

DYNAMIC RESOURCES

*“Everything in Scripture that teaches
about sin and redemption assumes the
literal truth of the first three
chapters of Genesis”*

John MacArthur



**THE DISCIPLINED
CHURCH**



John MacArthur

**3 FOUNDATIONAL
CHAPTERS**



John Cheeseman

**IS IT EVER OK FOR A
CHRISTIAN TO LIE?**

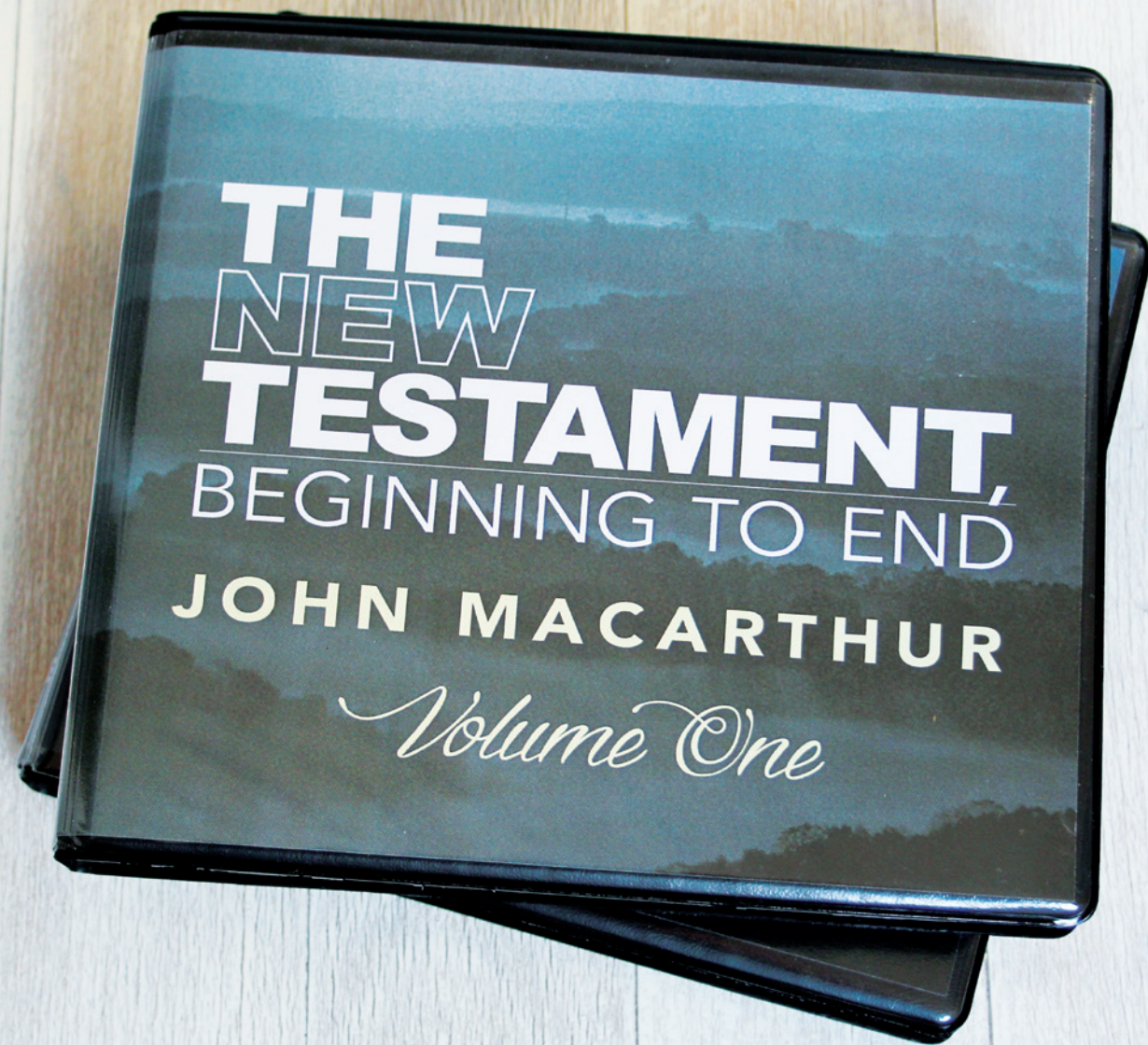


Jesse Johnson

**GOD IS
NOT FAIR**



Cameron Buettel



TAKE A JET TOUR THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament, Beginning to End captures the sweep of John MacArthur's forty-two years preaching verse by verse through the New Testament. This panoramic series gives clear, richly detailed teaching on a wide range of topics, including:

- The humility and exaltation of Christ
- The purpose of trials
- How to spot false teachers
- Living without compromise in a hostile culture
- The new heaven and the new earth

(Two volume album containing 27 individual CDs)

£35 + postage

Product code: 23-333

THE DISCIPLINED CHURCH

By John MacArthur

What is the single greatest contributor to the impact, growth, success, and stability of a church?

Some people might tell you it's having a gifted pastor—someone who can rightly divide the Word of God, and do it in an engaging, enlightening, and entertaining way. Other people might tell you the most important thing is the music—you've got to engage people's emotions through song and sound to keep them coming back for more.

Or maybe the key is to have friendly greeters and hospitable church staff to make people feel welcome. Or perhaps the success of your church depends on the quality of your Sunday school classes, your children's ministries, or the in-home

Bible studies. Some people might even tell you it comes down to the quality of the coffee you serve.

While every one of those aspects can figure into the popularity of your church, none of them guarantees biblical success like church discipline. You read that correctly—when it comes to growing a godly, biblical church, purity must be the first priority.

Purity

Purity was Christ's first priority with the disciples, as He laid the foundations of the church in His teaching. Matthew 18 is loaded with instructions and warnings about personal purity



and how to keep sin out of the midst of God’s people, starting in verse 6 where Jesus said this:

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. That vivid, horrific imagery wasn’t lost on His disciples—it was a clear message that sin was not to be trifled with or tolerated. Paul was just as clear with his exhortations to the church at Corinth, warning them he would deal firmly with their sin and “*not spare anyone*” (2 Corinthians 13:2).

Church discipline

The Lord takes the purity of His people seriously, and we need to reflect His priority in our local congregations. When I first began preaching at Grace Community Church, we didn’t

practice church discipline—in fact, I’d never been to a church that did. It was a totally foreign concept to me, but Christ’s instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 are clear.

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

I hadn’t seen it done before, but I became convinced it wasn’t optional—that we were compelled to be obedient to Christ’s model for church discipline. At first, people told me it would kill the church—people wouldn’t put up with that level of scrutiny in their lives, and they’d find somewhere less invasive to worship. In fact, the opposite has happened—Grace Church

has thrived because God’s people take sin seriously and don’t tolerate it in their local congregation.

