

# INTRODUCTION

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**MARK PRATER**

Eight years ago, when we formed our polity, Sovereign Grace Churches identified seven key convictions that characterize our churches, define who we are for the benefit of others, and bring unity to our ministry and mission as a family of churches. We call these convictions our “Seven Shared Values,” to which this edition of the journal is dedicated.

It’s important to note that our Seven Shared Values have a variety of importance. Some represent foundational theological commitments, others differentiate us, while others speak to how we function together as a family of churches. Collectively they express a faithful application of our biblical values, and they define what it means to be a Sovereign Grace church.

Why are these shared values important for you? Because they actually function daily in the life of your church. Mickey Connolly does a wonderful job showing us how they function in his article entitled, “The Purpose of Our Shared Values.” And in his typical winsome fashion, Jeff Purswell talks about why gospel centrality is such an important part of our culture in his article entitled, “Of First Importance.” But the gospel is also good news that must be proclaimed, which is why you must read Dave Taylor’s article, “Evangelism and Missions.”

Our shared values not only shape our churches; they

shape our pastors. C.J. Mahaney, in his article, “Faithful Shepherds,” skillfully shows how pastors in Sovereign Grace think about and approach pastoral ministry as shepherds who serve the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

To live out our shared values, we need the grace of God. Therefore, I’m so grateful for the prayer that Gary Ricucci wrote, “Praying Through our Seven Shared Values.” It contains prayers for each value and declares our dependence on God. Please join me in praying Gary’s prayer so that we can be a people who apply our shared values in a manner that brings glory, honor, and praise to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Mark*