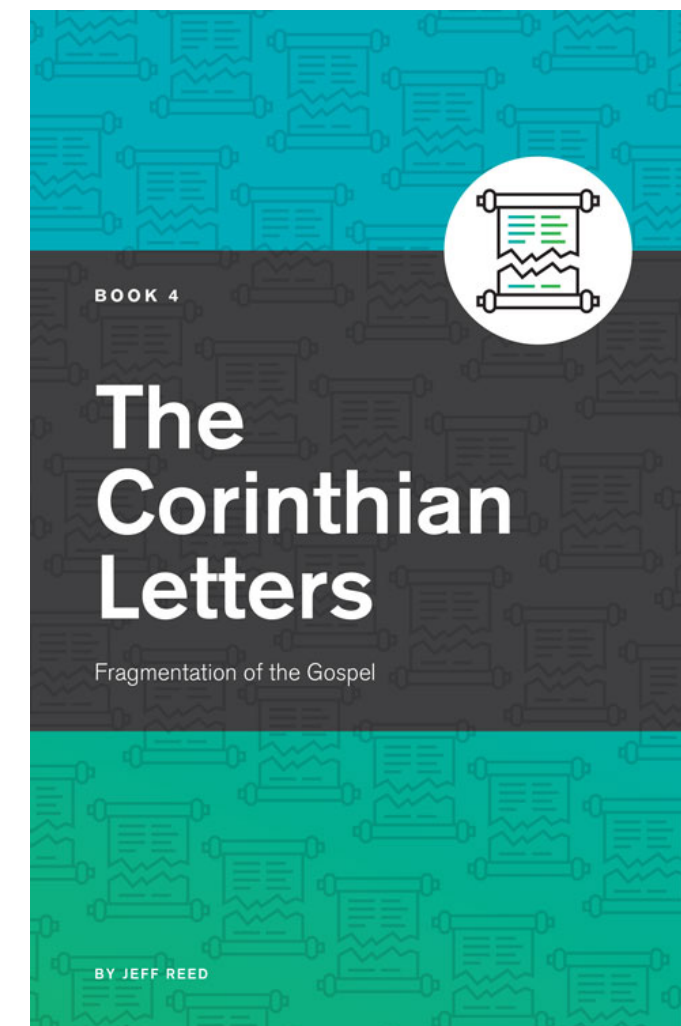
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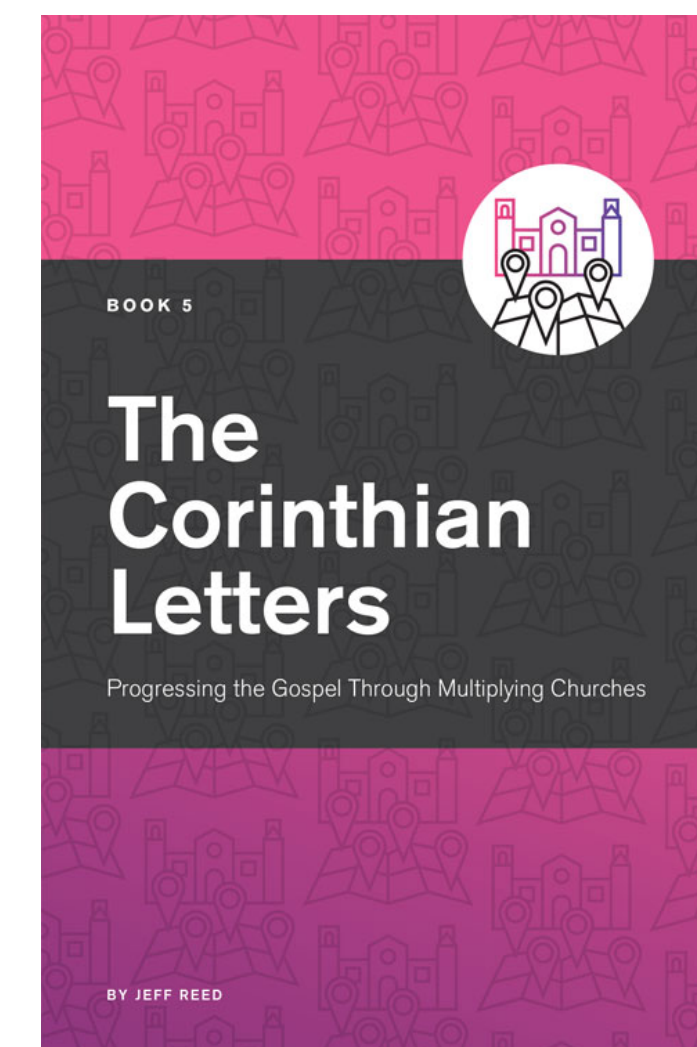
