



Baby Believer.

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BIG IDEA – Many are disillusioned with Christians and even more so with the Church, but **still open to Jesus**. Baby believers have a huge advantage: they're just getting started with Him, but it's only just the beginning!

Scripture Focus – 1 Corinthians 3:1–2, Ephesians 4:14–15

Discussion about perceptions of Christianity and the Church.

You've seen Christians who _____, but Jesus forms disciples that _____.

Openness to Jesus = high; trust in Christians and the Church = low.

To be completely fair... trust is at an all time low among every sector of society, so it's not just a distrust of churches, preachers or pastors.

The [Edelman 2025 Trust Report](#), shows that grievances along with the **speed of change has accelerated the level of distrust** globally in areas like **political elections, employers, and leaders who lie**.

"We are not dealing with a world that only mistrusts pastors. People are suspicious of almost all authority: politicians, educators, healthcare, police, media, CEOs, and clergy." [Gallup](#)

What about perceptions about Christians and the Church?

"Among people with no faith or distance from church, "**hypocrisy of religious people**" and **negative experiences with religious institutions** are the **top reasons** they say they doubt Christian beliefs."

In this season of mistrust among our civil and religious institutions, “At the same time, **research shows many people still have a surprisingly positive view of Jesus**, yet they very much **name the hypocrisy of religious people** and past hurt from churches as major reasons they doubt Christianity itself.” [Barna](#)

I get that! Mostly because Jesus called out hypocrisy!



DIG DEEPER: Callout on institutional hypocrisy – just look in the mirror! **A list of ten institutions that are 100% hypocritical.**

Jesus himself exposed hypocrisy and hypocrites!

The Church gets singled out because it **doesn't just claim preferences; it claims holiness, truth, and moral authority**—so **hypocrisy feels like betrayal**, not just inconsistency.

We have all seen Christians who have added to the mistrust and confusion. But Jesus forms disciples that are **actually trustworthy, honest, and Christlike in a culture that doesn't trust anyone.**

The issue isn't **all** Christians it's **some** Christians.

I think the Apostle Paul can help us define the problem of **all** verses **some!**

Paul tells us there are different kinds of Christians, always has been, always will be until God sorts us all out in the end.

These aren't labels to wear; they're snapshots that help us locate where we are—and choose a better direction.

However, it does allow us to extend mercy and be graceful to those who may be stuck or have difficulty yielding to Jesus to move along in their spiritual growth.



DIG DEEPER NOTES



Church Hurt Tips from Paul

Do you want to wallow or get well? Your choice.

Paul gives us four postures of believers and where they are at spiritually.

Remember: The goal isn't to figure out which box you're in. The goal is to ask, "What's my next step toward maturity?"

- **Baby Believers**
- **Carnal Believers**
- **Shipwrecked Believers &**
- **Mature Believers**

This week we take a look at Baby Believers.

We expect babies to act like babies. We know there's a whole lot going on in their amazing little growing brains. It is truly miraculous to watch it happen. Babies are adorable and always a wonder to behold.

But you know what's not cute? Do you know what's not adorable? When a full-grown adult behaves like a baby!

We all naturally grow and develop, progressing along at our own pace. We don't rush it; we understand that each person moves forward differently than the next. Yet, we still look for movement!

We recognize the difference between being "new" and being "stuck."

The Apostle Paul is the leading writer in the New Testament. Paul gives us the bulk of a believer's theology (our understanding of God and how we grow and mature as a follower of Jesus).

Even though this discussion about our growth stages is not a major topic in Paul's writings, there are a few clues that clearly help us understand there is a beginning and an end goal.

The beginning is a new believer, the end goal is to look more like Jesus – IMAGO DEI, "conformed to the image of Christ."

What are the marks of a baby believer?

1. **Saved but still fleshly – Paul wanted to address their spirituality (relating to the realm of spirit), but he could not. He had to write to them in their**

“fleshy/human” ways, like an infant, or a simple-minded or immature person.

