

SOVEREIGN GRACE

# PERSPECTIVES

Reflections on Doctrine and Practice in the Local Church

## Missiology

*Entering the Field of the Lord*

Dave Harvey



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Each issue of *Sovereign Grace Perspectives* attempts to communicate our current understanding of the topic addressed. Our theology continues to develop as we seek to grow in our understanding of Scripture.

Executive Publisher—C.J. Mahaney. Executive Editor—Kevin Meath (KMeath@sovgracemin.org). Design—Matthew Wahl. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Sovereign Grace Ministries exists to start, establish, and strengthen local churches with the gospel, for God's glory. We are a family of churches in six countries, and provide ongoing teaching and training to other church-planting ministries on several continents. We also hold conferences and produce a variety of resources to equip the entire Church, including books, worship music, and recorded messages.

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# Missiology

## *Entering the Field of the Lord*

Dave Harvey

The other day I took a two-hour trip to a town about 45 minutes away. That's a roundabout way of saying I got lost. My innate sense of direction—my wife would call it “masculine misguidance”—went AWOL and left me creeping along country roads better suited to mule teams than minivans.

I was traveling to a local church to spend an evening with its leaders. My enthusiasm was high and my destination clear. But I was clueless about one vitally important element—the best way to get there.

It wasn't entirely my fault. I had stopped for directions, called for directions, and prayed for directions. I really was on a sincere, desperate search for the best way forward. Yet additional information couldn't seem to move me down the right roads. Sure, I was moving, but I wasn't making much progress. Arriving late to the meeting was a great reminder that it's not enough to be in motion or even to know the ultimate destination. You have to know the best way to get there.

This issue of *Perspectives* is about the way this family of churches is moving to take the gospel to new people and places, whether across town or across an ocean of cultural difference. It's a descrip-

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tion of our direction in missiology, and an acknowledgement that when it comes to missions, it's not enough simply to be in motion or to know the destination. We must know the best way to get there.

In other words, the way we enter the field of missions matters to God.

We live in a world that is often said to be shrinking.<sup>1</sup> Global communications and transportation, the Internet, and transnational economic and geopolitical alliances are just some of the forces profoundly and rapidly reshaping the world. This changing world is our field—a world in continuing, desperate need of the gospel of Christ.

The world of missions is likewise undergoing sweeping change: old ways evaluated and adapted, new methods proposed and implemented. Many voices are weighing in, but with widely varying advice:

- We need a new Cambridge Seven; a new Lausanne; a new Student Missionary Movement.
- We need to target our efforts and resources on the 10/40 window.
- We need to harness the power of communications technology and transmit the gospel worldwide through the common grace of electronic media.
- We need more spiritual warfare. There are territorial spirits obstructing the gospel's potency, and missions must address this reality.
- We need to cast off Western organizational models and ground mission approaches in the cultural traditions of the peoples we are seeking to reach.
- We need to bring anthropology and sociology alongside theology as we look for new ways to cross borders effectively with the gospel.
- We need to earn the right to share our faith through the mercy-works of economic, material, and medical aid.
- We need spiritual revival—a worldwide move of God that opens closed doors, throws back the darkness, and clears the way for gospel advance.

The purpose of this booklet is twofold: to explain how Sovereign Grace Ministries understands the New Testament teaching on missiology, and to describe how we have sought to apply that teaching in response to the Great Commission. But first let us emphasize the obvious: this is far from the last word on the subject. We are a young family of churches and have much more to learn about missiology than we have to teach. Our gains have been modest and our mistakes memorable. Our understanding and practice of missiology (and indeed of every area) is *semper reformanda*—always being reformed. Yet, for reasons mystifying to us, there is growing interest in our doctrine and practice of missions. So here in these pages is an attempt to express and explain briefly our position and practice.

## ***More than Take and Give***

Sovereign Grace Ministries is built in part on a deep conviction that proper missiology cannot be constructed without a robust, corresponding ecclesiology—a doctrine and model of the local church. A more precise representation of our understanding might be that *missiology is most biblical when it flows through and returns to ecclesiology*. This position springs from our scriptural study and has been applied throughout the brief history of this ministry.

As one example, Covenant Fellowship Church, where I serve as senior pastor, was planted in 1984 from Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Covenant Life began when a 1970s teaching ministry in the Washington, DC, area called TAG (Take and Give) was concluded. For several years TAG's weekly meetings had attracted up to 2,000 people, most of them young and eager for authentic encounters with Christ. But as TAG's attendance grew, the leadership became increasingly aware of the deficiencies and dangers of regularly gathering people for teaching in a non-church context.

TAG's leaders felt confident that God had called them to teach and train Christians for God-glorifying impact. However, like me on my recent road trip, these leaders were clear on the general destination but hazy on the best route. This cast them back upon Scripture. Through study, they began to see that TAG's approach to caring for Christians lacked biblical context. From

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this insight emerged a conviction that the most biblical way to make disciples is through the local church.

Many were astonished when the leaders of TAG suddenly ended the popular, fruitful ministry to devote themselves to the building of a local church. From the beginning of what is now known as Covenant Life Church there was a developing missiology—a belief about the way Christians are to approach and apply the Great Commission. Through continued study of Scripture and the example of seasoned church builders, Covenant Life soon developed a conviction and passion for church planting.

Our church is a first-fruit of that passion. A small group of families and singles relocated to the Philadelphia area for the express purpose of planting this church. As we became established, the vision for church planting was internalized through study and a growing awareness of how God had blessed us through the sacrifices of our sending church. Covenant Fellowship has since planted other churches, eight to date, and helped train leaders for additional church plantings. Some of those churches are themselves beginning to explore and enjoy the adventure of church planting. Similar patterns have emerged elsewhere within the Sovereign Grace family.

Early in the history of this ministry, it became apparent that the churches needed to be linked by more than a name and an essentially common vision. A leadership team of gifted and proven leaders was formed and given a dual responsibility: serving the local churches and establishing strategies for future missions direction. (When referring to the overall ministry, “leadership team” is for us synonymous with “apostolic team,” a phrase defined in the following pages.)

Sovereign Grace Ministries—then called People of Destiny International and later PDI—formed as the organizational expression of this leadership team. The result has been slow, intentional growth from a single church to, as of this writing, 65 churches, the majority having been planted and the rest adopted. By God’s grace, these churches are joined by a commitment to sound doctrine, by relationships, and by a defined approach to missions, which itself spills over from our love for the gospel and application of God’s Word.

Let’s look now at the biblical basis for Sovereign Grace’s missiology.

## ***The Lord of the Harvest***

In the eighth and ninth chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, we encounter Jesus engaged in violent extension of the Kingdom of God. He heals the sick, calms the storm, casts out demons, and raises one from the dead. His renown and impact are spreading swiftly, and largely without opposition. In the midst of this remarkable expansion, Jesus gives his followers a startling command.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Mt 9:35–38)

Jesus’ words reveal important insights for developing a robust missiology. We see here the Shepherd’s heart of compassion for the lost. The Lord of the Harvest makes clear that gathering the lost is not his work alone—that God intends for the kingdom work of spreading the gospel to involve the labors of ordinary people. He issues a call to his followers, a call to pray earnestly for the ranks of God’s workers in the field to swell in order to reap the harvest he is preparing. And, yet, immediately following this command, Jesus identifies the Twelve and commissions them for their first missionary endeavors. Almost before they can pray for laborers, he makes them laborers.

Fast-forward to the last chapter in Matthew. Jesus Christ, now crucified and resurrected, speaks to his disciples the final words recorded by Matthew—the Great Commission. George Peters writes, “The primary historical significance of the Great Commission lies in the fact that it gives to the church the pattern and purpose of missions. It defines and delineates the missionary task. We have in the Great Commission a compass, a charter, and a plan.”<sup>2</sup> The final two verses of Matthew’s Gospel are widely seen as the mandate that launches missions:

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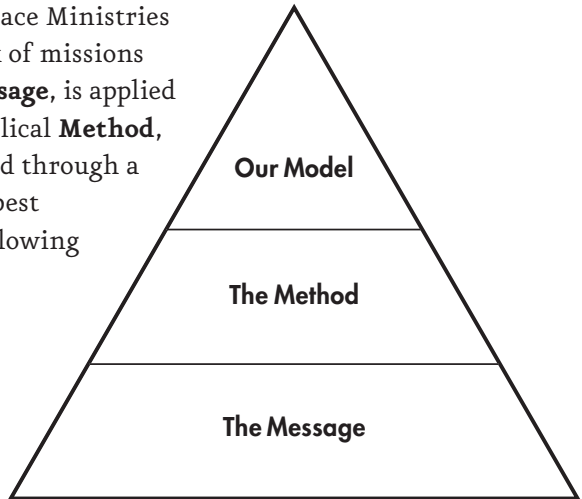
And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:18–20)

Viewing these two passages together provides much insight into the mission to which we are called. The Lord of the Harvest is seeking laborers to work toward a glorious end (making Christian disciples in every nation) through specific means (baptizing and teaching). Examining how the Great Commission is pursued in the New Testament shows us how these means of baptizing and teaching are to be employed. Thus provided with sound directions for our journey, we are able to move beyond the vague commitment to forward motion which so hampered my meanderings through the Pennsylvania countryside.