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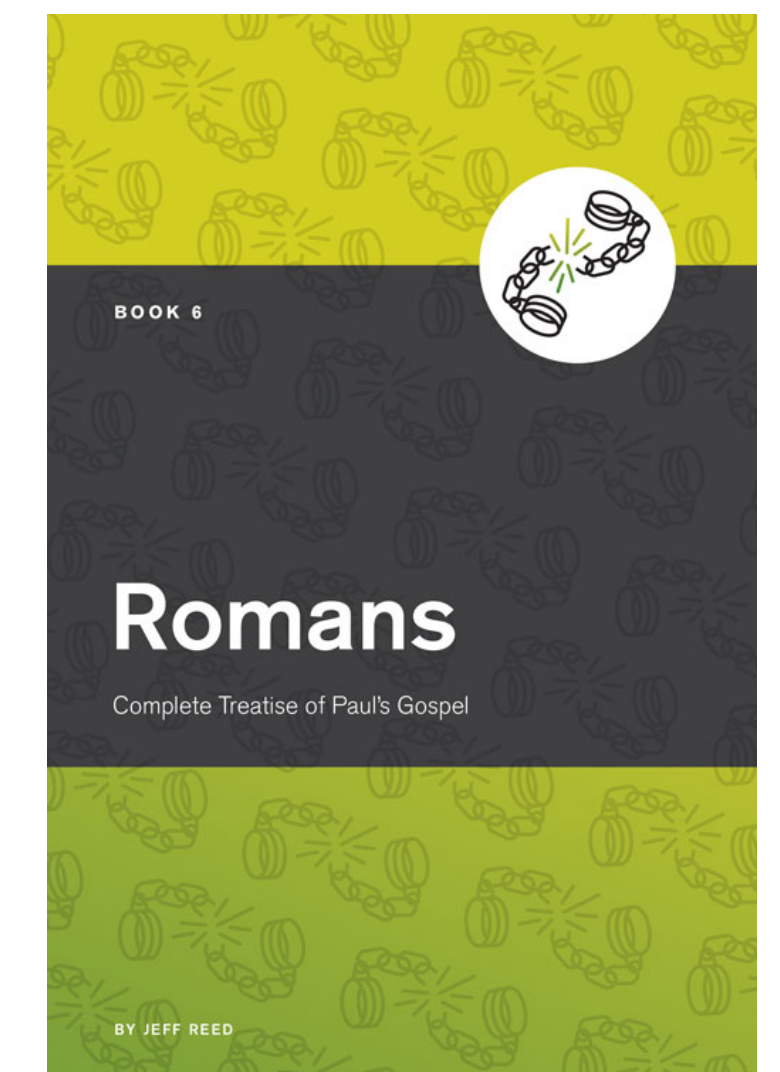
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June 56



