

UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH, ONE VERSE AT A TIME

# DYNAMIC RESOURCES

*"What's wrong with virtual, web-based congregations for the digital-age church? Why can't your iPod be your worship leader, your tablet be your pastor, and your friends your fellowship and accountability?"*

*The answer is simple: that's not the way God designed it."*

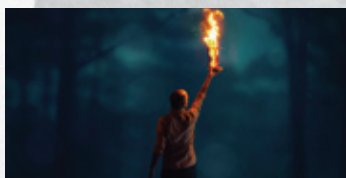
John MacArthur

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT  
ABOUT YOUR CHURCH?



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HOPE FOR A  
DOOMED WORLD



Jeremiah Johnson

A MENU  
OF REWARDS



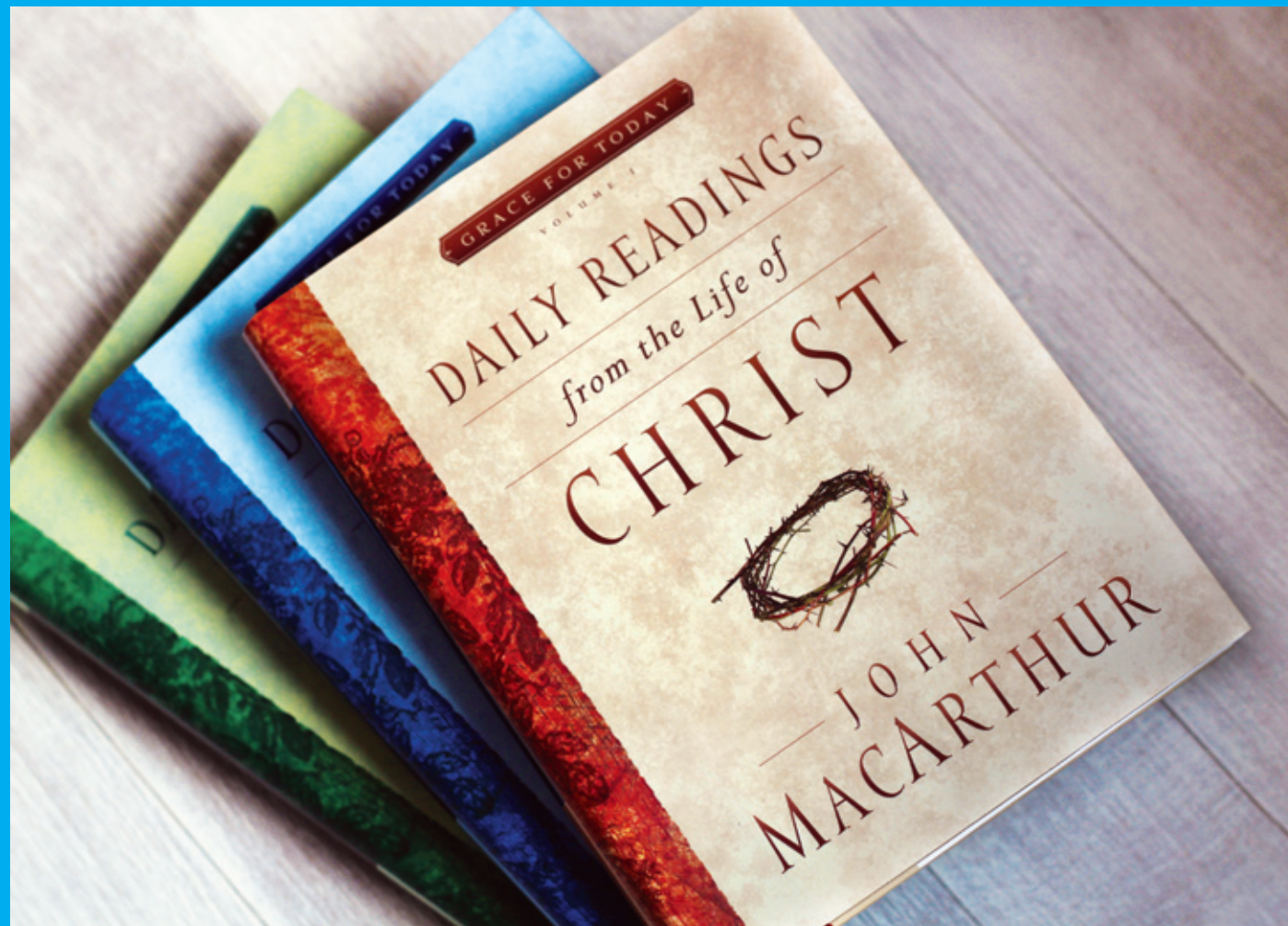
Jesse Johnson

CHRISTMAS -  
GOD'S RESCUE MISSION



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# What's so important about *Your Church?*

By John MacArthur

What's so important about your local church? At a time when there's more Bible teaching than you could ever consume available through radio, television, and the Internet, why should it matter where and how you're taking in God's truth? What's wrong with virtual, web-based congregations for the digital-age church? Why can't your iPod be your worship leader, your tablet be your pastor, and your friends your fellowship and accountability?

The answer is simple: that's not the way God designed it.

The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the importance of local assemblies. In fact, it was the pattern of Paul's ministry to establish local congregations in the cities where he preached the gospel. Hebrews 10:24-25 commands every believer to be a part of such a local body and reveals why this is necessary.

***'And let us consider how to  
stimulate one another to love  
and good deeds, not forsaking  
our own assembling together,  
as is the habit of some, but  
encouraging one another; and  
all the more, as you see the  
day drawing near.'***

Hebrews 10:24-25



It is only in the local body to which one is committed that there can be the level of intimacy that is required for carefully stimulating fellow believers *“to love and good deeds.”* And it is only in this setting that we can encourage one another faithfully and biblically.

The New Testament also teaches that every believer is to be under the protection and nurture of the leadership of the local church. These godly men can shepherd the believer by encouraging, admonishing, and teaching. Hebrews 13:7 and 17 help us to understand that God has graciously granted accountability to us through godly leadership.