Christians are called to “go” by divinely appointed means, given by the one who sends us. From this conclusion flows a conviction that has become the guiding principle of the Sovereign Grace missiology:

**The way we enter the field  
matters to the Lord of the Harvest.**

The Sovereign Grace Ministries approach to the task of missions begins with the **Message**, is applied through a sound, biblical **Method**, and is contextualized through a **Model**. It might be best visualized in the following diagram.





## The Message

Simply stated, the message is the gospel—the good news of the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This gospel is not abstract truth. Jesus Christ died for sinners—all of us—that we might be forgiven by God and reconciled to God on the basis of Jesus’ substitutionary, atoning death.<sup>3</sup> This indescribably profound truth is the ultimate basis for missions. There is no point in “going” if we do not carry and clearly articulate the gospel. Charles Spurgeon set the gospel in its proper theological context: “Do you not know...what God’s estimate of the gospel is? Do you not know that it has been the chief subject of his thoughts and acts from all eternity? He looks on it as the grandest of all his works.”<sup>4</sup>

When we take the gospel to the world, we proclaim “the grandest of all his works,” the single message God desires all nations to hear. Without the gospel as heart, goal, and message, there is no biblical missiology. This one element separates missions from religious social work and proselytizing. Many human agencies are effective at meeting temporal needs; only the gospel addresses people in their eternal state before God. Many religions seek converts; only one has the truth that creates new hearts. The gospel is the base of the missiology structure because it is the foundation upon which all missions is built. It is the only message that matters in an ultimate way.

The gospel is also the power behind missions. The apostle Paul was supremely confident in the power of the gospel for salvation across cultural boundaries. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Ro 1:16). “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1Co 1:18).

In his letter to the Colossian church, Paul affirms the power of the gospel coming to them, “as indeed in the whole world it is *bearing fruit and growing*” (Col 1:6, emphasis added). The gospel is not simply a set of pithy points enhanced through attractive literature. It is a dynamic, unstoppable force which God has unleashed in creation through the cross.<sup>5</sup> As Leon Morris so memorably stated,

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“[The gospel] is not simply good advice, telling us what we should do. Nor is it information about God’s power. It is God’s power.”<sup>6</sup>

Any missions commitment must begin with and be sustained by a resolute confidence in the truth of the gospel message and the power of its proclamation. Where this is lacking, the locus of our confidence shifts from God to methods. Missiology must never start with technology or territorial spirits. It must begin with our confidence in the explosive gospel message we carry.

Moreover, we want to proclaim a gospel that does not cease working in life-changing power when conversion is accomplished. For the gospel to be the foundation of a fully biblical missiology it must be the foundation of our lives, lives that witness not merely to salvation, but to ongoing transformation. Such lives give integrity to our proclamation and undergird the message of the cross. At Covenant Fellowship Church our mission statement is, “Loving God by celebrating, proclaiming, and living the gospel.” That is, we want to be gospel-centered. We want to connect the gospel not only to our proclamation, but to our parenting, our vocations, our friendships, our trials—to all areas of our lives.

A gospel-centered missiology will include lives that testify to a gospel-centered motivation for life. We must enter the mission field with the gospel, and with a confidence in what the gospel alone can accomplish.

### **Motives Born from the Message: Humility and Servanthood**

The message that is our foundation lays claim to how we think and act. The gospel is so glorious that God calls forth motives to match the nobility of the message. Paul’s letter to the Philippians—chapter two in particular—makes those motives plain, principally by offering what Sinclair Ferguson has called “one of the great New Testament passages on the person and work of Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

Philippians chapter one celebrates the advance of the gospel (1:5, 7, 12–14, 16–18, 27). Chapter two then displays the motives underlying our Lord’s delivery of the message of himself to the world.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a

thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:5–11)

While chapter two has as its context the disunity of the Philippians, it also offers awe-inspiring insight into the Incarnation. Referring to that chapter, David Prior writes, “The present passage uniquely unfolds the cross as seen through the eyes of the Crucified, and allows us to enter into the mind of Christ. We tread, therefore, on very holy ground indeed.”<sup>8</sup>

This may seem an unusual text by which to approach the topic of missiology. But Philippians chapter two is, if you will, a kind of DVD “bonus feature” for missiology, a behind-the-scenes peek into the mind of the Maker. Seeing the divine activity behind the gospel reveals the motives behind the message. It is a clear call for us to see that the self-emptying of Christ must influence not only our unity but our missiology.

The passage describes two specific ways Christ entered the field, and calls us to “have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” These two Christ-like ways are gospel motivations that embody and authenticate the message: the way of humility, and the way of servanthood.

**The Way of Humility.** Stop and ponder the significance of what Philippians 2:5–11 says about Christ. His position afforded the highest honors and incomprehensible prerogatives, yet he did not protect his rights. Instead, he humbled himself by laying aside these things in the interest of reaching his enemies (us!). Imagine a king laying aside crown, scepter, and robe to cook and clean for his enemies, in true servanthood. Such an audacious step of humility wouldn’t begin to compare to the divine condescension behind the words, “he made himself nothing.”

Christ shows us that we must descend if we hope to move forward in missions. A gospel-centered missiology humbles its bearers

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and causes them to stoop before those they seek to reach. If God's first move toward the field was a humble one, certainly ours should be. F.F. Bruce once wrote, "The lesson for the Philippian Christians is plain: as Christ set aside his own interests for the sake of others, so should they."<sup>9</sup>

Our passion for effectiveness, zeal for changed lives, and commitment to action often provide fertile soil for pride in our missiology. We are apt to approach the mission field as if it were our home turf, to which we alone bring the winning game-plan. We can overestimate our strengths, assume leadership prerogatives, and ask few questions of those we seek to reach. We may express a false humility that softens the claims of the gospel in the name of a "contextualized" message. But if we see ourselves in light of the glorious God—if we see that all of life and mission is grace—we will approach the field with biblical objectivity: this is God's turf and we are simply part of his work.

Humility ought to be evident not only in our interactions with those to whom we are sent. It is due also to those who brought the gospel there *before* us. Any success we may have is built upon the sacrifices of those who preceded us. We have no original ideas or unique ability; the power of the gospel effects each and every advance. Humility makes us students of others' successes, and of our own failures. Humility causes us to encourage the gospel-promoting work of others, to support it where and how we can, and to celebrate the fruit of gospel activity outside our own.

**The Way of Servanthood.** Of the King of kings and Lord of lords, Paul wrote that he came "taking the form of a servant." In the Upper Room, Jesus vividly depicted this servanthood by washing the disciples' feet. But even that striking picture was insufficient. Jesus immediately applied his lesson to the disciples in no uncertain terms: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14–15).

Before Christ died for us, he lived for us and served us. The grand missiological strategy of Christ was to relocate, become one of us, and serve. It was never just a matter of transmitting a body of doctrine. It was offering a life that substantiated the truth of

what he said, and then calling us to do likewise. The gospel is not just an exchange of information. God actually concerns himself with the entire delivery system, because a faulty delivery system can obscure the message.

Try this exercise sometime. Knock on a door in your neighborhood, or—to make it really interesting—fly to a far-away land and choose any door. As soon as it’s answered, blurt out a precise, accurate rendition of the gospel. Is a conversion at least possible? Sure. Is a door-knocker in the nose more likely? Probably. For although the message—the “what”—may have been technically perfect, something important was missing: the “how.”

The way we enter the field of missions can either complement or confuse our message. Servanthood complements the message by authenticating its potency. I can argue with an atheist all day about proofs for the existence of God, but something uniquely powerful happens when I follow Christ by serving sinners.

In other words, arguments don’t reach nations; servants do. Let me introduce you to one.

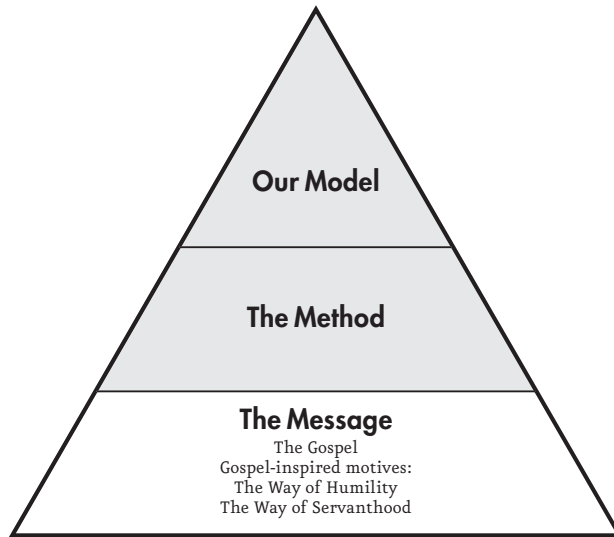
Larry Malament is a pastor in North Carolina. During the past six years, he has traveled to India twelve times to conduct dozens of meetings for thousands of Christian leaders. He has led three medical teams that were able to treat more than 10,000 patients.

Larry is sent to India by Sovereign Grace Ministries. We have no member churches in that nation, nor do we feel qualified to plant there. Yet we do have dear friends there—Indian men who are laboring in great trial and danger to plant and build churches. So we send servants to help our friends. Larry’s labors may never increase the number of churches in Sovereign Grace, but that’s not our goal. We seek to accomplish something far more important: to serve the laborers in India with what we have been given, as God may lead.