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# The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

Let's return to our heuristic author's intention statement.

Intention Statement for the Corinthian Letters:

To defend his unique role of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles in the context of all sorts of rivals, keeping the Corinthian churches in his sphere of authority as he continues to build a network of churches committed to progressing the gospel among the Gentiles

by writing his second letter to deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social status that were fragmenting the Corinthian churches. (1 Corinthians)

by writing his fourth letter to appeal to the Corinthians to remain under his leadership, despite attacks on his apostleship by rival leaders. (2 Corinthians)

# The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

## Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social status that were fragmenting the Corinthian churches, so the Corinthian churches would fully participate with him in the progress of the gospel

by applying the gospel to the core divisions that developed by factions within the churches  
by specifically addressing factions in

- community life and
- community gatherings

by taking them back to the gospel as apostolic traditioning

# The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

## Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

To defend his apostleship in the Corinthian churches, that they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles, for which he was uniquely commissioned

by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship

by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel as “conflicts without and fears within” as a context for victorious progress

by defending his apostleship and seeking the Corinthians as partners in that progression

# Reflections on 1 Corinthians

We learn a lot about how Paul built his network (movement) of churches:

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, 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 to make his churches become 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).

# Reflections on 1 Corinthians

## Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians

1. Paul came to Corinth in the power of the authority of the gospel tradition, not as one asserting personal authority or demonstrating exceptional oratory skill.
2. Paul understood the foundational nature of the gospel in the form of a formulaic statement and framed much of his authoritative teaching on that base.
3. He saw that gospel as the starting point for solving all of the divisions in the Corinthian churches and foundational to building a one mindedness in the churches.
4. Paul delivered the traditions he received from Christ with confidence and authority, yet with a clear understanding that the Corinthians needed to learn how to think at a principle level, producing the cultural flexibility needed to preserve their unity at a practical cultural level.
5. Paul established a process for future apostolic leaders to follow by working flexibly at a principle level from how he dealt with the divisions in the Corinthian churches, a process we are calling the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*.
6. Paul will further model the importance of apostolic authority in 2 Corinthians; as we will see, he will establish the perpetual need for the functions in 2 Timothy.

# Reflections on 1 Corinthians

## The Development and Importance of Apostolic Authority Today

1. It is evident that without authoritative traditions (first and foremost the apostolic tradition of the gospel), it would be impossible to deal with divisions in churches as they are becoming fully established in the gospel.
2. It is also evident that without apostolic leaders like Paul, who exercise their authority in a focused and at times fearless manner, divisions like those characterizing the Corinthian churches would never be dealt with.
3. It is also clear that apostolic authority is embedded in the traditions of Christ; even Paul needed to be clear not to go beyond the traditions themselves, but to identify guidelines based on those traditions and to model the flexible use of them by the churches.

# Reflections on 1 Corinthians

## The Development and Importance of Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians

4. In the emerging next Christendom, it is critical that networks of churches worldwide rediscover the apostolic traditioning of Paul and the importance of identifying and developing apostolic leaders, avoiding both institutionalizing that authority, as well as building around orators with big personalities.
5. Without key apostolic leaders and their teams and network, churches and networks of churches will never become fully establishing in the gospel, will not be able to deal with issues and problems, and will lose their impact in society and culture. Without the apostolic traditioning of Paul, they will most likely build on their own works and become worthless and without future reward because of building on the wrong foundation.

