



## *West Suffolk Epistle*



Volume 12 Issue 8

*West Suffolk Baptist Church*

August 2025

## *Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

### *How Should We Pray?*

According to Jesus, there are two big no-no's when it comes to how we pray: don't be like the hypocrites, and don't be like the pagans. **First**, then, Jesus does not want us to be like hypocrites when we pray:

*When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:5–6)*

Let's make sure we understand the word *hypocrite*. The Greek word *hypokrites* means "play actor." As a negative label, it means someone who puts on a mask and plays a part, someone who pretends to be something he is not. And that's very much the meaning of our English word *hypocrite*. Hypocrites profess to believe one thing but actually live a completely different way. A well-known vegetarian who eats bacon every night, a loud opponent of the tobacco industry who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day, a champion of family values who sleeps with prostitutes—these are hypocrites. They pretend to be what they are not. And specifically, their pretense is for the applause and esteem of others.

Too often, Christians think of hypocrites as people who do one thing but feel another. But that's not hypocrisy. Hypocrites publicize one set of beliefs but live by a different set of beliefs. When you come to church but don't feel like it, that's more like faithfulness. When you do the right thing in your marriage even when you don't feel much in love, that's fidelity. I've heard too many times, "Pastor, I would be a hypocrite to stay in this marriage because I'm not in love anymore." Or, "I would be a hypocrite to come to worship when I don't feel like worshipping." Or, "I would be a hypocrite to pray since I'm not sure what I believe and feel distant." Doing what is right when you don't feel like doing what is right is maturity. Professing one thing in public but living a different way in private is hypocrisy.

We can clearly see what Jesus has in mind from Matthew 6:1: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them." That's what hypocrites do. They don't really love God. They don't really love the kingdom. They don't really love the hallowing of God's name. They love to pray in the synagogues and at the street corners. They love to be seen by others. Obviously, it's not wrong to pray in public. Jesus isn't trying to overthrow corporate worship or corporate prayer (Matthew 18:19–20; Acts 4:24–30). When Jesus comes to 6:9 he assumes a corporate context for praying. He's warning against what is all too common in all of our hearts, perhaps in the pastor's heart more than in anyone else's: being religious in public more than being religious in private. Our prayer life should be like the iceberg in the ocean, with a great mass of spirituality under the surface that no one can see, rather than iceberg lettuce floating in the water, with all the vegetable on top and nothing under the surface. Our prayer life should be more than meets the eye.



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Jesus gives a warning for all of us, but especially for pastors, elders, deacons, women's Bible study leaders, small-group leaders, and anyone engaged in public ministry. Beware of religious professionalism. Beware of saying all the right things when out of your house and doing all the wrong things inside your house. You may be able to fool people for an hour or two once a week on Sunday, but you're not fooling God, and you're not fooling the people who live closest to you. Beware of this kind of religious professionalism. Don't pray in order to be seen by people.

Instead, Jesus says, close the door and pray to be seen by God. Do you see how prayer is a matter of faith? Do we really believe God hears us when we pray? Do we believe that God sees us? Do we believe that he will reward us? But when we pray in secret, do we believe that there is a God who sees in secret and is listening? That takes faith. If you live for the praise of men, that's all you'll get. Jesus says, "Don't be a fool. Don't live your life for earthly applause when you can get heavenly applause." Who cares if people out there think you're impressive when you can have God smile upon you? Do you believe that the God in secret sees you and will reward you?

A few months ago my wife and I got one of those baby monitors with a video camera. Now we know why our two-year-old sleeps so late in the morning. He plays in his crib for two hours after we put him to bed. It's amazing to see what's he's really doing when he doesn't know we are watching. Now imagine you're a little seven-year-old boy, and you love your father. You look up to your father. You know your father takes care of you. And your father has a camera on every wall to see what you are doing. Wouldn't that make a difference in how you live your life—not just in not doing the wrong things, but in how you do the right things? The boy doesn't need to feel pressure to measure up to his friends. He doesn't have to put on a show. He doesn't have to pretend to be what he's not. He just needs to be the same person wherever he goes, because wherever he goes, his Father is watching—not, in this instance, to punish, but to reward! Live for the one you can't see, not for the ones you can see. Do not be a hypocrite.

