



The Truth About Forgiveness

John F. MacArthur Jr.

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"The greatest measuring rod of love in the life of a Christian may be forgiveness, because God showed His love to us in terms of forgiveness." ?John MacArthur

Does anyone really want to forgive? Or admit that we need forgiveness? Whether we're giving or receiving, forgiveness is hard. It seems unfair. It feels unnatural. And as best-selling author and pastor John MacArthur demonstrates, forgiveness apart from Christ is unnatural. It is only as we understand our need, Christ's power and example, and what it really means to love that we can embrace two of the most liberating acts of love: forgiving and being forgiven.

The Truth About Series

For decades MacArthur has encouraged countless Christians to develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and a greater respect for God's truth. In The Truth About series, he now gathers his landmark teachings about core aspects of the Christian faith in one place. These powerful books are designed to give readers a focused experience that centers on God's character and how it applies to their daily walk of faith.

The Truth About Forgiveness Details

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From Reader Review The Truth About Forgiveness for online ebook

Debbie says

Short, sweet and to the point. Great read on a singular topic - clearly written and easy to follow.

Richard Long says

Share God's Forgiveness with others!

Excellent teaching on forgiveness. John MacArthur reminds us that forgiveness is supernatural for a person whose sins have been forgiven by God.

V Luttrell says

This book lays out the fundamental importance of God's forgiveness for the believer and the non-believer. MacArthur addresses several important issues in his seven simple chapters. He opens the book with a look at our utter sinfulness and need for a Savior. By starting with a portrait of humanity's total depravity, he sets the stage for the rest of the book: "It is the good news that man's sin can be forgiven, guilt can be removed, life can have meaning, and a hopeful future can be a reality" (p. 16). MacArthur then goes on to show that forgiveness comes from God alone through Jesus Christ and the extent to which we are forgiven. It is a beautiful picture of the love of God toward His people. He brilliantly weaves together our sinfulness, our need for forgiveness, and the grace and love of God poured out on humanity through Jesus Christ. It reminded me how Jesus came to forgive sinner. also that I am to follow Him and be like him. Let me leave all my sin to follow after my Lord. . MacArthur went into much detail how God's forgiveness is undeserved and how God truly wants to forgive, just like in the story of the Prodigal Son. :Let me like Jesus reach out and share the Gospel. First let us confess to each other and to God that we might be forgiven. MacArthur writes about God's forgiveness simply yet exactly. The chapter I found crucial was the last chapter that addressed the need to forgive others. I know that the Lord will give me the strength I need to forgive and to be forgiven by Him. His way of writing is quick and easy to read and understandable. Every one must read this book! Thank you Booksneeze for the opportunity to read this book.

thereadingowlvina (Elvina Ulrich) says

Review coming soon!

Dan says

I'll admit, I'm somewhat of a bibliophile, and I'm cheap. I love books. Especially free books. So when I saw

I could get John MacArthur's new book in exchange for writing a review (this very review you're reading right now) I jumped at it. I've read a lot on forgiveness, both toward God and man, and was planning on taking an hour, skimming the 115 page book, and getting the next book in his series. My plan failed... Let me explain why.

From the first page, I found myself screaming "Yes!" I assumed that this was going to be a basic book, but MacArthur hits the nail on the head when dealing with reasons we don't want forgiveness. He starts by rallying against the sin as sickness mentality in one of the best presentations I've ever read (this is coming from a Biblical Counseling student. I've read about it before.) Granted, it is a few years dated (cites the DSM III-R, DSM IV-R is current [p. 5]), but it is true none the less. He describes the ways man tries to obtain forgiveness, through the law or through Christ. He cites studies and scripture, and is poignant and eloquent in doing it. I'm in love with this book... and I haven't even started chapter two.

Now chapter two: MacArthur speaks of the fact that only God can forgive sins. And Jesus forgave sins, which means that Jesus is God and forgives sins. He uses the case study of the quadriplegic lowered through the ceiling's healing to show this. He presents the story and it's meaning and implications well - he is helpful in showing the connections between healing and forgiveness, and offers a fresh (read: biblical) take on the story (not "what will you do to bring your friends to Jesus.")

Chapter three then deals with God's forgiveness in spite of who we are, not because of who we are.

MacArthur speaks clearly about confession and repentance as necessary. He continues in chapter 4 to show from the Prodigal Son and story of Joseph how God actually wants to forgive. MacArthur is faithful to present the full truth of the scriptures on the issue of forgiveness. I'm glad I didn't skim like I wanted too!

Chapter five finishes up the story of the Prodigal Son focusing on the father's desire to forgive.

Chapter six speaks of the narrow and wide paths, and speaks against Finny-esque easy believism. He does not (unfortunately) outline a doctrine of substitutionary atonement, but rather focuses on man's role in forgiveness with God. Which is the point of the book - and it is brief - which is why I'm keeping my "unfortunately" comment in parenthesis. Chapter seven concludes with our response: Seek forgiveness from God and forgive others.