Ultimately, a commitment to humility and servanthood is validated by who gets the glory. Sovereign Grace Ministries is a good descriptive name for what we are about. It is not a brand or a franchise. We long to see the gospel and the name of Christ exalted, so we seek to use only those ministry methods that make more of him than of us. We believe that mission strategies and practices are effective only to the extent they magnify the grace of

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God in the gospel. This is our motivation for missions and for life. It is sobering to know that the way we enter the field matters to the Lord of the Harvest.



## ***The Method***

With the gospel as the message and humble servanthood as our motive, let's look again to the Great Commission for truth that can define our approach to missions.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt 28:18–20)

Virtually all missions approaches have been unified on the call to "go." And as we've discussed, there can be no true mission without the message. But *how* shall we take this message? In what way do we "go"?

The history of missions reveals great diversity in practice and, sad to say, much controversy as well. Let us read this commission

in context. The eleven disciples were of course the initial target audience for the Great Commission. Jesus spoke the words to those who were Apostles or would one day become Apostles. Yet the Lord entrusted it not to them alone, but to us all, for the Apostles also represent the Church. We know this because the scope of the commission involves a target (all nations) and a duration (the end of the age) beyond the life or capacity of the eleven hearers. Moreover, the Great Commission is applied in the New Testament through the vehicle of the Church and apostolic ministry. Therefore the two uses of the plural “you” in verse 20 cannot refer exclusively to the Eleven. Although the Eleven were chosen to receive and launch the Great Commission, the Church is chosen to finish it. John Piper writes, “It was given not only to the apostles for their ministry but also to the church for its ministry as long as this age lasts.”<sup>10</sup>

In Sovereign Grace Ministries, our way to the field is rooted in the Great Commission. The core of our approach—our method—includes three biblical elements: Church Planting, Apostolic Ministry, and Team Ministry.

### **Church Planting: Proclamation, Integration, Expansion**

I’m sure it was me, but I never got it. As a new believer, I looked at the New Testament and saw how central the local church is in the spread of the gospel. Then I watched many zealous Christians, who seemed inspired by the Great Commission, leave their local churches to engage in missions or evangelism apart from the local church. This baffled me and stirred questions in me about the nature of missions. What is the Great Commission and what is the church’s role in fulfilling it? Is God’s intent for the Great Commission merely conversions, or something more?

The Great Commission is full of action: *Go, make disciples, baptize, teach*. It resonates with initiative and momentum. We must allow the full scope of its mandate to inform our missiological paradigm. “Going” and “baptizing” are a fine start, but they’re not the Great Commission in full measure. Our mission must include “teaching” and “making disciples”—tasks that anticipate the local church, require the local church, and are ultimately applied within the local church in the New Testament. Indeed, an excellent way to understand the

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Great Commission is to study how it was obeyed in the New Testament.

Think about it: “Going” without “making disciples” is an aborted commission. “Baptizing” without “teaching” is birth without growth. To execute the full commission, we must endeavor to respect and apply each of these components as if the harvest depends upon it. If our mission strategy is to relocate to Eritrea to preach the gospel, that is merely “going” and “baptizing.” However well-intentioned, we have settled for a *good* commission while neglecting the great one.<sup>11</sup>

Healthy disciples, like healthy cells, reproduce themselves. In like manner, groupings of healthy disciples—local churches—are called to reproduce themselves toward the goal of reaching Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. The Great Commission is an invitation not just to individuals, but to local churches. When Christ said, “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), he wasn’t planting a permanent ego-boost in the pages of Scripture so we could all feel good about our churches. It was a grand mission declaration! Missiologist Aubrey Malphurs writes,

A careful reading of Acts reveals that the early church implemented the Great Commission mandate primarily by planting churches. A study of the missionary journeys recorded in Acts reveals that they, in fact, were church-planting forays into what was predominantly a pagan culture. As a result of these trips, Paul and others planted high-impact churches in key cities such as Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus.<sup>12</sup>

Armed with the good news, we are commanded to follow the New Testament pattern of penetrating new regions to communicate God’s Word and create God’s community. In contrast to traditional missionary enterprises, which often center primarily upon proclamation, church planting establishes a mission base for the three-fold purpose of *proclamation* (going and baptizing), *integration* (making disciples/teaching), and *expansion* (reproducing proclamation and integration in the new geographic area). The message proclaimed is the gospel, the context for integration is the church, and mobilizing a “gospelized” church produces expansion: local churches reproduce themselves.



It transforms one's mission strategy to recognize that the Great Commission assumes a context: the local church. A New Testament application of the Great Commission might therefore look like this:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{THE GOSPEL} \\
 + \\
 \text{THE COMMISSIONED INDIVIDUAL} \\
 + \\
 \text{THE LOCAL CHURCH}^{13} \\
 = \\
 \text{WORLD EVANGELIZATION}
 \end{array}$$

Sad to say, Christians in western culture, with its emphasis on individual vision and personal spirituality, often erase the Local Church factor from the equation:<sup>14</sup>

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{THE GOSPEL} \\
 + \\
 \text{THE COMMISSIONED INDIVIDUAL} \\
 = \\
 \text{WORLD EVANGELIZATION}
 \end{array}$$

Indeed, many of the classic biographies and studies of missiology published in the West lack any emphasis on the role of the church. Remove the local church from the equation, and it simply doesn't add up. Undue emphasis on the individual believer in the mission field creates an inevitable divorce between missiology and ecclesiology<sup>15</sup>—a divorce that Scripture doesn't sanction. As George Peters has noted, "The history of the church in missions is in the main the history of great personalities and of missionary societies. Only in exceptional cases has it been the church in missions."<sup>16</sup>

In common understanding, the church "sends out" missionaries and "supports" missions. Otherwise, churches only come into the picture as an optional extra—one potential positive outcome of missions. The disconnect is puzzling: Why do churches cede the mission to non-churches? As the eminent missiologist Roland Allen once said, "We cannot but recognize that everywhere we have established missions, and missions are not churches....If we

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establish missions instead of establishing churches it is because we differ from the apostles and the early Church in principle and in spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

A truly biblical missiology has a sturdy ecclesiology that shapes and guides its methods.<sup>18</sup> The New Testament model is for the preaching of the gospel to be directed *toward the formation of local churches*, which provide for new converts to be baptized, disciplined, and taught within the appropriate context of biblical community. Indeed, the Great Commission would make missionaries into church planters—people whose passion for the gospel results in a passion for the church.

It’s not enough simply to preach the gospel and see people converted. The Great Commission is fully satisfied only when converts become anchored in their faith, instructed in the context of the local church, and equipped as ambassadors of Christ. That is, *made disciples*.

In my neck of the woods, the marriage of Bible teaching and electronic media often tests the maturity of my doctrine and character. A while back, I flipped on one of the local Christian radio stations and listened while a man raised money for the radio program. He was not a pastor and, to my knowledge, had no local-church affiliation. Yet he was very passionate about using the program to “reach people.”

In his presentation, he noted that it cost \$15,000 to \$17,000 a week to keep his program on the air. I was dumbfounded, never having been confronted with the cost of subsidizing a ministry that, in this case, could neither go, baptize, nor make disciples, *but could only teach!* Is it possible to separate teaching from making disciples without unintentionally undermining the quality of the disciple?...or the nature of the church?...or the essence of the Great Commission?

In an exercise destined to boost my pulse rate, I began musing over how many churches could be planted for \$15,000 to \$17,000 a week—churches that could offer good teaching *and* an environment for applying that teaching in the context of committed relationships and under the care of godly elders. By contrast, Christian media—whether television, radio, or print—can only proclaim and therefore cannot truly make disciples.

Please do not misunderstand. Sovereign Grace has great respect

for those who have given their lives to the classical missions approach, and for many who employ their gifts and talents in Christian media. We should celebrate the fruit they have brought forth for God, learn from their example, and support them as appropriate. Nevertheless, if we take Scripture as our guide, we must recognize that, while these ministries can be a helpful supplement, nothing can replace the local church as the context for true fulfillment of the Great Commission. To make disciples, we must have proclamation, integration, and expansion. To make disciples, we must have the local church.

This brings us far closer to the New Testament way. The idea is not so much that *individuals* are to be sent out from the local church. Rather, they are sent out as *expressions of* the local church. In that sense, the local church *sends itself*—its gifts, values, maturity, and resources are reproduced in another location in a way that uniquely fits the context where it is planted. Because church planting exports biblical community rather than church traditions narrowly defined, it works across town or across cultures. This approach ensures that when evangelism occurs there is a compelling representation of the truth proclaimed, in the form of an indigenously genuine local church.

Church planting also brings the essential role of pastoral leadership into the mission field. Where church planting is the focus of missions strategy, people converted through evangelism are added to a body of believers where they can be cared for and discipled.

Then, when a local church is planted, the New Testament pattern would envision it not as an isolated outpost, but as part of a family of churches that work together to serve one another—the strong helping the struggling, the mature serving the new—all committed to extending the gospel to other areas through further church-planting endeavors. Church planting connects the message of eternal life with the only institution guaranteed to stand in eternity—the church.

Especially in cross-cultural application, added obstacles will surely arise, from seasons of persecution to the enactment of strict government policies that declare a country “closed.” But let us remember that the New Testament depicts a world in which persecution, suffering, and martyrdom were not unusual for Christians

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obeying the Great Commission. Despite such severe challenges, local churches were continually planted and strengthened. We must not abandon our commitment to church planting simply because a nation appears hostile or closed. Wherever possible, let us go forth in the sound, biblical hope of seeing a multitude of local churches established, churches that can serve and encourage one another, thus continuing the cycle of proclamation, integration, and expansion that will continue until the Savior returns.