- Vs 1 Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. Vs 2 I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, Vs 3 for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**
- Paul describes what “fleshy” means: They were still dealing with:
 1. Lots of jealousy, quarrels, factions, offense, drama.
 2. And it proves you are still living like people of the world.
 3. How many of us have **experienced these things as “normal” in our life or household** and it takes a mature **leap** to leave it behind and live like God intends.
 4. God intends for us to live within the context of the **“one another, with light and dark attributes.”**

2. Tolerate milk only and have aversion to “meat” – Paul explains that they could not tolerate solid food which require sacrifice and submission to God's will rather than our own.

- I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready. **1 Corinthians 3:2**
- The author of Hebrews picks up this milk vs meat theme, homing in on not knowing how to do what is right!
- You have been **believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others**. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. **You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.** **Hebrews 5:12-14**
- **Only tolerate basics;** resist deeper truth that demands real change.
- **Which is fine if you are still new believer!** This becomes an issue if you have known Jesus for several years and are still wrestling over simple issues.



DIG DEEPER: Moving from Milk to Meat Theology

3. Easily tossed, swayed, and hyped

- They are “[kludónizomai](#)” agitated and unsettled by every wind or whim.
- **Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.**
Ephesians 4:14-15 NIV
- Chasing after new teaching, new trends, new crisis = they swing hard emotionally and doctrinally.
- I have spoken with new believers or those who have returned to faith in Christ and they tend to get too excited about the newest, latest ideas floating around on social media.
- Constantly following what's new and cool can stunt your growth as a believer and make it harder to put down solid roots with Jesus and the community of faith (the Church).
- As a Pastor, there is constant pressure to teach the newest, latest, greatest stuff out there – but it can be counter-productive to us being and making disciples. It makes it suspiciously look like a distraction more than a doing the hard job of a being faithful.

4. Childish thinking, thin skin

- Paul uses Tongues and Prophecy to describe how our understanding of how God works in the gathering of believers is an example of being childish.
- Children can be quick to react, slow to reflect, sensing spiritual things, but shallow in their response to them.
 1. “don’t be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind.” (1 Cor 14:20; cf. 13:11)

5. Oversensitive conscience on secondary issues. Again, Paul is not being critical, just truthful in how baby believers can be “weak” in faith in areas they need help growing in.

- Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And those who don’t eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. **Romans 14:1-3.**
- Easily thrown and sensitive over disputable matters – even easily offended (food, days, gray areas).

- **When it comes to our response to young believers**, we are to **“Accept other believers** who are weak in faith, and **don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.”** Romans 14:1
 1. Remember it’s **GRACE** with **TRUTH**. Not critical and judgmental.

Jesus dealt with a woman who was stuck and struggling in infancy.

Jesus Story – The Samaritan Woman (John 4:4–30, 39–42)

A spiritual “infant” with a messy past and confused theology, but open and responsive.

What do we learn from Paul’s words of being a baby believer?

Movement should be serious because stagnation is stinky!

- Everyone Starts as a Spiritual Baby
- No shame in infancy; the problem is settling there.
- Paul: “I could not address you as spiritual, but as infants in Christ.”

What do we learn from Jesus meeting with the woman at the well?

Jesus Meets the Baby Believer with Truth and Grace

- He starts simple: “Will you give me a drink?”
- **He reveals her story without humiliating her** – exposes, but doesn’t crush.
- **He points out truth without judgment** – you’ve had five and your living with number six.
- **She is the first one that Jesus chose to reveal himself to:** “I am the Messiah, the one you are really looking for.”
- **Babies Believers are the best Witnesses**
- **She doesn’t know everything, but she knows enough:** “Come, see a man...”
- **Baby faith doesn’t wait for a religious degree to share good news.**
- **Jesus’ Invitation: Don’t Just Sip out of the well, grow up and drink deeply from Christ’s living water that flows continually.**
- **Move from “someone told me about Jesus” to “I’ve heard Him for myself”** (John 4:42).

