

John MacArthur: Servant of the Word and Flock by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, 2011. (68 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Secular Study Versus Biblical Knowledge.

Tyndale wrote in 1530,

They have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture, until he be noselled [nursed] in heathen learning eight or ten years, and armed with false principles; with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of Scripture.

MacArthur was being made aware of the same danger. In his later words:

The mark of theological scholarship in some circles is no longer how well a man knows the Bible but how well he understands the speculations of the secular academic establishment. [page 23]

2. Mind Filled with the Truth of God.

MacArthur was to say, “I am grateful to God that since the beginning of my training, my mind has been filled with the truth of God. My mind is not the battleground of indecision about what is true and what is false, over things which ‘minister questions rather than godly edifying’ (1 Tim.1:4).” [page 23]

3. The Gospel Alone Abolishes Racial Division.

The experiences in Mississippi confirmed the truth to John that he already knew: the gospel alone should abolish the racial division, and he saw something of its power in the numbers of young people who were converted; some of them were to train for full-time Christian service. [page 27]

4. Life Is the Result of Inner Attitudes.

He learned that life is more important than organization, and life is the result of inner attitudes. So the first need was for hearts moved by God through Scripture, not for new methods or programs:

The goal of a pastor and the leaders of a church should be to generate proper spiritual attitudes in the hearts of the people. They can’t just say, ‘You need to do this, and you need to do that.’ They must generate the spiritual attitudes that will motivate the people to right behavior ... If the right kind of spiritual attitudes are present in a church, the structure will take care of itself, because Spirit-controlled people are going to do Spirit-led things. [page 34]

5. A Healthy Church Community.

One effect of God-anointed preaching is that a congregation will not remain simply listeners. Wherever there is real benefit from the Word of God, there will be people moved to love and reach out to others. In a healthy church community Christian activity will be spontaneous. [page 34]

6. Ministry for Every Believer.

The church should emphasize ministry for every individual believer. Church leadership shouldn't recruit their members to do something out of legal obligation that they are not really motivated or gifted to do. Rather, the leadership should develop its members along the lines that the Spirit has gifted them. Aggressive, active, ministering people make a successful church. [page 35]

7. Sun Valley's Congregation Has a Passion for God's Word.

In the words of a later observer, Phil Johnson, the distinguishing characteristic of the congregation at Sun Valley became 'a fervent passion to understand and obey the Word of God.' [page 37]

8. The Holy Spirit Does Great Things When Whole Church Is Aroused to Sacred Energy.

Spurgeon's words: 'Great things are done by the Holy Spirit when a whole church is aroused to sacred energy; then there are hundreds of testimonies instead of one, and these strengthen each other.' [page 37]

9. The Church Is a Supernatural Church.

If one desires to be faithful to Christ and His Word, there is no technique or system that will guarantee a large church. The church is a supernatural work. I must ascribe our church's numerical and spiritual growth to the will of our sovereign God. We are content to focus on aggressive biblical ministry and leave it to the Lord to add to His church (Acts 2:47). Our task is to be faithful. [page 40]

10. Believing the Best about Others.

Perhaps a trait in his make-up, noticed by a later associate pastor, is relevant: 'You were always quick to believe the best about people—and the last to believe anything negative—sometimes even to a fault. Trouble erupted suddenly at a Tuesday morning staff meeting. MacArthur opened the meeting, as he often did, by expressing his appreciation for their help and friendship, only to be stopped dead by the words, 'If you think we are your friends you have another thing coming!' He then found that the speaker was part of a mutiny. The experience shocked and devastated him. It was not so much the personal criticism that hurt, but the realization that there was disloyalty to

the ministry at the level of the leadership. Those he had taken to be his friends, whom he personally mentored, were undermining him behind his back. Such experiences, sadly, are not unknown in Christian work. [pages 47-48]

11. Serving with Opposition.

MacArthur was once asked, 'Are there special difficulties you have had to surmount and overcome?' He responded, 'There's a lot of pain in ministry', and then spoke of the legal battle they had passed through. He also referred to 'two or three other times' when he was tempted to leave the church, 'when even the prospect of digging ditches for a living had a certain appeal'. Perhaps he was momentarily forgetting the words of Campbell Morgan he liked to quote, 'If you have no opposition in the place you are serving, then you're serving in the wrong place.' [page 53]

