



Lesson 8

Reaching Others Along the Journey Evangelism and Mission

Over the past eight weeks, we've looked at many essential topics that relate to our relationship with God and with other believers in the context of the local church. However, our study wouldn't be complete without giving attention to a critical component of the Christian life: the mandate from our Lord to reach others with the gospel. Our relationship with God was never intended to be merely a private journey concerned only with one's personal beliefs. On the contrary, those who have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ by definition become "ambassadors for God" in sharing the gospel with others (2 Cor. 5: 18-20).

One of the songs of Revelation proclaims that Christ's death ransomed people for God "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In this final lesson, we will explore the church's mission to glorify God through the proclamation of the gospel throughout the earth. As we will see, each of us has the great privilege and responsibility of "reaching others on the journey" as we share the gospel with others, demonstrate the reality of the gospel in our lives, and participate in the mission of the local church.

I. Church with a Mission

We want to avoid the mistake of viewing church life as simply a routine to fulfill, or viewing ourselves as a static gathering of believers. From the very beginning, God's people had, at the core of their identity, an element of mission, and the goal of expansion.

- A. The plan commenced: God's covenant with Abraham. When God revealed Himself to Abraham, He promised not only to bless Abraham, but to in turn make him and his descendants a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Genesis 22:17-18: "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

- B. The plan continued: The Great Commission. After Jesus accomplished his atoning work on the cross, He gave his followers a mandate to proclaim the gospel to all the nations. It is through the proclamation of the gospel that God will gather His people to Himself, and thus fulfill His original promise to Abraham to bless "all the nations."

Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

- C. The plan completed: The heavenly throng. We see the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan and Jesus' commission in the book of Revelation, which pictures people from all over the earth giving glory to God and to the Lamb of God who died for them. The Bible is clear that God's intention to bring glory to His name by gathering a people to Himself will surely reach its intended goal.

Revelation 7:9-10: "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

II. People with a Message: Evangelism

Since every Christian has personally experienced the grace of God through the gospel, each of us has a part to play in this glorious commission as we testify to the salvation God offers through the gospel.

"Successful Evangelism is simply taking initiative to share the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God." —Bill Bright

- A. Who should evangelize? Every Christian!

The work of evangelism is essentially that of bearing witness—each of us is called to testify to what God has done for us through the gospel. Each of us has been empowered by God, and each of us has our own story to tell of God's amazing grace to us through the cross.

Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

1 Peter 3:15-16: "but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..."

- B. What do we share? The Gospel.

We aren't merely calling others to live a moral life, or asking them simply to "believe in God," or trying to convince them that Christians are "nice people." Salvation comes only through faith in the finished work of Christ on our behalf. As the apostle Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

As we saw in Lesson 2, the gospel is the "good news" of God's saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Communicating the gospel faithfully will help to preserve its power and protect us from distorting its truth.

C. The method of our evangelism: Declaration and Demonstration

Declaration: Telling the good news

Romans 10:14-15: "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

"If you knew that a man was asleep in a blazing building, you would think it a matter of urgency to try and get to him, and wake him up, and bring him out. The world is full of people who are unaware that they stand under the wrath of God: is it not similarly a matter of urgency that we should go to them, and try to arouse them, and show them the way of escape." – J.I. Packer

"Evangelism is about overcoming the fear of man." – Jim Donahue

Since the gospel is, by definition, "good news," evangelism always involves the sharing of this news. Every Christian is called to be an ambassador of the gospel, and we seek to equip every member of Sovereign Grace to share the gospel accurately, joyfully, and faithfully. Here are some means by which we seek to do this:

- **Proclaim Evangelism Training Course:** This course is held to give specific instruction and motivation in sharing the gospel.
- **The Alpha Course:** This is an eight-week course designed to provide non-Christians an opportunity to explore the Gospel in a relaxed setting where any questions are welcome. The course at the church, where folks gather to share a free meal together, listen to a brief talk, and then gather in small groups to discuss the teaching and ask questions. This has been a most fruitful context for non-believers to explore the evidence for the Christian faith, to be presented with the claims of Christ and the gospel, and to "count the cost" of following the Lord. It also provides a very concrete way for our members to invite and bring people from their relational network.
- **Book Store Resources:** Our Book Store carries several great books that will serve to instruct you on how to think Biblically about evangelism and how to practically apply God's Word in this area.

2. Demonstration: Living the good news

Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

In addition to proclaiming the gospel, Christians are to testify to the reality of the gospel by the way they live. The Bible describes believers as “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10). These good works include deeds of kindness and love that express God’s love to people and give credibility to the message we proclaim.