**Second,** Jesus does not want us to be like the pagans when we pray:

*And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:7–8)*

Jesus uses the word "Gentiles" in verse 7, but he isn't thinking of ethnicity. He's thinking of people who pray when they don't know the true God. Years ago I was in New York City with a group of Christians meeting with and listening to different religious leaders in the city. Among other things, we watched, with permission, from the sidelines, Hindu and Sikh rituals. I'm sure many people there were sincere in their beliefs, and we respect their right to worship as they see fit. We believe in religious liberty for all people. And yet from a Christian perspective, I could see exactly what Jesus was talking about. I saw young men performing religious rituals for the onlookers, and the young men seemed barely interested in what they were doing. They were lighting candles or spreading incense or praying prayers on behalf of others. The point was simply that the ritual got done. The words were spoken and the phrases were repeated.



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You can see the same thing all over the world. In most Muslim countries, what matters is simply that the rituals are performed. Just say the right words, facing the right way at the right time. Some Buddhist countries make use of prayer wheels. People put their prayers in a box and then spin it around again and again so that the prayers are multiplied. It's a ritual; it's mechanistic. According to Jesus, that's not at all what prayer is about. Prayer is not like voting online for your favorite player to make the Pro Bowl or the All-Star game, when fans press the button over and over to give their choice as many votes as possible.

To be sure, elsewhere Jesus urges us to pray and never give up (Luke 18:1-8), but persistent prayer is very different from babbling prayer. The word in Matthew 6:7 is *battaloeo*, which means to heap up empty phrases or to keep on babbling (NIV). The King James Version translates it as "vain repetitions." The Greek word is a kind of onomatopoeia, a word that sounds like what it is (oink, quack, splash, buzz). Stop the *bat-ta-lo-ge-o*, Jesus says. Don't be like the pagans who think that the mere act of uttering words is by itself pleasing to God. The goal in prayer is not the completion of some mechanical ritual.

Praying with empty phrases and meaningless words happens more often than we might think. It can happen in liturgical churches. Pastors can read their liturgical formulas, this very precise language that has been shaped over centuries and is so rich, with all the passion of an exhausted customer service representative reading the same script for the millionth time. We can say the Apostles Creed or the Lord's Prayer or a responsive reading like it's an out-of-body experience. It's all too common for these precious words to become rote, lifeless, and dull.

On the other hand, you can also pray with empty phrases and meaningless words in very casual churches that don't make use of liturgies. Worship leaders can offer up their prayers without any forethought and pile up phrases that don't make a lot of sense, or may even be heretical. "Oh, dear Lord, Father God, we praise for you dying on the cross for our sins, and we just ask, Holy Spirit, that you'd be with us today and snuggle us up under the blanket of your love." We can think that the more emotional our prayers, the more we pile on divine titles, the more God will hear us. John Stott calls this kind of prayer all lips, no mind, no heart.

We don't have to impress God with our formulas or our spontaneity. He knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8). We don't pray because God needs help running the universe. We don't pray to change God's mind. We pray because God has ordained means to accomplish his ends. He has arranged things so that he will give more grace to those who petition him for it. God doesn't need prayer, but he uses prayer just like he uses other means. He uses rain to grow the crops, sun to warm the earth, and food to strengthen the body. In the same way, God uses prayer to do his sovereign work. In prayer, we are not instructing God as much as we are instructing ourselves.

Notice again the motivation in 6:9, for the instruction in verse 8 is based on the one who sees in secret. Jesus hasn't yet taught his disciples what to pray for, but already we see how important it is that we know to whom we are praying. We aren't praying to a hotheaded coach or to a distant king or to an austere supervisor. We are praying to our heavenly Father.





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If you believe that he's a good Father, then you don't have to try to impress other people. You know God will take care of you. And if you believe he's a great Father, then you don't have to heap up empty words. You know that God already knows what you need. You don't get extra credit for adding extra words.

When I give seminary students an assignment, I have to give some kind of approximate word count or they won't know what sort of paper they are supposed to write. But I always tell them, "Don't go over! I don't want to read any more than I have to! And don't pad out the paper with fluff. Say what you need to say and then don't say anything else. I am grading you on what you are saying, not on the fact that you found a very long-winded way of saying it."

Don't be a hypocrite when you pray, and don't be a pagan. Those are no-no's when it comes to prayer. This leads to one summarizing thought. You've heard this before, but you need to hear it again because it's true: prayer is not a formula. Prayer is not an incantation. Prayer is not a recipe. Prayer is a relationship.