The purpose of discipline

That’s because the purpose of church discipline isn’t to embarrass people by exposing their sin. On those occasions when the sinning man or woman refuses to repent and the elders need to bring the matter before the church, we don’t take any delight in that. We’re disappointed it’s gone that far, and we want to see the person repent before he or she has to be put out of the church altogether. We don’t do it because it’s fun—we do it because it’s the only way to keep sin from festering, taking root, and growing in our church.

Spiritual health

We do it because it’s vital to the spiritual health and the testimony of the church. Ignoring church discipline is the most visible and disastrous failure of the church in our time, because it conveys to the world that we’re not really serious about sin.

The problem with the church today is not that it’s out of step with the culture or it’s too old fashioned. The problem is that it has lost its interest in holiness. It’s not nearly concerned enough with maintaining its purity. Churches today have become content to be fellowships of independent members with minimal accountability to God and even less to each other. We have generations of pastors and church members today who have never experienced church discipline—they don’t know anything about it.

And yet God’s first priority for His people is that they be pure. If we’re going to be useful to Him—as individuals and as local church bodies—we need to be united in our commitment to dealing directly and biblically with sin.



Recommended reading - The Master’s Plan for the Church
See inside back cover for more details



IS IT REAL?

You can be wrong or deceived about many things in life, but none are as dangerous or tragic as being wrong or deceived about the genuineness of your salvation. Yet many people are convinced they’re on their way to heaven, but aren’t – they’re self-deceived. They don’t suspect they even have a problem.

In *Is It Real?* John MacArthur helps you to get to grips with the question, “Is my salvation the real thing, or am I only kidding myself?”

At the heart of this booklet are eleven test questions for you to answer that will help you to evaluate where you are spiritually. You don’t have to live in fear of the question, “Is my conversion real?”

£1

Product code: 45REAL

**“I AM WRITING THESE THINGS TO YOU
SO THAT, IF I DELAY, YOU MAY KNOW
HOW ONE OUGHT TO BEHAVE IN
THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, WHICH IS
THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD,
A PILLAR AND BUTTRESS
OF THE TRUTH”**

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15



3 FOUNDATIONAL CHAPTERS

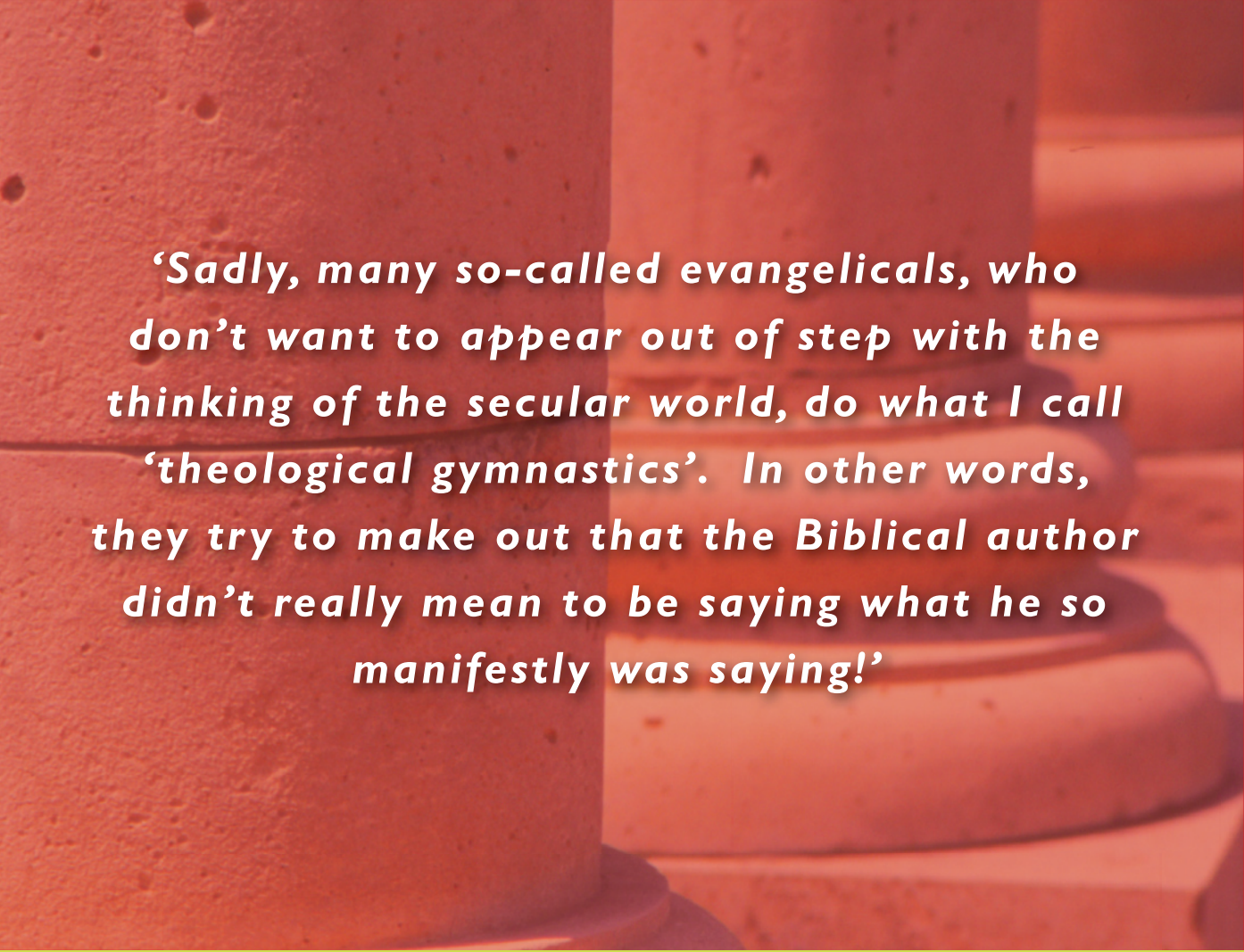
By John Cheeseman

Genesis chapters 1-3 comprise one of the most controversial passages in the whole of the Bible! In this article we'll be examining some of the main issues relating to these chapters, but before we do, one or two introductory remarks will be in order.

Poetry?