**Focused yet Flexible.** Within this church-planting emphasis, however, we want to remain focused on gospel opportunities, not an unbending model that recognizes no exceptions. Recently, a man in our church approached me about a sense of call to a closed Muslim country. He has been with us for a number of years and exhibits some evidence of a call to pastoral ministry. We discussed the possibility of sending him to Saudi Arabia for a year—not to plant a church, but to serve people and get the lay of the land.

This would be somewhat unconventional, given our understanding of missions, yet the potential gain could well be worth the effort. And while we would not consider something like this a missions trip per se, the New Testament goal would still be in firm view. Indeed, any effort taken in the name of the Great Commission must have its goal and methods measured against New Testament reality. An apostolic church-planting missiology (described in the following section) retains fidelity to the mandates of the Great Commission while providing sufficient flexibility to respond to whatever opportunities for mission God may present.

Within Sovereign Grace Ministries, then, we enter the field of the Lord, where possible, with the goal of planting churches. Where we can't plant churches we look to support churches already begun (more on this later). Where the church cannot visibly function in a given location, our goal is still the expansion of local churches, so we pray for God to open doors, confident that he is at work by his Spirit even where persecution is strongest. Even in these locations we have seen ways to invest strategically toward the building and strengthening of churches taking place in secret. But regardless of the obstacles, our commitment is to spread the gospel through church planting. Our confidence that church planting isn't just a strategy for open countries is rooted in the words of

the Lord of the Harvest himself: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

### **Apostolic Ministry: Mobile, Purposeful, Relational**

Apostolic ministry, so often missing from modern missions work, is nevertheless integral to the way of biblical missiology; it goes hand-in-hand with church planting.

Jesus gave the commission to ordinary men—men who would receive a unique calling as Apostles of the risen Christ. Joined by Paul of Tarsus, they would be the essential human agents in the establishment of the church after the ascension of Christ. These men would play a unique and unrepeatable role in redemptive history. There are no contemporary reproductions. They are gone, yet the mission remains. But does this mean that this vital ministry really ceased with the passing of the first Apostles or completion of the canon of Scripture?

Suggestions that apostolic ministry remained beyond the first-century church can be unsettling to any biblically literate evangelical. There is an understandable and commendable impulse to protect the canon of Scripture and avoid the emergence of alternative authorities in the church. But at Sovereign Grace we’re appealing for a specific type of apostle, one who neither pens Scripture nor acts with the authority of Paul, yet who stands as an essential link between the church and the mission.

In Scripture, the Twelve Apostles will always hold a unique place in the purposes of God (Rev 21:14). But the New Testament concept of apostle has various applications, including the eleven disciples, Paul, and others whose primary function was the planting and establishing of churches.<sup>19</sup> Within the pages of the New Testament, Big-A Apostleship flowed into little-a apostleship.<sup>20</sup> Apostolic ministry in this small-a sense did not end with the closing of the Canon. Instead, apostleship is a gift ministry in the form of men whose gifting equips them to serve strategically in the mission of church planting.

Today, Ephesians 4 apostles go forth in a way analogous to Paul<sup>21</sup> but not with the authority of Paul. It takes responsible exposition—labor that is beyond the scope of this project—to discover

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where Paul acts in Scripture as an Apostle to be admired or an example to be repeated. (In the first instance, the church is forbidden from imitating Paul. In the second, we are required to do so.) Yet such careful exposition must be done, lest apostles today be assigned an authority too low to be helpful or too high to be biblical. Roland Allen writes soberingly of the former error: “Men have wandered over the world, ‘preaching the Word,’ laying no solid foundations, establishing nothing permanent, leaving no really instructed society behind them, and have claimed St. Paul’s authority for their absurdities.”<sup>22</sup>

Paul clearly stands in the company of the original Apostles through his unique role in church history (writing Scripture, experiencing an appearance of the Risen Lord, his matchless revelation of the gospel, and his unique spiritual power and experiences).<sup>23</sup> However, Paul’s unique call does not eliminate the purpose for apostolic ministry in the church, particularly in the planting of and caring for new churches.

Why are apostles such an important part of the way we enter the field? In Sovereign Grace Ministries, we would state it like this: *Commissioned by the ascended Christ and armed with the gospel, present-day apostles plant and build local churches for the glory of God.*<sup>24</sup> We see three implications following from this role.

**Mobile.** One implication of apostolic ministry is mobility. I recently sat with a seminary president and unintentionally found myself in the middle of a discussion on apostolic ministry. “So basically they are like bishops in a denominational structure?” he asked. Good question! Perhaps in some ways there are similarities. But there are important distinctions also.

Apostles are more than administrators, and more than pastors gifted to care for other leaders. They also act as pioneers to break new ground. They reach into new places with the gospel and for the sake of the gospel.<sup>25</sup> Apostolic leaders are mobile by definition.<sup>26</sup> They are supported by local churches, in part, to travel in order to explore opportunities for church planting and to develop relationships with other leaders who carry a common vision. If the way we enter the field matters to the Lord of the Harvest, God wants to make sure that we don’t forget apostles in our going.<sup>27</sup>

While we can certainly root apostolic mobility in the Great

Commission, we also see it in the missionary strategy of Paul.<sup>28</sup> In Romans 15:19, Paul makes an extraordinary statement regarding his mission efforts: “So that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.” Think about that statement. *I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ in this area; I am moving on.* What creates that sense of accomplishment in Paul? Is it simply that he was called to other people groups where the gospel had yet to be preached? That might be part of it, but he is clearly saying that something had been finished in the region. What is that? P.T. O’Brien’s insight here is compelling.

Proclaiming the gospel meant for Paul not simply an initial preaching or with it the reaping of converts; it included also a whole range of nurturing and strengthening activities which led to the firm establishment of congregations. So, his claim to have “fulfilled the gospel in an arc right up to Illyricum” signified that he had established strong churches in strategic centres of this area, such as Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus. Further evangelistic outreach and the upbuilding of congregations lay in the hands of others.<sup>29</sup>

Those churches, in strategic centers, could now accept responsibility for their region by planting additional churches. Paul was able to move on because through church planting he had set a context for the ongoing ministry of the gospel that would begin to bear its own fruit: churches planting churches.<sup>30</sup>

**Purposeful.** The second implication of apostolic ministry is that apostles don’t just go into the field for some vaguely gospel-related but otherwise indeterminate purpose—they are builders of *local churches*. And one of the most effective ways they build is by equipping pastors.

For the skilled master-builders who are helping to lay foundations (1Co 3:10), elders and leaders are the primary focus. In his church-planting endeavors, it appears that Paul invested in a particular way into gifted, faithful men, and instructed them to emulate him in that practice (2Ti 2:2; cf. 1Ti 4:16; Acts 20:17ff.).

In our experience, apostolic ministry is often largely invisible to the average church member, especially when it is working well. Churches enjoy the fruit of apostolic care without necessarily

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knowing the details of how it emerged. We believe this is appropriate, for apostles exist to build local churches by serving local-church leaders. And what a joy that is!

**Relational.** The third implication of apostolic ministry is care. Apostolic ministry is relational. Apostles serve by caring for the churches they help plant (again, essentially by caring for the leaders). They provide ongoing care even when they may be primarily occupied elsewhere.

Apostles also establish relational connections between and among churches, helping individual churches meet one another's needs. We see this in Paul's example as he took up collections from prospering churches to help struggling churches (see 2 Corinthians 8). We also see Paul repositioning leaders in his sphere for the health of local churches. Through apostolic connections, churches share resources, send people to help with outreach, welcome traveling or relocating members, partner in specific ministry endeavors, and share in the advance of the gospel. Because these connections are primarily relational and organizational, the response to sudden need can be timely and well focused.<sup>31</sup>

One Sovereign Grace church planter in Boston said it this way: "Sovereign Grace Ministries sends the church planter into the field with another man, a more experienced man. Although this man does not physically go with him, his presence is felt through the ongoing care by and relationship with the apostolic-team member. This man models for the church planter what godliness ought to look like in a pastor—through his humility, integrity, fear of God, passion for Christ, skillful application of the Word of God to his own life, the example of his marriage, his parenting, his work in evangelism, and his passion for the local church. His example continues to exert a profound influence on the church-planting pastor, and often shapes the trajectory for the church planter's own growth."

Apostolic ministry is also relational with respect to churches, movements, and leaders beyond its sphere of influence. The effect is that people in local churches see themselves as meaningful participants in a larger purpose. Without apostolic ministry, church planting is carried on piecemeal. With apostolic ministry, church planting becomes the outworking of healthy churches strategically embracing the call to mission.



One Sovereign Grace pastor from Mexico has been deeply influenced by apostolic ministry. During the past 18 years, the church that Carlos now serves as senior pastor has experienced several significant changes and crises. In one instance, having just moved into a new facility, the church was on the verge of a major division. The founding pastor had decided to leave, and Carlos and two fellow pastors were faced with a nearly overwhelming level of questions, doubts, and spiritual turmoil within the church. “But I believe,” Carlos says, “that God has anointed apostolic ministry with much wisdom which is expressed through teaching, counsel, and guidance.”