12. The Nature of Christian Warfare.

The trials I have sought to describe undoubtedly strengthened his understanding of the nature of the Christian warfare and of the only effective response. Of course, critical men and women do not know that they are being used by the powers of evil. The weapons those powers employ

consist of lies of all kinds—elaborate lies, massive philosophical lies, evil lies that appeal to humanity's fallen sinfulness, lies that inflate human pride, and lies that closely resemble the truth. Our weapon is the simple truth of Christ as revealed in His Word.

[page 53]

13. MacArthur's Father's Encouragement.

Jack MacArthur's encouragement to his son took different forms. Referring to the example of his father's study habits, John wrote in 1997:

'He was—and still is—an insatiable reader, a non-stop studier, and a life-long learner committed to enlarging his mind with important, stimulating books. Even now it's not uncommon for him to send me a package in the mail—several books along with orders to read them and give a full report on what I think.'

The debt John owed to his father in this regard is noted in the dedication of his *Commentary on Hebrews* (1983),

With loving gratitude to my father, Dr. Jack MacArthur, who gave me the legacy of loving books and challenged me by his example to make use of commentaries.

[page 58]

14. Study to Know God.

Even if I never preach another sermon, I would thank God every day of my life for the sanctifying grace that has come to me through the daily study of His precious Word. Pastors should study to know God, not just to make sermons. For me, the greatest joy of preaching comes not in the final step, proclamation, but in the transformation of my own life. [page 61]

15. Handling the Sword of the Spirit

The authority of Scripture is no less evident in the way a preacher handles the Word of God in public. The nature of Scripture as revelation from God must control the manner in which it is taught. There is something seriously wrong when a preacher thinks he must not put Scripture at the forefront of his message lest his hearers are 'put off'. It is no less wrong when a man thinks the best way to gain a hearing is to sprinkle the message with appealing stories and humour. A man who cannot get attention without these things, MacArthur would say, does not know what it means to handle the sword of the Spirit. [page 62]

16. The Power of God's Word Is More Effective.

You have to believe that the power of God's Word will be more effective than any human drama or communication gimmick. Nothing is as dramatic as the explosion of truth on the mind of a believer through powerful preaching. [page 63]

17. Sermons Need Doctrine.

It is sometimes asked where the vogue for 'expository preaching' resurfaced in the twentieth century. Some have traced it to Martyn Lloyd-Jones. MacArthur, however, was listening to his father treat Scripture in a consecutive way long before he ever read anything by Lloyd-Jones; and he tells us that the examples his father followed were G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) and W. A. Criswell (1909-2002). There was to be, however, a growing difference between the older, Morgan-type exposition and MacArthur's. In his case, as with Lloyd-Jones, the devotional thought is grounded on the bringing out of clear doctrinal principles. Exposition needs to lead hearers to doctrinal certainties. MacArthur's definition of a strong congregation is a congregation that has learned to 'speak with one voice on essential doctrinal matters'. A sermon without doctrine does not build strong Christians. [page 64]

18. Bible Exposition Requires Time.

He comments that those who only preach short sermons miss this point: 'I am convinced that biblical exposition requires at least forty minutes ... Rarely, does a man preaching twenty-five to thirty minutes do doctrinal exposition. *Expository Preaching*

p. 339. He would not say this, however, without adding the caution that length is not the main feature of good preaching. [page 64]

19. The Supernatural Message of Everlasting Life.

Church history is strewn with examples of those who thought they could mould the message for their own time – but ended by corrupting the truth ... If church history teaches us anything, it is that different times do not require different messages. Those who preach anything other than the unadulterated gospel forfeit the power of God in their ministries.