In the first place, these chapters are not poetry. Many wish to argue that these early portions of Genesis are poetry or myth, and are not to be treated as historical. Quite frankly, this just won't do at all. There are indeed poetical accounts of creation in the Bible – Psalm 104, for example, and certain passages in the book of Job. But these differ completely in language and

style from Genesis chapters 1-3. The frustrating thing is that many, who affirm that Genesis must be understood as poetry or myth, are those who have never even studied the original Biblical languages. Any self-respecting Hebrew scholar, even those who are liberal in their theological outlook, will tell you that the author of Genesis intended to write an historical account. The liberals of course don't believe that these chapters do contain history, but they're quite convinced that this was in the mind of the author. Surely one of the fundamental principles of Biblical interpretation is to ask the question: - what was the original intention of the writer in saying what he did? Sadly, many so-called evangelicals, who don't want to appear out of step with the thinking of the secular world, do what I call 'theological gymnastics'. In other words, they try to make out that the Biblical author didn't



‘Sadly, many so-called evangelicals, who don’t want to appear out of step with the thinking of the secular world, do what I call ‘theological gymnastics’. In other words, they try to make out that the Biblical author didn’t really mean to be saying what he so manifestly was saying!’

really mean to be saying what he so manifestly was saying! The Hebrew word, which is translated ‘created’ in chapter 1:1, is only used with God as the subject; never do we read in the Bible that a man creates. It is only God who creates, and whenever the word is used there’s no mention of pre-existing material. The implication is always that God has created out of nothing. In other words, God has willed the existence of that which formerly had no existence. Human beings cannot create. If we want to make something, we need to have the material which we then form into something else. We are craftsmen, not creators. But Almighty God has simply willed that things come into existence. The Bible tells us that through God the Son, all things were created (John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-16).

This is why life has a meaning and a purpose. This is why there are absolute standards of right and wrong. If the universe was simply the product of blind chance, as many scientists would have us believe, then there would be no meaning and purpose. There would be no absolute standards. Of course, so many people take precisely that viewpoint. It’s every man for himself. Let’s live for the moment. If it feels right, just do

it. What may be right for me may not necessarily be right for you. Eat, drink and be merry, and get through as best you can. What a tragic philosophy. If on the other hand we believe in a Creator God, life takes on a great significance. Our chief reason for existence is to live for the glory of God. He created us, and He is the One to whom we owe our complete trust and obedience.

24 hour days?

What about the length of the ‘days’ in Genesis chapter one? There are those who argue that the Hebrew word for ‘day’ is capable of a variety of interpretations. They say that it doesn’t always refer to a period of 24 hours. For example, in chapter 2 verse 4 the word ‘day’ seems to cover the entire span of the creation of the heavens and the earth. Moreover, it’s pointed out that on the first three days of creation the sun and the moon were not in existence, so how could the first three days be solar days as we know them today?

What are we to say about such arguments? Again, we need

to ask the question: - what was in the mind of the original author when he spoke of a six-day creation? Is there anything in the surrounding context which has a bearing on our interpretation? Yes, there most certainly is! The writer actually defines the length of the days when he says in verse 5, *“There was evening and there was morning, the first day.”* Then again, in verse 8, *“There was evening and there was morning the second day.”* And again in verse 13, *“There was evening and there was morning the third day.”* Surely the natural understanding of these verses points to a 24 hour day-night cycle. The fact that the sun was not made until Day 4 does not make the first three days indefinite periods of time, because on the first day God said, *“Let there be light.”* (verse 3) So He must have created some light source in the heavens, with reference to which the rotating earth passed through the same night-day cycle. Furthermore, don’t the words of the fourth commandment support this understanding? *“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God ... In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”* (Exodus 20: 8-11) Surely the force of the analogy between God’s rest on the seventh day and our need to rest is completely lost if the six days of creation were indefinite periods of time, covering millions of years.

Old earth?

Let me deal with another question which is related to this. How old is man and how old is the earth? It’s almost universally taught these days that both man and the earth are millions of years old. However, there’s one important factor which needs to be considered. If the Lord God Almighty is to create planet earth, He doesn’t require millions of years in which to do so. He can do it in the twinkling of an eye if He so chooses. So although a scientist may examine the world and conclude that it must have been in existence for aeons of time, it’s perfectly feasible that it is considerably younger.

Let me illustrate this principle. We’re told in Genesis 1: 11 that God said *“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit.”* Now, if you were a scientist and examined one of those fruit trees, you might well come to the conclusion that the tree was 30 years old, judging by its height and the width of its trunk. However, what the scientist may not realize is that only a few minutes beforehand the

fruit tree hadn’t existed at all! God decided in His infinite wisdom to make a fully-grown tree that had the appearance of being 30 years old. So, here’s a very important principle. If my interpretation of Scripture leads me to conclude that the earth is a lot younger than I’m told in the scientific text books, I need to recognise that the scientist is working from a completely different standpoint. He’s calculating the ‘apparent’ age. But ‘apparent’ age and ‘actual’ age can be very different, once you introduce the doctrine of a Creator God. The usual objection to all this is that God is deceiving the scientist! This is a ridiculous argument. The Bible affirms that God has revealed Himself in His Word as well as in His creation – see Psalm 19. If the scientist chooses to ignore the teaching of the Word, he has only himself to blame if he comes to the wrong conclusions about the created order!

Evolution?

This of course leads us to another problem. How do those early chapters of Genesis fit in with the commonly accepted theory of evolution? This is a favourite hunting ground for those who say that there is a real conflict between the teaching of the Bible and the so-called discoveries of modern science. It’s fashionable these days for Christians to try and twist the Scriptures, so they accommodate the latest scientific theories. However, if you follow that line, you end up by doing violence to what the text of Scripture is actually saying. Bible-believing Christians will have many problems with evolutionary ideas. Let me mention a few. Firstly, there’s the theory that all plants and animals have evolved over millions of years from one, or a few, common ancestors. Surely that’s contradicted by the teaching of Genesis chapter 1, where we read that living things reproduce according to their own kind – see verses 11, 21 and 25. In other words, a human being will always reproduce a human being. A cat will always reproduce a cat, and so on. There may be occasional freaks or mutations, but they’re not essentially different from their parents. Genesis rules out the idea that one particular plant may produce something that’s essentially different from itself. It reproduces according to its kind. To put it bluntly, the Bible is totally against the notion that human beings are descended from monkeys! Of course, evolution is only a theory, and yet one watches television programmes in which broadcasters affirm that it’s an established fact. This isn’t the case at all. Scientists can’t point to a single example of transformation of one species into another. Yes, plants and animals are capable of variations within the basic kinds

of species, but there’s no concrete evidence of one basic type being changed into another basis type.

Let me mention a further problem with evolutionary theory. Genesis chapter 1:31 tells us that after God had created the world, with man as the pinnacle of His creation, “*He saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.*” Moreover, in Genesis chapter 2, we have the picture of the original creation as literally a paradise - a flawless environment for man and women to live together in perfect health, perfect happiness, perfect holiness and fellowship with God. This is completely at variance with evolutionary ideas. Evolutionists would have us believe that death, disease, famine and drought have raged on this planet long before man every appeared on the scene. It’s very hard to see how that can possibly be reconciled with the opening chapters of Genesis.

Historical Adam?