During this tumultuous time, Carlos says that the hours he spent on the phone with Steve Shank, the apostolic-team member who serves his church, were his “lifeline.” “Steve helped me make wise decisions and guided me through careful steps that I needed to walk the church through. Steve helped me identify the areas of my unbelief that were feeding my sinful anxiety.” In addition to pastoring Carlos, Steve regularly travels to Mexico to help equip the church through the preaching of God’s Word. During these visits, Steve engages with the church and spends time with Carlos and his family. “Because of Steve’s continual care for my church and family, we have been spared from many pitfalls, dangers, and mistakes,” Carlos says. “Steve and the other apostolic-team members continually challenge me to grow in character and righteousness. The challenge comes from their compelling example of humility and love for God and his Word in their own lives.”

As a pastor in Mexico for the past 14 years, Carlos reports that he has yet to find a pastor who enjoys the same benefit from apostolic ministry that has provided him with so much help and joy. “I am so thankful that I have never had to serve as a leader alone,” Carlos says, “but that God—in his mercy—has always allowed me to be under the care of someone more gifted and more mature who I can look up to and seek help from when needed.”

During the time Carlos has served as senior pastor of this church, the congregation has grown from 360 to 560. The church has become a significant evangelical presence in northern Mexico, planted churches, and begun a Spanish-speaking Pastors College that has graduated 14 men.

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Such is the fruit of the mobility, purposefulness, and relational care of apostolic ministry. A biblically sound approach to the mission field must be church-centered and fully integrated with small-a apostolic ministry.

### **Team Ministry: Leadership, Plurality, Unity**

The third element of the Sovereign Grace Ministries missiology is plurality, better known as “team ministry,”<sup>32</sup> for the New Testament teaches the humbling reality that we need one another for life, godliness, and mission.

Team ministry begins at the apostolic level. Paul and other apostolically gifted men mutually relied on and were committed to one another. And Paul, like other apostles, had leaders who traveled with and served alongside him. Such fraternity and accountability is a key safeguard in keeping a New Testament apostleship from becoming authoritarian or succumbing to error.

Within Sovereign Grace, team ministry also characterizes the church-planting endeavor. It has been our experience that effective church planting happens when a man called to plant a church is surrounded by a team committed to undergird him in that work.

One way the apostle serves the church-planting pastor is by helping to identify and position his team. Not everyone who would love to go on the adventure will be a good fit. And all who do go must thoughtfully count the cost—in time, limited resources, loss of relationships, and the possibility that the new church may not take root.

Team members will be involved in many activities, including prayer, service, giving, and outreach. Through faithful participation, the church-planting team becomes a column of pillars that uphold the young church. The team also provides an ethic of humility and servanthood—fertile soil for a new church.

It always amazes me how the hearts of so many believers race with a desire to serve in this courageous task. Christians will make extraordinary sacrifices to participate in something that is evident in Scripture, effective on earth, and rewarding for eternity.

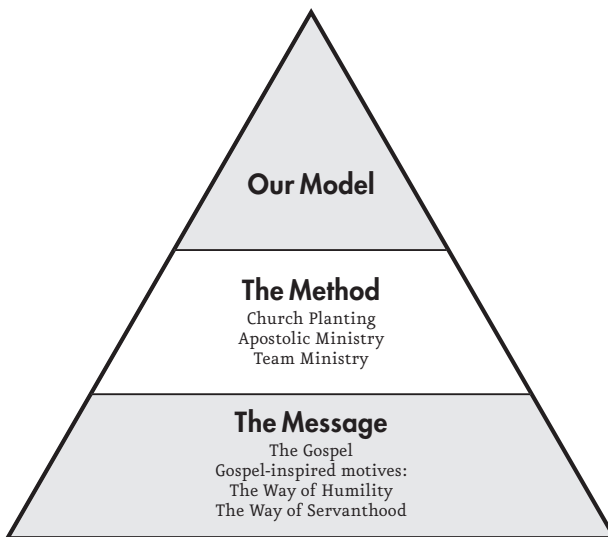
I was in a church-planting conference where a ministry veteran made the following observations. About 4,000 churches are started each year in the United States. That’s encouraging. But then he

noted that 7,000 close their doors every year. Some 1500 pastors leave ministry every month—a total of 18,000 a year. Only ten percent of pastors remain in ministry until age 65.<sup>33</sup>

At another such conference, a man described his recent church-planting experience in a major city. At the same time, 25 other churches were being planted in that city. His was the only one still in operation. I hear that and think, *Was there a solid team identified and sent in the planting of those churches? What difference might team ministry and support have made in those situations?* So many, isolated from any care or support, are struggling to start or lead churches. No one is available to serve in a way we would call apostolic, and no one is walking beside them, sharing in the building of the church.

A church-planting vision, married to apostolic care and team ministry, is the missions methodology of Sovereign Grace Ministries. It is our biblically derived response to the Great Commission. While we respect other movements and other missions visions, and desire to learn from and cooperate with them, we are committed to apostolically led church planting.

Because the way we enter the field matters to the Lord of the Harvest.



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## Our Model

A few years ago, a pastor in Great Britain learned about Sovereign Grace Ministries from a friend. What his friend described intrigued him. The pastor spoke to others who knew of Sovereign Grace, and he visited our website, reading all he could about who we are and what we believe. Although his interest continued to grow, he knew he had to look beyond reputation, materials, and self-defining statements. He had to interact with the people and churches of Sovereign Grace. In his words, he had to see what the ministry looked like “on the ground.”

The way we enter the mission field—what does that look like “on the ground”? This is the back-end question of missiology. Yes, there must be a commitment to the *message* of missions—the gospel—and there must be *methods* drawn from God’s Word and consistent with the gospel. But methods can wither on the vines of lofty mission goals if there isn’t a *model* in place and functioning. This closing section outlines key features of the Sovereign Grace model for missions, in the hope of communicating something of how our missions model is worked out on the ground.

The model we employ is an application of our core methodologies: church planting, apostolic care, and team ministry. Typically, a maturing local church looks for opportunities to plant a church because it yearns to reproduce itself according to the biblical pattern. But church planting is not simply a local-church effort. It is a cooperative “teaming-up” in which the mission burden of the church is stewarded by the gift of apostolic ministry.

Through the Sovereign Grace Ministries Mission Fund, to which each local church contributes, apostolic church-planting strategies are pursued and church planting can move from vision to reality. This results in the strategic formation and sending-out of church-planting teams. From the beginning, each new church is relationally connected as much as possible to other local churches in Sovereign Grace Ministries. That is, at a number of levels, church planting is a family project.

But where does it begin? How does Sovereign Grace Ministries prepare to enter the field?

## ASLA

To establish gospel-preaching congregations in every community is a noble and thoroughly biblical goal, perfectly in keeping with the Great Commission. The big question, of course, is how.

Simply stated, gospel-preaching congregations spring from the leadership of gospel-preaching church planters. Armed with a glorious message, some men are called to reproduce local churches that will reflect God's glory in a fallen world. The church must identify and nurture such men and employ church-planting methods that match the nobility of the call (1Ti 3:1). The Lord desires it, and the harvest requires it.

The need for men with the gifting and calling to sculpt churches is—like the good news they bear—ever-expanding, never diminishing. To identify and equip these pioneers, we utilize a four-fold process represented by the acronym ASLA: Assessment, Specialized Training, Launch Support, Apostolic Care. By these methods, apostolic ministry serves local churches to accomplish church planting.

**Assessment.** The potential church planter is served through the grace-filled evaluation of his gifting and character. (The assessment process described in this section applies to all prospective Sovereign Grace pastors. Here, however, the focus is on potential church planters.) As will be described in more detail below, assessment is done through:

- Materials and training designed to clarify a man's call
- Evaluation of that call (internal and external evidence)
- Pastors College
- Church-planting internships

Assessment begins in the local church, where a man's sense of call can be evaluated and nurtured by elders who know what is required for ministry, and who have seen the candidate serving.<sup>34</sup> It is a joint venture between a man, his local pastors, and—at a certain point—the apostolic team, all seeking to discern the nature and timing of a man's call to plant a church.

Early in the assessment process, a body of teaching geared to prospective pastors comes into play (e.g., *Am I Called?* from the

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*Perspectives* series, and *The Summons* series of audio messages—see our website). There are also periodic regional events within Sovereign Grace that help men clarify their call by biblically engaging their hearts and their pastors. Particular attention is given to the areas represented in the “calling equation,” a series of biblical criteria that can serve as markers of a call to ministry:

The grace of God to serve as a church planter will be seen in *CHARACTER + CAPABILITIES + CONDUCT IN THE HOME + CONFIRMATION IN THE CHURCH*<sup>35</sup>

Evaluation of these areas, with particular emphasis on the leadership gift and preaching gift, often produces a profile that tends to confirm a man in his calling or discourage him from pursuing church planting.

Not long ago, I participated in a roundtable discussion with seminary leaders about the many pastors who leave ministry, whether through discouragement or disqualification. These leaders were engaged in some thoughtful institutional soul-searching about their effectiveness in preparing men for the long-term trials of ministry. I was there primarily as a learner.

The discussion eventually centered on the fact that at this seminary, as at a great many others, the admissions process was inattentive to the calling or character of the applicants. The institution was essentially training men who had committed to study for pastoral ministry without a sound assessment of their pastoral call. It reminded me of the words of the Nicene father, Jerome. “Many build churches nowadays; their walls and pillars of glowing marble, their ceilings glittering with gold, their altars studded with jewels. Yet to the choice of Christ’s ministers no heed is paid.”<sup>36</sup> And that was in the year 394!