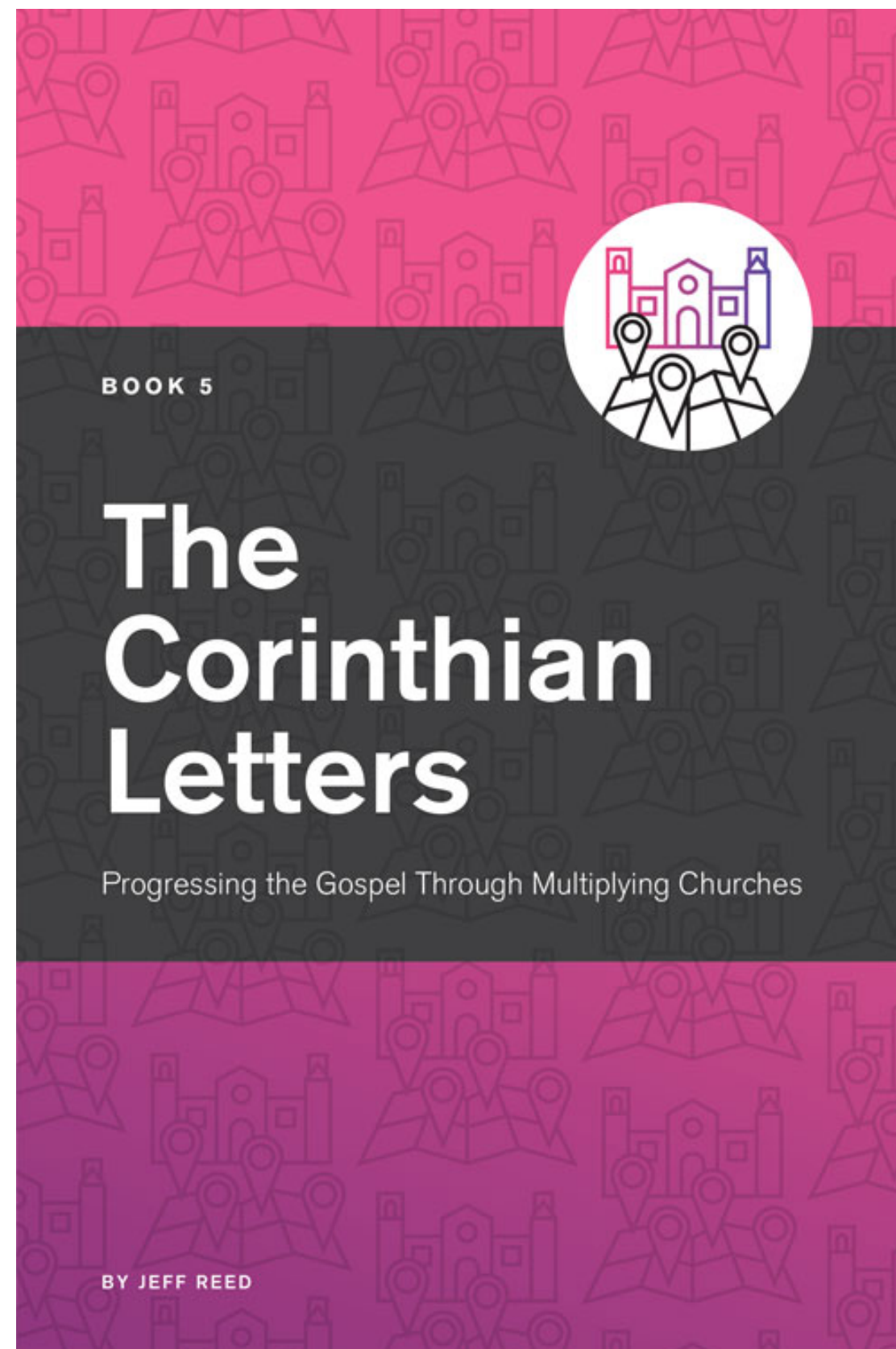
# Reflections on 1 Corinthians

The Development and Importance of Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians

6. As the next Christendom begins to emerge, Paul's apostolic authority and the functions of establishing churches with that functional authority are critical, or network after network will create secondary traditions, just like Eastern orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism, and classical Pentecostalism; they will lose their power and effective impact; they will stop growing; their works will not last; and they will lose their future rewards.



# Turning Our Attention to 2 Corinthians



The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches, Book 5

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Leadership

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Now let's turn our attention 2 Corinthians. Before he begins his first argument, he gives a brief introduction.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia:  
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, 4 who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. 6 If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation. NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

8 We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,<sup>a</sup> of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, 11 as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

12 Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. 13 For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end— 14 as you have already understood us in part—that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast. NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

15 Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor;<sup>d</sup> 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. 17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards,<sup>e</sup> ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.” 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.” 20 For in him every one of God's promises is a “Yes.” For this reason it is through him that we say the “Amen,” to the glory of God. 21 But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, 22 by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment. NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

23 But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. 24 I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith. 2 1 So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. 2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? 3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. 4 For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

In this section, we will cover 2 Corinthians 1:3–2:11. Let's read his introductory argument at one time and then put the book in context.

5 But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent—not to exaggerate it—to all of you. 6 This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; 7 so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ. 11 And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. NRSV