Now, what about the historical Adam? Some Christians advocate the idea that Adam is merely symbolic of every man, and so, for example, Genesis chapter 3 was simply written to warn us against the pitfalls of temptation. In fact, if you look closely at this chapter, this theory doesn’t stand up to investigation at all. Adam’s experience is not our experience. When Adam was faced with temptation, he was an innocent creature, and by yielding to temptation, he became a sinner. We’re sinners already. We don’t become sinners when we fall into temptation. We’re already born into a state of sin (Psalm 51: 5). There’s therefore a profound difference between Adam’s situation and our own. Adam became a sinner by sinning. We’re sinners from our mother’s womb (Psalm 51:5). Adam’s experience was a unique experience. He’s not a symbol of every man. When Adam sinned, it was a once-for-all, unrepeatabe historical act. This is confirmed by the words of the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 5. In this chapter Paul is comparing the action of Adam with the action of Christ. As Adam did one thing, so Christ has done another. In verse 19 he says, “*For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.*” That’s a very significant

statement. According to Paul’s argument, if Jesus was a real historical person, so then was Adam. Unless we’re to reject the teaching of the New Testament, we cannot say that Adam wasn’t an historical figure.

Relationship roles?

Finally, I want to say something about the importance of these chapters for understanding the God-given relationship between men and women. In Genesis chapter 2: 18 God says: - “*It is not good that the man be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.*” The Hebrew word for helper literally means ‘one who assists.’ It indicates a supportive, subordinate role, but not a relationship of superiority and inferiority. Men and women have equal standing before God in terms of their created dignity (see chapter 1:27). But in God’s economy there’s a difference of role and function. The apostle Paul picks this up in the New Testament when he says in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “*I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.*” This has important ramifications in the life of the family and also in the church. In the marriage relationship the husband is the head of the wife – see Ephesians 5:23. In the church, the man must exercise authority, not the woman.

In 1 Timothy 2: 12, 13 we read these words, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man ... For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*” It’s instructive to note that Paul bases his argument on two abiding principles. Adam was formed first. This was the divine order. Furthermore, Eve was to be man’s helper. She was to follow, not lead. What happened in the fall? The roles were reversed. Eve became the leader, with disastrous consequences for the whole human race.

How important it is that we properly understand these early chapters of Genesis!

Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version
Recommended Resources – The Battle for the Beginning



Recommended reading - Battle For The Beginning
See inside back cover for more details

IS IT EVER OK FOR A CHRISTIAN TO LIE?

By Jesse Johnson

Is it ever not a sin to lie? Or—to let the double negative cancel itself out and get right to the chase—does God ever put you in a position where sinning is the right thing to do?

This question is as bothersome as it is perennial. It invariably comes attached to this hypothetical: say you lived in Nazi Germany, and you have Jews hiding in your living room, and the SS guards knock on your door and ask if you are hiding Jews. What do you do? Do you lie?

Let me give you my conclusion, and then try and walk you there with me. First: GOD HATES LYING. So yes, it is always a sin to lie, and no, it is never ok to lie. Proverbs 12:12-13 explains why:

“No disaster overcomes the righteous, but the wicked are full of misery. Lying lips are detestable to Yahweh, but faithful people are His delight.”

Lying lips are one of the seven things that God finds detestable (Proverbs 6:16). Christians are called to let their yes be yes, and lying violates that basic principle (James 5:12). Meanwhile, God is a God of truth (John 14:7), while the devil is the father of lies (John 8:38). Lies are an affront to providence, as they imply that the world would be better if God simply would have worked it out more to our liking. Thus every lie is an attack against the sovereignty of God, and essentially places you in opposition to that which is true. Instead of lying, speak the truth (Col. 3:9, Eph. 4:22, 24). It really is that simple.

The philosophical problem

The question, is it ever ok to lie, comes from a faulty ethical construction. In Christian ethics there are basically two schools: graded ethics, and absolute ethics. Graded ethics says there is a triage to God’s commands, and some are more important than others. When they contradict, always follow the more serious one. For example, they would say the duty owed to the Jews hiding in your living room is greater than the commands against lying. So it is better to lie than to betray those in your living room.

On the other hand, those that hold to absolute ethics (like me, Moses, and Jesus) say that all commands from God are binding, and it is never ok to set aside any of them. God doesn’t grade on a curve, so we shouldn’t view his commands in some kind of order of importance.

Those that hold to graded ethics use verses like Mark 12:31 (where Jesus says that Loving the Lord your God and loving your neighbor are the two greatest commandments) as evidence that God holds some of his commands to be higher than the others. Whereas one who follows absolute ethics

would look at Mark 12:31 and say that those commands are greater because the other commands are flow out of them—which to say that violating any command would in some way be an offense to either your neighbor or God, but likely both. The simple problem with the graded-ethics approach is that it is not taught by the Bible—verses like Mark 12:31 notwithstanding. The first person to be stoned to death in the Old Testament was executed for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, so at the very least that causes some problem for the concept of graded morality. Regardless of absolute vs. graded ethics, the first people God strikes dead in the New Testament are Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit. The moral of that has to be: if you are going to rate sins in some kind of order of seriousness, lying should be pretty close to the top.

The hypothetical problem

But this takes us back to the Jews hiding in the living room. What then? Well, when scheming up hypothetical ethical dilemmas, you have to remember that hypotheticals are literally problematic. They are contrived precisely because they expose a supposed weakness in a person’s argument.

So if you are going to play the hypothetical game, remember that God is sovereign, and with that comes his promise that every instance of temptation he will always provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13)... and that escape is NEVER going to involve sinning. God does not open your escape hatch through sin. In fact, in the context of 1 Corinthians 10, sin is the very thing that God gives you an escape from.

Thus, in any hypothetical moral dilemma you need to remember that there is an unstated contingent—namely; God will give you a way out that does not involve sin.

Back to the guards at the door

So we are back to the guards knocking on the door, and the Jews hiding in the living room. The ground rules are that you can’t sin, and that lying is a sin, and delivering people over to their death is unloving, which is to say that it too is sinful. What is left to do?

Well, this decision is really made before you took the Jews in. When you gave them refuge in your house, you did so while taking responsibility for their safety. If you are brave enough to hide them, then you better be brave enough to protect them. How can you hide them but not be willing to physically defend them? If the guards knock on your door, respond by telling them that they have no right to enter your house, and that what they are doing is morally reprehensible—but that Jesus offers forgiveness for their sins, and they need to repent. Then slam the door, and take the hypothetical from there. A person, who is brave enough to lie, but not brave enough to be a martyr, isn’t brave at all.

What about war time ethics?