Furthermore, when Paul gave Timothy special instructions about the public meetings, he said,

***“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching”***

1 Timothy 4:13

Part of the emphasis in public worship includes these three things: hearing the Word, being called to obedience and action through exhortation, and teaching. It is only in the context of the local assembly that these things can most effectively take place.

Acts 2:42 shows us what the early church did when they met together:

***“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”***

They learned God’s Word and the implications of it in their lives, they joined to carry out acts of love and service to one another, they commemorated the Lord’s death and resurrection through the breaking of bread, and they prayed. Of course, we can do these things individually, but God has called us into His Body—the church is the local representation of that worldwide Body—and we should gladly minister and be ministered to among God’s people.

Active involvement in your local church is imperative to living a life without compromise. It is only through the ministry of the local church that a believer can receive the kind of teaching, accountability, and encouragement that is necessary for him to stand firm in his convictions. God has ordained that the church provide the kind of environment where an uncompromising life can thrive and His people can grow spiritually.



# WHEN SHOULD PEOPLE LEAVE THEIR CHURCH?

*By John MacArthur*

Leaving a church is not something that should be done lightly. Too many people abandon churches for petty reasons. Disagreements over simple matters of preference are never a good reason to withdraw from a sound, Bible-believing church. Christians are commanded to respect, honour, and obey those whom God has placed in positions of leadership in the church (Heb. 13:7, 17). However, there are times when it becomes necessary to leave a church for the sake of one’s own conscience, or out of a duty to obey God rather than men. Such circumstances would include:

- If heresy on some fundamental truth is being taught from the pulpit (Gal. 1:7-9).
- If the leaders of the church tolerate seriously errant doctrine from any who are given teaching authority in the fellowship (Rom. 16:17).
- If the church is characterized by a wanton disregard for Scripture, such as a refusal to discipline members who are sinning blatantly (1 Cor. 5:1-7).

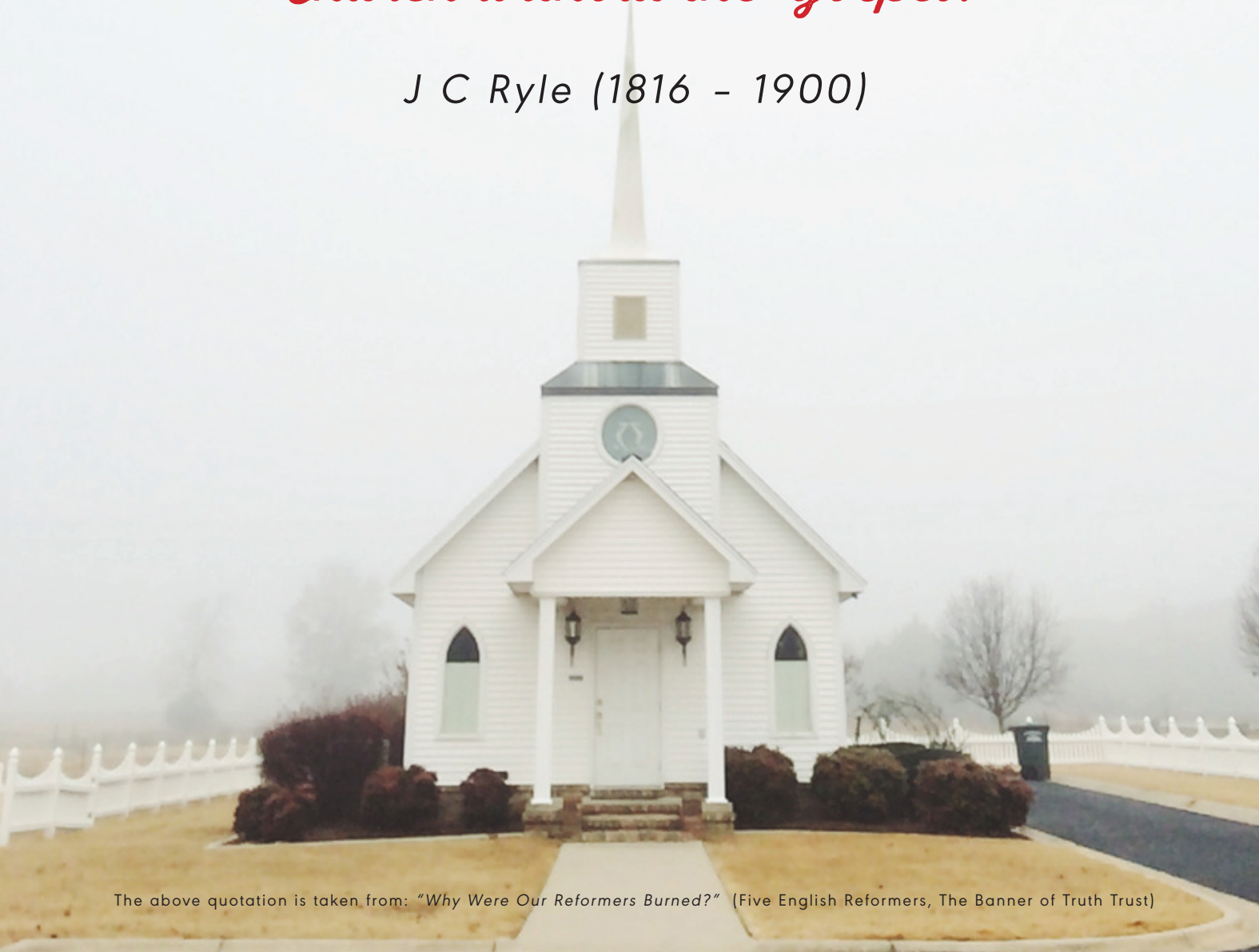
- If unholy living is tolerated in the church (1 Cor. 5:9-11).
- If the church is seriously out of step with the biblical pattern for the church (2 Thess. 3:6, 14).
- If the church is marked by gross hypocrisy, giving lip service to biblical Christianity but refusing to acknowledge its true power (2 Tim. 3:5).