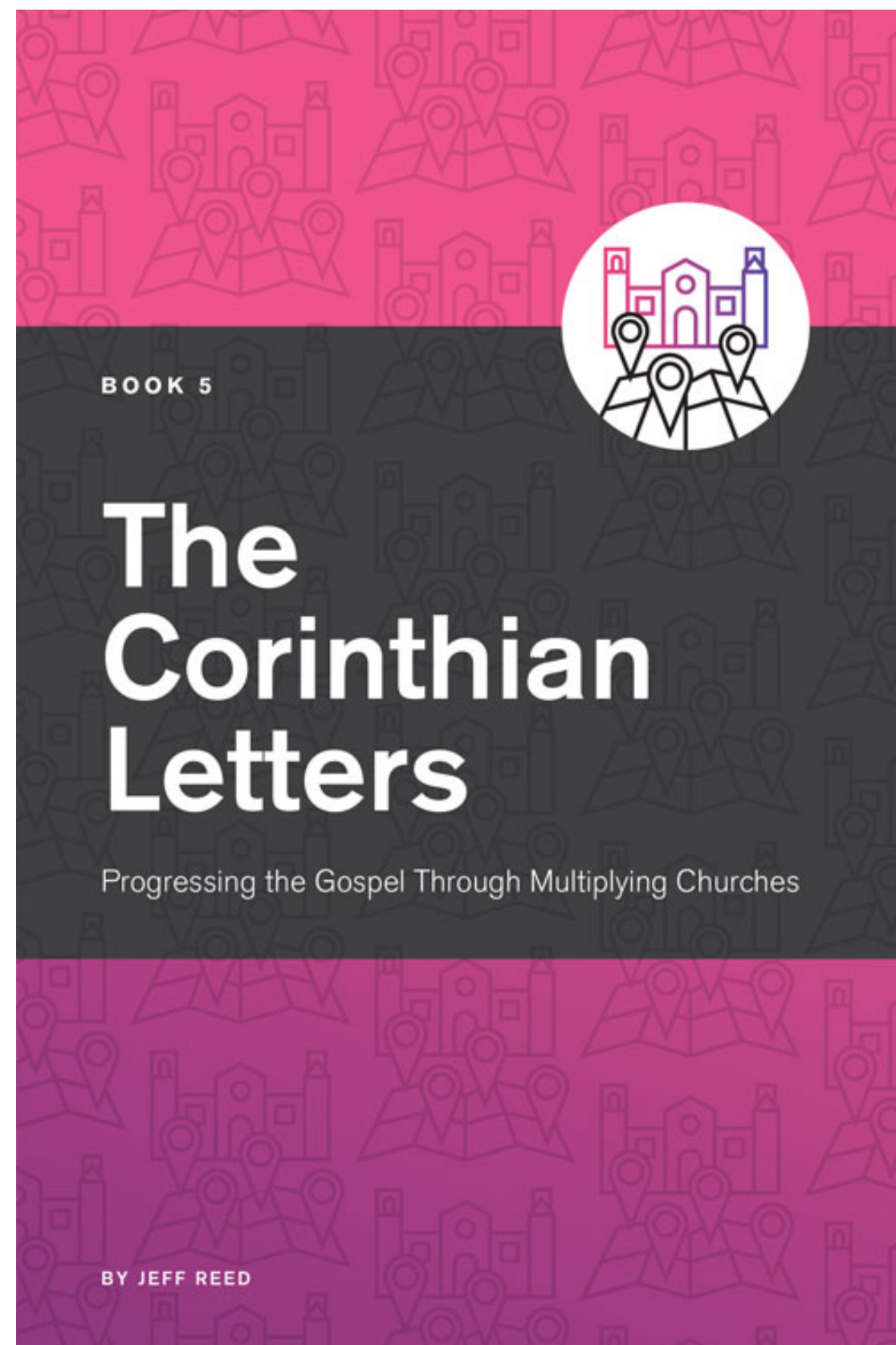


# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

His argument is this: (1 Corinthians 1:1–2:11)

- He begins his argument by focussing on the fact that he was deeply depressed. 1:8
- He is writing plainly to them, directly in a way they can understand, and prays they will follow his reasoning all the way through the letter. 1:13–14
- He was honest in his plan to visit them, not manipulating, but he was so upset (he sent the 3rd letter that did not make the New Testament final cut) that he went on to Macedonia. 1:15–18
- Upon more reflection, he seemed to argue that it was better for him to write a carefully constructed argument with the hope that most in the churches would follow his defense. 1:23–2:4
- He appeals to them to carefully follow his argument, as many have begun to do with his first letter. 1:13–14
- He finishes this section by calling those who are listening to him not to overdo the discipline (reaffirm their love for him) he asked them to carry out in the first letter, and to tell them the specific discipline he called on was a test of whether they would follow him. 2:5–11

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks



So why is Paul writing this letter? Why did the Spirit include it in the N.T. canon?

In fact, more specifically, why the subtitle of this book:

Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

I've never seen any kind of title or subtitle to 2nd Corinthians that is even close to this title.