As absolutist as that sounds, the Bible keeps room in its moral constructs for war time ethics. God uses countries to bear the sword and punish evil doers. It is expected that war includes both deception and violence. An army can fake left and go

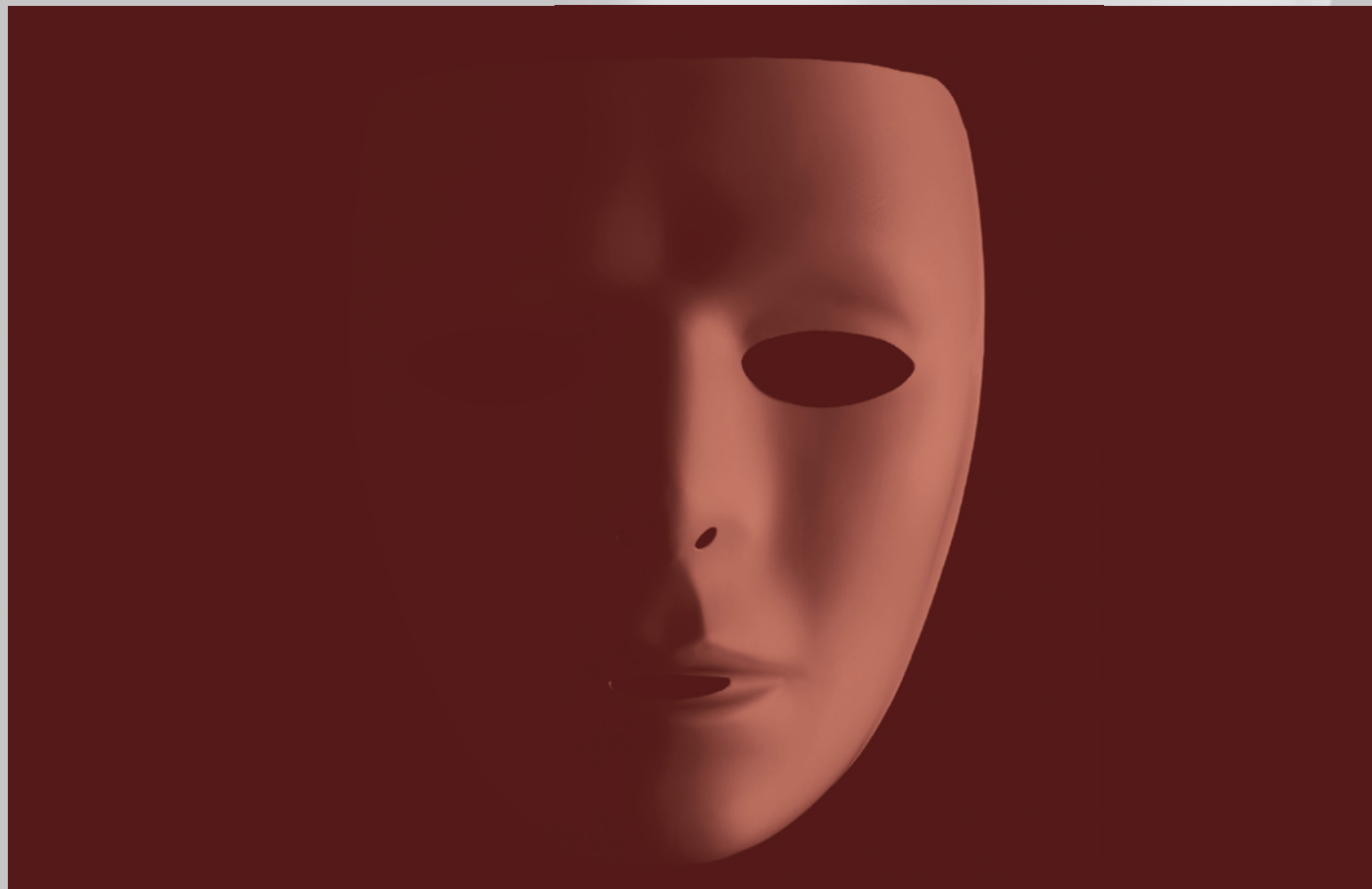
right, because they are bearing the sword to suppress evil. But that is fundamentally different than a person—a civilian, if you will—who lies because they have a secret moral agenda. Even if their morality is right, it is undercut by lying because (remember) God will never put you in a position where lying is right thing to do.

What about Rahab?

No conversation on lying would be complete without Rahab sneaking on to the set. “What about her?” you ask. “Didn’t she lie?” Well, yes...but that is hardly the point of that narrative. Rahab sided with Yahweh over and against her nation. She heard of God’s work in the wilderness, and when she met the spies, she was soundly converted by faith alone; that faith immediately manifested itself in her devotion to God and his people (James 2:25).

So the point of the Rahab narrative in Joshua 2 is that an idol-worshiping prostitute was radically saved, and that God then used her to help Israel enter the Promised Land. Did she lie? Yes. She had been a believer for all of ten minutes, so cut her some slack. Is she in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11? Yes! As shocking as it might seem, there are some believers who were both liars and prostitutes (or Sampson, who was a liar while with a prostitute). Yet somehow the gospel is greater than sin, and salvation comes through faith alone. Rahab is always held out as an example of faith for siding with God’s people, and is never held out as an example of lying for the glory of God.

Jesse Johnson served with John MacArthur on staff at Grace Community Church but is now Teaching Pastor at Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Virginia.



Recommended reading - *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong*
See inside back cover for more details

GOD IS NOT FAIR

& CHRISTMAS PROVES IT!

By Cameron Buettel

When the daytime temperatures in Southern California fail to reach 20 degrees Celsius, we know that Christmas will be fast upon us. The holiday is a joyous time – particularly for Christians as it provides us with an outstanding opportunity to talk about Christ.

But the good news of Christ's birth is increasingly lost on our narcissistic culture. And most of those who do make the connection between Christmas and Christ end up celebrating nothing more than a sentimental infant idol, whose central message was 'peace and goodwill towards men'. Any discussion of the Saviour that goes beyond such sentiment is usually met with widespread resentment.

Objections to the God of the Bible come thick and fast in a world that prefers a god on their own terms. And many Christians feel paralyzed and helpless in the face of the annual onslaught. The protests masquerading as questions can seem insurmountable. How can a loving God send people to hell? How can God justly condemn people who have never heard the gospel? Why doesn't God save everyone? And why doesn't God punish all the evil in the world?



In short, the people of the world most commonly object to the God of the Bible on the grounds that He is so unfair. The shocking truth of the matter is that they are right – God is amazingly unfair in the way He treats people. And the birth of Christ is the most lavish example of God putting His unfairness on display before humanity.

The world might be right about God's unfairness, but the conclusions they draw from it are abysmally wrong, as evidenced by the common objections they raise. Put simply, they're asking the wrong questions. However, if we can help them ask the right questions they may be able to appreciate a

most surprising and glorious truth – that God's unfairness is actually good news! To that end, let us consider some of the most common gripes with God's fairness, or lack thereof, and the truth revealed by a change in perspective.

How can a loving God send people to hell?

That question is rooted in an inflated view of man and a deflated view of God. Such a paradigm needs to be turned

completely upside down before any proper perspective can be achieved.