To take heed to the choice of Christ’s ministers is to spare a church much heartache. Should the local pastoral team and apostolic team come to believe that a man is probably called as a church planter, he will be invited to enter our next phase of equipping.

**Specialized Training.** It cannot be overemphasized that the best training for a church planter begins in the local church, where a man’s pastors can equip him by providing personalized opportunities for growth. Such training may not require significant changes in a man’s life, for much of it will involve sim-

ply being more intentional and faithful in the ways he is already serving in his home church. As a man proves fruitful in his local church, however, there will likely come an opportunity for more-concentrated training: participation in the Pastors College of Sovereign Grace Ministries. (While specialized training is generally an extension of the assessment process, for those who continue to demonstrate evidence of a call, primary emphasis will gradually be placed on trying to discern its specific nature.)

The College combines three primary training components: a rigorous course of academic study, training in practical aspects of ministry, and an environment that facilitates growth in humility and Christ-like character. The academic year consists of approximately 34 weeks of instruction. The classroom experience is designed both to expose the student to a wide range of material important to ministry in the church and to lay strong biblical and theological foundations in the student's life. Classroom instruction also covers methodological, practical, and administrative subjects critical to a leader's success and the success of a church. Active participation in the working model of a local church during the Pastors College is a full part of the training process. (As of this writing we are also developing within the College a track for prospective church planters.) Greater clarity about the nature of a call often comes through the experience of formal pastoral training under the eyes of men whose commitment to church planting fuels their desire to serve in the College.

Following completion of the Pastors College, the prospective church planter will generally serve a one-year internship at a Sovereign Grace church specifically staffed and equipped to receive and train church planters. This internship allows a man yet another opportunity to tend to weaknesses in doctrine, character, or experience prior to taking on the responsibility of planting a church. It also allows the local elders and the apostolic team an opportunity to see the man apply what he learned in Pastors College. It looks at him "on the ground"—the assessment process continues. As the indicators remain positive, the internship turns toward matters of location, strategy, and team development for the church planting.

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Throughout the process of specialized training, the man is fed with sound doctrine. His calling is tested and his giftings are developed through practical, supervised ministry responsibility. Through serving, interaction, accountability, and discipleship in a local-church context, three things happen. The qualities of leadership necessary for church planting become increasingly discernable. The man gains invaluable experience in loving and serving a church effectively. And perhaps most importantly, his values and character are biblically molded—a profound asset for his family, ministry, and personal life, wherever God may take him in the future.

One urban church planter for Sovereign Grace wrote: “I’m convinced that I would not have been prepared to plant a church apart from the care and equipping I received during my one-year internship. Our lives were enriched by our many new friends and partners in the gospel that resulted from our year together. First, we had the opportunity to see the functional centrality of the gospel fleshed out in the life of a local leadership team and in the ministries of the local church. Second, we were exposed to a local-church model that has benefited from years of strategic thinking by its leaders, who are continually asking themselves how they can go from ‘good to great’ in every area of church life, and how we can build models of ministry that can be exported to any church, regardless of its size or cultural context.”

**Launch Support.** When the time comes to plant a church, this broad category includes the following components:

- **Financial Support:** Sovereign Grace Ministries provides grants to our church plants, designed to carry a new church through its inception and first months of operation until it becomes self-sustaining.
- **Team Formation:** Effective church planting is always a team effort. God places within individuals the desire to serve on a church-planting team. These people are then shepherded through a process of equipping and evaluation that complements that being given the church-planting pastor. The result is a group of individuals and families being sent out from a local church in a church-planting venture.



Being on a team may appear exciting from a distance, but it's tough work, not recommended for the faint of faith or sensitive of soul. I have met with some teams being sent out from the churches I serve to deliver the message, "Church Planting: The Morning after Your Send-Off." This is my attempt to bring a reality check to their potentially romanticized visions of summarily taking Town X for the Kingdom. Through this teaching I also try to ensure that prospective team members have done the "heart surgery" necessary to evaluate their motives honestly. Is the desire to participate an act of service, or an indulgence of selfish ambition? Is there a sense that this step draws one closer to God, or just closer to the senior pastor? Is the goal to pursue God and his will, or to flee some difficult situation or relationship in the home church? Where such heart evaluation is absent, the team may become paralyzed with the rising tide of difficulties or stumble over the shifty idols of unmet needs or expectations.

- **Practical Tools:** Sovereign Grace Ministries is committed to supporting our church plants with practical help and resources. Our *Administrative Manual for Church Planters* offers tools, explanations, and a wealth of information on the mechanics of organizing a church. The administrative arm of Sovereign Grace Ministries not only commits to praying for these churches, but also promotes interest in them through various communications media.
- **Strategic Help:** Sovereign Grace is serious about church planting. And while we recognize that our experience is quite insignificant in the sweep of church history, the successes and failures we have racked up along the way have prepared us to offer strategic help to the churches we plant. Whether counsel on operational issues (legal, contractual, payroll, website, etc.), assistance in monitoring the budget, or the personal attention of a church plant liaison in our administrative offices, we stand poised to come alongside the church planter so he is not bearing the burden alone. We also assist pastors through our conferences and other training contexts, all designed to equip them in sound doctrine and to care for their souls.

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There is one more important element to mention. Sovereign Grace Ministries is a family, and as a family we help each other, particularly our new church plants, in tangible ways. As churches are getting started, other churches send evangelism teams to help reach the lost, attract new members, and serve the new church however they can. There is also an experimental program underway that involves college-age adults relocating for a few months from their home church to a new church to serve in any way possible. All these efforts are directed toward one goal: seeing the Great Commission practically applied through church planting.

That's how launch supports works "on the ground." A church planter sent to Corning, New York describes how launch support has affected his life, family, and new church:

"There are countless ways we have been strengthened as a church plant by the support and commitment of Sovereign Grace Ministries. We were provided with a generous grant for our first year, which enabled me immediately to set up an office and be a full-time pastor. I was able to focus my attention completely on the church plant because Sovereign Grace Ministries stood behind us with such generous financial support. But that support and care in no way ended after the first year. Let me share a personal story.

"We were about five months past our last grant installment and struggling financially. We were confident we were going to be OK, but our income had simply not caught up to our trimmed budget. That month, a pastor came to minister to our church and unexpectedly presented us with a significant financial gift from Sovereign Grace. After the initial shock, there was a great sense of relief, and more keenly, gratefulness to God that we had such friends and partners pulling with us and caring for us.

"Nearly every other month, seasoned pastors from other Sovereign Grace churches visit to minister God's Word and give my family and our leadership team much-needed encouragement, counsel, and accountability. I remember what happened when my wife and I, sitting across the table from the gifted man that Sovereign Grace Ministries has provided to care for our church, shared an area of marital tension. We received practical, grace-filled, yet pointed counsel that helped bring biblical perspective,

repentance, and reconciliation to our marriage. What a source of strength and encouragement to know we weren't alone!"

**Apostolic Care.** None of what this pastor describes could occur apart from the ongoing work and unceasing commitment of apostolic care, so vital to the health and development of our church plants. We have already summarized the fundamental purpose of apostolic care: "armed with the gospel, present-day apostles plant and build local churches for the glory of God." On the practical level such care is expressed—well before the new church is even begun—through helping the pastor to choose a location, think strategically, and organize his resources.

When a church is in its infancy, apostolic care is at its most active. An important early goal of every church is for the senior pastor to establish a team of leaders around him. During this time, the pastor regularly receives direct apostolic care. Small-a apostles also offer practical counsel and help mobilize the new church to support the pastor. As an eldership plurality is achieved within the church, apostolic care becomes less central and more supplemental. Like the father of an adult son, the apostle remains closely related, occasionally present, but always available to mobilize help.

As one Sovereign Grace church planter stated, "The investment by the apostolic team through this relationship is extremely important to our ministry as we grow. Our ministry, as a family of churches, remains familial, not formal, and the relationship between the apostolic team and team-related church remains personal, not professional. The blessing of being related and building relationally is very satisfying, and I believe adorns the gospel of Christ with a model of church life bound together by love for one another."

Recently I met with a man who leads the church-planting efforts for a denomination that expects to plant 50 to 60 churches in the next year. After celebrating the strengths of their church-planting efforts, I asked him about weaknesses. Without a moment's hesitation, he identified insufficient follow-up care and ongoing involvement with church planters as a principal weakness. Like so many that plant churches, this denomination knows that the delights of church planting generally lead quite quickly to the challenges of church care. So God has established apostles to

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care for churches, both new and old, until all churches have been replaced by a single congregation of the redeemed.

### The Adoption Process

In a way most humbling and unexpected, Sovereign Grace Ministries regularly receives inquiries from existing churches about the possibility of becoming part of our family of churches. When exploring adoptions, we find the biblical metaphor of partnership (Php 1:5; 2Co 1:24) extremely helpful in defining roles and relationships. Like most partnerships, a church adoption is done for mutual benefit and carries responsibilities for both parties.

How does a partnership with Sovereign Grace Ministries develop? Quite simply, it starts with time. Through meetings, conference attendance, exposure to Sovereign Grace materials, and strategic dialogue with a member of one of our regional leadership teams, an interested church, whether domestic or international, gradually becomes more familiar with the doctrine and practice of Sovereign Grace Ministries. In this way the church forms an increasingly accurate view of Sovereign Grace—strengths, weaknesses, warts and all—and the apostolic team has opportunity to assess the compatibility of the inquiring church.