This is not to suggest that these are the only circumstances under which people are permitted to leave a church. There is certainly nothing wrong with moving one’s membership just because another church offers better teaching or more opportunities for growth and service. But those who transfer their membership for such reasons ought to take extreme care not to sow discord or division in the church they are leaving. And such moves ought to be made sparingly. Membership in a church is a commitment that ought to be taken seriously.

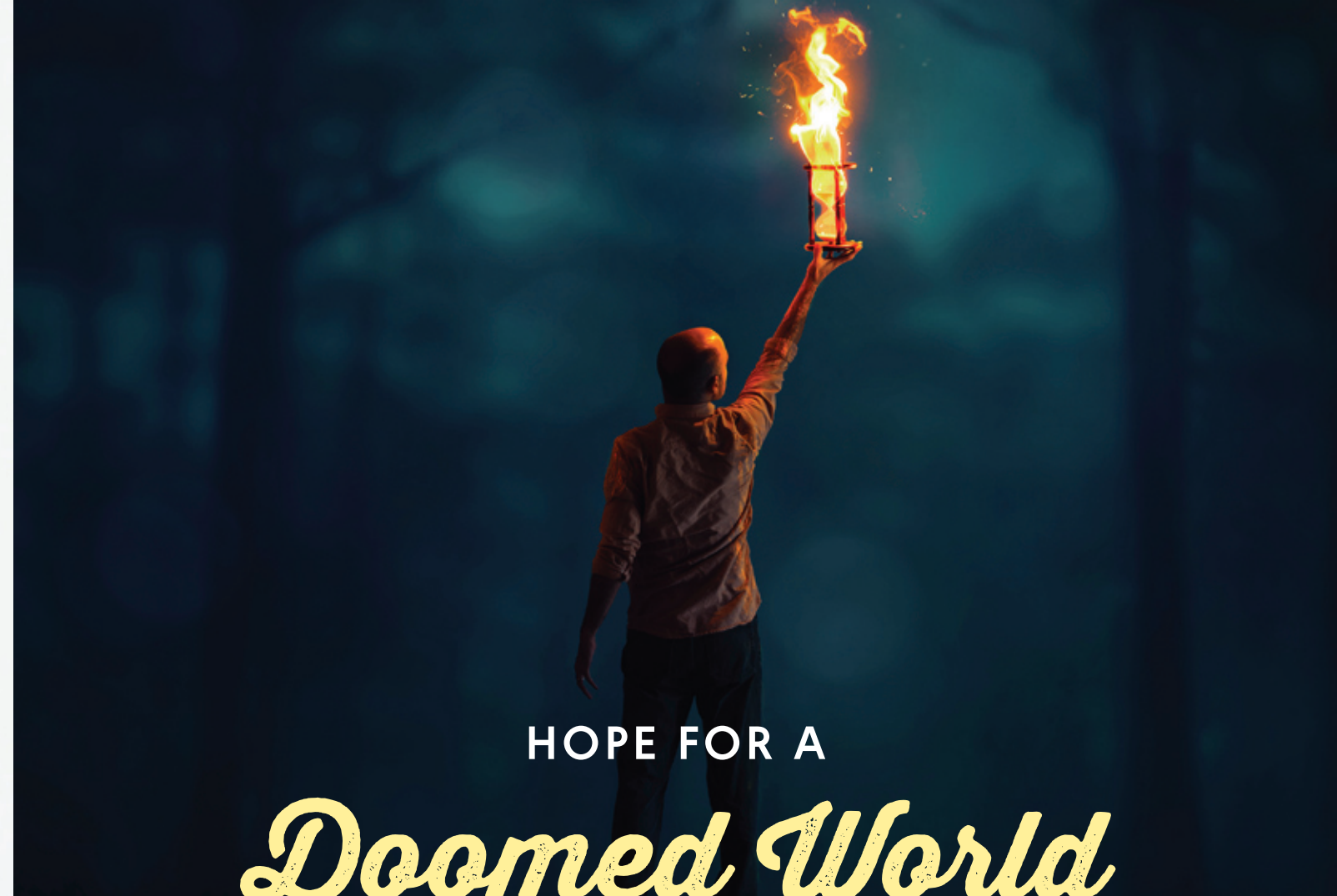


*“Take away the Gospel from a Church and that Church is not worth preserving. A well without water, a scabbard without a sword, a steam-engine without a fire, a ship without compass and rudder, a watch without a mainspring, a stuffed carcass without life, all these are useless things. But there is nothing so useless as a Church without the Gospel.”*

J C Ryle (1816 – 1900)



The above quotation is taken from: *“Why Were Our Reformers Burned?”* (Five English Reformers, The Banner of Truth Trust)



## HOPE FOR A *Doomed World*

By Jeremiah Johnson

It's natural to look at the world today and wonder if we're being judged by God. With shocking and steady increases in violence, sexual perversion, and immorality of all sorts, it's hard to not assume we're being punished.

But let's not make the mistake of taking too myopic a view of this present era in the world's long history of sinfulness. Many prior societies have excelled in debauchery and bloodshed. And if the Lord tarries, future generations will devise new means of fulfilling their lusts and indulging their immoral appetites. Imagine how utterly wicked the world must have been for the Lord to regret creating man in the first place, and choose to virtually blot out mankind through the flood (Genesis 6:5-7). The simple truth is this world is perpetually racing to hell. In a full sprint and with the hearty approval of their unsaved peers, unrepentant sinners chase down every temptation, indulge every lust, and gleefully invite their own destruction (Romans 1:28-32). The book of Judges succinctly describes such aggressive godlessness and wanton self-indulgence with the repeated phrase *“everyone did what was*

*right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25, c.f. 17:6)—an increasingly accurate description of contemporary culture. And it's only through God's grace that we're not locked in the same vile pursuits (1 Corinthians 6:11). We must also remember that the solution to society's sinful self-destruction is not political change. No amount of political leverage can press someone into God's kingdom, and there's no way to legislate true repentance and faith. That ought to be obvious to believers. In the end, the root cause of this world's problems is not political, so it makes no sense to expect the solution to be political, either. The heart of the issue is sin, and God's pattern for dealing with sin has nothing to do with political parties or movements. In his book *Why Government Can't Save You*, John MacArthur reminds us that the church's influence is not broadly political, but *personal*.