Nothing is wrong with the message ... If they don't hear the truth, cool music won't help. If they don't see the light, power-point won't help. If they don't like the message, drama and video won't help. They're blind and dead. Our task is to go on preaching not ourselves, we carry a supernatural message of everlasting life. [page 66]

20. Scripture Controlling Preaching.

Wherever Scripture controls preaching, it means there will be dependence on the power of God in addressing the conscience of man in sin. That is the real point of contact (Romans 2:14-15). Faithful preaching means addressing 'every man's conscience in the sight of God' (2 Cor. 4:2). [page 67]

21. Finney's & Darby's Doctrines.

Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) carried the deviation much further than Wesley by teaching that man does not have a fallen *nature* at all. He taught that faith is fundamentally a human decision and that salvation is secured by the sinner's movement toward God and the gospel. This belief was almost universally accepted in Fundamentalism, and it was compounded by an error that came from another quarter. The scheme of unfulfilled prophecy that became accepted in Fundamentalism was Dispensationalism. This scheme believed that Scripture is to be understood as distinguishing sharply between 'law' (Old Testament) and 'grace' (New Testament). Jesus taught 'the law' because the new dispensation of the 'the church age' had not yet begun, but for us who now belong to a new dispensation 'the law' has no place. J. N. Darby, Scofield's chief mentor, taught that Christ's preaching to the Jews—as in the Sermon on the Mount—was no guide for preachers today; Darby held it was a *different* message because the Jews lived in 'the kingdom age'. Christians are now in 'the church age' which began after the Jews rejected 'the kingdom'. Whereas in the 'kingdom age' the message was 'law', in the church age it is 'grace', and these two things, it was claimed, stand opposed to one another. The law requires 'works'; the gospel is all grace. So an omission of the law of God—the Ten Commandments—became endemic in evangelism, and the unforeseen consequences were vast. If sin is 'transgression of the law', and if it is 'by the law' that the real nature of sin becomes known (1 John 3:4;

Romans 7:7), then inevitably, where this is omitted, the seriousness of what it means to be an unregenerate sinner is going to be lost. When that happens, instead of pressing for conviction of sin and the fear of God, evangelistic preaching gives the main attention to encouraging sinners to make ‘a decision for Christ’. In other words, everything necessary for conversion is reduced to the human choice, with the time of conversion determined by man. Even the work of God in regeneration is made a consequence of man’s decision. [pages 71-72]

22. Shepherd’s Conferences.

The kind of pastors’ conferences that John wanted to encourage can be seen in this note he wrote on objectives:

1. Renew the flame of pastoral ministry.
2. Give them a greater desire for the ministry which they have received from God.
3. Help them to forget themselves so that they may exercise a more efficient ministry.
4. How to discern leadership within the church.

His headings for what he was to say at one of these conferences further shows his intention:

Humility and teachableness—Perseverance in the face of discouragement—Devotion and loyalty to God, not the church—It is God’s church—Nourish a sense of thankfulness and satisfaction for what they already have. [pages 84-85]

23. A Vision for Master’s Seminary.

In a Grace to You letter of September 1986, MacArthur wrote of the features that were his vision for the new seminary. They included:

1. A faculty committed to nurture, not just to lecture.
 2. A commitment to small-group discipling relationships between students and faculty members.
 3. A focus on high-quality personal, educational, and ministerial development.
 4. The cultivation of an attitude of worship and spiritual devotion.
 5. An expositional curriculum and ministry model.
 6. An internship program that complements the student’s program of study.
 7. A program designed to culminate in ordination for ministry.
 8. A placement ministry committed to assisting each graduate in the early years of ministry.
 9. A positive outlook focusing on biblical certainties and God’s grace rather than critical theories or reactions.
 10. A chapel program carefully structured for specific spiritual goals related to Christian living and ministry.
 11. The cultivation of a worldwide vision through involvement in evangelism and missions.
 12. A discipling ministry available for each seminarian’s wife and family.
 13. Effective training in leadership attitudes and skills.
- [page 87]

24. Working alongside the Church.

Our role is not to supplant the local church's ministry, but rather to work alongside the church, providing another resource for those hungry for the truth of God's Word. Media ministries can never substitute for involvement in a biblical church, group Bible study, or interaction with a teacher. [page 88]