Final Thoughts: throughout my summary, you get some of my opinions. Here are the rest. I really do like this book. Run, don't walk, to the internet and consider buying it. It's a really good book. It's very practical and not theology heavy. You can read the book quickly, I did it in one day. This is somewhat peripheral, but the binding is a little bit cheap. I'll probably have some loose pages in it because I'm bound to be lending this book out and reading it over again.

Sarah says

In this book, Macarthur outlines the Godly attribute of 'forgiveness'. First he explains our need of it, and how God provided it, and defined it by His example, showings us how we are to forgive as well. I thought it was a good overview of the topic. I thought that the book would be longer than it was (its quite small, only 118 pages), but if you want a resource to give to someone who wants to learn about the Gospel, this is a nice concise read.

I liked Macarthur's point about how the escalating depravity of humanity that Paul speaks about in Romans 1 is not merely grosser sins, rather, it is the loss of conscience: "Paul knew that those who underestimate the enormity and gravity of human sinfulness - especially those who do not see their own depravity - cannot apply the only effective remedy to their problems...to attempt to eradicate the human conscience is one of the most spiritually destructive pursuits any individual or society can engage in. It results in God's wrath- not yet ultimate wrath (hell(or eschatological wrath (the Day of the Lord), but temporal wrath. That is, He removes restraining grace and turns a person or a society over the cycle of sin without the mitigating deterrent of conscience.....That is Paul's main point in Romans 1:18-32. There he describes the judgment of God that results in humanity's decline into wanton sin. Notice that the most dramatic feature of his narrative is not the

ghastly sins he names - although he chronicles some pretty gross practices. But the singular feature that marks each step of mankind's descent under God's wrath involves the hardening and decimation of the conscience.....Paul said God's wrath is revealed because people 'suppress the truth in unrighteousness' (Romans 1:18). He is referring to sinners who have successfully hushed their own consciences. 'The truth' they suppress is innately known truth about the character of God, a sense of good and bad, and a basic knowledge of right and wrong. These things are universally known to all, 'evident within them; for God made it evident to them' (vs.19 NASB). In other words, God manifests Himself in the most basic sense within every human conscience."

Also, his critique of modern therapy, and our turning sin into 'illness' is very pointed: "...the number of people who suffer from such newly identified "sicknesses" is increasing even faster. The therapy industry is clearly not solving the problem of what Scripture calls sin. Instead it merely convinces multitudes that they are desperately sick and therefore not really responsible for their wrong behavior. It gives them permission to think of themselves as patients, not malefactors. And it encourages them to undergo extensive - and expensive- treatment that lasts for years, or better yet, for a lifetime. These new diseases, it seems, are ailments from which no one is ever expected to recover completely.....Recovery, the code word for programs modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous, is explicitly marketed as a lifelong program. We've grown accustomed to the image of a person who has been sober for forty years standing up in an AA meeting and saying, 'I'm Bill, and I'm an alcoholic.' Now all 'addicts' are using the same approach - including sex addicts, gambling addicts, nicotine addicts, anger addicts, wife-beating addicts, child-molesting addicts, debt addicts, eat addicts, or whatever. People suffering from such maladies are taught to speak of themselves as 'recovering' never 'recovered.' Those who dare to think of themselves as delivered from their affliction are told they are living in denial..... Disease model therapy therefore feeds the very problem it is supposed to treat. It alleviates any sense of guilt, while making people feel they are victims helplessly bound for life to their affliction....(it)is disastrously counterproductive. By casting the sinner in the role of a victim, it ignores or minimizes the personal guilt inherent in misbehavior. 'I am sick' is much easier to say than, 'I have sinned' But it doesn't deal with the fact that one's transgression is a serious offense against a holy, omniscient, omnipotent God. Personal guilt is for that very reason at the heart of what must be confronted when dealing with one's sin. But the disease-model remedy cannot address the problem of guilt without explaining it away. And by explaining guilt away, disease-model therapy does untold violence to the human conscience. It is therefore no remedy at all, but a disastrous prescription for escalating wickedness and eternal damnation."

If you want a good, but quick explanation of the Gospel to read, or just to carry around with you to give to inquirers this would be a good choice.

I received this book as a complimentary copy from BookSneeze® in exchange for my review(which does not have to be favorable).

Charli says

I have to say it - I did not like this book. At all. John MacArthur starts the book off by basically stating that all illnesses, physical and mental, are the products of a relationship with God that is not quite right. While yes, sometimes physical and mental ailments can be attributed to a person's relationship with God not being quite what it should be, this is not always the case. In fact, there are many people who are "right with God" and are still afflicted with mental and physical ailments.

