

Paul's Later Letters

Fully Establishing the Churches According to Christ's Design

Paul's Later Letters

Paul's establishing process schema

In this session, we will pull together Paul's establishing process from Paul's early, middle, and later letters.

Logic: Titus is the second letter of Paul's final phase of setting churches in order.

Bring together into a schema

- Paul's coherent thinking: new perspective on Paul hermeneutic
- Paul's topos: early, middle, and later letters
- Paul's core elements of the establishing process
- Paul's complex apostolic network framework

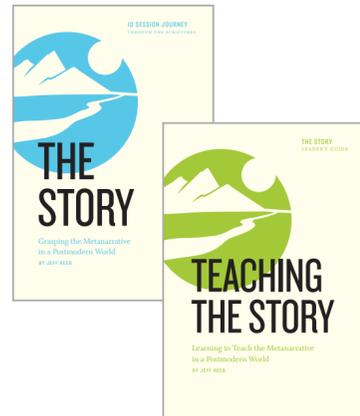
Paul's Later Letters

Issue: Phases in the process of establishing churches

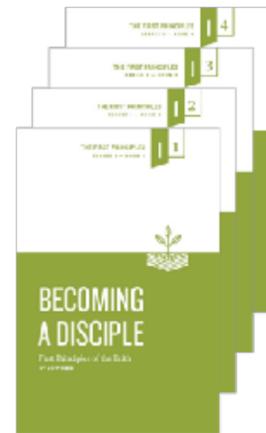
Questions:

1. What is the essence of Paul's process of establishing churches? In what sense is this one unfolding process illustrating Paul doing theology as a coherent thinker?
2. What are the core elements of the establishing process in Paul's early letters? in his middle letters? in his later letters?
3. How does Paul's establishing process schema empower him to think through the specific issues and problems of his churches as he is establishing them?
4. What is likely to happen to networks of churches that are not properly established? What happens to the power of the Spirit expressed in the churches? to families? to individuals?

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 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

Paul's Later Letters

Paul's later letters bring us to the third and final phase of Paul's process of establishing strong, mature, multiplying churches, with solid leadership and high community impact with the gospel.

1 Timothy—written to Timothy at Ephesus, Autumn of AD 62

Titus—written to Titus who was in Crete, Summer of 66

2 Timothy—written to Timothy, Spring of 67 (shortly before Paul's death)

Middle and Later Letters

1 Timothy and Titus are similar in relationship to Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians — framework

Colossians — put into action in a cluster of churches

1 Timothy — framework

Titus — put into action in a small network

Ephesians is sort of the framework for Christ's grand strategy. And Colossians, written in a very similar manner and content, is an example of establishing a cluster of churches in the grand strategy revealed in Ephesians.

1 Timothy is sort of the framework for fully setting in order the churches according to Christ's design as a household of God: a "family of families." (Timothy was at Ephesus fully establishing them.) And Titus is an example of establishing a small network of churches.

Titus



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

Session 1: Setting in Order What Remains

Session 2: Top Priority: Appointing Elders

Session 3: Ordering the Churches as Families of Families: Adorning the Gospel

Session 4: Engaging in Good Occupations and Meeting Pressing Needs

Session 5: Phases in the Process of Establishing Churches

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

I've chosen to develop a phrase that captures the framework Paul built to establish his churches: *Paul's Establishing Process Schema*

establishing: This is the word Paul used again and again to describe the process of stabilizing the churches in the gospel (the kerygma) and the teaching (the didache).

process: The process involved Paul's visits to them, writing letters to them (Pauline corpus), and sending members of his apostolic team to establish them.

schema: Schema communicates a framework with a strategy that is intended to be used in all future cultures and historical eras.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

³⁶ After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing...."

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.

Acts 15:36; 16:5 NRSV

¹ Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:1–2 NRSV

²⁵ Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ

Romans 16:25 NRSV

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him,
⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6–7 NRSV

Peter even used it when referring to the teaching of Paul to establish churches.

^{15b} So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,
¹⁶ speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable (unestablished) twist to their own destruction....

2 Peter 3:15b–16a NRSV

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

The word *establish* was used by Paul to refer to churches that were established, rooted, strong in the kerygma and didache.

