

Our Seven Shared Values

by Ricky Alcantar

Why the things that bind our churches across Sovereign Grace together are not on the surface, but at a deeper level of shared theological values.

Years ago I stayed with our friends, the Ramoses, whose father Ricky was a pastor at a church in Ciudad Juárez. Knowing I'd be attending with them, my mom tried to prepare me: "It's like our church — just a little different."

She undersold the difference. The songs were all in Spanish, the singing louder and more passionate. The congregation was much larger than ours. The sermon ran longer than I was used to. You could smell food being prepared for an after-church meal, and after the service they threw a full party.

Yet looking back, I understand what my mom meant. Almost everything on the surface was different — but everything underneath was the same.

When I think about our seven shared theological values, what I witnessed in Mexico was unmistakably present:

1. REFORMED THEOLOGY

The worship songs and prayers in Juárez were full of confidence in a big, sovereign, and reigning God.

2. GOSPEL-CENTERED DOCTRINE AND PREACHING

My Spanish wasn't great, but it didn't take a linguist to notice how often Carlos preached about Christ and the cross.

3. CONTINUATIONIST PNEUMATOLOGY

There was prayer for healing and a clear expectation of the Spirit's active work in the service.

4. COMPLEMENTARIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AND HOME

Though Mr. Ramos pastored in a different country, I recognized the same humble, dignified, pastoral heart I'd seen in my own church leaders.

5. ELDER-GOVERNED AND ELDER-LED CHURCHES

Several pastors led, prayed, sang, and ministered together. No one was doing it alone — just like at home.

6. CHURCH PLANTING, OUTREACH, AND GLOBAL MISSION

Someone shared an encouraging update about outreach in Juárez, and I was struck by the church's heart for their city and nation.

7. UNITED IN FELLOWSHIP, MISSION, AND GOVERNANCE

Somewhere in the middle of all of it, I began to realize we were tied together — a church in the US and a church across the border, united in profound ways.

This kind of unity — not around surface distinctives but around deep theological values — was beautifully present in the early church. The first-century churches were made up of radically different ethnic and cultural groups, planted in vastly different places. But I love Paul's prayer in Romans 15:5–6: "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our shared theological

foundation "in accord with Christ Jesus" is what makes it possible to sing his praise "with one voice."

Since that early visit to Mexico, I've had the opportunity to visit dozens of Sovereign Grace churches. Some meet in schools, others in historic buildings. Some are in suburbs, some in rural settings, some in densely populated cities. Each carries its own traditions and style — in Santa Ana they celebrate a festival of nations every year; at our church, we bring out a piñata when we have a guest speaker.

So as you gather this week, rejoice that there are churches across the world who are just like yours in the ways that matter most.

Writing about the most foundational gospel truths in Philippians 3:1, Paul says: "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you." We are a "same things" family of churches. We sing the same things. We preach the same things. We seek to reach our neighborhoods and the nations with the same things.

Now when I visit or read about another Sovereign Grace church, I find myself agreeing with my mom: "They're like our church — just a little different." In all the best ways.

102

Partner Churches
70 U.S. and
32 Outside of the U.S.

39

Candidate Churches
pursuing formal
partnership with SG, all
located outside the U.S.

\$310K

Spent on
Church Care
Fiscal Year 2025



SOVEREIGN GRACE JOURNAL
SOVEREIGNGRACE.COM/JOURNAL



SGCLEADERS.COM
SGPASTORSCOLLEGE.COM



ORDINARY PASTOR PODCAST
THE CLASH VS. PODCAST