In all these efforts, the goal is not merely relational connection or doctrinal agreement, but an essential blending of the two. The apostolic team looks for a *truth-based relationship*. The reality of this relationship is manifested when the following three ingredients are evident:

1. Substantial theological harmony with the interested church
2. Methodological agreement on structures central to reproducing some of the distinctive attributes of Sovereign Grace churches (small groups, certain polity features, etc.)
3. Faith towards God—resident in both the apostolic team and the local-church elder(s)—for the formalizing of the relationship<sup>37</sup>

Where the apostolic team believes that we have sufficient capacity to serve such a church adequately,<sup>38</sup> the presence of these elements generally results in an adoption.

## The Associate Program

As we have met with and ministered to leaders or churches who have expressed an interest in Sovereign Grace, we have at times encountered an intriguing challenge: *Certain of these inspire our ongoing friendship and service but are not positioned to consider membership within Sovereign Grace Ministries.* How are we to function within or understand such relationships?

In such cases, it is likely that we all agree on biblical essentials but, especially because these groups tend to be located outside the U.S., the way these essentials are emphasized and applied can be vastly different. Culture gaps, the time required to build certain core attributes in a non-American setting, and our limited experience in cross-cultural ministry suggest that we interpret and explain these relationships apart from our historic paradigm of member churches.

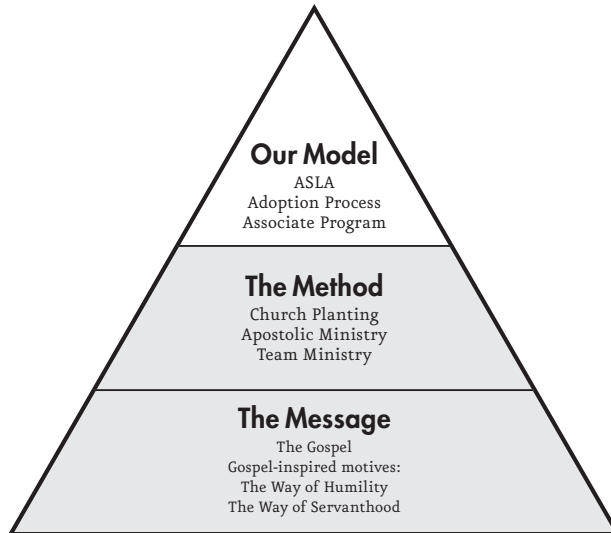
For this reason we have begun the Associate Program in an effort both to serve and to learn from these leaders and churches within the mutually protective context of a simple yet structured understanding, one which clarifies our involvement and distinguishes it from our apostolic care for member churches. Such relationships are initiated by our invitation, established by mutual agreement, and may or may not envision Sovereign Grace membership as an eventual goal.

We see the Associate Program as an important stage of our missiological development, for these relationships are clearly strategic to our own education and growth. Yet, in a marvelous testimony to God's grace, they also appear to be consequential and strategic to the international leaders who are part of the program. One associate from India who leads a church-planting movement of more than 230 churches recently said, "My friends at Sovereign Grace have helped our churches grow in four distinct ways: becoming more passionate about the gospel, being doctrinally sound, being servant-leaders who are clothed with humility, and growing in devotion to the local church." This man's affection and appreciation is most meaningful, not primarily because he sees us as a transferable model, but because he sees us as servants.

The Associate Program may not be permanently necessary. As Sovereign Grace becomes established in other nations, Lord

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willing, through the placement of indigenous men and the emergence of native models, the need for such a designation may diminish. For now, however, we want to define carefully the nature and purpose of these relationships, for we know that the way we enter the field matters to the Lord of the Harvest.



## ***A Case Study for the Model***

Pete Greasley and Peter Bowley were co-pastoring a church in Newport, Wales,<sup>39</sup> which had just become independent of an affiliation of churches based in Great Britain. They knew independence would eventually mean isolation, so they began to look for some way to connect their church to other gospel-focused congregations. They became aware of Sovereign Grace Ministries and began to interact with us by studying materials and attending conferences. As an apostolic-team member, I had the privilege of developing a relationship with these men and their church during the next several years.

The church's previous experience with apostolic ministry had left them skeptical and suspicious. In addition, their polity and practice differed from ours in a number of important areas. But

the pastors had a growing conviction—which we thought might well be from the Lord—that God wanted them to be adopted into the Sovereign Grace family. To pursue that possibility, greater trust and a deeper relationship had to be developed between Sovereign Grace and the leaders and people of the church.

So in 1999 my family and I relocated to Wales for three months (turning over leadership of our church to the men on my pastoral team) to help this wonderful group of people known as Christchurch work through the transition into Sovereign Grace Ministries. Serving Christchurch in that way remains one of the highlights of my life.

The adoption became official later that year, but that's really just the beginning of the story. Pete Greasley, who became senior pastor, has a longstanding burden for missions and had developed a number of cross-cultural relationships with churches, particularly in Africa and Sri Lanka. Through Pete, we too developed a relationship with these leaders and they with us. I traveled several times with Pete to enjoy and explore these relationships.

One local church in rural Nagongera, Uganda, which had long been supported by Christchurch, was struggling to care for hundreds of AIDS orphans in their village. Taking this opportunity to heart, our church formed Covenant Mercies, a mercy ministry of Covenant Fellowship Church. Covenant Mercies has partnered with this church, called Nagongera Gospel Centre, to purchase land, build a community of orphans' homes, and provide sponsorships for more than 500 children. We have sent numerous construction and medical teams to serve this community, and arranged for a revolutionary modernization that has turned the village into a regional tourist attraction: running water pumped into homes, the pumps powered by solar panels.

More significantly, these acts of kindness have positioned Nagongera's local-church leaders, as well as those who travel there to serve, to preach the gospel with great effectiveness. Nagongera Gospel Centre has planted three other churches and more than doubled in size since our partnership began because men, women, and children have seen the message of the gospel demonstrated in motive, method, and model.

Our visits to Pete's friends in Sri Lanka have positioned us to

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conduct leaders' conferences, teach in a prominent Bible college there, and serve many churches in practical ways. Following the tsunami in December 2004, Pete's relationships in Sri Lanka enabled us to respond immediately and generously. When Sovereign Grace started a relief fund within a few days of the disaster, churches and individuals donated some \$400,000, all of which we disbursed (within Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the affected region) to churches and other locally active gospel-based ministries that could use the money wisely in their communities.

More recently, Nagongera Gospel Centre and two church associations in Sri Lanka—friends first introduced to us by Pete Greasley—have become Associate members of Sovereign Grace Ministries. In addition, Christchurch has itself planted two churches, one in England and one in Wales. God has done marvelous things, to his own glory, through the providential adoption of that one church in Newport, Wales.

And then there's Slava—a Russian and former Red Army officer who stood guard on the east side of the Berlin Wall. Slava was converted and called to ministry, and eventually began laboring with great difficulty and in great isolation to build a local church in Russia. Through a former missionary who had become part of a local church, he became acquainted with a Sovereign Grace Ministries church in Vancouver, Canada. This church invited Slava to Vancouver. In getting to know him, the local pastor drew in the involvement of the apostolic team, wondering if a door into Russia might be opening. Recognizing Slava's call and character and the strategic possibility he represented, we offered him a tuition-free year of study at the Pastors College. There Slava experienced for the first time—in the host church, Covenant Life Church—the local-church model and pastoral care for his marriage, character, and call.

When it came time to craft an internship for Slava, the choice was obvious: send him to Pete in Wales. As this booklet goes to press, Slava is finishing his internship at Christchurch, and together we are weighing a variety of options that would allow him to begin to minister or church-plant among Russians. Although the details are not yet clear, Slava and his wife, Anya, are not launching out alone. They have a family of churches supporting them and they are clear on the message, the method, and the model.



## Conclusion

In these pages we have looked very briefly at a missiology that includes the following elements:

- Mobilized apostolic ministry
- A transportable local-church model
- Relationally focused ministry
- Team participation on both the apostolic and local-church levels
- Assessment of pastoral candidates
- Specialized training of pastoral candidates
- Church-planting internships
- Launch support for church-plants
- Apostolic care of local churches
- Church adoption
- The development of formal associations

Put it all together, and you have a snapshot of God's work within Sovereign Grace as we have sought to fulfill the Great Commission faithfully and biblically through a specific model of missions.

God has been kind to Sovereign Grace and given us much fruitfulness. But what is most important here is not a model or its results, but the fact that the Lord of the Harvest is at work empowering his Church for the fulfillment of the Great Commission because of his love for the lost. Like everything else about us, our approach to missions is *semper reformanda*—always being reformed—yet we believe the model described here represents a biblically consistent, local-church-focused approach to reaching the lost and making disciples.

God wants churches that live for the harvest, churches with a vision not simply to offer a message, but a vision that comprehends the critical links between message and method, message and model, message and people. It falls to the church to translate this vision into a strategy—a *missiology*—that faithfully gives expression to our Lord's commission.

Our Savior is at work in the field and calls us to join him. But

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knowing the destination—that we are called to the harvest—is not enough for lasting fruitfulness. We need to know the best way to get there. Through the grace of God, Scripture shows us the way.