25. Ten Reasons for Being a Pastor.

An article he wrote on 'Ten Reasons I am a Pastor' underlined why he put his calling first. The reasons included the following:

The church is the only institution Christ promised to build and bless . . . The corporate functions of the body all take place in the church . . . I can be consumed with study and communion with God. There's a public side to me that the congregation sees, but there's a private side to me that only God knows. While I might preach three hours a week, I study thirty. And those hours spent each week in God's presence are a high and holy privilege . . . I am directly responsible to God for the lives of the people He has given me to shepherd. As a radio teacher, I'm not as personally accountable for how people apply God's Word. But as the pastor-teacher of a congregation, I have a relationship with my people like that of a shepherd and his sheep. I watch over their souls as one 'who will give an account' (Hebrews 13:17) . . . I share the joy of parents over the birth of a child, as well as the pain of children over the death of a mother or father. I help celebrate a wedding; I also offer comfort at a funeral . . . I feel loved, appreciated, needed, trusted, admired—all a result of being an instrument God has used in the spiritual progress of His people. I know my people pray for me and care deeply about me . . . The reward of being a pastor far surpasses any frustration I ever feel in ministry. And so I say with the apostle Paul, 'I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3:14) [pages 89-90]

26. The World Was Changed in the Reformation through God's Word.

Martin Luther wrote to John von Staupitz in 1522 about the reformation: 'Christ is doing this without us, of course, without the help of a human hand, solely through the Word.'

27. 'Accepting Christ' versus a Changed Heart.

MacArthur's case was that current teaching had

subtly changed the thrust of the gospel. Instead of exhorting sinners to repent, evangelicalism in our society asks the unsaved to 'accept Christ'. That makes sinners sovereign and puts Christ at their disposal . . . This modified gospel depicts conversion as a 'decision for Christ' rather than a life-transforming

change of heart involving genuine faith, repentance, surrender, and rebirth unto newness of life. [page 113]

28. Genuine Salvation.

Any “salvation” that does not alter a lifestyle of sin and transform the heart of the sinner is not a genuine salvation. [page 114]

29. Salvation Is for People Who Hate Their Sin.

In the extensive controversy on this subject the issue was often confused. As MacArthur observed, an age used to soundbites and little theology was poorly placed to understand what was at the heart of this issue. Some, who were ignoring that conversion entails more than a changed legal standing before God in justification, thought he was jeopardizing the truth of justification by faith alone. They failed to teach that grace secures a decisive break from sin, demonstrated by repentance and new obedience. “True saving faith is a *repentant* faith in Jesus Christ, and that produces good works.

What is more, when an individual is savingly convicted of sin, he or she desires more than forgiveness; such a person wants salvation from sinfulness; he is ready to pray, ‘Save me from myself!

Salvation is for people who hate their sin. It is for individuals who understand that they have lived in rebellion against a holy God. It is for those who want to turn around, to live for God’s glory. [pages 114-115]

30. Ongoing Work of Grace in the Christian’s Life.

True grace is more than just a giant freebie, opening the door to heaven in the sweet by and by, but leaving you to wallow in sin in the bitter here and now. Grace is Good presently at work in our lives. By grace ‘we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them’ (Eph. 2:10) . . . That ongoing work of grace in the Christian’s life is as much a certainty as justification, glorification, or any other aspect of God’s redeeming work. [page 117]

31. Scripture, not Experience, Is the Test.

‘I sincerely thank God for the many charismatics who sincerely love the Lord and want to obey Him.’ But he did not regard that sentiment as justification for saying nothing on the issues. For a time he seemed to be largely alone in his conviction that the new teaching was threatening evangelicalism through the back door. His case was that the enthusiasm for revelatory prophecies, and for apostles today, ignored the uniqueness and sufficiency of Scripture. To the argument that the movement was divinely authenticated by the renewal of miraculous gifts, he replied that Scripture, and not

alleged experiences, is the test. He pointed out many contemporary ‘prophesies’ had been proven false by the test provided in Scripture (Deut. 18:21-22). Yet this was brushed aside by the promoters of the Charismatic movement. [page 120]

32. Experiences Grow Out of What We Believe.

Lifeless, dry orthodoxy is the inevitable result of isolating objective truth from vibrant experience. But the answer to dead orthodoxy is not to build a theology on experience. Genuine experience must grow out of sound doctrine. We are not to base what we believe on what we have experienced. The reverse is true. Our experiences will grow out of what we believe.