But Paul also had a process for establishing churches, both by the authority of his letters and, in Titus and 1 Timothy, he actually calls it *setting in order what remains*. So Paul saw this process, as seen in his later letters, as having a final stage or phase.

Even Peter saw it—“as in all his letters,” referring to the Pauline corpus.

I have simply attempted to explain the process laid out in that corpus of Paul's letters.

So back to the *establishing process schema*.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

I see four main aspects to the schema:

- Paul's Hermeneutic: The New Perspective on Paul
- Paul's Establishing Phases
- Paul's Elements of the Phases
- Paul's Complex Apostolic Network Framework

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Hermeneutic: The 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.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Hermeneutic: The New Perspective on Paul

Central to this hermeneutic is the concept of *topos*, a Greek rhetorical style used by Paul, in which he organizes the phases of his letters around *topos*, e.g. the church as a family of families, in his later letters.

Topos (common topics in one place) is a very important form of Greek rhetoric that enables one to structure an argument, including several topics, around one memorable schematic or rubric or literally in one place.

Paul was not a Western systematic theologian, just going from isolated topic to isolated topic, but he was a coherent thinker, always carrying his arguments as *topoi*, moving in and out of his *topoi* as needed for establishing his churches.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Hermeneutic: The New Perspective on Paul

Why is this so important?

Because Paul did not give us the process and its core elements as step one, two, three—do it exactly this way.

He established the framework of the process and the core teaching. Then with that teaching and within that framework, he addressed the issues and problems in his churches, in a way that was fitting for them, and it became a model for us. Note: we dealt with this process at many points within the letters, increasingly in his middle and later letters.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 1: Strong in the Gospel

Organizing center: Romans 16:25: “fully established in the gospel (Paul's gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

²⁵ Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 16:25–27 NRSV

Paul saw the first priority in his churches was to fully establish them in the gospel. Everything built from there.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 2: Strong in the Mission/Vision of the Church

Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10: “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)

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 3:8–10 NRSV

His second phase saw his establishing his churches in an understanding of Christ's grand strategy and the importance they they firmly grasp it and fully participate with his in the progress of the gospel within the framework of that strategy.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 3: 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.”

¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, ¹⁵ if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