This demonstration of the gospel takes place in countless, daily ways through the lives of individuals and families in our community. We also seek to facilitate this demonstration through various organized Servant Outreach and Connecting Events through which our members can use their gifts to care for others, connect with them relationally and testify to the gospel.

These outreaches include:

- E3 Ministry – Exercise Outreach
- Angel Tree
- Alexandria Neighborhood Outreach
- Christmas Mall Outreach
- Christmas Eve and Easter Outreach
- Food Pantry
- St. Bride’s Prison Ministry
- Oneismus House
- Care Group Evangelistic Events

D. The context of evangelism

1. Personal.

We encourage everyone at Sovereign Grace to bear witness to Jesus Christ and share the gospel in the network of relationships He provides to each of us. These “fields of harvest” (see Matt. 9:38) include our family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, classmates—anyone whom God has sovereignly placed in your life.

2. Corporate.

We believe that God has a plentiful harvest for us to reap in Chesapeake and beyond. We therefore seek to reach those in the area in which God has placed us, and to provide contexts our members can utilize to reach out to those in their relational network.

3. Public

We believe that there are opportunities to share the gospel in the midst of our everyday lives, even as we shop for groceries, have coffee at a local coffee shop, or are out in a public place. We encourage members to serve others in public, carry invitations to upcoming events with them (Sunday Celebrations, Alpha, other events), as well as carry Gospel tracts and to be available to speak to unbelievers about the Gospel.

III. Our Broader Mission: Church Planting

While we have a specific mission as a church, we are also part of a family of churches under the name of Sovereign Grace Ministries. Sovereign Grace Ministries is a network of churches in the U.S., and a growing number of countries around the world joined together by relationship and common doctrine. Our broader mission includes participation with other churches in the planting of new churches through Sovereign Grace.

A. Purpose:

The primary purpose of Sovereign Grace Ministries is to establish and nurture local churches to God’s glory.

- B. **Structure:**
Sovereign Grace Ministries is led by an apostolic team of men based in various related churches. These men work to care for our family of churches, as well as to lead in the planting of new churches.
- C. **Function:**
Individual churches participate in church planting by helping to raise up leaders and sending teams of people to new cities for new church plants. Sovereign Grace is the result of a church plant in 1987 led by Steve Shank. Sovereign Grace Church also sent a church planting team to Denver, CO in 1997 to start Grace Community Church.
- D. **Other Ministries:**
As part of its effort to equip and strengthen local churches, Sovereign Grace Ministries also serves churches in numerous other ways designed to care for pastors, strengthen believers, and to help grow strong churches. Its other activities include:
- An online-store featuring Bible study and theology resources, music and video resources, audio messages, and more.
 - Book publishing
 - Conferences
 - Pastors College

IV. Our Specific Mission and You

- A. Our mandate to proclaim the gospel plays an important role in our overall mission as a church. Earlier in this course, we introduced to you the mission statement of Sovereign Grace Church:

Our mission at Sovereign Grace Church is to glorify God by Knowing, Applying, and Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the Scriptures teach and all genuine believers can attest, it is only through the gospel that we can be reconciled to God and our lives can be transformed for the glory of God. It is therefore the gospel that we proclaim to others, that we seek to apply to our lives on a daily basis, and that forms the basis for our relationships with the others in the context of the local church.

- B. If it is your desire to take part in our mission by becoming a member of Sovereign Grace, the process is a simple one with a few straightforward requirements:
1. A clear testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ
 2. Successful completion of the class "Our Journey Together"
 3. Support of the church's Statement of Faith (see Appendix A)
 4. Regular attendance of the Sunday morning meeting
 6. Consistent participation in a Care Group
 7. A meeting with a pastor to discuss church membership

Upon completion of these requirements, you will be welcomed into membership with other new members during the Sunday meeting. We welcome new members into the church three times a year, and consider these special Sundays as significant days in the life of our church.

V. Next Steps on the Journey

We are so grateful that you have joined us for this “journey” of exploring Sovereign Grace Church. We trust that the past eight weeks have been encouraging and informative as you seek to determine God’s will for your life, especially with regard to your involvement in a local church. What we have said before bears repeating: although we do hope that you will find in Sovereign Grace a church home where you can thrive, our main burden is not that you become a part of this church, but that you become a part of some church. It is our desire that you develop a biblical, enthusiastic conviction about the importance of active involvement in the local church, and with this conviction find a church home where you can worship God, grow in your relationship with Him, and serve in ways that glorify Him.

If there are any remaining questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We desire to do all we can to serve you as you consider the very important decision of local church involvement. Whatever decision you make, we hope your time here has increased your love for the Lord, and has strengthened you to “continue the journey” as you seek to glorify God, cherish the Savior, and serve His purposes in the context of the local church. May God’s richest blessings be upon you!