The Holy Spirit is working mightily in churches today, but not in the way most charismatics think. The Holy Spirit’s role is to empower us as we preach, teach, write, talk, witness, think, serve, and live. He does lead us into God’s truth and direct us into God’s will for our lives. But He does it through God’s Word, never apart from it . . . to use phrases such as ‘God spoke to me’, or ‘This was not my idea; the Lord gave it to me’, or ‘These aren’t my words, but the message I received from the Lord’, confuses the issue of the Spirit’s direction in believer’s lives today. [page 121]

33. Passion for the Truth Is Ceasing.

To be passionate about truth was ceasing to be a mark of Christian character. A. W. Tozer had noted this ethos before his death in 1963:

The fashion now is to tolerate anything lest we get the reputation of being intolerant. The tender-minded saints cannot bear to see Agag slain, so they choose rather to sacrifice the health of the church for years to come by sparing error and evil; and this they do in the name of Christian love. [page 125]

34. Doctrine Forms the Belief System that Controls and Compels Behavior.

Doctrine is not the exclusive domain of seminary professors. All true Christians must be concerned with understanding sound doctrine . . . Doctrine forms the belief system that controls and compels behavior.

‘It is exceedingly difficult in these times’, wrote Spurgeon, ‘to preserve one’s fidelity towards God and one’s fraternity among men. Should not the former be preferred to the later if both cannot be maintained? We think so. To which quotation John MacArthur adds another from the same preacher:

What have you and I to do with maintaining our influence and position at the expense of truth? It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good . . . Your duty is to do the right: consequences are with God. [pages 126-127]

35. Patricia MacArthur's Testimony.

Eighteen months after the accident Patricia MacArthur recorded her own testimony in speaking with Richard Mayhue:

The accident affirmed that our days are numbered and God is in charge. That is what I kept emphasizing to our daughter who was in the accident with me—1. that God is in control of our lives and, 2. that He is totally sovereign. Whatever He allows to come into our lives, He has a purpose for our good and His glory. And, 3. it made me realize how temporary this life on earth is.

People ask me, 'Why do you think God allowed this to happen?' or, 'What did you learn through it?' I've learned again that God is sovereign; He will go through any circumstances with us. The verse that kept going through my mind is, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee' (Isaiah 26:3). I used to sing that a lot in the morning. I know His salvation, and I have come to know His healing powers in a personal way. [page 140]

36. Books that Have Impacted John MacArthur's Life.

MacArthur was asked to list the books that had the greatest impact on his life. He named the following:

Arthur Bennett, e. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Banner of Truth, 1975).

Stephen Crannock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Klock & Klock, 1977).

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Inter-Varsity, 1973).

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Eerdmans, 1977).

Arthur Pink, *Spiritual Growth* (Baker, 1971).

John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Tyndale, 1967).

Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (Banner of Truth, 1975).

Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Banner of Truth, 1970). [page 145].

37. Being a Living Sacrifice.

As I have studied God's Word and experienced both the exhilaration of spiritual victory and the discouragement of failure, I'm convinced the key to powerful living is not getting more from God. The key is just the opposite. The moment we stop making demands on Him and offer ourselves as a living sacrifice is the moment we begin to

please Him . . . From my own experience I know that being a living sacrifice is not an easy path. But sacrifice is absolutely necessary if we are ever to know the fullness of God's blessing and render to Him the service He is due. [page 153]

38. Disagreement with Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT).

In a Grace to You letter of June 1994, MacArthur expressed his disagreement with [Evangelicals and Catholics Together] (ECT), and set forth the Roman Catholic teaching clearly. The promoters of ECT proceeded on the basis that evangelicals and Catholics are equally to be regarded as Christians, but what makes a person a Christian was necessarily left unstated—necessarily because, according to Catholic belief, regeneration rested on the foundational Roman Catholic error, namely that Scripture alone is not to be regarded as the one source of saving revelation: 'Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.'