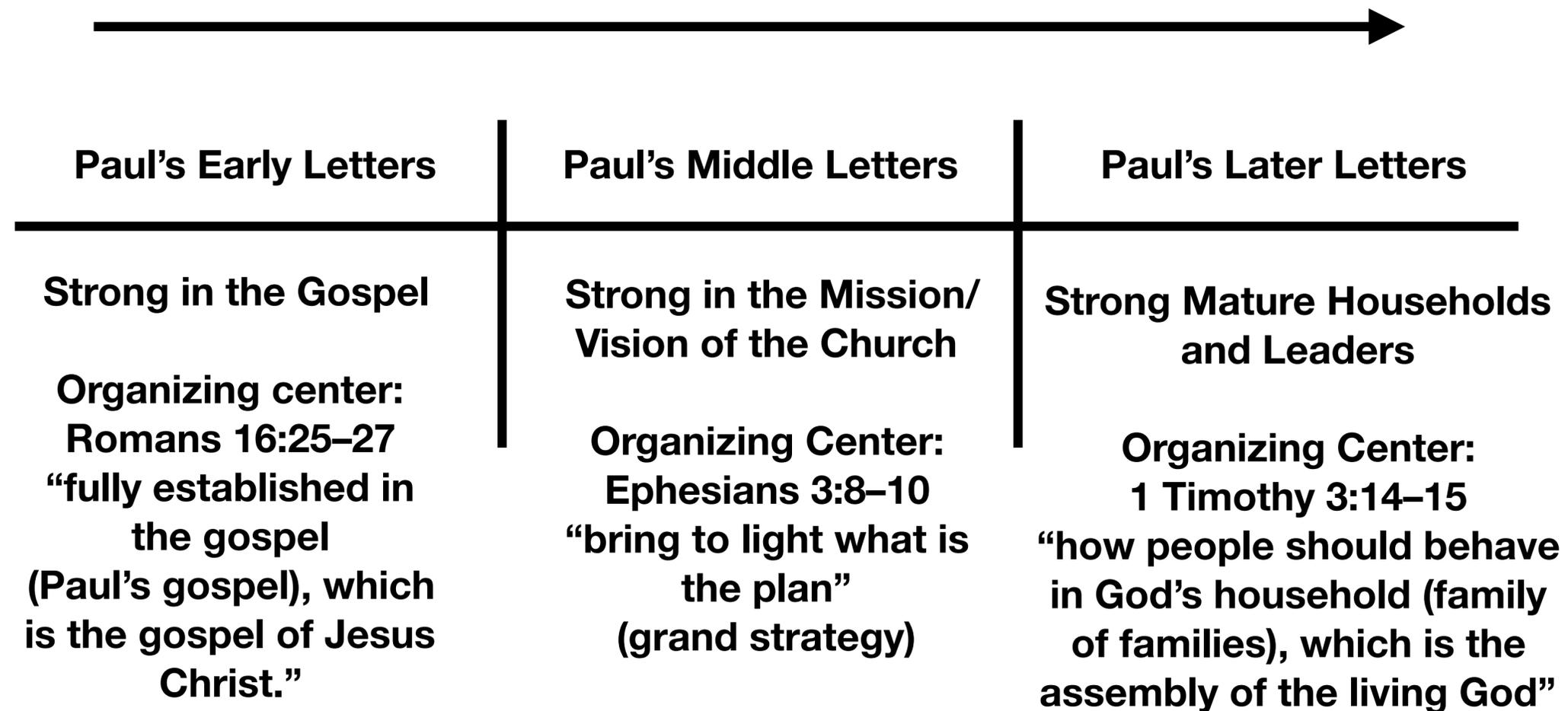
1 Timothy 3:14–15 NRSV

This third phase, in his letters to Timothy and Titus, he called “setting in order what remains” in establishing the churches.

We have used this chart to visualize these phases.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

The Process of Building Strong Churches



Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

The third aspect of his establishing process schema involves the core elements of each phase. We will now look at these elements within the context of each phase.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 1: Strong in the Gospel

Organizing center: Romans 16:25: "fully established in the gospel (Paul's gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Let's look at Paul's process of establishing his churches in the gospel through the interaction of this process in the six early letters of the Pauline corpus.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 1: Strong in the Gospel

Organizing center: Romans 16:25: "fully established in the gospel (Paul's gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in Paul's Gospel:

1. Paul's gospel was based on the kerygmatic statement Paul received from the Apostles; it was consistent with Peter's five kerygmatic sermons in Acts; and it is to be considered the essence of the gospel.
2. Paul saw his first major task as establishing his network of churches in a full understanding of the gospel. This engaged him in an almost decade long battle to see the gospel remain pure from all the old Jewish systems; he even had to take on the Jewish Apostles themselves.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in Paul's Gospel

3. Paul warned against adding anything to the gospel, claiming it would actually turn it into another gospel. He warned that a special focus on basing lifestyle choices on the gospel would separate some believers from others.
4. Paul saw a *full understanding of the gospel* as key to dealing with all sorts of conflicts, divisions, and social stratification, since people came to Christ from all different cultural and religious traditions. Dealing with these issues filled him with conflicts without and fears within, but it was foundational in establishing the churches.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in Paul's Gospel

5. Paul understood that even when churches started off strong, they needed the nurturing of a mother and the exhorting of a father to become deeply rooted, founded on the full understanding of the gospel, laying a foundation for the first principles of the faith.
6. Paul was willing to call his churches fully established in his gospel (the gospel of Jesus Christ) when they grasped the manifesto like argument of his letter to the churches of Rome, which repositioned the role of Israel with that of the Church as being central to the progress of the gospel globally.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 2: Strong in the Mission/Vision of the Church

Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10: “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)

Let's list the core elements of Christ's grand strategy for unfolding His kingdom through the Church, which was previously not revealed before. This is seen in the context of Paul establishing a hub church, a cluster of three churches, and a strategic church in these core concepts and calling them to be one minded around them.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 2: Strong in the Mission/Vision of the Church

Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10: “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in The Essence of Christ's Grand Strategy: The Church (schema, framework)

1. Christ is building one large, global family; it will have one foundation built by the Apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone; the whole structure will be built by Christ and His gifted leaders.
2. The Church is Christ's grand strategy for progressing the gospel, which is now being revealed through Paul. Paul is also charged with taking the gospel to the Gentiles. This grand strategy will amaze even the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in The Essence of Christ's Grand Strategy: The Church (schema, framework)

3. This Church will have one foundation—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. It is all woven together in His great plan for fully realizing His kingdom, eventually 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 faith—the didache, the teaching, the deposit, the sound doctrine.
4. It is built by 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 fully matures in Christ, the watching world will see Christ, and it will stun rulers in the heavenly places.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 3: 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.”