### **Be the One, Not the 450**

Think of the difference between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20–40). The 450 prophets of Baal called upon their god from morning until noon. Then after Elijah mocked them, they doubled their efforts. They cried out and cut themselves until they were covered in blood. The Bible tells us, "*As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention*" (18:29). When it was Elijah's turn, he spoke the covenant name of God and claimed a covenant relationship with God. "*O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word*" (18:36). In other words, he prayed to the God who was actually there, he prayed to the God he knew personally, and he prayed to the God he trusted. And then he prayed in a short, straightforward prayer for God to hear his servant and for God to glorify himself. "*Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back*" (18:37).

Yes, we must pray. That is a command in the Bible, and more than that, it is an assumption in the Bible. But if we are going to move from "I should pray more" to "I can pray," we have to think of prayer in the right way. And at the heart of that right way is understanding that our God is not hard of hearing, and he is not hard of heart. Speak to him. Shoot straight with him. Be plain with him. You don't need to impress him. As your heavenly Father, he already loves you. You just need to show up and talk to him. That's the good news.

And the even better news is that when we do show up for prayer, our heavenly Father will be gladly waiting there, ready to hear us and eager to listen. ~ **Kevin DeYoung - The Lord's Prayer - Learning from Jesus on What, Why and How to Pray**



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## *The Dobbs Decision: The State Being the State*

Dr. R.C. Sproul offered a succinct and profound statement on the relationship of church and state when he said, “The church is not calling the state to be the church. The church is calling the state to be the state.” When the state, and specifically the Supreme Court of the United States, decided *Roe v. Wade*, the state abdicated its role as the state. The decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* is a major leap back to the state’s rightful position.

That rightful position of the state can be found in the opening chapters of Genesis and also in what may very well be the most brilliant documents in the history of political philosophy—namely, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution, ratified in 1791). The Declaration of Independence’s opening sentence appeals to “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” That is the most stable, worthy, and certain foundation for all the particular laws that govern a body politic. The very next sentence enumerates particular “unalienable rights”—that is to say, rights that are absolute. They are not invented or created by human institutions. They exist. They are. Those rights govern men and are “endowed by their Creator.” Those rights are “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Liberty was the watchword of the modern revolutions, overthrowing the rule of the monarchies for the rule of law. But notice what comes first in the list of rights: life. The right to life is the fundamental and foundational human right. The founders of the United States may very well have invented a government with its three branches and bicameral legislature, but it did not invent the right to life. The Declaration merely declared what is already reality.

The right to life stems from one unalterable truth: All human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7–8). That means one unalterable conclusion: Murder is a violation of nature (Genesis 4; Exodus 20:13). That all human beings are created in the image of God means that all of human life is to be preserved and protected, and every body politic has the main function of protecting life. Governments that protect life are good, honorable, and just. Governments that don’t protect life are not good, are dishonorable, and unjust.

This is why governmentally sanctioned abortion is so egregious. This is why abortion is the abdication of the state’s role. Abortion is especially egregious because of the victim, who is powerless and vulnerable. The Supreme Court suborned injustice in the *Roe* decision.

One thing we know is that sin has consequences. The *Roe* decision had consequences not only for the tens of millions of lives aborted, but it also had consequences for the broader culture. Dr. R.C. Sproul, Francis Schaeffer, and others spoke of the culture of death. This is clearly illustrated in the work of Peter Singer, a longtime professor of ethics at Princeton University, who wrote,

*I do not deny that if one accepts abortion on the grounds provided in chapter 6, the case for killing human beings, in other circumstances, is strong. Euthanasia is not something to be regarded with horror.*



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Singer refers to chapter six of his book, in which he argues that the unborn child (he exclusively uses the word fetus) is not a life, and Singer further argues that the entire notion of sanctity of life is wrong. Then he moves from the fetus to the infant: “If we can put aside these emotionally moving but strictly irrelevant aspects of the killing of a baby we can see that the grounds for not killing persons do not apply to newborn infants.” We need to follow Singer’s train of thought. He denies the sanctity of human life. Then he justifies abortion as perfectly fine, even required in some cases. Then he justifies infanticide. Then he justifies euthanasia. This is “Exhibit A” of the culture of death, and this is the consequence of an unjust decision like Roe.

Dobbs is not a perfect decision. As many have observed, Dobbs returns the issue of abortion to the states. The political battle over the abortion pill has already started. That is sadly true. Some also have pointed out that some elements of the concurrences of the Supreme Court Justices of the majority opinion were weak (Justice Clarence Thomas being the notable exception). Dobbs is not the end of the legal battles, but merely the beginning of a new phase. All that to say, the fight for life and the end of legalized abortion is not over.