The church will really change society for the better only when individual believers make their chief concern their own spiritual maturity, which means living in a way that honors God's commands and glorifies His name. Such



a concern inherently includes a firm grasp on Scripture and an understanding that its primary mandate to us is to know Christ and proclaim His gospel. A godly attitude coupled with godly living makes the saving message of the gospel credible to the unsaved. If we claim to be saved but still convey proud, unloving attitudes toward the lost, our preaching and teaching—no matter how doctrinally orthodox or politically savvy and persuasive—will be ignored or rejected. [John MacArthur, *Why Government Can't Save You* (Nashville: Word, 2000) 130.]

The only hope for this doomed culture is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit unleashed in the lives of sinners through the proclamation of the gospel. That's where you and I come in. We aren't merely *observers* as the world succumbs to the ravages of its corruption—we're called to administer the antidote. We have been set apart to testify to the truth of God's Word—to live out that testimony as salt and light in this dark and ruined world (Matthew 5:13-16). What does that look like practically? The apostle Paul gives us some insight in his letter to Titus (Titus 3:1-8). Here are some of the key aspects of godly living he highlights.

## 1. Remember Your Christian Duties

Paul begins by reminding us of our place in the world—that we are not called to be rebellious revolutionaries, but that we must be humble, meek, and submissive to the authority God has placed over us, and that we need to reflect the character of Christ to the watching world. He writes, “*Remind them to*

*be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people*” (Titus 3:1-2). As John MacArthur explains, such behavior stands out to the world and adorns the gospel:

Consistently demonstrating willing obedience for human authority shows unbelievers that, even though the things of this life are not our primary focus, we still have respect for government and loving concern for other citizens. As Christians, our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and our main focus must be on holy living and on reaching the lost, because our Lord Himself came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). When we do live as God wants us to in an unbelieving culture, that in itself can make the attitude of the lost more receptive to God (1 Peter 2:12). [Why Government Can't Save You, 131-132.]

Believers need to work hard to protect their testimonies before the watching world. We need to guard against behaviors and activities that tarnish our testimonies and cast doubt on the truth of God's Word. We need to remember that our lives are not our own—that we belong to Christ as tools for the work of His kingdom. Our responsibility then is to stay sharp and useful through self-discipline and separation from the world. If we're going to have any influence against the overwhelming corruption all around us, we need to make sure the world sees a stark difference in the way we live.

There's a corporate element, too: We need to protect the testimony of the church. One of the greatest hindrances to the work of the church is often the church *itself*. The reasons vary. Sometimes the church excuses and tolerates sin to the

point it becomes a hypocritical laughingstock, rendering its testimony meaningless and its ministry impossible. It's hard to overstate how dangerous the church's dalliances with unchecked sin can be. If the church can't or won't set a moral and spiritual example, it effectively has nothing to offer the world. But it's not just sin that impedes the reach and the usefulness of the church. Today, the church's effectiveness is often cut short by wrong priorities. By putting emphasis and energy into things like numerical growth, worldly popularity, or extra-biblical authority, the church diminishes the value of biblical fidelity and cripples its ability to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). God's people need to get serious about His truth—its sufficiency, its inerrancy, and its authority. We need to be clear about what it says, and what it means by what it says. And we need to be unhindered in our ability to bring that truth to a corrupt and dying world.

## 2. Remember Your Unsaved Condition

There's a second mindset believers need to cultivate if they're going to be salt and light in the world. Rather than giving in to spiritual elitism and looking down on lost and depraved sinners, we need to remember that we were no better than them—and would *still* be no better—apart from the intervening and transforming work of Christ.

Paul describes our prior spiritual condition in stark detail: “*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another*” (Titus 3:3). As John MacArthur explains, remembering our sinful past ought to make us sympathetic to the spiritual needs around us, and patient with the depravity of sinners who don't know any better:

Unbelievers [are] spiritually insensitive to what God demands of them and what He desires in a righteous society. Hence, non-Christians have produced the kind of culture we have today. And although we detest the sinful, unbiblical aspects of society, we must remember that the same ungodly characteristics once defined our lives. Such awareness will keep us humble and prevent us from putting down sinners simply because they rub us the wrong way by their values and lifestyles. Our unbelieving neighbors don't need merely to be set straight about their

political and moral choices; they need soul-transforming salvation through Jesus Christ, just as you and I once did. [Why Government Can't Save You, 138-139.]

Remembering what you've been saved from helps protect you from spiritual pride, and motivates you to reach out to others with the only true source of lasting hope and salvation. It injects your evangelism with much-needed humility.

## 3. Remember Your Salvation

Along those same lines, Paul also wants us to remember the saving and transforming work the Lord has already accomplished in us.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

Whereas reflecting on our past sinfulness makes us sympathetic to a lost world in need of salvation, reflecting on our new state in Christ and His transforming work in us reminds us to live as citizens of heaven, and not wallow in the wretchedness that surrounds us. As John MacArthur explains,

Being saved is the most precious and important reality that Christians can know and appreciate. Salvation has delivered us from the predicament of being spiritually dead, enslaved to the penalty of sin, living under God's wrath, and on our way to hell (see John 3:16-17, along with verse 36). As a result, it has also granted us the privilege of being made “alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5), of being “conveyed . . . into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13), of being able “to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), and of attaining “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2). [Why Government Can't Save You, 141.]





But those glorious truths aren’t just for our own edification—they ought to prompt us to reach out to others with the same truth that has transformed us. As John says, “Our position as people who are saved by the sovereign grace of God provides us with a great hope for the future that ought to daily motivate us and keep us focused on our real priorities.” [Why Government Can’t Save You, 144.]

The call to be salt and light also means we need to be quick and capable proclaimers of the gospel. The world is an intimidating place, and many believers can find no end of excuses to avoid boldly telling others about their salvation in Christ. But such timidity is unbecoming of our faith and the Lord who saved us. We can’t give in to the fear of man, the desire for acceptance, and the love of our comfortable lives. We need to be willing to sacrifice all those things—*anything*, in fact—in order to reach and rescue sinners headed to hell. Perhaps the best cure for spiritual stage fright is found in the convicting words of Paul: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). With eternity in the balance, how can we afford to be silent?

