

Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

John MacArthur: Servant of the Word and Flock

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But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.
Isaiah 66:2

When John MacArthur said “Amen” at the end of his prayer last Sunday night, he had just finished his exposition of Mark’s Gospel. The evening was the final punctuation on a monumental body of work—the verse-by-verse exposition of the entire New Testament. After praying, John looked up at his congregation, and with a meek grin said, “There we are.” The church erupted in applause and a standing ovation, which he quieted in short order so he could thank everyone for allowing him to minister to them for more than four decades.

I was grateful to the Lord that I could witness that moment. And I’m especially thankful for the release of Iain Murray’s biography of our beloved pastor: *John MacArthur: Servant of the Word and Flock*. His book has helped help me understand the significance of what I witnessed last Sunday night.

Iain Murray is the preeminent Christian biographer of our time and has given us an appreciation for such gifts to the church as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones. The strength of Murray’s biographies is not simply in his unique ability to sift through the vast details of a person’s life and distil them into interesting narrative, but in his acute and perceptive theological analysis. As a student of church history, Murray is able to see the implications of a man’s life and ministry. He helps the reader understand where the subject fits in the historical and doctrinal development of the church, which allows him to appreciate not just the man, but more importantly, the wisdom and glory of the God who gave him to the church.

Murray applies that same pattern to his current biography of John MacArthur. The overview of his life chronicles and begins to explain what God has done through John’s life to bless people all over the world. And it’s a fascinating story. The vantage point of hindsight allows us to see the fingerprints of God’s providence in gifting, shaping, equipping, and enabling John MacArthur to be what he is—a faithful servant of God’s Word and a loving shepherd to God’s flock.

Young “Johnny” MacArthur was a typical athlete—football was at the center of his life and he was uninterested in books and study. But God used a car accident to get John’s attention. He refined him through the trials of responsibility and suffering, fashioning him into a uniquely useful servant for our time. He’s now known as a diligent student of Scripture, enraptured with the glory of Christ and passionate about the truth. His church knows him as a meek man, a shepherd marked by humility,

compassion, and generosity. His family knows him as a husband who loves his wife, Patricia, a tender father of four children, and a gentle grandfather of fifteen grandchildren.

In the book, Murray accurately portrays John MacArthur's passion for theology, and his courage in proclaiming it publicly. Armed with an insatiable curiosity and a zeal for the glory of Christ, John has read extensively and deeply. What he's learned has enabled him to lead the charge in some of the most important theological battles of our time. Murray pulls back the curtain on his thinking about doctrinal controversy and personal confrontation, and actually chronicles some of the better-known episodes.

No one could anticipate all that God has accomplished so far through John's life and ministry, which provides us yet another opportunity to praise the wisdom and power of God. John MacArthur is yet another illustration of 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.

Let me encourage you to read Iain Murray's absorbing biography for yourself. At 240 pages, it's very accessible and totally engaging—you'll have a hard time putting it down.

You can get a copy of *John MacArthur: Servant of the Word and Flock* here, or, if you are already on the Grace to You mailing list, check your mailbox for an offer to receive a free copy of the book.

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