The Bible tells us that men love to proclaim their own goodness (Proverbs 20:6) and are pure in their own eyes (Proverbs 16:2), but the reality is that we have all "*sinned and fall short*" (Romans 3:23) of God's righteous standards. People ought to tremble at the thought of standing alone before God on Judgment Day (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15), but they don't comprehend the true gravity of their situation.

For example, the Bible says that all liars will end up in hell (Revelation 21:8). If that seems overly harsh, consider this: if I lie to my daughter, there is nothing she can do to me. But if I lie to my wife, my sleeping arrangements are likely to shift from the bedroom to the garage. If I lie to my employer, I will probably get fired. If I lie to the government, I could end up in jail. Though the crime never changed in each situation, the level of punishment did change in proportion to the level of authority I offended.

The problem is not only how serious our sins are, but also how righteous God is. He is pure light without any trace of darkness (1 John 1:5). He created you (Genesis 1:26-27), owns you (Psalm 24:1), is fully worthy to receive your undivided worship (Revelation 4:11), and demands your perfect obedience to His law (Matthew 5:49).

When we understand our sin properly, in terms of the righteous Lord it offends, we can appreciate the necessity of hell. And more than that, we stand amazed that we don't all wind up there.

The right question isn't "How can a loving God send people to hell?" but "Why doesn't God give us all the due punishment for our sin and send everyone to hell?"

How can God justly condemn people who have never heard the gospel?

That question isn't exclusive to the world. Many pastors and missionaries struggle with this issue, as well. But once again the problem stems from a wrong view of man.

Just as man is born into bondage to his sin nature, he is also born into the just punishment for his sin (Romans 6:23). In the moment Adam sinned, he and all his offspring stood guilty and condemned – and only through Christ can we be redeemed (Romans 5:18-19). There are no free passes for ignorance.

Sometimes Christians can slip into the habit of merely paying lip-service to God's verdict on sinners, while harbouring doubts about the justice of His condemnation of them, whether they hear the gospel or not. But that betrays the clear testimony of Scripture:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20)

Put simply, God doesn't believe in atheists.

Unbelievers are not morally neutral before they reject the gospel. Caught in the snare of sin, all people stand guilty and without excuse. Rejecting the gospel is merely one further expression of their relentless rebellion against the God they know to be true. When it comes to salvation, God doesn't owe anyone anything. But in His grace and mercy, He has made possible the way for some to be redeemed.

Therefore, the question isn't "How can God justly condemn people who have never heard the gospel?" but "Why does He use the truth of the gospel to penetrate hearts that have already rejected the testimony of His creation?"

Why doesn't God save everyone?

Amazing Grace is a timeless anthem, reaching well beyond the confines of the church and permeating the modern world. But how often do we pause to reflect on its rich lyrics?

John Newton, like so many of the Puritan hymn writers, was astounded that a holy God was willing to save a wretch like

himself. Charles Wesley similarly marvelled, “And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour’s blood? Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

Newton and Wesley’s common ground is not unusual. It is the pervasive view expressed throughout the hymnal. The songwriters of old were amazed and overwhelmed that God would condescend to dwell among sinful men, fulfilling the law that they had broken and suffering the wrath that they deserved (2 Corinthians 5:21). They were astonished that God would save anyone, least of all themselves! They understood and gratefully expressed how they were the beneficiaries of God’s glorious unfairness.

Not only that, their hymns give voice to the convictions held throughout church history, going all the way back to the church’s formative years. God’s grace, His unmerited favour towards sinners, was something the apostle Paul simply could not fathom: “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:8)

Most unrepentant sinners favourably compare themselves to the rest of the fallen world. Even as believers, we can be tempted to discount the severity of our sin when it’s compared to the impurity around us. But in the light of God’s

righteousness, expressed in His law, we’re able to accurately see the grievous nature of our sin. The only appropriate response is to echo the awe-struck perspective of Newton, Wesley, and the apostle Paul, and celebrate the amazing grace and mercy of our Lord.

In light of that grace, the question is not “Why doesn’t God save everyone?” but “Why did God save anyone at all?”

Why doesn’t God punish all the evil in the world?

The world shudders at names like Hitler, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, and Pol Pot; tyrants and despots of the last century responsible for countless deaths during their reigns of terror. And despite our modern claims to enlightenment and refinement, the world today is just as wicked and violent. We reel in horror at the murderous rampage of ISIS through the Middle East. Yet even within polite society, there’s a ghastly, ongoing genocide against the unborn.

We’re surrounded on all sides by evil, and not all of it is violent or even obvious. Countless men and women twist Scripture

and pervert the truth while claiming to speak for God. Others use the promise of divine blessing to build empires through the funds they extort from desperate and naïve followers, usually those who can least afford it. Worse still, they’re leading countless men and women to hell through their damnable heresies.

But if you’re looking for empirical evidence of Adam’s fall, you don’t need to go beyond your own front door. No one had to teach your children to disobey, lie, and be selfish, they were born with an advanced degree in sin, just as you were, too. As we’ve already seen, the extent of our sinfulness is greater than we like to imagine, and the holiness of our Judge is beyond our comprehension.

Is God mad about evil? You bet! Two thousand years ago, He walked among us as a sacrificial Lamb. But when He returns, He’s coming as a Lion to make war with His enemies (Revelation 19:11-16). He will deal with the tyrants, terrorists, and televangelists, but He won’t stop there, he will also punish liars, thieves, blasphemers, idolaters, and the sexually immoral (Revelation 21:8). In fact, His judgment will cut to the very core of unbelieving hearts, extending even to their thought lives, where sexual fantasies amount to adultery (Matthew 5:27-28) and hatred equals murder (Matthew 5:21-22).

It’s easy to long for God to deal with the evil out there, but we wouldn’t want to invite the same scrutiny and judgment in the darkest corners of our own hearts. The staying of the Lord’s hand is a worldwide blessing and mark of God’s glorious unfairness. God’s greatest gift to unbelievers right now is the time they still have to repent – but that time is running out.

The right question isn’t “Why doesn’t God punish all the evil in the world?” but “Why hasn’t God punished me for my sin?”

Ultimate Unfairness

When we peer at the baby in the manger, we need to remember that He was born to die. God’s unfairness built to a climax some thirty-three years later: “For our sake He

made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). As John MacArthur summarizes, “God treated Him as if He committed believers’ sins, and treats believers as if they did only the righteous deeds of the sinless Son of God.”

The world sees God’s unfairness as a cause for complaint. But in reality, it should be a source of relief. Sinners desperately need God’s mercy, and nothing is more unfair than mercy. Nowhere is that better displayed than in the sacrificial death of His Son. God’s glorious unfairness is manifest in the fact that He sent Christ to earth instead of sending us to hell. He lived a righteous life on behalf of evil people, and paid an eternal debt we could not afford. What could be more unfair?