## 4. Remember Your Mission

Finally, Paul wants us to remember our primary means of preserving and influencing the world. He writes, “*This saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people*” (Titus 3:8). We need to faithfully preach the truth, but we also need to live lives that make our message believable and attractive. As John MacArthur explains, that starts with a life of good works:

How can we live in a pagan society in a God-honoring manner, in such a way that we do not alienate the very people God wants us to reach with the gospel? We must

remember to be engaged in good works, which Scripture says will result from our salvation. [Why Government Can’t Save You, 144.]

Livingassaltandlightintheworldisnotjustaboutconfronting the deadness and darkness of society. It’s about living lives that adorn the gospel—that testify to God’s transforming work, and exemplify integrity, humility, and self-sacrifice. Not only do we need to preach Christ, we need to reflect His character to the world. Moreover, we need to react in a Christ-like manner to the opposition we’re sure to face. Jesus warned His disciples of the world’s hostility (John 15:18-19), and we see that same overt opposition toward God’s people and His Word today. But even as the world operates as our enemy, working to silence our message and stifle our influence, we need to remember that they are actually our mission field. Being salt and light means we don’t respond to hostility in-kind, but that we graciously and humbly endure whatever the world throws at us, and faithfully keep at the work of God’s kingdom. That, as John MacArthur writes, is how you and I make an impact in this ruined world:

If all that is true of you, you will recognize that it is not your primary calling to change your culture, to reform the outward moral behavior and professed political convictions of those around you, or to remake society superficially, according to some kind of “evangelical Christian blueprint.” Instead, you will constantly remember that the Lord has called you to be His witness before the lost and condemned world in which you now live. [Why Government Can’t Save You, 145.]

All scripture verses quoted in this article are from the English Standard Version Bible.

Jeremiah Johnson is the Lead Content Developer at Grace to You, where his work is regularly featured on the GTY blog. He had the privilege of growing up at Grace Community Church, under the teaching of John MacArthur. Today he serves there as a deacon and a Bible study shepherd. He and his wife, Tiffany, live in Valencia, California.



# A Menu of Rewards

By Jesse Johnson

When one of my daughters loses a tooth, I reward her with chocolate. A dentist might find this ironic—“Do you want her to lose the rest of them?”—but I feel that the reward is an essential element of this rite-of-passage.

A wiggly tooth is frightening to a child. The idea of the tooth falling out...well, that can be downright terrifying. And my normal go-to parental response of: “suck it up girl, this happens to everyone!” doesn’t quite assuage the fears. But chocolate does. In fact, my girls so love chocolate that they actually look forward to losing their teeth. The existence of the reward took something that induced fear, and it transformed the trepidation into expectation.

Yet the existence of a reward does not make the inevitable

conditional. It is not as if a child could say, “Since I don’t like chocolate, I guess I’ll just keep all of my teeth.” No, the teeth are coming out regardless of whether or not the girl actually wants the reward.

With this analogy in mind, consider why Jesus ends each of Revelation’s seven letters with the promise of a reward. In this section of scripture (Revelation 2-3) Jesus writes to a few bad churches, a few excellent churches, and a few decent churches. He tells some of them that wrath is coming, some of them that rescue is coming, but to all of them he describes a Christian’s future rewards.

In fact, if you look at the end of all seven letters, Jesus describes fifteen different rewards:



## *Ephesus (2:7)*

- THE TREE OF LIFE

## *Smyna (2:10,11)*

- THE CROWN OF LIFE
- NO SECOND DEATH

## *Pergamum (2:17)*

- HIDDEN MANNA
- WHITE STONE
- NEW NAME

## *Thyatira (2:27)*

- RULE THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH
- THE MORNING STAR

## *Sardis (3:5)*

- CLOTHED IN WHITE
- NAME NOT BLOTTED OUT OF BOOK OF LIFE
- CONFESSED BEFORE FATHER AND ANGELS

## *Philadelphia (3:10-12)*

- KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL
- PILLAR IN TEMPLE OF GOD
- NAME OF GOD, CITY OF GOD, AND NEW NAME

## *Laodicea (3:21)*

- SIT WITH JESUS ON HIS THRONE

These rewards can seem all over the map—and that’s because they literally were. They are not described in the seven letters in any kind of chronological order, because instead they are following the geographical progression of the seven letters themselves (the letters would have been delivered in the order they are written in, following the Roman postal route).

That doesn’t mean the rewards are random. Instead, Jesus chose facets of future glory that would be particular to the struggles and strengths of the church that received the letter. So in that sense, each of the letters is its own stand-alone unit, and each unit describes a reward that is referenced latter in the book of Revelation.

With the unity of each letter in mind, Jesus’ words to the Philadelphian church stand out. This letter is unique because they receive a description of rewards that happen at different stages of future glory. Jesus begins by describing the rapture, then the tribulation, then the kingdom, and finally the eternal state.

With that basic eschatological outline in mind, it is helpful to view all of the rewards offered in terms of what stage of future glory they are received. In fact, think of the rewards as a menu; when you go to a restaurant, they don’t just give you an alphabetized list of all that they offer. They don’t sort

it by price, or by preparation time. Instead, they sort it by the typical way a person would receive it—appetizer, salad, entrée, and dessert. So let’s look at the rewards of Revelation 2-3 through the lens of a menu—a menu of rewards:

## *Rescue of the Rapture (3:10):*

Because the book of Revelation describes the cataclysmic events of chapters 4-19, and then obviously describes the church ruling the nations with Christ (2-3; 19-20), then it would be logical to assume that the church must somehow pass through the events of Revelation 4-19.

So chronologically, the first of the rewards experienced is the rescue *“to keep you out of the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth”* (3:10; also described in John 14:3, 1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thess. 4:17, as well as Rev. 12:5).

