

EDITORIAL

A Notable Giant

I recently reached back forty years through life's rearview mirror and revisited the experiences of a 25-year-old, fresh out of the Navy, neophyte seminary student. One of my strongest memories from those earlier years remains reading *Moody Monthly*, especially Warren Wiersbe's "Insight for Pastors" column where he often wrote brief biographical sketches of great preachers from bygone eras. Several years later, my family gave me a treasured volume of Wiersbe's articles for Christmas entitled *Walking with the Giants*.¹

These miniature literary portraits of men greatly used by God thrilled me. I felt especially drawn to the men who labored a lifetime preaching sequentially through the Bible, like Alexander Maclaren and Joseph Parker. These were inspirational moments for me at the time, but little more as I focused primarily on surviving the rigors of seminary study.

Of late, however, the opportunity to reconsider some of those same men has resurfaced. With a better and clearer perspective on how infrequent precious men like these have surfaced in church history, it dawned on me that I now walk in ministry with one such giant—John MacArthur, president of The Master's Seminary.

I have lived beyond 65 as TMS celebrates her 25th year. During times like these, older gentlemen usually engage in serious reflection on their lives and ministry. In so doing, I asked several people to name for me the pastors who in the course of their ministries preached though the entire Bible or either Testament and then put their preaching into print to extend their fruitfulness even further in time and space.

Limited to those who ministered after Johannes Guttenberg invented the printing press in 1440, the list remains unbelievably short because only a rare handful of men over the last 500-600 years have actually done so. While my brief research certainly cannot be considered exhaustive, it does capture a representative group of the notable giants. By century, it looks like this:

16th century—John Calvin (1509-1564)²

17th century—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)³

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Walking with the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976).

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. (1853; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

18th century— John Gill (1697-1771)⁴; Charles Simeon (1759-1836)⁵
 19th century—Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)⁶; Joseph Parker
 (1830-1902)⁷; B. H. Carroll (1843-1914)⁸
 20th and 21st centuries—J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988)⁹;
 Warren Wiersbe (1929-present)¹⁰; John MacArthur (1939-present)¹¹

John MacArthur began preaching through the New Testament at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA in 1969. He plans to finish the New Testament with the Gospel of Mark in 2011—43 years of preaching that spans all or part of six decades.

His preaching unfolded in the following fashion:

Matthew	1978–1985	2 Thessalonians	1992
Mark (in process)	2009–2011	1 Timothy	1985–1987
Luke	1998–2008	2 Timothy	1987–1988
John	1970–1972	Titus	1992–1993
Acts	1972–1975	Philemon	1991
Romans	1969–1970, 1981–1986	Hebrews	1972–1973
1 Corinthians	1975–1977	James	1986–1987
2 Corinthians	1993–1998	1 Peter	1969, 1988–1990
Galatians	1973–1974	2 Peter	1969, 1990–1991
Ephesians	1971–1972, 1978–1979	1 John	1975, 2002–2003
Philippians	1988–1989	2 John	1975, 2003
Colossians	1976	3 John	1975, 2003

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (1845; repr., Marshallton, DE: Sovereign Grace, n.d.).

⁴ John Gill, *Gill's Commentary*, 6 vols. (1746–1763; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

⁵ Charles Simeon, 21 vols. (1847; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956). The reprint title is *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*.

⁶ Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 17 vols. (1904–1910; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974).

⁷ Joseph Parker, *The Peoples' Bible*, 25 vols (1886ff. repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987). The reprint title is *Preaching Through the Bible*.

⁸ B.H. Carroll, *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, 6 vols. (1948; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973).

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible: Genesis through Revelation*, 5 vols. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988).

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 6 vols. (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2001).

¹¹ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, estimated 33 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1983–2014).

