

# INTRODUCTION

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**T**he church of Christ in many ways appears ordinary, weak, and unremarkable. Yet we know from God's Word that the church is the most important institution in history, the greatest display of the wisdom and beauty of God in the world today, the focal point of God's plan to save sinners, and the dearest place on earth. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). God is passionate about his church, and he calls his people to share his passion.

The theme of this issue of the Sovereign Grace Journal is "A Passion for the Church." Several articles focus on what particular books of the Bible contribute to our understanding of the church: Acts, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. Standard ecclesiology topics are covered, such as the marks of the church, the role of pastors and deacons, church membership, the importance of the Sunday gathering, and the mission of the church. We also selected less common topics that we were eager to address: singles and children in the church, ethnic harmony in the church, developing leaders, and more.

Brian Chesemore has written a helpful article on the value of a membership covenant, and how this functions in Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville. Bill Patton has written an article entitled "The Benefits of Spending Decades in One Church." Bill led the planting of Covenant Fellowship Church in Pennsylvania in 1984 and still serves the church as an elder. As with previous issues, we've included book recommendations on our theme.

I personally benefited from each of these articles, and I'm thrilled to share them with you. May God use the truths in these pages to strengthen our churches and deepen our love for the local church.

*Jared*