At the Throne of Grace

A Book of Prayers

John MacArthur

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A PERSONAL WORD

“His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him” (Luke 1:50).

At an appointed moment near the beginning of the worship service, a lone figure ascends the platform stairs and approaches the pulpit. His snow-white hair speaks of a distinguished and elderly soul, yet his stride and physique reveal a younger man and the all-American athlete he was in his day. To the thousands gathered in the sanctuary, this man is their beloved pastor. Their teacher. And to many more outside the walls of this building he is a world-renowned theologian and Bible scholar. An author of esteemed repute.

To be sure, he is all of these to us as well. But John MacArthur is a man whom we love as no other. He is our dad.

We’re preacher’s kids. We wear the same label today that we wore as young children. And because we have been a part of a church where our dad has been the pastor since 1969, we have been surrounded all our lives by people who knew exactly who we were.

“You’re Pastor MacArthur’s daughter, aren’t you?”

“You must be Dr. MacArthur’s son; you look just like him.”

As the years went by and each of us married, our spouses joined us, grafted in and belonging to the preacher. Then, one at a time, our own children became part of that family circle as well.

The preacher’s extended family.

You have heard jokes about the stereotypic preacher with incorrigible kids lurking in the shadows or waiting out church services in the parking
lot. Perpetual troublemakers who would prefer being anywhere but in church and anything but the son or daughter of the man in the pulpit.

That's not how it has been for us. Ditto the spouses and grandchildren.

Each of us has willingly drawn ourselves into the congregation that is Grace Community Church, participating in worship and volunteering for special places of service where we have been called. Our own walk with Christ has been profoundly informed by our dad’s expository approach to preaching, unpacking the Word of God verse by verse.

As little ones, sitting with our mother, her open Bible and notebook reminding us what a student acted like, we read along. We listened. We took notes. As John and Patricia MacArthur’s children, truth poured over us, shaping our understanding of God from the days when our feet could not reach the floor. When the time was right, we were led to kneel before a holy God and receive the gift of His salvation for ourselves.

In addition to our father’s teaching gift in the pulpit, we have also been instructed and inspired by his prayers. Every Sunday at Grace Community Church, an important part of each worship service is the pastoral prayer. When the time comes for this to take place, our dad, the shepherd, steps toward the pulpit as though he’s approaching the Throne of Grace. In fact, this is exactly what he is doing.

Those gathered in the sanctuary pray along silently as our dad prays with deep respect and tenderness. They quietly come alongside the man in the pulpit as he thanks God for His grace and the incomprehensible gift of Jesus. Solid theology is forged into these people as their pastor prays.

This is no casual exchange, and they know it.

For us who lived in the John and Patricia MacArthur home, the pulpit wasn’t the only place that we heard our dad pray. Nearly every morning of our growing-up years, breakfast together was nearly sacramental. The morning meal our mom had painstakingly prepared was thoughtfully laid before us. No hasty bagel or splash of juice at our house. Then dad usually read a portion from Scripture and often a few paragraphs from a classic devotional. And then he would pray.

Even when we were very young, we listened attentively to our dad speak
to his heavenly Father. We listened and we learned of God’s grace through these humble prayers. And we began to understand who Jesus is and what He had done for us.

Our theology was shaped by the words our dad prayed.

Sitting around the kitchen table, we heard dad’s words of gratitude for the privilege of being adopted into God’s family. We heard expressions of his love for the Bible and the church around the world and for the people who were the congregational family at Grace Church. His transparency disclosed his own disappointments, and his faith unpacked his sheer confidence in God’s providence.

In his prayers, our dad was carrying our family into the holy presence of the sovereign God of the universe.

This was no casual exchange, and we knew it.

You may have heard our dad on the radio or seen him standing in the pulpit. For our entire lifetimes, however, we have known and watched him when the microphone was unplugged all week long between Sundays. We have witnessed his tenderness with our mother, his confident discipline with us when we were disobedient or defiant adolescents. We have heard his enthusiastic cheers from the stands from T-ball to professional sports. And we have been the recipients of his affirming words and tender affection. His generosity with his calendar and resources are legendary.

By God’s grace, our dad has been what he preaches.

We have seen the discipline of his pastoral study of God’s Word, during which he remains focused for countless hours in preparation of opening and explaining the Scriptures to us and others.

And we have heard him pray.