Why is this letter so personal about Paul and his relationship with the Corinthians?

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's focus on the second question first.

And why is this letter so personal about Paul and his relationship with the Corinthians?  
Why does it merit canonization?

We have just seen that this introduction is highly personal. And much of it focuses on Paul himself. As we will see, this is not just true of the introduction. This intense personal reflection and intense focus on his relationship with the Corinthian churches continues throughout the entire letter.

Observe these select verses of his continued self reflection and intense focus on his relationship with the Corinthians.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

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 NRSV

4 For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. 2 Corinthians 2:4 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

12 When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; 13 but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 2:12–13 NRSV

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? 2 Corinthians 3:1 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

4 but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 2 Corinthians 6:4–7 NRSV

2 Make room in your hearts for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. 2 Corinthians 7:2 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

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 NRSV

11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! 2 Corinthians 7:11 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

10 I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— 2 I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. 2 Corinthians 10:1–2  
NRSV

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 10:10–11  
NRSV



# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

5 I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 6 I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you. 2 Corinthians 11:5–6 NRSV

16 I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 2 Corinthians 11:18 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Let's look at a selection of the verse of the self reflection of Paul and his intense personal relationship with the Corinthian churches.

9 For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect. 10 So I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down 2 Corinthians 13:9–10 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Observations of the intense personal relationship of the Corinthians and Paul

1. This continues throughout the letter
2. He is depressed, confrontative, defensive, full of anxiety.
3. He wants them to fully accept his authority as an apostle.
4. His motivation is that they set everything in order according to the authoritative traditions he delivered to them.
5. He is willing to use his authority in a confrontational way in the future if he needs to
6. He had to make stressful ministry decisions (leaving an open door for the gospel) because of his intense anxiety over the them

These are just a few verses, there are many more. And just reflecting on these again and again produces tremendous insight into leading church networks. We will gain all these insights as we focus work our way through this entire series.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Back to the question: Why is this letter so personal about Paul and his relationship with the Corinthians? Why does it merit canonization?

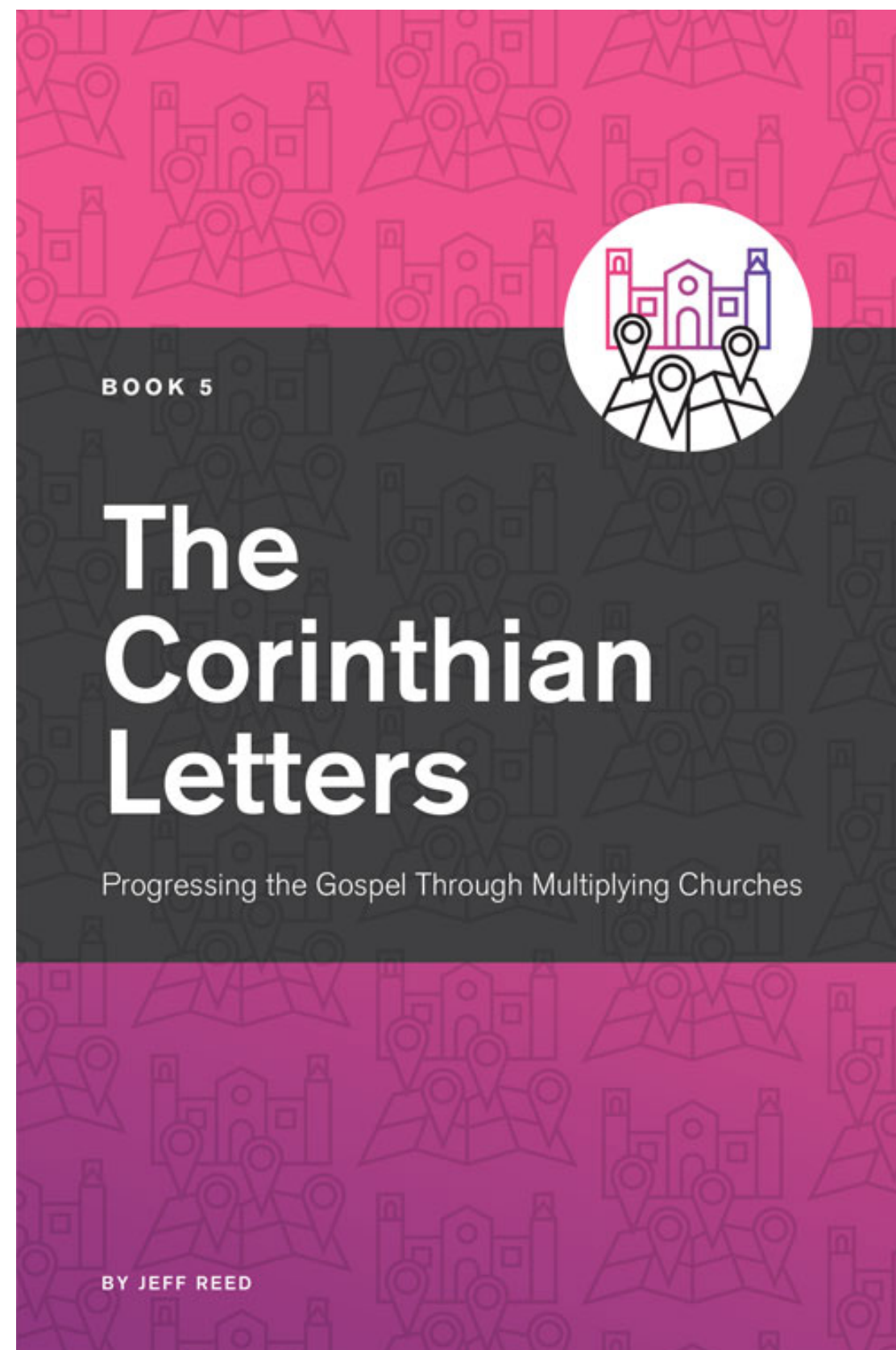
Part of the answer is given in 1 Corinthians

