

# INTRODUCTION

***Mark Prater***

*Executive Director, Sovereign Grace Churches (Glen Mills, PA)*

---

**W**hat do people experience when they walk into a Sovereign Grace church for the first time? Of course, we want them to receive a warm welcome. Even more, we hope they see and experience the fruit of the gospel at work in our lives. To say it another way, gospel-centrality produces a gospel culture that is marked by certain qualities like humility, joy, gratitude, encouragement, generosity, servanthood, and godliness. It's those seven qualities that we call "Shaping Virtues" in Sovereign Grace. We pray that they mark all of our churches regardless of culture, ethnicity, or nation.

This fifth edition of the Sovereign Grace Journal is dedicated to our seven Shaping Virtues. These virtues aren't unique to Sovereign Grace. They will be seen in any church that is committed to keeping the gospel central. For our family of churches, it's our desire that God would use this edition of the Journal to strengthen these virtues in each of our lives and in every Sovereign Grace church. In fact, as I read each article I was both inspired and convicted. I was inspired to grow in each of the seven virtues, and convicted in areas where I am falling short, which only revealed my need for the grace of God that is mine in the gospel.

Mickey Connolly's opening article provides a pithy yet wonderful overview of each of our seven Shaping Virtues. Next you will find seven articles that are more of a deep dive into each virtue, written in a way that will inspire and challenge you to grow by the grace of God. Keep in mind that as the gospel transforms us these virtues will not only be seen in us individually, but also in our homes and in the community of the local church. Therefore, don't miss Andy Farmer's article about how our Shaping Virtues are experienced in small groups and Aaron Mayfield's contribution for how these virtues are important in building a gospel-centered home. And make sure to peruse the book recommendations which will point you to resources that will help you grow as you apply the gospel to your life. We have carefully selected one book to recommend for each of the Shaping Virtues.

We publish the Sovereign Grace Journal with the hope that it will influence generations to come. I dream of a day, long after I'm gone and in glory, when someone reads this edition of the Journal and knows what it means to be in a Sovereign Grace church. May the power of the gospel produce that kind of gospel heritage, and may the power of the gospel produce that kind of gospel fruit found in the Shaping Virtues for generations to come, all for the glory of God.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".