MacArthur concluded, 'While there are some matters of our faith that are open to discussion—issues that many godly men disagree on—the means of salvation is not one of them.' He was taking this up, he said, 'out of love for Christ and His church.' [page 166]

39. Books Require a Response from the Mind.

Unlike television, books, freeze thoughts on the printed page, forcing us to argue, and judge ideas using our active, engaged minds. Books are permanent, requiring a response from the mind. they help us raise our thoughts and think outside ourselves and our everyday lives. It's no accident God's chosen vehicle for his special revelation was a book! [page 170]

40. Applied Discipleship.

It is vitally important, but it must be kept in proper biblical perspective. The right kind of theological training is applied discipleship, not merely academic classroom exercises. That is why our seminary is located on our church campus, and I've always sought to keep theological training in the context of church life. The purpose of theological training is to make us better disciples and more effective ministers, not to gain academic respectability in the eyes of the world. [page 170]

41. Salvation Is the Church's Mandate.

Not the reformation of culture but the salvation of men and women is the church's mandate. But too many churches lacked sufficient hold on truth to fulfill such a calling. They lacked the faith to assert that from Scripture

we can understand the ebb and flow of life better than all the educators, philosophers, politicians and social pundits combined . . . A look at the trends sweeping today's churches demonstrates just how small a god we've fashioned. How else can we explain the boom in Christian psychology, flashy, Las Vegas-style worship services, and high-tech church growth seminars? [pages 197-198]

42. People Being Convinced by Scripture, not People.

John MacArthur (as Martyn Lloyd-Jones) does not wave the labels 'Calvinist' or 'Reformed'. He wants people to be convinced by Scripture itself, not by any other authorities:

I normally prefer to avoid using the term Calvinism because it often provokes too much emotion and too many misconceptions to be useful if the goal is real understanding rather than vigorous debate.' [pages 206-207]

43. Reformational Theology.

Instead he usually uses the term 'the doctrines of grace'. But sometimes the better-known term is unavoidable, as when in 2008 *Grace to You* entitled his two-part series on these doctrines 'Hot Button Questions on Calvinism'. After endorsing a reprint of *The Five Points of Calvinism* in 2004, he was careful to add, 'I believe them, not because of their historical pedigree, but because that is what Scripture teaches.' In the same book he repeated what he said in 1997: 'The Spirit of God is moving the church to re-establish the glorious high ground of sovereign grace in salvation. It was a conviction shared by his friends. In October 2003, when Mark Dever asked R.C. Sproul to name 'the things you most appreciate about the current scene in American evangelicalism', the Presbyterian preacher replied, 'The recovery of interest in Puritanism, the recovery of concern for reformational theology.' [page 207]

44. Defending the Gospel and Doctrine.

When I came out of Seminary, I really did not expect to fight the battles I have fought. I never thought I would spend most of my life on the broader evangelical front defending the gospel and sound doctrine. [page 209]

45. Time for Quiet Gratitude.

Every genuine work of God is incapable of being adequately explained on the human level. There is mystery in it. Truth 'springs from the earth' independently of what may be happening elsewhere. In so far as a new unity has come into being today—as we believe it has—it has not come from meetings or organizations. A true revival of God-centered Christianity has always had with it the biblical caution not to be called masters, and to cease from man. While recommending Hansen's survey, Don Carson had good reason to add:

This is not the time for Reformed triumphalism. It is the time for quiet gratitude to God and earnest intercessory prayer, with tears, that what has begun well will flourish beyond all human expectation. [pages 210-211]

46. In the Presence of God, There is Godly Fear.

For too long, in MacArthur's words, evangelical circles have been better at merriment than mourning. This is no argument against joy and song, but where the presence of God is felt there is also godly fear. When the Spirit of God is poured out men have better understood the text: 'The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him' (Habakkuk 2:20). [page 212]

47. MacArthur Explains Scripture Well.

MacArthur has an amazing ability to explain Scripture by Scripture. [page 220]

