

A HUMBLE BROTHER WHOM GOD HAS EXALTED

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My first contact with John Fullerton MacArthur, Jr. took place in November 1973 at the Laymen's Retreat at the Sawmill Creek Resort on Lake Erie. John was 34 years old and in his fifth year as the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church. His preaching was phenomenal. Preaching from John 21, he kept saying things like, "Wait until you hear this." We had never heard anyone more excited about the Bible, and John's enthusiasm for God's Word was contagious.

The Moody Bible Institute Pastors' Conference in May 1977 marked my second exposure to John and his zealous exposition of the Scriptures. Then during my years at The Chapel in University Park (Akron, Ohio), John came several times to preach. A friendship developed and led to an invitation to join him for the transition of Los Angeles Baptist College into The Master's College.

Serving closely with him quickly revealed that John MacArthur lives what he preaches. Together we examined the biblical policies of LABC and determined certain adjustments to strengthen them. We worked toward bringing every aspect of TMC to a level of excellence, from student life and chapel to academics, athletics, and facilities. And every student was encouraged to spend a summer overseas on a missions assignment.

We began regular faculty and staff prayer meetings seeking the Lord, His wisdom, and provision for every need. The Lord was faithful to graciously answer our requests, often far beyond our expectations. In 1986 it became essential to establish The Master's Seminary. The Lord again gloriously answered our prayers and sent an outstanding team of humble professors, as well as the funds and students that were necessary to launch The Master's Seminary.

In November of 1989 I traveled to the Soviet Union for a three-week missions trip hosted by Christians who had endured persecution and remained faithful to the Lord. Pastor Yakov Dukhonchenko, following a prison term for preaching the gospel, had become a pastor, a leader of pastors, and then was also serving as the vice president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the Soviet Union. When I asked if he had heard of John MacArthur, he replied, "Do you mean the brother who wrote the book *The Charismatics?*" I said, "Yes." He pounded his big fist on his desk while exclaiming, "I believe like that

brother.” *The Charismatics* had been “unofficially” translated and printed in Russian and John was already a highly respected author.

Later Pastor Dukhonchenko shared the startling news that the Berlin Wall was being dismantled. He was gravely concerned, saying, “The coming freedom will bring a flood of false teachers and our people are not ready for it. They will trust everyone who comes in the name of Christ. They have never been exposed to false teachers.” I responded, “If the Lord allows me to serve in your country, my highest priority will be to help you maintain a doctrinal fence around your churches.” Before long, Dr. MacArthur would become God’s key instrument to help protect their doctrinal convictions and strengthen their churches.

A few months later, John joined me in Kiev for a conference with more than 600 humble pastors from the eleven time zones of the USSR. It was a glorious event. We had never heard men sing like that, or pray the way that they prayed. Throughout the sessions the pastors were in full agreement with John’s teaching. Their doctrinal traditions had been strongly held, and John’s expositions strengthened their faith through the additional Scriptural support of their convictions.

While Dr. MacArthur’s great knowledge of the Bible was deeply appreciated, the loving acceptance of the pastors stemmed rather from their assessment that John was a fellow, humble servant of Christ. He was their brother. In the extended Q. & A. sessions John graciously answered every question with three or four Scripture verses. Soon thereafter we began to translate John’s commentaries and books into Russian, and he dedicated *Charismatic Chaos* to Pastor Yakov Dukhonchenko.

John then invited Pastor Dukhonchenko and his assistant, Pastor Grigory Komendant, to come to Los Angeles for a visit. We spent a day in the college board room comparing our doctrinal distinctives. After several hours of discussion, Pastor Dukhonchenko joyfully declared, “Finally we have found someone outside of the Soviet Union who believes as we do.”

Later, The Master’s College granted the Doctor of Divinity to Pastor Grigory Komendant and The Master’s Seminary granted its first honorary degree, the Doctor of Divinity, to Pastor Yakov Dukhonchenko. Over the years D.D.s have also been granted to a former president of the UECB of Russia, Piotr Konovalchik; to the founding president of Irpin Biblical Seminary, Alexei Brinza; and to the current president of the UECB of Belarus, Viktor Krutko.

The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists continued to invite Dr. MacArthur for a total of ten pastors’ conferences in Kiev, Ukraine; Minsk, Belarus; Moscow and Voronezh, Russia; Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Bucharest, Romania. Partnership with the Slavic Gospel Association helped make possible both the conferences and a continuing stream of Russian versions of John’s publications, which has grown to more than 300,000 copies.

Since the Lord granted the evangelicals of the USSR freedom to worship in 1989, Dr. John MacArthur has been their principal theological influence. Evangelical pastors, church planters, and seminary students

throughout the nations of the former Soviet Union are using John's *Study Bible*, commentaries, and other books. Graduates of The Master's Seminary, and their disciples, have been training pastors at Irpin Biblical Seminary, Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary, Samara Theological Seminary, Odessa Theological Seminary, Minsk Theological Seminary, Almaty Bible Institute, Baku Bible Institute, Dushanbe Bible Institute, International Bible Institute of Ukraine, and in the Strategic Bible Institutes and Antioch Initiative programs of SGA.

Underlying all of this tremendous progress of the gospel is Dr. MacArthur's reputation as a humble servant of Christ, who has a special place in his heart for those who have suffered for their faith and remained true to the Lord.....he is their beloved brother.

John is a humble servant of the most high God, and I am blessed to call him my brother and my friend.

