

C.J. Mahaney Takes Leave Over 'Serious' Charges

✖ C.J. Mahaney, president of Sovereign Grace Ministries, announced on Wednesday that he is taking a leave of absence from his leadership position.

In a blog post on SGM's website, Mahaney says pastors and leaders within Sovereign Grace have made charges against him and other leaders over the last few years, and he is taking a leave of absence "in order to give time to considering these charges, examine my heart and receive the appropriate help from others."

Mahaney says the charges, which have been difficult to read, "are not related to any immorality or financial impropriety, but this doesn't minimize their serious nature, which include various expressions of pride, unentreatability, deceit, sinful judgment and hypocrisy."

Although his departure from the Gaithersburg, ministry may have come as a surprise to many, "a process has been unfolding over a number of months in which the board has sought to evaluate charges against C.J., assist him in examining his heart and pursuing reconciliation, and bring accountability and guidance to him in this process," SGM Acting President Dave Harvey wrote in a blog post.

Harvey also said the board is examining charges against the ministry and is “in the process of securing help from an outside organization that can conduct a thorough and objective review of the charges being brought against C.J. and SGM.”

The length of Mahaney’s leave of absence depends on findings from the independent panel, and the board will determine what Mahaney’s duties will consist of upon his return.

Mahaney has acknowledged some of his mistakes and is looking to biblical counselor Dr. David Powlison and Pastor Mark Dever. “I have enlisted them to serve me personally during this time and to ensure this process of examining my heart and life is as thorough as possible,” Mahaney wrote.

He also took responsibility for SGM’s problems and said he has begun to repent of sins he’s committed while in leadership.

“For the past five years or so I have become increasingly aware of certain deficiencies in my leadership that have contributed to deficiencies in Sovereign Grace Ministries’ structure and governance, the lack of a clear and consistent process of conflict resolution and pastoral evaluation, and the number of former Sovereign Grace pastors who are offended with me/SGM,” he explains.

“My friends, though my soul can be easily overwhelmed as I contemplate my sin and its effects on others, I am also resolved to examine my heart, address the past, and play my role in preparing SGM for a future of planting and serving churches,” Mahaney wrote.

The leaders at SGM continue to support Mahaney and his actions.

“The charges against C.J. are serious, but his response has been one of self-examination and, when possible, specific confession to those sinned against,” Harvey wrote. “We ... believe the leave of absence is appropriate in the present circumstances to afford C.J. the time to reflect upon his heart and to allow an independent panel space to conduct its review.”

Mahaney has become a well-known pastor in his time at SGM, and has published several books. He was senior pastor at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg for 27 years.