48. Scripture Is Reliable.

Defending the accuracy of the Bible seems to interest MacArthur not at all. This basic assumption that the text of Scripture is reliable is part of the foundation of his effectiveness as an interpreter. [page 220]

49. Not a Healing Ministry in Church Today.

When MacArthur argues that the purpose of the miracles was to make clear that Jesus was the Christ, he means we should not therefore expect this kind of healing ministry in the church today. It had its function in New Testament times but, since we have the inspired witness to establish both the true divinity and the true humanity of Christ, miracles are no longer necessary. [page 221]

50. Confidence in Scripture.

One of the greatest strengths of MacArthur's preaching ministry is his complete confidence in the text. [page 221]

51. High Quality Books Are Crucial in Life.

The role high-quality books play in our lives is absolutely critical. So why do so many Christians find it difficult to apply themselves to books? A.W Tozer said that 'to enjoy a great religious book requires a degree of consecration to God and detachment from the world that few modern Christians have.' While it takes great determination to form habits and cultivate our minds through books, even greater are the rewards you'll see in your thought patterns and spiritual growth. When it comes to how we spend our spare moments, have we passively allowed the world to squeeze us into its mold? What can we do today to change that? [page 224]

52. Graces Better than Gifts.

For real usefulness graces are better than gifts. As the man is, so is his work. If we would do better, we must be better. Such was Spurgeon's conviction, and it is also MacArthur's: 'A leader's effectiveness is always bound up in his character. It is the pastor's example that ultimately lends credibility to his message.' [page 225]

53. Church and 'Entertainment'

'Many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn people of its existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. when the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes.' – Charles H. Spurgeon [page 226]

54. Spurgeon Realized Ministry Depended on His Presence.

At times it was a great burden for Spurgeon to realize not only that thousands looked for the help of his ministry, but that the very livelihood of Christian workers and missionaries, and the support of several agencies, all depended on his presence. If on occasions, his friends saw him depressed, it was commonly in connection with this burden. [page 226]

55. God's Work Is Not Dependent of Those He Chooses to Employ.

All lasting work is truly the work of God Himself. Christ's work will all be fulfilled, and it is in no way dependent on the instruments He chooses to employ. The text Susannah Surgeon chose for her husband's 'Funeral Sermon', could not have been more suitable: 'For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep' (Acts 13:36). When the service of one man is done, the work of God is certain to go on. [page 226]

56. The Future of Ministry.

'Do you have any fear about the future of this ministry?'

None whatsoever! God has supported it through times when we did not believe it could survive. God sustains what He wills, and we have seen His hand. My concern is to be a man of spiritual integrity, to have a ministry of spiritual integrity, and simply to teach the Bible under the promise that God blesses His own Word. To what extent He blesses, it fully satisfies me. I say this all the time, as long as God wants to sustain this ministry we will rejoice in that. And when He no longer needs it, will rejoice in whatever other ministry takes its place. [page 227]

57. Diligence in John MacArthur.

By temperament and by grace, diligence is evident in John MacArthur to an uncommon degree. Commitment to hard work marks his life. [page 229]

58. Standing Fast in the Lord.

The work of these institutions [Master's College and Master's Seminary], and of Grace to You, is never far from his thoughts. Their concerns are his concerns, and at times not without anxieties. He knows something of the feeling Paul expressed in the words, 'For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 3:8). [page 230]

59. Perseverance, Grace, and Blessing.

In addition to this, there are the long hours spent alone on the preparations of books that have served so many. Thirty hours a week in his study has remained normal. Without diligence all this would have been impossible. It is perseverance, conjoined with grace, that brings blessing. 'The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance' (Proverbs 21:5). 'Whosoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (2 Corinthians 9:6). [page 230]

60. Tenderness and Grace with People.

There is another characteristic of MacArthur's personality which has been essential to his ministry, namely, his tenderness and graciousness in dealing with people. He does not hold himself aloof. That is not to say that, in a congregation of several thousand people, he is readily available to all. Were that the case his ministry could never be sustained. He has safeguards against interruptions, and cannot simply pass the time of day with anyone who has the time to talk. But every Sunday he is available at the front after the service to speak to all who wish; no one is left with problems unattended; and those who do speak with him are universally met with kindness and consideration. Despite the length of the queue below the pulpit, each individual has his full and patient attention. [pages 232-233]

