



SOVEREIGN GRACE MINISTRIES

F. A. Q.

Important and recurring questions regarding Sovereign Grace Ministries and our pursuit of the network are here summarized and ordered under four headings: Benefits, Authority & Leadership, Charismatic Concerns, and Miscellaneous.

BENEFITS

1. How would belonging to SGM benefit Coram Deo Fellowship?

RELATIONSHIP.

Belonging to SGM would help us avoid isolation – Sean and Larry as vocational pastors, and the CDF body by engaging us in something bigger than ourselves.

RESOURCES.

As part of the SGM network, we would gain access to leadership, accountability, counsel in crisis, and the encouragement and prayers of other churches.

OPPORTUNITY.

Through SGM we would be able to participate in mission/church-planting far beyond our capacity. We also have the opportunity to learn from other leaders and churches about practical ministry.

FOCUS.

Belonging to SGM would help determine how we invest our resources and challenge us to new perspectives and priorities in ministry.

2. What are the advantages of a formal relationship over an informal one?

First, belonging to a network/organization is consistent with Coram Deo's understanding of commitment and participation. We value a "formal relationship" with Sovereign Grace Ministries for the same reason we emphasize membership at CDF and not just attendance. Also, more practically, we feel the level of relationship and participation (as described above) could not be experienced in only an informal relationship.

AUTHORITY & LEADERSHIP

3. How does SGM view church leadership/government? What differences are there between us?

Having viewed their documents and discussed this matter with SGM leadership, we have found unity regarding eldership and governing the church, with only slight difference. This

slight difference concerns the meaning and use of the terms "first among equals" and "Senior Pastor." However, both SGM and we have recognized that in actual practice, CDF functions almost identically to Sovereign Grace churches and well within any expectations SGM has.

4. What role would SGM play in staffing/leadership needs at CDF?

None, other than the welcomed resources of wisdom, counsel, and recommendation.

5. What is the difference between a network such as SGM and a denomination (e.g. Methodist)?

The level of authority and involvement. In a denomination a centralized office typically determines curriculum, development, and participation, etc. Some assign pastors to churches and even circulate them. Local churches are not autonomous. In a network, churches are associated but maintain autonomy. There may be a leadership structure within the network but its oversight is more limited.

6. How would doctrinal or ministry-related disagreements with SGM be handled?

We would expect any such potential (future) disagreements between CDF and SGM to be carefully and lovingly worked through to a resolution. If an impasse occurred, mutual dissolution of membership and participation would be the goal. The Elders of Coram Deo are not concerned about this issue since it would require a major doctrinal shift or radical change in philosophy of ministry, and is the reason we are pursuing the relationship with diligence.

CHARISMATIC CONCERNS

7. Are we at CDF cessationist or continuationist?

Coram Deo Fellowship is continuationist in its understanding of the spiritual gifts, meaning that we do not understand Scripture to teach that any spiritual gift (as identified in New Testament texts such as 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12) has been "discontinued" by the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that we condone every claimed manifestation or practice of the gifts in all churches which claim to be Charismatic or Pentecostal. It does mean that we are not cessationist (believing certain gifts have ceased and never any longer manifested).

8. According to Sovereign Grace's Statement of Faith: "All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced."

What does "earnestly desired and practiced" mean for CDF?

This means that we at CDF desire and pray the Holy Spirit to manifest himself among us in whatever ways bring him glory and that we are conscious of not quenching any such

manifestation while faithfully exercising the gifts he distributes in this community. It does not mean that will fabricate manifestations or manipulate experiences, whether personal or corporate.

9. How does CDF's pursuit and practice of the spiritual gifts compare to other SGM churches?

We are probably on the conservative end of the spectrum of SGM churches. According to SGM this is more typical of its churches in the West without a clear understanding of why.

MISCELLANEOUS

10. Would belonging to SGM limit our involvement with other like-minded churches or ministries or resources?

No limits are anticipated.

11. Have you talked with other "adopted" pastors within the SGM network?

We have spoken a little with the pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Spokane, WA (the adopted SGM church closest to us) and have attended services there. We think anyone from Coram Deo would feel very much "at home" at Grace Christian. This is a relationship we intend to pursue more, and we invite you to visit gcfonline.org to learn more about this likeminded church.

12. What affects would membership in SGM have on Coram Deo's worship services, ministries, or regular operations?

Sovereign Grace Ministries would impose no changes in how we practice worship, pursue ministry, or operate institutionally.

13. What financial expectations or obligations would SGM have of CDF?

Sovereign Grace Ministry strongly encourages its member-churches to commit 10% of its monthly budget toward the ministries of SGM. These monies go primarily to church planting with a small part toward leadership training and education. SGM shows sensitivity to the needs of individual fellowships who are small or face hardship. The financial expectations are not articulated as "requirements" but are seen as a normal, integral expression of partnership and shared vision.