Our desire is to employ a missiology as noble and biblical as the gospel we proclaim. Because the way we enter the field matters to the Lord of the Harvest.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

## Endnotes

1. As just one recent example, Thomas L. Freidman's book, *The World is Flat* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), explores the ongoing technology- and media-driven blurring of sociocultural differences that have historically distinguished disparate societies from one another.
2. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1984) p 178
3. It is not the purpose of this booklet to expound on the gospel per se, but here are three books that bring the gospel into captivating view: *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), by John Murray; *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002) by Jerry Bridges; *Living the Cross Centered Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), by C. J. Mahaney.
4. Charles Spurgeon, quoted in John H. Armstrong, "In Search of Spiritual Power," *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992) p 85
5. Paraphrasing Joseph Fitzmyer, quoted in Robert L. Plummer, "A Theological Basis for the Church's Mission in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol 64, No 2, Fall 2002, p 258, fn 20
6. Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985) p 44
7. Sinclair Ferguson, *Let's Study Philipians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1997) p 42
8. J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philipians* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1984) p 108
9. F.F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Philipians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989) p 70
10. John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003) p 160
11. The implications of a downgraded commission extend beyond missiology. As a Christian counselor, Paul Tripp laments the loss of a full commission when he says, "I believe that the church has been weakened by its tendency to neglect the second half of this commission. Jesus calls us not only to go and make disciples, but also to teach them what it means to live lives that are obedient to every command of Christ. It is a call to exhort, encourage, and teach so that we would be progressively freed from old patterns of sin and conformed instead to the image of Christ. The Great Commission is not only a call to bring people into the kingdom of light, but also a call to teach them to live as children of light once they

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- are there. When we lose sight of this second half of the Great Commission ('teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'), we lose sight of its claim on our everyday talk." Paul David Tripp, *War of Words* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000) p 171
12. Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992) p 43. George Peters (*A Biblical Theology of Missions*, pp 220–221) strikes a similar note: "The church is God's creation for the observance of the divine ordinances, and it is God's institution for teaching purposes. Since the church is the pillar and ground of truth, the Great Commission falls principally upon her. She inherits the Great Commission from the apostles of Christ and becomes responsible for its realization. Too long has pietistic individualism dominated the mind and scene of Protestantism in relation to the Great Commission while the church was left asleep."
  13. Mt 16:18, 28:16–20; Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–35, 13:1–3, 15:3–4; Eph 1:22, 3:10–11, 21, 4:11–16; 1Ti 3:15
  14. In Peters' study of missiology in history (*A Biblical Theology of Missions*, pp 216–217), he mourns the development of "The misconception that missions was the responsibility of individuals rather than the obligation of the churches. This erroneous idea, advocated by Zwingli and his successors, has only gradually and in part been overcome in recent decades. Zwingli maintained that missions is the business of specially called apostles, and that the church as such has nothing to do with missions. This same idea carried over later into Pietism and became dominant in much of Western Protestantism. It still survives due to the inertness of many churches and their inability to organize effectively for missions on the one hand and the strong and vital individualism of some leaders on the other hand.

"Thus individuals have felt called to follow in the steps of the apostles and to pioneer for Christ in mission lands independently of the churches and church direction. As a result, many churches as such have remained practically uninvolved in missions while individuals or small groups from within the churches have aggressively carried on foreign mission work....Such development was most unfortunate and worked itself out negatively in at least three ways:

"First, it left many of the larger churches passive and uninvolved in missions.

"Second, it set up a trade-company type of missions administration

and complex with the mission societies becoming autonomous agencies alongside autonomous church bodies, thus introducing a dichotomy on the home base.

“Third, it related the churches of the mission lands to a missionary society rather than to a mother or sister church of the sending countries.”

15. “Around the world one of the most neglected areas of missiological research has been ecclesiology.” Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991) p 20
16. George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, p 214
17. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962) pp 124–125
18. Chaney agrees. He writes, “The only way to increase the ratio of Christians to population in any nation is to multiply the number of churches. If evangelicals are to make significant progress in bringing America to Christ, the number of churches must be multiplied.” Charles L. Chaney, *Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1991) pp 176–177
19. See Acts 14:4; 1Co 4:6, 9, 9:5–6; Gal 1:19; 1Th 1:1, 2:6; Php 2:25
20. See also a message by Dave Harvey recorded at the 2005 Sovereign Grace Ministries Leadership Conference, “Exploring the Gap between the Big & Little ‘A’: A Fresh Look at Apostolic Ministry” (available at [www.SovereignGraceMinistries.org](http://www.SovereignGraceMinistries.org))
21. Vern S. Poythress, *Modern Spiritual Gifts as Analogous to Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works of the Spirit within Cessationist Theology*, paper distributed by Westminster Campus Bookstore, Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA
22. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962) p 5
23. “Paul saw his own apostleship as on a par with that of the Twelve, so far as immediacy of call, witness to the resurrection, grasp of the gospel, and intrinsic authority were concerned.” D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987) p 90
24. For further discussion of our view of apostolic ministry, see Dave Harvey, “Polity: Serving and Leading the Local Church,” *Sovereign Grace Perspectives: Reflections on Doctrine and Practice in the Local Church*, No 2, March 2004, esp. pp 17–26
25. For a good discussion of the focus on sending-out in the *apostello* word

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group consult Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, which has appeared in a variety of editions from the University of Chicago Press.

26. "Apostles were, by virtue of their commission, mobile." J.D. Douglas et al., ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1982) p 59
27. Some have asked us if church planters are apostles. In our context, the answer in most cases is no. We see church planters as called by God to a specific location to fill a strategic and abiding role in establishing a local church. By relocating into the field, a church planter becomes a kind of "mobile elder," temporarily in motion until he arrives at the place where he will pastor God's people. There are five reasons why I think it is better to view church planters through the pastoral office rather than the apostolic one:
  - 1) Moving once to a new location to plant a church does not adequately represent the mobility and wisdom-gift inherent to the apostolic role.
  - 2) The church planter begins performing pastor-elder tasks on the morning the new church is launched. Typically, within the first few weeks, the church planter serves a small group of attendees by providing pastoral care and leadership.
  - 3) The church planter is endowed with pastoral status in the eyes of those attending the new church.
  - 4) Within Sovereign Grace Ministries, the church planter is the first pastor-elder of the new church.
  - 5) There are no biblical expectations or responsibilities for elders that are not equally necessary and applicable for church planters.

Thus, we see the church-planting pastor as an elder. This is probably what led Aubrey Malphurs (*Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p iii) to conclude, "The qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9...are qualifications for elders but are also essential for church planters." (emphasis mine)
28. While affirming the unique status of Paul's apostleship, it appears that his ministry travel was part of a larger pattern of extra-local, church-planting activity by other apostolically gifted men (e.g., Apollos, see Acts 18:24-19:1; 1Co 1-3).
29. P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Missions in the Writings of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995) p 43. John Piper (*Let the Nations Be Glad*, p 192) also notes, "Paul must have had some idea of what 'reached' means when he said in Romans 15:23, 'I no longer have any room for work in these regions.' He

must have known what it means to complete the missionary task when he said in Romans 15:19, 'From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.' He knew his work was done in that region. That is why he headed for Spain. The 1982 Unreached Peoples Meeting...defined an 'unreached' people group as 'a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group.' Thus, a group is reached when mission efforts have established an indigenous church that has the strength and resources to evangelize the rest of the group."

30. This is an important difference between a church-planting model and classical missions. The classical missions call is often based upon sending individuals from the church into the field on the basis of their internal call to "go" to the world. In a church-planting missiology, the internal call is brought under the apostolic call: the going of the church is shaped by the function of apostolic ministry.
31. Through connections made by the Sovereign Grace apostolic team, churches in the regions affected by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 or hurricanes in the US Gulf Coast region in 2005 were able to have immediate needs met and quickly become centers for ministry to others.
32. For a definition and discussion of plurality within Sovereign Grace Ministries, see Dave Harvey, "Polity: Serving and Leading the Local Church," especially pp 2–6.
33. Paul Johnson of Vision New England
34. When pastors from other ministry contexts have expressed interest in serving within Sovereign Grace (which we experience as a great and surprising honor) the same process of assessment within a Sovereign Grace church would generally be in view.
35. For a more-detailed description of how the calling of a pastor is understood within Sovereign Grace Ministries, see Dave Harvey, "Am I Called? Discerning the Summons to Ministry," *Sovereign Grace Perspectives: Reflections on Doctrine and Practice in the Local Church*, No 3, April 2005
36. Quoted in Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. and exp. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995) p 67
37. This section was drawn from Dave Harvey, "Polity: Serving and Leading the Local Church," pp 26–27.
38. Throughout our history there have always been more opportunities to adopt churches than we have had capacity to absorb, and we do not want

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to bring into the Sovereign Grace family churches to which we could not give sufficient apostolic care. That capacity, while always limited, has been expanded by a group of pastors who serve on regional leadership teams and help care for churches extra-locally.

39. This is the church referred to briefly at page 26.



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SOVEREIGN GRACE® PERSPECTIVES

**Missiology**  
Entering the Field of the Lord

When pursuing the Great Commission, it's not enough simply to be in motion or to know the destination. We must know the best way to get there. This *Perspectives* describes how Sovereign Grace seeks to take the gospel to new people and places, whether across town or across an ocean of cultural difference.

Because the way we enter the field of missions matters to God.