## *Reunion with Rewards (3:11):*

After the rapture (or for those who proceed the rapture), the next stage of history will be in the presence of God in glory. It is at this moment when we awake in the presence of Christ,

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”*

Rev 2:7

*“The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels”*

Rev 3:5

aware of our unworthiness. There Jesus will clothe us in white our name will not be blotted out of the book of life, and Jesus will confess us before angels and before our heavenly father (3:5).

After that, we will receive a white stone, demonstrating we have a right to be there (2:17). We will receive the crown of life, and no longer be in fear of the second death (2:10-11). We will have access to the hidden manna of God’s power (2:17). This is the scene also described 2 Cor. 5:10 and Rev. 19:7-9.

## *Reign of the Kingdom (3:12a):*

After our reunion with Christ in glory, he will return to earth with his glorified church. He will subdue the nations, and we will rule over them with an iron rod (Rev. 2:27, 3:9). We will reign with Jesus as he sits on his throne (3:21), and as his temple is established (3:12; also described in Rev 20).

## *Restoration of Eternity (3:12b):*

As Revelation draws to a close, believers will see the new Jerusalem descend from heaven, and the city of God will be with man for all time, and we receive a new name for eternity (Rev. 3:12, Rev. 21-22; 1 Cor. 15:28).

Taking all of these together should give us a grand view of our future. It should have the effect of causing us to look at the world which always seems to be wiggling on the brink of disaster, and know persecution can come and go, because God has rewards for his believers that will remain forever.

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



## CHRISTMAS - GOD'S RESCUE

# Mission

*By D Paul Mitchell, Director, Grace to You Europe*

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895) lived in Ireland during the Great Famine (sometimes referred to as the Irish Potato Famine) which is estimated to have caused the death of some 1 million people. It was also an era when diseases such as typhus and smallpox devastated whole communities; infant mortality was especially high due to extreme poverty and woefully inadequate healthcare.

Moved by compassion for the poor, and especially concerned for the eternal souls of their children, Cecil used her gift as a hymn writer to paint word pictures in order to enable even the very young or illiterate to understand profound scriptural truths. This is exemplified in her much beloved carol, Once in Royal David's City. Whilst specifically written for little children, the carol doesn't contain mere Victorian sentimentality. Consider the second stanza, which says: "He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all", a statement which is faithful to scripture and therefore both theologically and doctrinally correct. The second stanza also goes on to remind us that Jesus' entrance into the world

brought Him into poverty and humility, thus identifying with the poor, because "His shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall." At Christmas we celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ coming down to earth from heaven on a divine rescue mission, as we read in 1 Timothy 1:15 *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"*

Sadly, most people on earth don't want to be rescued from their sin, and even amongst the relatively small number that acknowledge they need rescuing, the majority of those believe they must lend God a helping hand. The adherents of all religions (including some that claim to be Christian) are to some extent trying to earn salvation by performing rituals or good deeds in the belief that God (or the gods) will then be obligated to grant them favour. But salvation is monergistic, God working without any help from us - the only thing we contribute is the sin from which we need to be saved. Without God's intervention we are in an extremely perilous situation, never more than a single breath away from being swept into everlasting hell.

Man's determination to merit his salvation reminds me of the events surrounding a shipwreck that occurred near my home in West Cornwall when I was a small boy during the extremely severe winter of 1962-63. The time-line leading up to the wreck commenced on Friday 2nd November when the French fishing trawler, Jeanne Gougy, with a crew of 18 aboard, slipped her berth in Waterford, Ireland, and plotted a course East, heading for her home port of Dieppe. The crew experienced rough weather during the voyage but conditions worsened as they approached Land's End. In the early hours of the 3rd November disaster struck. In mounting seas the trawler was driven onto jagged rocks at the base of the towering cliffs and wrecked. Mercifully, Land's End based coastguards were quickly on the scene and attempted a rescue. A rocket with a line attached was fired at the stricken vessel, but tragically, the crew member who tried to retrieve it was swept away into the raging Atlantic.

Later, as dawn broke, four bedraggled survivors appeared on deck and so another attempt to reach the boat by rocket was made. This proved successful, a line was secured and a remarkable rescue was made by Breeches Buoy. The joint efforts of the coastguards on the cliff, who fired the line down to the trawler, and the tenacious efforts of the crew who managed to secure the line were highly commendable. No one ever doubted for a moment that those men deserved to be rescued - after all, they fully played their part in the operation which saved their lives. The rescue of those four shipwreck mariners is an illustration of man-made religion: God lets down a rope of rules and regulations from heaven and as we perform our religious rituals and good deeds, we appease him and gain His favour, resulting in our entitlement to commence a slow and very uncertain climb upwards. Or to put it more succinctly: God does His bit on the top of the rope, when we do ours at the bottom.

Most religious people really do believe that they must contribute something to their salvation, a fact confirmed by the results of surveys carried out by the Barna research group. In recent years researchers have estimated that as many as 81% of Americans who self-identify as born again Christians believe that the proverbial saying, "God helps those who help themselves", is a verse from the Bible. It would appear that the Barna surveys have revealed a very sad state of affairs indeed. If the situation is as bad as that in the U.S.A, a country renowned for its robust evangelicalism, it must be considerably worse in Europe, where liberal Protestantism and national churches characterised by

non-biblically authorized ritual and liturgy dominate much of the church scene. How depressing to think that as we approach 2017, the year in which we will be celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the start of the Reformation, we have a situation in our churches where most people still believe in a salvation that is synergistic, a combination of God's grace and man's works, a doctrine that the Bible absolutely rejects:

***"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."***

Romans 3:23-25 (ESV)

Church Reformer, William Tyndale, the first person to translate the Bible into English from the original Hebrew and Greek, confirmed that the Bible does not provide any support whatsoever for human effort to be added to God's grace in our salvation when he asserted: "It is the blood of Christ that opens the gates of heaven, and not thy works."