Nevertheless, there is much to celebrate here. The Dobbs decision is a giant step back to the culture of life declared in Genesis 1–2 and beautifully echoed in the founding documents of the United States. The decision of Dobbs holds, “The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion.” Those few words overturn decades of injustice and the murder of tens of millions of lives. Those few words uphold the Constitution, which is the singular task of the judicial system. The Dobbs decision is the state being the state—as ordained by God.

Genesis 1–2 does not present an exclusively Christian ethic. These two chapters present the foundational ethics that govern human beings and their interaction with one other. Genesis 1–2 is the basis of ethics and law. Genesis 1–2 is what lets the state know that the state is to uphold the sanctity of all human life. For decades, faithful Christians have advocated for the state to be the state on the issue of abortion and to reverse Roe. Dobbs is the state fulfilling its obligation as the state. ~ ***Dr. Stephen J. Nichols is president of Reformation Bible College, chief academic officer for Ligonier Ministries, and a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow.***

## *Salvation in Scripture*

The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and earth (Genesis 1–2), and it concludes with the creation of a new heavens and earth (Revelation 21–22). Creation and new creation frame the entire redemptive-historical content of Scripture and place it in its proper God-centered context. In other words, the redemption of man is not the ultimate end or goal; it is penultimate. Scripture is not man-centered. It is God-centered. The ultimate end or goal is God and His glory. The redemption of man serves that ultimate goal.





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## *Salvation in Scripture*

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The culminating act of the six days of creation in Genesis was God's creation of Adam and Eve. But man is not an end in himself. The seventh day indicates that man is created to worship his Creator. God made a covenant with the first man, commonly called the covenant of works. In this covenant, "life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience" (Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2). Sadly, Adam and Eve chose to take the word of the serpent over the word of their loving Creator. They sinned against God and became incapable of obtaining eternal life through the covenant of works (Genesis 3). Their descendants are born in this same condition of utter lostness.

The story of salvation in Scripture begins as soon as Adam falls into sin. Instead of leaving Adam and Eve in a permanent state of enmity with Himself, God tells the serpent that He will "*put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.*" God then adds this fascinating promise: "*He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). This is a declaration of war by God against the serpent, and it is an announcement of grace to Adam and Eve. Everything we read from this point forward is God working toward the ultimate fulfillment of these initial promises.

Mankind initially spirals downward, further and further into corruption and sin, and God judges the world with the flood (Genesis 6–9). The few remaining survivors continue in sin, and God confuses their language and disperses them across the earth (Genesis 11). But then God calls Abram and makes a covenant with him. Among the promises made to Abraham:

*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* (Genesis 12:2–3, emphasis added)

It will be through a son of Abraham that the work of man's salvation will be accomplished.

Ultimately, Abraham's descendants are enslaved in Egypt. While there, they grow into a numerous people (Exodus 1:7). After four hundred years, God tells Moses what He is about to do and commands Moses to tell the people:

*Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord."* (Exodus 6:6–8, emphasis added).



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*“I will bring you out, and I will bring you in.”* This is what God does in His paradigmatic Old Testament work of redemption. When the prophets speak later of a future, greater work of redemption, it will be described using exodus terminology.

During the exodus, God gives His law to His people and lays the foundation for that which is to come, a kingdom within the promised land. The kingdom, however, does not last because of the sins of the kings and of the people. God warns them through the prophets, but they refuse to repent and are sent into exile. The prophetic warnings of coming judgment are not, however, the last word. God promises that on the other side of judgment, He will do a work of redemption greater than the first exodus. He will send a messianic king to His people to save them. He will establish a new covenant and create a new heavens and new earth.

