

# **PARTNERSHIP STORY**

## **INTERNATIONAL**

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PASTORS WHO WALK ALONE are vulnerable, sometimes struggling in solitude, carrying the burdens of the church and personal life on their own. I have seen my own need over the years for fellowship and friendship in ministry. Praise God, my story is not one of loneliness but one of fellowship, friendship, and ministry support from our family of churches.

### **Years of Calling and Equipping**

I was born in El Salvador, and I was introduced to Sovereign Grace Churches almost 15 years ago, thanks to men like Carlos Contreras and Steve Shank who visited my church in El Salvador. I was deeply impacted by the centrality of the gospel, among other things. After a few years, Carlos invited me to explore a potential call to pastoral ministry, and to move from El Salvador to Ciudad Juárez, the Sovereign Grace Church in Juárez, Mexico. There I had the privilege of receiving pastoral training, and being a part of Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, strengthening friendships and learning from men like Bob Kauflin, Jeff Purswell, and being exposed to C.J. Mahaney's ministry, among others.

Upon returning to Juárez, the Lord made it clear that he had called me and my family into ministry. Although at that time I did not know where, the Lord confirmed that he had a plan for us in the city of Guadalajara.

### **Partnership in Guadalajara**

Gracia Soberana de Guadalajara, the Sovereign Grace Church in Guadalajara, Mexico, was planted thirty years ago by a man name Luis Bermea, who served faithfully as the only pastor. Because of this, he endured quite a lot. He needed association, friendship, counseling, and ministerial support.

By God's providence in 2012 Luis met Carlos Contrearras and requested that his church be adopted into our family of churches, which occurred in 2014. The Lord's provision in this was clear in two ways. First, the Mexico and Latin America region prayed for the opportunity to plant a church in Guadalajara, since it is the second largest city in Mexico, with nearly 6 million people in the metropolitan area. Secondly, Luis for the first time received the partnership he needed. Through this partnership, Luis and the church in Guadalajara were reinvigorated, and our family of churches was a blessing to his life and ministry.

Luis saw the need for plurality of elders, so he asked the region of Mexico for another pastor. The pastoral team of Gracia Soberana in Ciudad Juárez, which I was now a part of, invited me to consider whether I should go to Guadalajara and join this newly adopted church as one of its pastors. My wife and I prayed about it, and felt it was God's call, so we moved there in 2018. After two years, Luis led through a transition placing me into the senior pastor role.

### **Blessings of Partnership**

From the moment I was sent from Juárez, I have been able to see the blessing of partnership in my life. However, since May 2021 when the regional elders laid hands upon me as the new senior pastor of this church, I have grown even more aware of the gift of partnership in our denomination.

I felt more than ever the need for a true companionship in the faith. I did not want to walk alone in this new city. As a new pastor, I had many doubts about how to do ministry, but there have been many evidences of grace that God has given me through our family of churches, confirming that I do not walk alone.

Throughout this process I have been accompanied by faithful friends. It really feels like being a part of a natural family. I have always had the support of the pastors of the Mexico region as well as Sovereign Grace globally. They were of great comfort in all my ministerial doubts, in much support, prayer, visits of various men to preach, serving as true friends for the needs of the church, and also for my spiritual, personal, and family needs.

We have received so much of our fellowship in the faith. Thanks to the Latin American Fund, I received a scholarship so that I can finish my M.Div. at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Through that time we were able to partially support Andrés Contreras for two years, a current pastor in training in our local church.

### **Hosting our Partnership**

As part of the partnership, this church has hosted different events in the region. For the fifth consecutive year we have hosted Simeon Trust preaching workshops where almost 60 pastors come per year. We have been able to serve them and at the same time we have been enriched by their fellowship. It has been a blessing to our family of churches, because from these workshops, some pastors have sought partnership with Sovereign Grace.

We have hosted training events for current pastors of Sovereign Grace around Latin America, from all over Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Bolivia, and the United States. The first year, 2021, Joselo Mercado, Carlos Contreras, Hellman Ávila, and Rich Richardson served us very well. Last spring Bob Kauflin, Rich Richardson, Joselo Mercado, and Carlos Contreras taught us with the focus on the Sunday gathering. It was enriching and rewarding being positioned to serve and equip these pastors.

We also have been enriched by our annual conference, Fieles a Su Llamado, which is hosted in Gracia Soberana Ciudad Juárez. Even beyond the conference, we benefit from time to be refreshed, encouraged, and be together as friends.

### **Grateful to God for Fruit and Partners**

We remain dedicated to the gospel in the pulpit and in all other areas of ministry as a church. As a result, many have joined our church. We are humbled at testimonies we hear from them such as, “We were praying for a church with sound doctrine and practice in our city, and Sovereign Grace has been the answer.”

We are overwhelmed by the grace we've received in partnership. And we are filled with gratitude for the many men and churches throughout Sovereign Grace as they each have shared their love and support. I feel proud to be part of Sovereign Grace Churches. Most of all, I thank God because this is not by our merits, or for our own glory. As Psalm 115:1 reads: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"