They must accept his apostolic authority and accept the traditions he has delivered to them, or they will build on the wrong foundation and their work will go up when Christ returns because it will not last

Part of the answer unfolds throughout 2 Corinthians

They must accept his apostolic authority and remain with him as he seeks to expand the field and enlarge his sphere of progressing the gospel, as they are critical this expansion and therefore to his stewardship of building an apostolic network

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks



Let's return to our collection of questions

So why is Paul writing this letter? Why did the Spirit include it in the N.T. canon?

In fact, more specifically, why the subtitle of this book:

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# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

So why is Paul writing this letter? Why did the Spirit include it in the N.T. canon?

Note: The whole letter is going to continue this way!!

Paul gives clues in this section, but first let's think back to the narrative of the book of Acts, which situates all these letters.

Luke records the unfolding plan, and organizes the narrative around 6 summary statements:

Acts 6:7

Acts 9:31

Acts 12:24

Acts 16:5

Acts 19:20

Acts 28:30–31

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

6 summary statements

6:7 The word of God increased, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew by leaps and bounds....9:31 So the church in all Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria found itself at peace. It was built up and gained in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the holy spirit.... 12:24 But God's word grew and multiplied....  
16:5 The churches were strengthened in faith, and grew in number every day....  
19:20 So the word grew and was strong, in accordance with the Lord's power.

In Acts we have the unfolding of Christ's plan, and we are all part of it. We are all to participate in the progress of the gospel, and the multiplication of churches globally is the vehicle for that progress.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Paul gives us clues that he is keeping the Corinthian churches in line with God's plan. (That will be much clearer as his argument unfolds. But look at his clues in this beginning section.)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia:  
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
2 Corinthians 1:1–2 NRSV

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 NRSV

11 as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.  
2 Corinthians 1:11 NRSV



# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

He will unfold this as we go along in very clear ways

8 We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; 2 Corinthians 8:1 N. T. Wright

15 We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action.  
2 Corinthians 10:15–16 NRSV

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Now back to where we started.

Why would Paul write a letter like this? Why would the Spirit put this intense correspondence in the New Testament?

Churches are not about themselves.

Not just good places to get personal encouragement.

Not just a good way to raise a good family.

As this letter unfolds, we will get a very good picture of this.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Our entire philosophy of ministry will be shaped in our thinking as this letter unfolds.