Hundreds of years later, an angel appears to a young woman in Israel and announces to her that her son will be this promised messianic king (Luke 1:26–33). His name will be Jesus, *“for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is the One who has come to crush the head of the serpent. He is the son of Abraham through whom the nations will be blessed (Matthew 1:1). He is the promised Suffering Servant who is pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), and whoever believes in Him shall be saved (John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

The second Adam is the head of a new humanity, and in the greater exodus, He brings His people out of sin and darkness and brings them into His kingdom to worship God, to be in union and communion with God, and to enjoy God forever. The salvific work of Jesus Christ and its application to His people is one of the most glorious doctrines in Scripture. ~ ***Dr. Keith A. Mathison is professor of systematic theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.***

## *Witnessing His Glory*

The book of James has an unusual sentence construction that links the word glory with the name of Jesus: *“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality”* (James 2:1). In this verse the words *“Lord of glory”* have alternate renditions. Some translations read, *“Our glorious Lord.”* Still another possible translation reads, *“Jesus Christ, who is the glory.”*

B. B. Warfield, in his book *The Lord of Glory*, says, that Jesus was the glory of God, the shekinah. According to the Old Testament, the shekinah was the visible manifestation of the invisible God. The shekinah was a radiant cloud or brilliant light within a cloud that signaled the immediate presence of God. For Jesus to be identified with the shekinah was to be equated with the presence of God Himself. In Jesus we see the full manifestation of the majesty of God.

That the New Testament writers ascribed glory to Jesus was a clear indication of their confession of His full deity. Glory, in the sense it is used with reference to Jesus, is a divine attribute. It is the glory of God that He refuses to share with any man. ~ ***Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.***





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### *West Suffolk Baptist Church* *A Lion of the Pulpit/Now in Christ's Presence* *Dr. John MacArthur—July 14, 2025*



He was the greatest expositor of his times. One of the ironies of John MacArthur is that, to the end, he insisted that any God-called preacher of the Word could do what he did. There was great truth in that claim, of course. After all, what MacArthur meant was that preaching comes down to the exposition of God's Word before God's people, and that meant studying God's Word with diligence and then standing before a congregation to read and explain that scriptural text. Any God-called preacher can do that. Every preacher *should* do that, even *must* do that. On the other hand, John MacArthur was uniquely gifted as an expositor, and he was uniquely faithful as well. He was a preacher God used to make other preachers *better* preachers.

He was the son and grandson of preachers. His grandfather was Anglican and Canadian. John MacArthur's father, John Fullerton MacArthur, Sr, known as Jack, was a leading independent Baptist preacher who was glad to be called a fundamentalist. John was born in Los Angeles, where his father was already a well-known and respected preacher. John would follow in this father's footsteps, enrolling at Bob Jones University. That didn't go so well and John would eventually play football and graduate from Los Angeles Pacific College. At that point his studies grew more serious at Talbot Theological Seminary, part of Biola University. He graduated in 1963.

John had worked on staff with his father and developed as a preacher and by 1969 he was ready for his own church. In God's providence that church was Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, north of Los Angeles. His first sermon as a young pastor set the stage for what became a ministry with international reach. That sermon was unusually long for a young preacher, but it turned out to be a pointer to a very long and very powerful ministry.



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## *A Lion of the Pulpit/Now in Christ's Presence*

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By the time John MacArthur became pastor at Grace Community Church, Southern California was already known as an unprecedented laboratory for big things. As the population doubled, then tripled, and kept growing, Southern California became a leading indicator for America as a whole. Its youth culture was massive, fueled by the Baby Boom. Its economy was legendary. The region's reputation as "where the future took place first" was grounded in the film industry, television, real estate, high education, and what would later be called cultural production. Oddly enough, it was an incubator for what became both "red" and "blue" America. It was also Ground Zero for the sexual revolution and the emergence of a culture marked by personal autonomy, expressive individualism, and progressivist ideologies.

Some of that was already evident in 1969, but Sun Valley pretty much looked like the other suburban areas in the increasingly populous and ever-expanding Los Angeles region. At the same time, the entire region was a cornucopia of religion, offering just about every form of religion imaginable. In terms of Christianity, you could find Protestant liberalism in the mainline churches and just about every form and flavor of evangelicalism, from dispensationalists with overhead projectors to entrepreneurial church planters pioneering "seeker sensitive" models of church. Charismatic mega-churches were emerging, as were prosperity preachers. Robert Schuller founded the Garden Grove Community Church, later the Crystal Cathedral, in 1955. Let's just say that John MacArthur was doing something different at Grace Community Church when he became pastor in 1969. He started preaching, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book. As a young man, he had hoped to preach through the entire New Testament, verse by verse. That was accomplished, by the way, on June 5, 2011. Sunday by Sunday, passage by passage, he studied the text, then read and explained the text ... faithfully and powerfully.