Growth markers: teachability, hunger for Scripture, willingness to change.



DIG DEEPER: Church Hurt Tips from Paul.

Baby faith often has a gap between new beliefs and old habits. That gap can look like hypocrisy, but **it's often immaturity not meanness.**

Take hypocrisy for example. **Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you're not.**

Immaturity is being what you are—but not growing.

A baby believer will stumble with inconsistency. A hypocrite gets stuck performing consistently.

Spiritual infancy is a starting point, not a lifestyle.

Jesus gladly meets spiritual babies where they are—but He never intends for them to stay there.

APPLICATION

“Not That Kind of Christian”

You've seen Christians who stay shallow, flaky, and easily swayed.

But Jesus forms disciples that grow up, lean in, and learn to drink living water, and digest difficult ways of God - not just continue to sip spiritual milk.

Where am I spiritually “infant-like” (too fleshy or shallow, easily swayed or offended)?

One concrete “grow up” step this week: Pause and pray before responding. Ask someone more mature and trustworthy for help in understanding.

Many are disillusioned with Christians and even more so with the Church, but still open to Jesus. Baby believers have a huge advantage: they're just getting started with Him, but it's only just the beginning!

We want more new believers, not less. We also don't want anyone to get stuck staying a baby believer longer than they should. That's what I love about Paul's phrase to the churches in Ephesus – we should all grow up in truth and grace!

SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NLT ON SCREEN

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?

Hebrews 5:12-14 NLT ON SCREEN

You have been **believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others**. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. **You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.**

1 Corinthians 14:20 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, **don't be childish in your understanding** of these things. **Be innocent as babies** when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind.

Ephesians 4:14-15 NIV

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Romans 14:1-3 NLT

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything **must not look down on those who don't**. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.



DIG DEEPER NOTES



Callout on institutional hypocrisy – just look in the mirror!
Institutions where hypocrisy is regularly identified

Hypocrisy is called out anywhere people claim virtue publicly while violating it privately—or where institutions market ideals they don't actually practice.

Common targets:

1. **Politics / Government:** "Integrity and transparency" while hiding conflicts of interest; "law and order" while excusing insider corruption; "family values" while living the opposite.

2. **Corporate / Business:** “People are our greatest asset” while treating employees as disposable; “customer first” while exploiting fees and fine print; “green” branding while polluting or lobbying against reform.
3. **Media / Journalism:** “Just the facts” while slanting coverage; calling out misinformation while amplifying sensationalism for clicks.
4. **Academia / Education:** Teaching critical thinking while punishing dissent; promoting equity while protecting favoritism or ideological gatekeeping.
5. **Healthcare / Pharma:** “Patient first” while incentives reward volume, billing complexity, or over-prescribing; moral messaging while ignoring access gaps.
6. **Law Enforcement / Justice System:** “Equal justice” while applying discretion unevenly; punishing small crimes while powerful offenders get leniency.
7. **Nonprofits / Charities:** “Serving the vulnerable” while leadership self-enriches; “mission-driven” while protecting brand over people.
8. **Tech Platforms:** “Community and safety” while optimizing addiction; “free speech” claims while selectively enforcing policies.
9. **Celebrity / Entertainment culture:** Public virtue-signaling while exploiting people behind the scenes.
10. **Activism / Social movements:** “Justice and inclusion” while practicing purity tests, harassment, or selective outrage.



Jesus called out hypocrisy and hypocrites!