When this matter is settled in our hearts, so many worldly complaints melt away. We can savour this Christmas and remember Jesus’ arrival on earth as the beginning of the most gloriously unfair period of human history. I pray that you will spend this Christmas meditating on these glorious truths and that you’ll be well equipped to answer the complaints of an unbelieving world. Take comfort in the mercy God has shown to you, and invite others to rest in His glorious unfairness.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you many not grow weary or fainthearted.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

All Scripture quotations come from the ESV

Cameron Buettel is an Australian native, now in his final year of study at The Master’s Seminary and currently employed by Grace to You as a writer. He resides in Santa Clarita, California, with his wife, Majbrit, and four children, Louisa, Josef, Teresa and Thomas.



Recommended reading - The Truth about Grace
See inside back cover for more details

RIGHT THINKING IN A WORLD GONE WRONG

One of the greatest challenges facing Christians today is the powerful influence of secular thinking. From all directions we're fed a constant barrage of persuasive – yet unbiblical – worldviews. This makes it difficult to know where to stand on today's most talked-about issues.

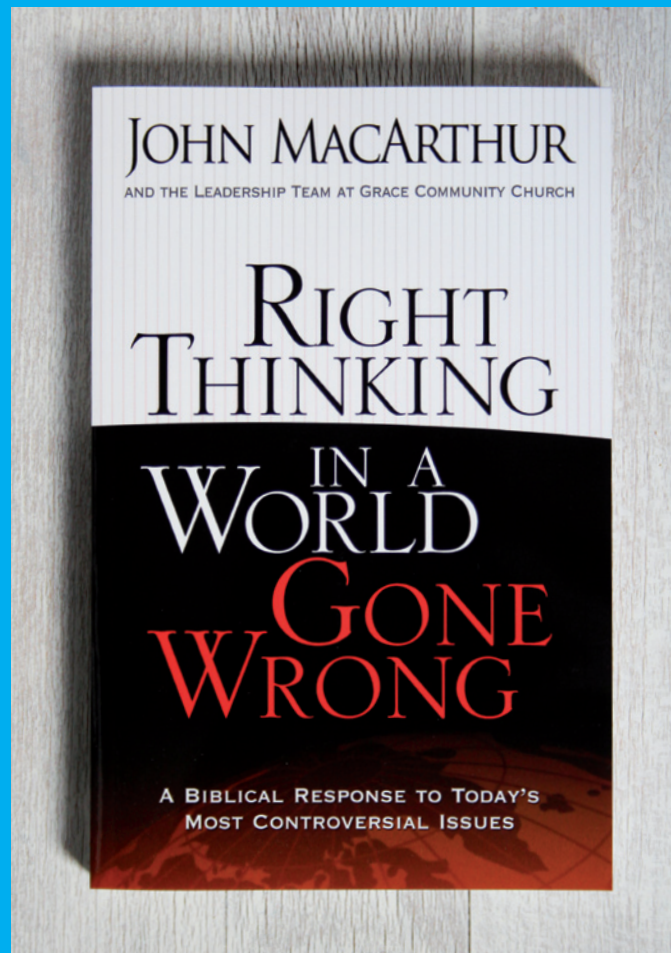
The leadership team at Grace Community Church, along with their pastor, John MacArthur, provide much-needed discernment and clarity in the midst of rampant confusion. Using the Bible as the foundation, you'll learn how to develop a Christian perspective on those key issues affecting the Church in the 21st. Century.

This book provides the reader with a biblical response to today's most controversial issues.

(Softcover)

£9

Product code: 451209



BATTLE FOR THE BEGINNING

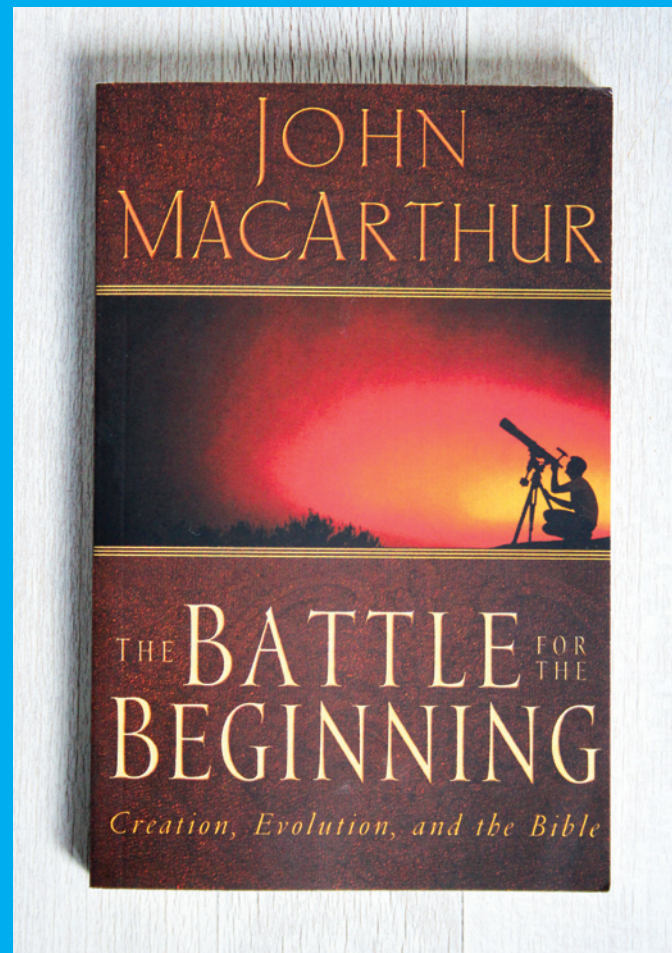
Many Christians who claim to believe that the Bible is God's revealed truth seem willing to allow modern scientific theories to replace the Genesis account of creation. Such compromises present a conspicuous danger. Bible teacher and pastor, John MacArthur, believes that in Genesis 1-3 we find the foundation of every doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith – the vital underpinnings for everything we believe. The Battle for the Beginning draws a clear line on today's theological landscape.