In this final phase, we are looking at the final phase of the establishing process, “setting in order what remains.” The core of Paul's framework in this final phase is organized around the community household codes.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Phase 3: 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.”

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in the Community Household Codes as a Family of Families

1. Key apostolic leaders and their teams must carefully establish the social structure of new churches as a family of families, ordering the community life to begin establishing an intergenerational community impact with the gospel. They must quickly identify, develop, and appoint well-trained elders (Titus 1).

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in the Community Household Codes as a Family of Families

2. Members of the household must keep their focus on older men setting an example for younger men, and older women being diligent to assist younger women in the very difficult task of building strong families within the family of families; younger men must lay a solid reputation for good works, taking care not to allow a focus on teaching to bring about a censuring because of careless speech.
3. If we get our churches properly set in order according to the community household codes, we will be a powerful witness, especially within our families. This will protect our churches from those upsetting our families or our churches with unsound teaching; and we will make the gospel attractive, even beautiful, to the watching communities and cultures around us.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Establishing Phases and Elements

Core Elements: Establishing Churches in the Community Household Codes as a Family of Families

4. If we do not follow these community household codes, we give Satan an open door into our churches. Not following these codes, opens the door for Satan to upset whole households and for younger men to upset the household community. Both will weaken our witness in the watching world. But it is clear, that following them adorns the gospel amongst the communities and cultures in which our churches reside.
5. Focusing on good works and good occupations is key as we seek to build strong families and a strong, one-minded family of families.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Complex Apostolic Network Framework

In the final part of Paul's schema, Paul's process of establishing churches involves building a strong complex apostolic network. This assumes the complex apostolic network framework from the book of Acts (see the encyclical *The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks*).

It also assume this is just a simple framework for building a network of churches as part of the establishing process. As we study the early, middle, and later letters in this series, we can fill in a great deal within this part of the schema to help guide us as we seek to build our own networks, as part of the establishing process.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Paul's Complex Apostolic Network Framework

1. Early Letters. Paul had to work very hard to get the new churches all lined up around a full understanding of the gospel. As the churches were being established in the gospel, part of establishing them was to begin building them into a simple network—the first phase of the network building process.
2. Middle Letters. As seen in the middle letters, Paul deepened his network by centering his focus for three years around a strategic hub, the churches of Ephesus. From that base, he developed a cluster of churches in the Lycus Valley. And finally, he established a model of a strategic partner church in Philippi.
3. Later Letters. In his final set of letters, we see Paul deepening and expanding his network by strengthening his hub church Ephesus and by creating new smaller networks, like on the island of Crete. Thus, His network expanded network by network.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

This schema of Paul's process of establishing churches is a bridge between the Complex Apostolic Network chart and the process of building contemporary church networks in the global South, as we move toward the emerging next Christendom.

After a basic framework is in place from both the Complex Apostolic Network chart and this process—Paul's Establishing Process Schema—for our networks, then these Mastering the Scriptures Series books on Paul's letters provide almost endless interplay between Paul's examples of dealing with issues and problems in the early churches and our own contemporary, complex cultural situations, as we seek to be involved in this process in our own network of churches.

Paul's Establishing Process Schema

Issue: Phases in the Process of Establishing Churches Today

Questions:

1. Following Paul's establishing process schema, how well are our churches established today? Which phases have our church or churches been established in and which phases are weak, or could be considered unestablished?
2. What specific elements in the early letters are strong, weak, or missing in the establishment of our church network? what elements in the middle letters? what elements in the later letters?
3. How does Paul's establishing process schema guide us today in thinking through the issues and problems of establishing our own churches, church networks, and denominations?
4. What do you see as unsolved issues or problems in our church network in which they are not properly established? What is the evidence of the power of the Spirit being weakened or quenched as a result of unsolved issue or problems?