- **Matthew 23:1–36** — The fullest “anti-hypocrisy” chapter in the Gospels (“woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...”). Theme: *looking righteous while being rotten inside; burdening others while excusing yourselves.*
- **Matthew 6:1–18** — Hypocrisy in spiritual practices:
 - Giving for applause (**6:1–4**)
 - Praying to be seen (**6:5–6**)
 - Fasting for image-management (**6:16–18**)

- **Matthew 7:3–5** — The “speck and plank” hypocrisy: correcting others while ignoring your own sin.
- **Matthew 15:7–9** (cf. **Mark 7:6–13**) — “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Theme: *external religion without inner obedience; using tradition to dodge God’s commands.*
- **Luke 11:37–44** — Hypocrisy as clean-on-the-outside religion: careful public appearance, neglecting justice and love.
- **Luke 12:1** — “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Theme: *hypocrisy spreads; it’s contagious in communities.*

Jesus exposes hypocrisy without using the word

- **Matthew 22:15–22** — He perceives their malice in the trap question (“why put me to the test?”). He exposes performative questions meant to win, not learn.
- **John 8:1–11** — Hypocrisy of selective moral outrage (publicly shaming one sinner while ignoring their own guilt and/or the man involved).
- **Matthew 21:28–32** — The two sons: the one who *talks* obedience vs. the one who *does* it. Theme: *God cares about actual repentance more than religious talk.*



Moving from Milk to Meat Theology

The milk to meat on who God is and how we mature, breaks it into four groupings.

The usual Pauline set: Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

1. Simplest On-Ramps (clear, concrete, low theological density)

These are **easiest for a new or “baby” believer to read and immediately see who God is and how to live.**

1 Thessalonians

- Tone: warm, simple, encouraging.
- Theology of God: Father who loves, chooses, calls; Jesus who died and rose; basic return-of-Christ hope.
- Maturity: basic holiness, sexual purity, brotherly love, working with your hands, staying awake spiritually.

Philippians

- Tone: joyful, relational, Christ-centered.
- Theology of God: Christ's humility and exaltation (2:5–11), God who finishes what He starts, joy in Christ.
- Maturity: growing in love, joy in suffering, unity, contentment, pressing on toward the goal.

Philemon

- Tone: personal, one-page case study.
- Theology of God: God who transforms relationships in Christ.
- Maturity: forgiveness, reconciliation, seeing others "in the Lord," practicing costly grace.

These three are your most accessible "who God is + how to grow" on-ramps.

Core Growth and Church-Life Letters (moderate complexity)

Still very teachable, but with more dense theology and church-structure pieces.

Colossians

- Theology of God: very high Christology (Christ as image of the invisible God, fullness of deity, creator, reconciler).
- Maturity: "continue in Him," put off the old self, put on the new, household codes; great for identity and sanctification.

Ephesians

- Theology of God: big picture—Father's plan, Son's work, Spirit's seal; cosmic scope of the church.
- Maturity: from death to life, saved by grace for good works, unity, spiritual gifts, marriage/household, spiritual warfare.

- More layered than Colossians, but still clear.

1 Timothy & Titus

- Theology of God: God our Savior; Christ as mediator; sound doctrine vs junk teaching.
- Maturity: qualifications for leaders, order in the household of God, training in godliness, good works in real life.
- Great for “how a church should function” and what mature leaders look like.

2 Timothy

- Theology of God: God who saves, calls, guards the deposit by the Spirit.
- Maturity: endure hardship, guard sound teaching, finish the race; excellent for perseverance and “finishing well.”

2 Thessalonians

- Theology of God: God as judge; Christ's return; justice on evil.
- Maturity: standing firm under pressure, not being idle, correcting end-times panic.
- A bit more eschatological, but still readable.

These letters are your “core growth & church health” manuals—more than basics, but not yet at Romans-level complexity.

3. Conflict and Reform Letters (hot, nuanced, mixed pastoral + heavy theology)

These get more complex because Paul is arguing hard against real problems.

Galatians

- Theology of God: justification by faith alone, the cross, grace vs law, life in the Spirit.
- Maturity: walking by the Spirit vs flesh, the fruit of the Spirit, crucifying the flesh, carrying one another's burdens.
- Intense, polemical, but nuclear for identity and freedom.