“Everything in Scripture that teaches about sin and redemption assumes the literal truth of the first three chapters of Genesis. If we wobble to any degree on the truth of this passage,” John MacArthur insists, *“we undermine the very foundation of our faith.”*

(Softcover)

£5.50

Product code: 451136



THE MASTER'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

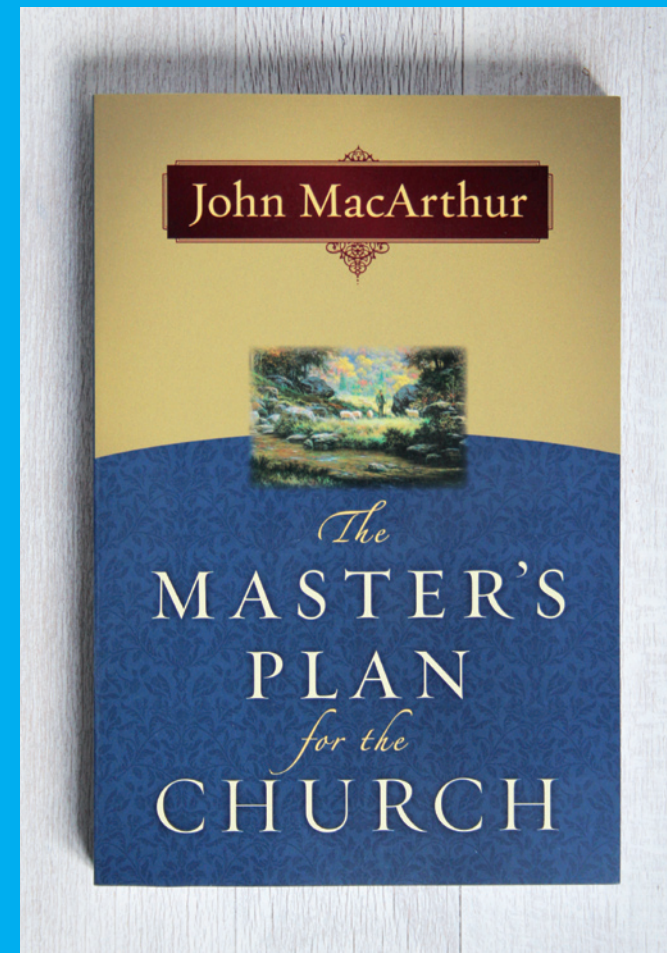
It is absolutely essential for a church to perceive itself as an institution for the glory of God, and to do that, claims John MacArthur, the local church must adhere unfalteringly to biblical leadership principles. Christ never intended church leadership to be earned by seniority, purchased with money, or inherited through family ties. He never compared church leaders to governing monarchs, but rather to humble shepherds; not slick celebrities, but to labouring servants. Drawing from some of the best received material on church leadership, The Master's Plan for the Church provides the reader with crucial and effective lessons in leadership.

This book is pertinent not only for pastors and elders, but for anyone who wants the church to be what God intended it to be.

(Softcover)

£6.50

Product code: 451125



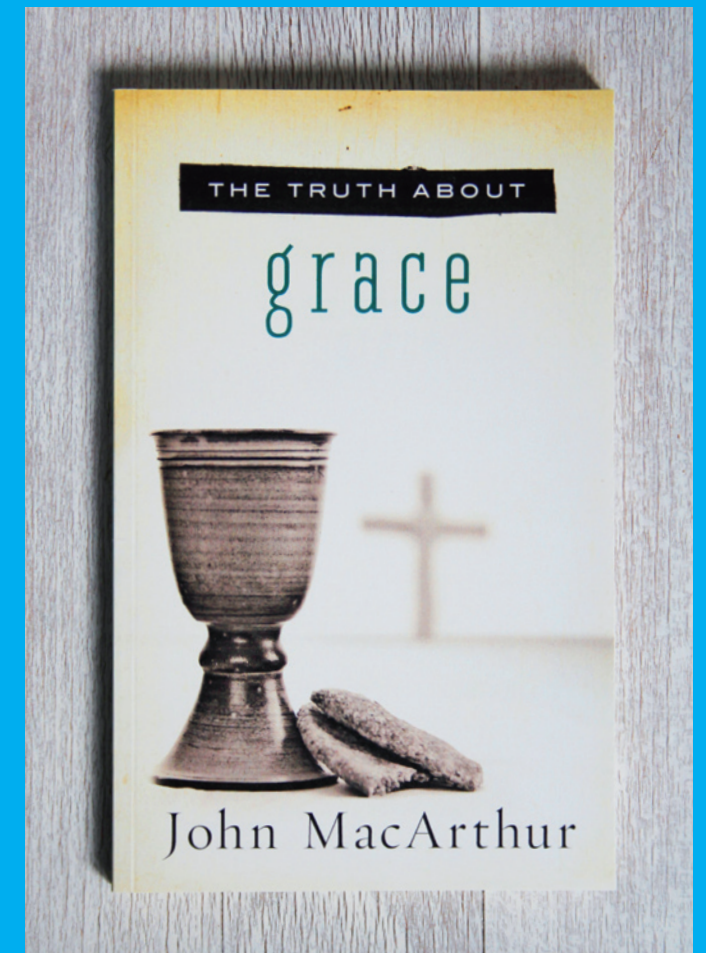
THE TRUTH ABOUT GRACE

Simple definitions can make grace feel like an obvious - even mundane - concept. Nothing could be further from the truth. Grace is the defining feature of the Christian faith. Once we understand how undeserving we are and how much favour we've been given, grace becomes shocking, thrilling, inspiring, and contagious. John MacArthur illuminates this profound concept with verse upon verse of Scripture. He also shows that misunderstandings about grace have led to some of the church's greatest problems, perhaps because grace is her most precious gift. *“Is the experience of God's grace in your life a thrilling thing? Just thinking about the fact that God, by His own sovereign plan, decided to be gracious to me is overwhelming. There is nothing greater than receiving grace upon grace.”* (John MacArthur)

(Softcover)

£6

Product code 452020





facebook

Why not take a look at the Grace To You Europe Facebook page? You can find regular updates here about news, products, videos, etc. Once you have connected with us please encourage any of your friends to join who you think may be interested too. You can find our page by simply searching in Facebook for 'Grace To You Europe'

MISSION STATEMENT

GRACE TO YOU EUROPE USES MASS COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TO EXPOSE JOHN MACARTHUR'S BIBLE TEACHING TO AS WIDE AN AUDIENCE AS POSSIBLE. WHY?

"For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13)

ONE OF OUR PRINCIPAL TASKS IS TO PROTECT BELIEVERS FROM BEING...

"tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph 4: 14)

We accept the God-given responsibility of *"speaking the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15) and strive for the growth of the church and the glory of the Lord, rather than the praise and honour of men.

Our role is not to supplant the local church's ministry, but to support it by providing additional resources to those hungering 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. Yet we sense the need for more in-depth resources, evidenced by the many Christians and Christian leaders worldwide who depend on our ministry to supplement their own study. Our desire is that God be glorified through Grace to You's radio broadcasts, CDs, DVDs, MP3s and publications. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of this ministry, and we desire to perform our work as unto Him, to reflect Him to all those we encounter, and to operate not in our strength but through His power (Philippians 4:13).

GRACE TO YOU EUROPE

5 Caxton House, Wellesley Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8ET

Tel: 01233 662262 Fax: 01233 638810 Email: admin@gty.org.uk

www.gty.org.uk

BROCHURE DESIGNED BY

RT
www.rtgraphics.co.uk