1 Thessalonians	1990–1991	Jude	1975, 2004
		Revelation	1970, 1991–1995

Then in 1981, Jerry Jenkins, at that time Director of Moody Press in Chicago originated the idea for a *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* series. This monumental work should be completed with 33 volumes (estimated) in 2014 (estimated). Without question, it stands as one of the most thorough word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, and book-by-book New Testament commentary series ever undertaken by a preacher. The publication schedule to date has worked out in this sequence:

Hebrews	1983	Titus	1996
First Corinthians	1984	Acts 13–28	1996
Matthew 1–7	1985	James	1998
Ephesians	1986	Revelation 1–11	1999
Matthew 8–15	1987	Revelation 12–22	2000
Galatians	1987	Philippians	2001
Matthew 16–23	1988	First Thessalonians	2002
Matthew 24–28	1989	Second Thessalonians	2002
Romans 1–8	1991	Second Corinthians	2003
Colossians	1992	First Peter	2005
Philemon	1992	Second Peter and Jude	2005
Romans 9–16	1994	John 1–11	2006
Acts 1–12	1994	First, Second, Third John	2007
First Timothy	1995	John 12–21	2008
Second Timothy	1995	Luke 1–5	2009
		Luke 6–10	2011

While John MacArthur has majored on the New Testament in his pulpit preaching, his extended labors have also included study notes on the entire Bible in *The MacArthur Study Bible*. To date, it has been published in three English versions (ESV, NASU, and NKJV) which have been translated into eight additional languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish).

Of the other nine notable giants mentioned above, John MacArthur most resembles three of them. First comes John Gill (pastored the Carter Lane, Southwark church in London for 51 years) in the overall scope of his ministry. In addition to his commentary work, John Gill wrote a theology¹² and a volume on pastoral ministry.¹³ John MacArthur has published a “systematic

¹² John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (1769; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, n.d.).

¹³ John Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity* (1770; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, n.d.).

shepherdology” of sorts in five volumes.¹⁴ Currently, he is working on *Christian Doctrine: The Persons, Purposes, and Plans of God* with two colleagues.¹⁵

Second, in his approach to preaching, John MacArthur very much thinks like Charles Simeon (pastored Trinity Church in Cambridge, England for 54 years). His three great aims of (1) humbling the sinner, (2) exalting the Savior, and (3) promoting holiness (conviction, conversion, and consecration) parallel John MacArthur’s prayerful outcome of his own preaching.¹⁶

Third, in his exposition, John MacArthur embraces the expositional essentials of John Calvin (pastored St. Peter’s Church in Geneva, Switzerland for 25 years) —to accurately explicate and applicate God’s Word.¹⁷ John MacArthur could just as easily comment as did John Calvin, “Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning, and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning.”¹⁸

Surely enough has been said by now to identify John MacArthur as a man ordained by God to be numbered among the notable preaching and writing giants in church history. With a rare combination of exceptional depth of study, determination, devotion, diligence, and discipline, John MacArthur has pastored, preached to, and published for Grace Community Church during the last 43 years (with many more anticipated).

Having this perspective in mind and on the occasion of completing 25 years as President of The Master’s Seminary (1986-2011), this 22nd volume, 1st issue of *The Master’s Seminary Journal* (Spring 2011) has been prepared for presentation to Dr. John MacArthur at the 25th graduation celebration of The Master’s Seminary as a festschrift (a volume of writings by colleagues and friends collected in honor of one’s significant accomplishments and contributions) recognizing a most worthy slave and notable giant of Christ to the glory of God.

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¹⁴ *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005); *Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005); *Biblical Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005); *Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011); and *The Master’s Plan for the Church*, updated ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2008).

¹⁵ Projected for publishing by Crossway in 2013.

¹⁶ H.C.G. Moule, *Charles Simeon* (1892; repr., London: Inter-Varsity, 1948), 52.

¹⁷ John H. Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in Light of Recent Research,” *Review and Expositor* 86 (1989): 32, 34.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians in Calvin’s Commentaries*, 22 vols (1853; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 21:136.