1 Corinthians

- Theology of God: Christ crucified as the wisdom and power of God; the Spirit's work; resurrection hope.
- Maturity: dealing with division, sexual sin, lawsuits, spiritual gifts, worship chaos, love as the highest way.
- Very practical but context-heavy; lots of tricky issues and cultural background.

2 Corinthians

- Theology of God: God of all comfort, power in weakness, new covenant ministry, reconciliation.
- Maturity: suffering as part of ministry, integrity, generosity, boasting only in weakness.
- Emotionally raw and theologically rich; harder to “track” for new believers, but gold for suffering and leadership.

These are ideal for taking more grounded believers into “how the gospel reforms a messy church and a messy heart.”

4. Heavyweight Doctrinal Map (most theologically complex)

Romans

- Theology of God: sin, wrath, justification, union with Christ, life in the Spirit, Israel and the nations, God's mercy and sovereignty.
- Maturity: presenting bodies as living sacrifices, transformed minds, love, submission, conscience, unity between strong and weak.
- This is the densest and most systematic. Absolutely foundational, but not where I'd start a brand-new believer if I want them to actually grasp and obey rather than just drown.

How I'd summarize it for your “baby → mature” frame

If you want to move from “simple to complicated” in how to see God and growth in Christ:

- **On-ramps (simplest):**
1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon
- **Core growth and church life (next level):**
Colossians, Ephesians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus
- **Conflict and reform (advanced, pastoral + theological):**
Galatians, 1–2 Corinthians
- **Heavyweight doctrinal spine (most complex):**
Romans



Church Hurt Tips from Paul

Do you want to wallow or get well? Your choice.

1. Paul himself is a “church-hurt” apostle

Paul is not writing from a safe distance; he's bled from friendly fire.

- “Danger from false brothers” (2 Cor 11:26).
- “Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me...” (2 Tim 4:10).
- “Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will repay him...” (2 Tim 4:14).
- “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.” (2 Tim 4:16).

He knows what it is to be hurt by believers and abandoned by churches.

2. Paul refused to confuse Jesus with His broken people

Corinth is a disaster zone of “church hurt”: factions, lawsuits, sexual sin, power games, arrogance.

- Some say, “I follow Paul,” others “I follow Apollos,” others “I follow Cephas” (1 Cor 1:12–13; 3:4).
- They're **suing each other in pagan courts** (1 Cor 6:1–8).
- There's **a man sleeping with his stepmother** and **the church is proud of its “tolerance”** (1 Cor 5:1–2).

Paul's response is crucial for wounded Christians:

1. **Christ, not the leaders, is the foundation.**

- “No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 3:11)
- Leaders are “only servants” (3:5–7). They will answer to God.

2. **Jesus will sort out the damage.**

- Each builder's work will be tested by fire (3:12–15).
- That means some “Christian” work will burn, even if the person is saved “as through fire.”

For a church-hurt believer, Paul's word is basically:

"Don't mistake a crooked builder for a crooked Christ. The foundation is still sound, even if some of the framing is garbage."

3. "Work out your salvation" happens in messy church, not outside of it

Philippians 2:12–13 is often quoted like a private, internal spirituality verse. It isn't.

- "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling..." (Phil 2:12) is plural – "all of you together."
- The context is church conflict (Phil 4:2–3, Euodia and Syntyche), grumbling, and pressure.

How does Paul say we "work it out" in a wounded, imperfect community?

1. Take the posture of Christ, not the posture of pride.

- Phil 2:1–11 – humility, considering others, the cross-shaped mind of Christ.

2. Refuse to let bitterness become your language.

- "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure... then you will shine among them like stars." (2:14–15)

That's not, "Your hurt doesn't matter." It's, "In the middle of real hurt, **don't let grumbling and tearing down become your identity**. Let Jesus shape your response."

4. Paul commands both forgiveness and boundaries

Paul is not soft on abuse, nor is he soft on unforgiveness.

a) Forgiveness and bearing with one another

- "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Col 3:13)
- "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph 4:32)

That's aimed at real grievances and real wounds inside the church.