61. Love for Jesus Christ Secures Result.

But it is not organization that secures the result. It is love for the Saviour and love for one who speaks in His name. [page 234]

62. Humility.

Humility is remembering what we are before God, owing everything to his grace: 'Humility is not a necessary human work to make us worthy, but a necessary divine work to make us see that we are unworthy and cannot change our condition before God.' 'The mark of a mature life is not sinlessness, which is reserved for heaven, but growing awareness of sinfulness.' 'The believer sees himself before God: poor,

sorrowful, meek, hungry.’ The Christian ought to have no problem in seeing that Paul was not referring to a former condition and a past experience when he speaks of himself as a ‘wretched man’. [page 235]

63. Humility and Leadership.

It is the practical consequences of humility that are visible. In MacArthur it includes willingness to esteem others, and to listen to opinions that differ from his own. While he preaches with boldness and certainty, in his personal life he has no air of infallibility and knows that such attitude cannot consist with ‘lowliness of mind’. With all Christians, he remains a pupil in the school of Christ. He writes:

The fruits of true, Christlike leadership are humility, tenderness, self-sacrifice, and affection for the sheep. A good shepherd embodies what every leader in the church should strive to be: personal, gentle, hands-on, and self-giving . . .

Overbearing autocrats who seem incapable of empathy or kindness are not fit leaders at all. The key to effective leadership has very little to do with wielding authority and much to do with giving oneself. [page 236]

64. Appearance of Wealth and Its Message.

Pennington gives the following story of something that happened on one occasion when he was travelling with John and Patricia for a preaching service in Denver. On arriving at the airport, it was necessary to hire a car to take them to the church. But no vehicle was available other than an expensive Cadillac. With no alternative, they were obliged to take it.

You were so concerned about the message that it would send, and it was so contrary to your nature, that you stopped the car several blocks from the church. And you, Patricia, and I walked the rest of the way to the church in the cold. I’m sure the people that night wondered why the MacArthurs were walking to church. [pages 236-237]

65. Size of Speaking Engagement Does Not Matter.

That same characteristic enters into his acceptance of speaking engagements. Accustomed to addressing large numbers, the size of the number does not determine where he will speak. [page 237]

66. The Word of God Is Preeminent.

What humility means for MacArthur brings us back to the fundamental principle of his ministry: all success lies in the Word of God. [page 237]

67. Scripture Is All Sufficient.

As a young man John MacArthur made a commitment to study the Word of God. He had no idea then what that commitment would mean, but he looks back on it now as 'the most profound choice I ever made'. It led him to the proclamation which can affirm, 'We believe, and therefore speak' (2 Corinthians 4:13). From this came the shepherding of the people of God and a personal life of trust in God. He has taught that the sufficiency of Scripture means that no situation can arise in which its light is not relevant. No need is unmet where its directions and promises are followed. 'All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. But the word of the Lord endures forever' (1 Peter 1:24,35). [page 239]

68. No Substitute for Scripture.

God's Word is bold, honest, and direct, cutting across the grain of popular culture. It penetrates hearts, illuminates minds, and transforms lives. Our circumstances and preferences don't inform or liven up the Bible, dictate its meaning or determine how it applies to our lives. It is eternal truth, living and active, and it cuts to the heart of every issue. Its meaning is fixed, and applicable to everyone, everywhere. Scripture speaks with absolute authority as it guides believers, confronts error, and brings clarity to even the most confusing theological questions.

There's simply no substitute for Scripture. Nothing else is as trustworthy and steadfast as the Word of God. Church tradition changes over time. Authors and pastors make mistakes. Even your own conscience can be wrong. All believers must be like the Bereans Paul describes in Acts 17:11, measuring everything we hear, read, and see against the perfect, unchanging standard of the Bible. The authority and power of God's Word is unshakeable and unforgettable. [pages 239-240]