But let's return to the story of the Jeanne Gougy, because what happened later that November day helps to illustrate God's sovereignty in our salvation. By late Saturday morning, people had driven out from Penzance and the surrounding villages to gather on the Land's End cliff tops in order to gawp at the spectacle of the wrecked trawler being smashed on the rocks below by huge Atlantic breakers. Whilst they were all staring down in morbid fascination, a woman in the crowd cried out that she had spotted a figure in the wheelhouse as the wreck was momentarily exposed between the pounding waves. At first her claim was met with disbelief and derision - it wasn't possible that anyone could still be alive in what had now become a water filled coffin. However, as binoculars were focused on the wheelhouse, a fleeting glimpse was caught of someone waving an arm just before the trawler was once again plunged beneath the waves. Unhappily, by this point there was no longer any possibility of reaching the trawler by Breeches Buoy - in fact the man in the wheelhouse was beyond any rescue effort that could



be attempted by those standing on the cliffs. It seemed inevitable that the unfortunate crewman was going to perish whilst the crowd looked on without any ability to save him. Whilst they realised they couldn't help him, the coastguards thought there might be a very slim chance that somebody else could, so they made a desperate phone call to the Royal Air Force and No. 22 Squadron, based at Chivenor in Devon, scrambled one of their new Westland Whirlwind Search and Rescue helicopters to the scene. Exceptional flying skills enabled the pilot to position his aircraft directly above the wreck, but sea conditions were considered to be far too dangerous to attempt a rescue. However, the Winchman, Sgt Eric Smith, surveying the disaster scene from the open door of the hovering helicopter, knew that the man in the wheelhouse would not be able to cling on for much longer. A rescue attempt **had** to be made - otherwise the poor man was doomed. Therefore, at great risk to his own life, Sgt Smith volunteered to be lowered down to the stricken vessel, which was continually being submerged by massive waves. Sgt Smith later recounted what confronted him as the helicopter hovered above the wreck:

*"I sat on the edge of the helicopter door and it was terrifying and I quickly realised the only way was to go down myself. Coming to terms with my fears, I committed myself to going down – it was pretty frightening with the boat swamped by the waves. But it was the right thing to do because the fisherman in the wheelhouse was on his last legs."*

Sgt Smith was lowered into the maelstrom and once inside the wheel house he found not one survivor, but two, a man and a boy, whom he rescued separately. A report of a possible third survivor required him to enter the wheelhouse yet again and crawl along a passageway towards the radio room to search for the survivor. None was found, but before being able to return to the helicopter he had to disentangle the winch cable from the hub of the ship's wheel; the wheelhouse and passageway continually being engulfed by the sea. Sgt Smith was awarded the George Cross for his bravery and the significance of the rescue recognised 50 years later when at the age of 76 he was selected to be a Torch Bearer at the London Olympics.

However, the real miracle of this rescue was only fully revealed when the two survivors were eventually discharged from hospital and were able to tell their side of the story. They described how for many hours they had only managed to stay alive by holding their breath each time the wheelhouse was submerged by hundreds of tons of water. They had kept on pushing themselves up to gasp air in between each wave and were totally exhausted, freezing cold, and on the very point of death when Sgt Smith entered the wheelhouse and pulled them to safety.

Unlike their fellow crew members who had been rescued earlier on that day, they were completely powerless to contribute anything to their own rescue, they could only



The wrecked trawler, Jeanne Gougy. Alamy stock photo

hold their breath between waves and feebly raise an arm in the hope that they would be spotted in their distress and someone would come to save them – in their case they were totally dependent upon the selfless bravery of Sgt Eric Smith and the exceptional flying skills of the helicopter pilot.

In the salvation of men and women it was God who initiated the divine rescue mission. He didn't agree to rescue us on the basis that if we did our bit He would do His. Instead, in supreme love He sent His only Son Jesus Christ to save us, and the Son, in willing obedience to His Father, left the glory and splendour of heaven and came down to earth to rescue perishing sinners, pathetically trying to haul themselves to safety up the slippery rope of good works.

***“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”***

Romans 5:6-8

Salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or good works:

***“But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our***

***Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”***

Titus 3:4-7

Distinct from the adherents of made-made religion, true Christians gladly acknowledge their need of the Saviour; they understand that their eternal souls are in great peril without Jesus Christ, having no ability to save themselves through the performance of religious rituals or good deeds. Man-made religion, which demands entry to heaven based on good works, allows men and women plenty of boasting rights, but in so doing robs God of glory, unlike biblical Christianity, which gives God all the glory for His amazing grace:

***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”***

Ephesians 2:8-9

I hope that as you sing ‘Once in Royal David's City’ this Christmas, you will consider afresh the profundity of the words that constitute this beloved carol, because as you sing you are in agreement with historic Christianity's belief in the sovereignty of God in salvation, affirmed by the Nicene Creed, which unequivocally states:

**For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven**

And that, as Cecil Francis Alexander appreciated, is a truth that even a little child can understand!

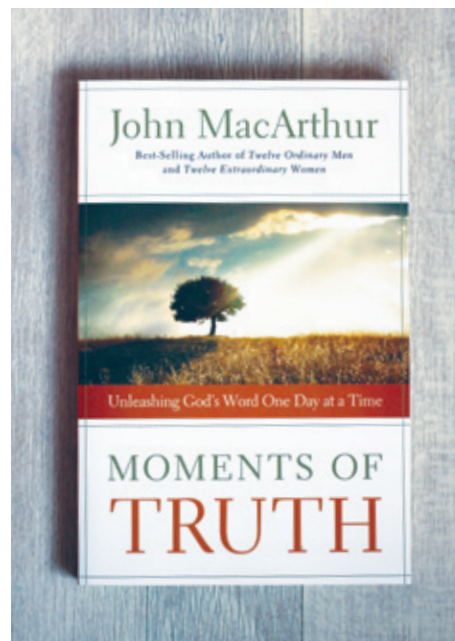
All scripture verses quoted in this article are from the New King James Bible, unless indicated otherwise.