But he never uses forgiveness as an excuse to keep people trapped under ongoing harm.

b) Boundaries and separation from unrepentant harm

- "Warn a divisive person once, then a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them." (Titus 3:10–11)
- "Keep away from them" when people cause divisions and put obstacles contrary to the teaching you learned (Rom 16:17–18).
- "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." (Eph 5:11).
- Regarding a so-called "brother" who is sexually immoral, greedy, abusive, drunk, or swindling: "Do not even eat with such people." (1 Cor 5:11–13).

Paul's line is clear:

- Yes, forgive.
- No, you are not required to stay under unrepentant spiritual or relational abuse. Sometimes obedience looks like **putting someone out** or **getting away**.

That speaks directly to church-hurt people: you can walk away from toxicity without walking away from Jesus.

5. Paul validates the pain and says God meets you there

2 Corinthians is Paul with his guard down.

- "We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself." (2 Cor 1:8)
- He talks about being "hard pressed... perplexed... persecuted... struck down" (4:8–9).
- He admits "conflicts on the outside, fears within" (7:5).

And yet:

- God is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles" – so that we can comfort others (1:3–4).
- The very wounds become ministry: "death is at work in us, but life is at work in you" (4:12).

For church-hurt believers, Paul is saying:

God doesn't waste your pain, and He doesn't gaslight it away. He intends to comfort you in it and eventually use it to heal others.

6. Paul insists: don't let hurt drive you into isolation

Paul knows how bad churches can be. But he still says:

- "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor 12:21).
- "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it..." (12:26).

The temptation after church hurt is: "I'm done with church. It's just me and Jesus now."

Paul would say:

- Yes, **leave** a toxic context if needed.
- No, **do not amputate** yourself from the body of Christ altogether.

Working out your salvation, in Paul's mind, requires a body—broken and in process as it is.



Moving from Milk to Meat Plan

Think of it as four 3-month modules.

Quarter 1 (Weeks 1–13): Simple, Clear On-Ramps

Theme: "New Life, New Family"

Letters: 1 Thessalonians → Philippians → Philemon

Why these first:

- Warm, concrete, very readable.
- God as Father, Jesus as Lord, basic hope, joy, holiness.

Reading / Teaching Flow:

- **Weeks 1–5 – 1 Thessalonians**

- Focus: basic conversion, holiness, hope, community.
- Teaching aims:
 - God chose you, loves you, is coming again.
 - How to live sexually clean, work hard, love people, stay awake spiritually.
- **Weeks 6–10 – Philippians**
 - Focus: joy in Christ, humility, pressing on, contentment.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Jesus' humility and exaltation (2:5–11).
 - Growing up: stop grumbling, start shining; learn contentment in all circumstances.
- **Weeks 11–13 – Philemon (+ review)**
 - Focus: forgiveness and reconciliation “in Christ.”
 - Teaching aims:
 - The gospel changes power dynamics and relationships.
 - Practicing costly forgiveness and seeing people “as a brother/sister.”

End of Q1:

People know the basics: saved by Christ, called to holiness, part of a family, joy in suffering, forgiveness as normal Christianity.

Quarter 2 (Weeks 14–26): Identity and Everyday Maturity

Theme: “In Christ, Growing Up”

Letters: Colossians → Ephesians

Why here:

- They deepen identity (“in Christ”), and show what “put off / put on” growth looks like.
- Strong on who Jesus actually is.

Reading / Teaching Flow:

- **Weeks 14–19 – Colossians**
 - Focus: Christ supreme, Christ in you, putting off/on.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Jesus as image of the invisible God, creator, sustainer.
 - Kill old patterns (sexual sin, greed, anger); put on compassion, patience, love.
 - Christ in you = actual change, not just belief statements.
- **Weeks 20–26 – Ephesians**
 - Focus: big gospel story + church life + spiritual warfare.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed by the Spirit.
 - Saved by grace for good works.
 - Church as one new humanity; unity, gifts, speaking the truth in love.