## Philosophy of ministry

- what it takes to establish churches in the gospel
- what kind of battles to expect
- the personal commitment of leaders, an expected toll on leaders
- how to think about what success really is
- how can we know if a church is established in the gospel
- how leaders bring about change in churches
- what does it mean for leaders to exercise authority in and amongst churches

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

As the gospel is spreading rapidly all across the Global South, networks appear everywhere as standard development. We actually work with over 100 networks, some of them huge.

They need to develop a sodal-modal combination, which includes apostolic teams and local elders shepherding the churches under those teams. The teams need to establish their authority by providing strategic expansion vision and solid apostolic teaching, and the appointment of elders as official authority shepherding the churches.

Western denominations need to renew or repurpose themselves as networks and movements in the same fashion.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

What do we learn so far from Paul's philosophy

Paul's Philosophy of ministry:

- If we are not fully engaged in the progress of the gospel beyond our own sphere, we are not established in the gospel.
- Getting a church founded will involve a significant amount of strong leadership and confrontation.
- Progress of the gospel is very demanding, and it demands churches that fully participate in that expansion.
- Those on the front lines should expect constant pressure, deep discouragement, and a lot of criticism.
- Apostolic leaders must be able to make convincing, authoritative arguments to defend their authority, teaching, and ministry sphere.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Are you established in the gospel?

It is far more than just embracing the gospel message, but includes the entire apostolic teaching and participating fully in the progress of that gospel under the vision and teaching of apostolic leadership and the shepherding of local, recognized leaders.

Is your church established in the gospel?

It is far more than just embracing the gospel and teaching, but includes participating in the progress of the gospel in partnership with and with the authority of apostolic leadership.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Now back to Paul's apostolic authority which permeates both of these rather lengthy letters.

First let's review again, Paul's concept of authority from 1 Corinthians

Then let's begin to add to this understanding from 2 Corinthians 1:3-2:11

# Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians

## Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians

1. Paul came to Corinth in the power of the authority of the gospel tradition, not as one asserting personal authority or demonstrating exceptional oratory skill.
2. Paul understood the foundational nature of the gospel in the form of a formulaic statement and framed much of his authoritative teaching on that base.
3. He saw that gospel as the starting point for solving all of the divisions in the Corinthian churches and foundational to building a one mindedness in the churches.
4. Paul delivered the traditions he received from Christ with confidence and authority, yet with a clear understanding that the Corinthians needed to learn how to think at a principle level, producing the cultural flexibility needed to preserve their unity at a practical cultural level.
5. Paul established a process for future apostolic leaders to follow by working flexibly at a principle level from how he dealt with the divisions in the Corinthian churches, a process we are calling the *apostolic traditioning of Paul*.
6. Paul will further model the importance of apostolic authority in 2 Corinthians; as we will see, he will establish the perpetual need for the functions in 2 Timothy.



# Apostolic Authority in 2 Corinthians

Apostolic Authority in 1 Corinthians 1:1-2:11

1. Paul saw his apostolic authority including his key apostolic team members as seen in including Timothy in the introduction to the of 2 Corinthians.
2. Paul understood the authority he exercised in this letters and in necessary visits as including those churches throughout Achaia, of which the Corinthian churches were a hub.
3. Paul saw suffering and persecution as part of the process of bonding them together with him in progressing the gospel as they were informed and prayed for each other in the progress of the gospel.
4. Paul was frank and straightforward in his letters, and clear, not manipulative in revealing to them his plans; and when he changes his plans he gives careful, honest explanation.
5. Paul made his travel plans with full intention of completing them as shared with his churches, but he understood the problems and pressures of his churches may cause him to alter those plans in the context of carrying them out.
6. Paul called on the churches to discipline the person (most likely a church patron whose church was creating the opposition), but to not to make it a permanent rejection.

# The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

Issue: Pressure of leading church networks today

Questions:

1. What does Paul's letter teach us about the importance of apostolic authority in shaping our churches into a full participation in a network of churches?
2. Why is it important for apostolic leaders to fully engage the churches in their network in their travel plans, and the rationale for them, openly and honestly, along with changes in light of ministry pressures and problems with churches as they surface?
3. How important is it that apostolic leaders are open with their churches and church networks with the personal pressures and problems as they impact their own lives under that pressure.
4. How important is it that churches are properly oriented towards apostolic leaders of their network and respond to their shaping role even if it involves even if it is franking direct?