A few years ago, a friend approached us and asked what we thought about our dad’s prayers being transcribed and published so others could read them. We felt an immediate mix of emotions. We agreed these prayers
should be put in print—and we had our children's children in mind here—but we hesitated, because we suspected that our dad would resist. We knew his thoughts regarding the sacredness and propriety of a person's personal dialogue with the Father.

So we talked it over with him. As we anticipated, dad pushed back, not enthusiastic about memorializing something so intimate. Respectfully, we asked him to pray about it and consider the loss for those who would never hear or read these prayers if they were not published. We encouraged him to allow his prayers to be available in print—not only for our own posterity but as a legacy for those of his friends around the world who would be instructed and inspired by them.

After some time, dad finally agreed…with one caveat. He asked that his children write this introductory note to the book and explain that it was our desire that he put his prayers in black and white.

As you open this book and begin to read and to experience these prayers, you will understand what we have said here about these words expressed to a sovereign God from the heart of one of His servants. These are the prayers of a warrior for Truth. For our family, these are the prayers of our dad, a gentleman who would never be presumptuous in any way. He continues his ministry to all of us from a position of humility and thanksgiving as he stands before a holy God.

And now we are pleased to be able to share these prayers with you. Because they were delivered to thousands of worshipers simultaneously by way of a microphone, they have been adapted somewhat to enhance the experience of reading them in your personal time of devotions. We hope that you'll be encouraged—and transformed—in your own time before the Throne of Grace, just as we have.

God bless you,
Matthew MacArthur
Marcy Gwinn
Mark MacArthur
Melinda Welch
PRAYERS ON WORSHIP AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
ADORING OUR ADVOCATE UNRESERVEDLY

1 John 2:1-19

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven...
you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

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**OUR GRACIOUS GOD,** we thank You for our heavenly Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, whose death on the cross made propitiation for all our sins—perfectly satisfying every demand of Your holy justice.

It is He who brought us
out of guilt and into forgiveness,
out of darkness into light,
out of our rebellion and into Your love,
out of death and into life.

He delivered us from this evil world, into Your glorious kingdom.
How we praise You for the wonder of Your love in Jesus Christ!
We thank You for sending Your Son, the Incarnate One,
who was despised, rejected, beaten, mocked, and crucified—
a ll in order to atone for our sin.

In Him Your love has outloved all other loves.
Your mercy extends beyond comprehension to sinners
with complete and permanent forgiveness of our sins
through faith in Jesus Christ.
We therefore long to love You with a love like Yours.
We know that is not possible, so with the apostle Peter
we plead that You would know our hearts, knowing we truly love You
in spite of what it often looks like.

Our hearts are too much like stone; we ask that
You melt them with Your grace.
Our private lives are too often gated and locked as if we could shut You out
and thereby do what we want.
Help us throw open the door and lose the key! May Your will rule our lives.

We worship You, Father, for Your great love and the gift of Jesus Christ,
Your only-begotten Son, which is to say God the Son.
We praise You, Lord Jesus, for the wondrous gift of salvation
You provided for us.
We adore You, blessed Spirit, for revealing to us the truth of the gospel
and for making our hearts Your dwelling place.
Heavenly Father, in us may Your Son see the fruit
of His soul’s anguish and be glad.
Bring us away from all that we falsely trust,
and teach us to rest only in Him.
Never let us be calloused to the astonishing greatness of the gift of salvation.
May we pursue sanctification—ever-increasing
holiness—with all our might!

1. John 21:15-17
2. Isaiah 53:10-11
Lord Jesus, Master, Redeemer, Savior, take possession of every part of our lives—Yours by right through purchase.
- Sanctify every faculty.
- Fill our hearts with hope.
- May we flee the many temptations that relentlessly hound us and mortify the sins that continually plague us.
- May there be no hypocrisy in us.
- Help us trust You in the hour of distress.
- Protect us when evildoers pursue us.
- And deliver us from the evil of this present world.

Dear Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow, we confess that You alone are the giver of every good and perfect gift, and You have given us so many things, richly supplying us with things to enjoy.

And we are reminded by the passage we have just read that the greatest gift of all is Your Son, Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His very life in order that we might be freed from sin’s bondage.

Fill our hearts with gratitude, and may our lives reflect overflowing thankfulness so that all who see may honor You.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

1. James 1:17
2. 1 Timothy 6:17