- Household relationships (marriage, work) and the armor of God.

End of Q2:

People have a deeper sense of identity and calling and see that maturity means putting off old patterns, walking in love, and living as part of Christ's body, not solo.

Quarter 3 (Weeks 27–39): Church Order, Real-Life Godliness

Theme: "Being Useful in a Real Church"

Letters: 1 Timothy → Titus → 2 Timothy (+ 2 Thessalonians if you want)

Why here:

- Takes more mature believers into leadership, order, "how a church should function," and endurance.

Reading / Teaching Flow:

- **Weeks 27–31 – 1 Timothy**
 - Focus: sound doctrine, prayer, godliness, qualifications.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Guarding the gospel from junk teaching.
 - What mature leaders look like.
 - Training yourself for godliness; life that matches belief.
- **Weeks 32–35 – Titus**
 - Focus: healthy teaching and good works.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Grace trains us to say "no" to ungodliness.
 - Different groups (older men/women, younger men/women, workers) living out the gospel.
 - Zealous for good works in the everyday world.
- **Weeks 36–39 – 2 Timothy (and/or 2 Thessalonians)**
 - Focus: perseverance, suffering, finishing well.
 - Teaching aims:
 - Guard the deposit of truth.
 - Suffer for the gospel without shame.
 - Don't quit when it's hard; finish the race; pass it on.

End of Q3:

People see that maturity is not just "me and Jesus"; it's ordered church life, godly leadership, real-world obedience, perseverance under pressure.

Quarter 4 (Weeks 40–52): Conflict, Deep Reform, and Big Gospel

Theme: "From Shallow to Rooted"

Letters: Galatians → 1 Corinthians → Romans (selects)

Here you move into the tougher stuff: legalism vs grace, a messy church, and then the deep architecture of the gospel.

Galatians (Weeks 40–44)

- Focus: justification by faith, freedom vs legalism, life in the Spirit.
- Teaching aims:
 - Don't drift from grace to performance.
 - Freedom is not "do what I want"; it's "walk by the Spirit, not the flesh."
 - Fruit of the Spirit vs works of the flesh as a maturity diagnostic.

1 Corinthians (Weeks 45–49)

- Focus: the cross, church chaos, spiritual gifts, love, resurrection.
- Teaching aims (you'll have to choose key sections, not every verse):
 - The cross as God's wisdom and power.
 - How the gospel confronts sexual sin, lawsuits, disunity, and selfish worship.
 - Gifts in order, love as the non-negotiable center.
 - Bodily resurrection as future hope, not vague spirituality.

Romans (Weeks 50–52 – focused introduction)

With only three weeks in Year 1, don't pretend to "finish Romans." Use a high-level flyover of the spine:

- Week 1: Romans 1–5 – universal sin, justification by faith, peace with God.
- Week 2: Romans 6–8 – union with Christ, life in the Spirit, no condemnation.
- Week 3: Romans 12 – living sacrifices, renewed mind, genuine love, practical holiness.

Then position Romans as "Year 2 deep dive."

End of Q4:

People have seen how the gospel confronts real sin, legalism, church mess, and then glimpsed the full weight of grace and Spirit-led life in Romans.

Summary Snapshot (for you to see the progression clearly)

Q1 – New Life, New Family (On-Ramps)

- 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon
- Focus: basics of following Jesus, joy, holiness, forgiveness.

Q2 – In Christ, Growing Up (Identity & Sanctification)

- Colossians, Ephesians
- Focus: who Jesus is, who we are in Him, put off/put on, church as body.

Q3 – Useful & Ordered (Leadership, Godliness, Perseverance)

- 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy (+ 2 Thess optional)
- Focus: sound doctrine, elders, godliness, perseverance, passing the baton.

Q4 – Reformed & Rooted (Conflict, Reform, Big Gospel)

- Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Romans (intro)
- Focus: grace vs legalism, messy church reform, and the deep structure of the gospel.