Under John's preaching, church attendance doubled, then did so again. It grew into the multiple thousands, leading to a near-constant process of growth and development at the church. His sermons were made available on cassette tapes and then they were broadcast on radio (and eventually streamed on the internet). Untold thousands listened to John's sermons, one after the other.

He grew as a preacher and his public influence grew explosively. If you listen to a message from his early ministry at Grace and compare it to his later years, you will not find any difference in conviction. What you do find is a growing depth of understanding and a greater sense of biblical theology, joined to a more comprehensive understanding of theological structure. MacArthur was a dispensationalist, but he described himself as "leaky." As he preached through the New Testament, his preaching became more evidently Reformed and Calvinistic. As he said, he was simply reading and explaining the text. He refused to read a Pauline text, for example, and then try to explain that it doesn't mean what it says. That was anathema to John MacArthur.

His preaching would be channeled into a commentary series on the entire New Testament and a massive study Bible. His teaching ministry reached nation after nation, on various platforms. The extension of his teaching ministry, *Grace to You*, reaches around the globe.



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## *A Lion of the Pulpit/Now in Christ's Presence*

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In terms of his style, there was more there than John MacArthur recognized in himself. His steady delivery, careful cadences, and deliberate pauses were distinctives of his homiletical style. He didn't really want to admit that he had a style, but he did. It was just disciplined by the text and the task. He rarely told stories, and he didn't use what other preachers would call "illustrations." He explained one text by another text, and he constantly connected texts. He built an edifice of preaching, verse by verse, leaving the congregation eager to start again next time at the next verse. But his personality did show through, certainly more than he himself believed. All he had to do was lift his eyebrows, which he did for emphasis. His commitment to exposition meant that he was frequently looking down at his Bible. He knew exactly when to look up, and exactly how to look at the congregation for emphasis.

He was not afraid to enter theological battles. In 1988 he released *The Gospel According to Jesus*, launching an assault on those who denied that the gospel of Jesus Christ requires both faith and repentance, response and obedience. His case was made by scriptural texts, but they were connected in a clear hermeneutic of the gospel. Later, he would take on the embarrassing excesses of the charismatic movement in *Charismatic Chaos* in 1992, and he was always unafraid to aim fire at any form of theological liberalism or compromise.

MacArthur understood the power of influence. Furthermore, he loved preachers. He loved being with preachers. He loved talking about preaching, and he was possessed by a drive to help other preachers. This urgency was transformed into what became the Shepherds Conference, year after year. The conferences became gathering events for preachers committed to exposition. John MacArthur never seemed more alive, or more at home, than when being with fellow preachers, preaching to preachers. His influence among and through other preachers will be his most lasting legacy beyond Grace Community Church.

That same vision led to the establishment of The Master's Theological Seminary in 1986, just one year after agreeing to serve as president of Los Angeles Baptist College, now known as The Master's University.

I had the great privilege of knowing John MacArthur as a friend. He gave me many opportunities to preach with him and to his people, especially at Shepherds Conferences. We preached together in so many settings and spent much time together. He joined us at Together for the Gospel (t4g) and encouraged so greatly. John MacArthur made a massive impact on my life, and I saw him in so many different settings, from his home to so many public events. He was the same, constantly. He was generous and gracious and kind, even as he had the courage of a lion.

Our hearts go out to his devoted wife of so many decades, Patricia, and to his children and their spouses and a great host of children and great-grandchildren. We also pray for Grace Community Church as the congregation mourns the death of their pastor and looks to the future with hope.

John MacArthur will be greatly missed and deeply mourned. He demonstrated faithfulness over a long lifetime of honorable ministry—a remarkable gift to Christ's church. His race is now complete—and what a remarkable race it was. But, remember this: Pastor John MacArthur would be the first to say that the priority above all other priorities is that the faithful exposition of Holy Scripture continue until Jesus comes. *Soli Deo Gloria.* ~ **Dr R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**





## *West Suffolk Epistle*



### *West Suffolk Baptist Church*

## *Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

If you have a birthday or anniversary in August that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at [gwlcf10415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

#### *Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner August 2025*

##### Birthdays

*Ben S. (8)  
Harper K. (11)  
Melody A. (12)  
Carrie P. (24)*

*Ezra P. (26)  
Marlin H. (27)  
Julian H. (27)*

##### Anniversaries

*Jared and Hannah E. (4)  
Mike and Cheryl P. (9)*

#### *The Coming of the Son of Man Matthew 24:29 - 31*

<sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ~ ESV



### *West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership*

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.