

JOHN MACARTHUR IN MY LIFE AND MINISTRY

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For more than three decades, I have had the privilege of watching, up close and personal, the life and ministry of John MacArthur. As I reflect on these years of ministry association, there are more than a few things that have significantly impacted my life and ministry. This occasion provides an opportunity not only to express my appreciation to this man but also to give thanks to the Sovereign One who orchestrated it all through His divine providence.

It all began rather quietly. Though I had not met Dr. MacArthur personally, I was introduced to his ministry through my acquaintance with some of the Grace Church pastors during my early teaching days at Talbot Seminary. His commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture was vividly displayed through the lives of his disciples. It was evident that they were students of the Word; they held its Author in highest esteem and embraced its contents. Knowing that “a pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone after he has been fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40), I was eager to meet their mentor.

That opportunity arrived in the summer of 1977, when I was asked to help launch an extension campus for Talbot at Grace Church. I immediately noted (apart from its size, of course—on our first Sunday, my wife exclaimed, “this is like going to a crusade”) the supremacy of the Word. It was a shared perspective, one that I fully embraced. But Dr. MacArthur’s influence infused its foundational centrality with even greater intensity and tenacity. And, of course, a high view of God’s Word naturally leads to a high view of the God who is revealed in it. It was imperative that God’s Word not be compromised, not only in teaching and preaching but also in conduct and example—a commitment we observed soon and often.

While that was the genesis of Dr. MacArthur’s influence in my life, it was not the last. The subsequent years would prove to expand it exponentially. Some principles that were woven into the fabric of ministry were:

Faithfulness to the Word of God. There was a willingness to do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

Commitment to the task. In other words, “paying the price of preparation.” The fruit of his oft-repeated catchphrase, “take care of the depth and God will take care of the breadth” became a core principle that motivated every ministry effort.

Humble, generous spirit. I have repeatedly observed him embrace the little things of ministry, often at the expense of family time or personal pleasure. Whether it was a handwritten note, a phone call to give encouragement, or an early-morning stop by the hospital to pray with a son who had fractured his neck, he graciously gave of himself.

Entrusting others. He encouraged people to embrace the ministry opportunities that presented themselves, always eager to provide ministry outlets for others. His expanded ministry continually opened doors of service for others, at home and around the world!

Positive outlook. He thought the best about others and stood ready to defend them against rumor or gossip.

Excellence. From the quality of his sermons to the upkeep of building and grounds, everything was to declare the glory of God. This, in turn, promoted excellence in everyone's contribution to the ministry.

His influence was not limited to my own life and ministry but also extended into the lives of my wife and children. Every Woman's Grace became a weekly staple for my wife. My sons were faithfully taught the Word, first in the nursery and Sunday School, then in Awana and Discovery Club, and later in high school and college. My family and I are eternally grateful.