The author gratefully acknowledges [www.wrecksite.eu](http://www.wrecksite.eu) for some of the details surrounding the wreck of the Jeanne Gougy



# Recommended Reading

Visit our online store at [www.gty.org.uk](http://www.gty.org.uk) to view our entire range of Study Bibles and books by John MacArthur

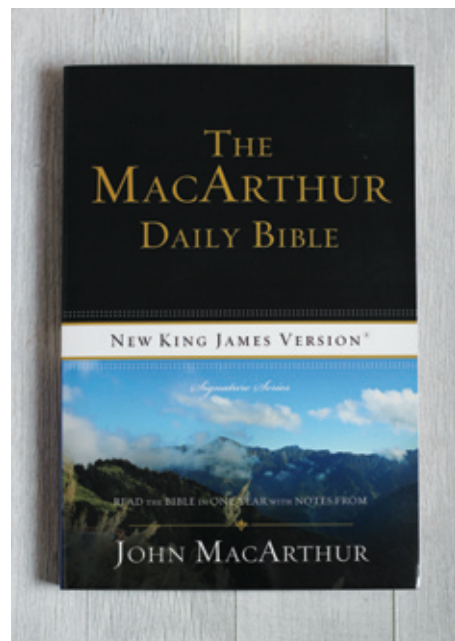


## Moments of Truth

We are in desperate need of moments of truth. Truth that can shine through the clutter of modern life. Truth that we can welcome without hesitation. Truth that is good for our souls. The Bible is the only source for such truth, and John MacArthur is absolutely committed to sharing and illuminating God's truth for us. From creation to parenting, leadership to the end times, *Moments of Truth* addresses practical and foundational subjects in bite-size pieces. Day by day, John quotes Scripture and helps us apply it to our lives with eye-opening lessons and probing questions that are relevant to the season. Spend time each day with *Moments of Truth*, and see how God uses the truth to set you free.

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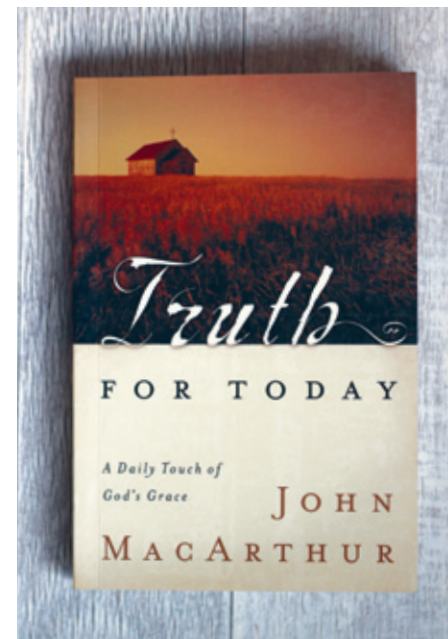
## The MacArthur Daily Bible (NKJV)

The latest resource based on the popular *MacArthur Study Bible*, this unique resource takes a portion of the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs for each day of the year, with background notes and explanations from John MacArthur to help guide and inform you.

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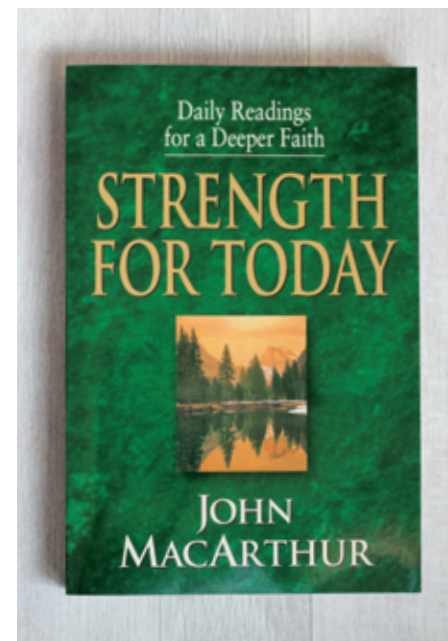
## Truth for Today

Be prepared to be encouraged, challenged, energized, and changed as John MacArthur offers seasoned wisdom on different passages of Scripture.

Perfect for daily readings, *Truth for Today* is a unique gift book destined to be a treasured classic for years to come.

Softcover pocket size  
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# £4.65

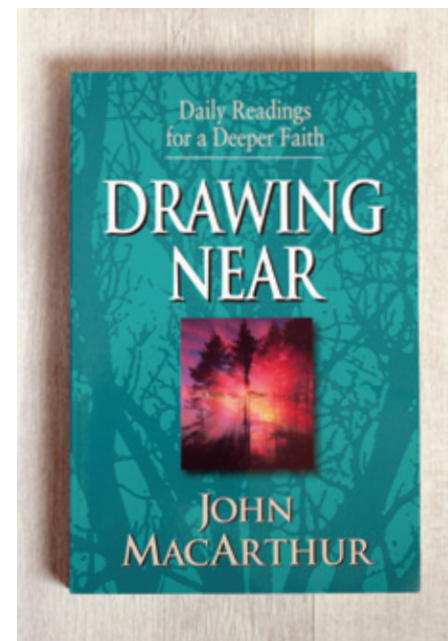


## Strength for Today

Offering significantly more than the typical or topical anecdotes of some other devotionals, the in-depth Bible exposition of this daily study gives you a firmer grasp on many great passages of Scripture. Passages that speak at length of Christian character, the meaning behind Christ's death and resurrection, and how we benefit from life's trials. After a year in God's Word with this book as your companion, you will find that both your walk with Christ and your faith have grown stronger – all because you committed yourself to a daily, in-depth study of the Scriptures, and to learning more about the God who is your Strength.

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## Drawing Near

We know that we must nourish our bodies every day with food and water or our health will decline. But we may forget that's true spiritually as well. When we neglect to regularly feed on the Scriptures, our faith becomes weak and we start to lose touch with our Saviour. But a diet of fast food is also bad for the body; your body needs more than a quick fix. John MacArthur offers a solution – and an alternative to the typical thematic or topical devotionals – by taking an in-depth approach to Bible exposition in this daily companion. Stimulating and instructive, the selections take you on a well-crafted, guided tour of dynamic Bible doctrines and their application to life. There are also practical suggestions for prayer, ideas for further exploration, and an easy guide for reading through the Bible in a year.

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## 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

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