I do agree with the author's assessment that our society has found a way to ignore our consciences and assign our guilt to something other than our own sinful nature. However, I do not agree that you may not be a Christian if you get angry with people easily or if you harbor unforgiveness toward someone. That is part of

being human and frankly, it is something to be worked on, but it **does not** mean that you are not a Christian.

Finally, I take high offense to the idea that altar calls, which are done in most churches that I have attended, are manipulative things that mean nothing and that no free will is involved in a person's salvation or forgiveness. God does not forgive us of our sins until we actually make the decision to come clean to him about what we have done and ask for his forgiveness. If we do not ask for his forgiveness, he does not give it to us. But if free will is not a part of it, then we will never ask because we cannot make that choice.

All in all, this book flies in the face of everything I have ever been taught - in multiple churches that I have attended and I find much of this book to be self-serving to the author's beliefs.

(I read the paperback version, which Goodreads does not list.)

Lizette Vega says

Pastor Mac Arthur provides a thorough look at human nature, and our inability to forgive. Society is quick to present our problems as addictions, or illnesses, but never draws the conclusion that those ailments may result from guilt, bitterness, or resentment.

He continues his argument by reviewing the parable of the prodigal son and which correlates with how God forgives us. If God is so generous with his forgiveness, why can't we pursue reconciliation with others?

This little book is highly recommended.

Stephanie Ziegler says

This book was nothing like I thought it would be. I thought I would be reading a book that gives advice on how to forgive others so I can forgive myself. The book ended up being about how God can only give forgiveness. The author used stories and Scripture from the Bible to explain this. I enjoyed reading the stories. I have never read the Bible (at least, not yet) and enjoy learning in any way I can. The morale of the stories was easy to understand, but the author kept repeating the same things over and over and it annoyed me.

That, however, is the good in the book. By the second page of the book, I was outraged at his opinions about illness and disabilities. He states that all "kinds of immorality and evil conduct are now identified as symptoms of this or that psychological illness." I suffer from a disability. However, I DO NOT blame my disability for things others or I perceive as wrong or sinful. My therapist does not try to bring up other things to continue therapy sessions. My therapist told me to turn to religion and find a church and my life will change for the better. I was very offended by the author right out of the gate, yet I continued to read the book without any bias.

Is this 114-page book worth the \$12.99 it states on the back cover? That is for you to decide, but I would tell you to search for a different book on forgiveness. At least one that is more substantial for the price you pay.

If you don't believe me, check it out for yourself!

Until next time, take life one page at a time!

Seth Nelson says

Very good.

Reuben H. says

This is a book in a series of three books by John MacArthur. I had to choose one out of The Truth About Grace, The Truth About Forgiveness, or The Truth About the Lordship of Christ to read and review. I chose the one that I would be the most interested in, as forgiveness is something I have always struggled with.

I didn't expect much from the book; nonfiction generally bores me by explaining things I already knew in five times the amount of words necessary. I do admit sometimes I thought it was a little wordy—even for a book only a little over a hundred pages—but that is to be expected, and it didn't happen nearly as much as I thought it would.

I started the book genuinely surprised; MacArthur started at a point I wouldn't expect, and continued explaining what I had never thought of before. That, in itself, is something wonderful. I began expecting little, and what I found was more than I could have hoped for.

The first chapter made me think a lot. Sometimes I thought, "He can't say that, because it's very apparent that he's never experienced that himself," but every time as I kept reading I realized that this man truly knows what he's talking about, whether he's experienced "certain things" or not.

The Truth About Forgiveness is not a typical Christian nonfiction book, basically putting a boring sermon I've heard before into text format. It's something entirely unique, and for the first time something actually worth putting into book format. It focuses much on what Jesus said about forgiveness, through parables and stories, along with actual happenings, but it does it in a way that grabs your attention and keeps you interested. What's more, it actually uses good points that you might not have thought of.

It's extremely rare that a nonfiction book, especially about Christianity, does not disappoint me, but this one not only didn't disappoint me, it actually impressed me. When I saw the dozens of five-star ratings for the book, I inwardly chuckled and knew it would have a lot to prove if it were going to get anywhere near that rating from me. Because face it, everyone: sermons and books about forgiveness are generally just plain boring. We never truly hear what we need to hear. John MacArthur's book, however, is different.

I have never recommended a nonfiction book as highly as I recommend this one. Five stars.

Naomi says

"The Truth About Forgiveness" by John MacArthur is another book in "The Truth About" trilogy. In this book, the focus is forgiveness, both our need to receive it and to give it. He opens the book with a look at our utter sinfulness and need for a Savior. By starting with a portrait of humanity's total depravity, he sets the stage for the rest of the book: "It is the good news that man's sin can be forgiven, guilt can be removed, life can have meaning, and a hopeful future can be a reality" (p. 16). MacArthur then goes on to show that

forgiveness comes from God alone through Jesus Christ and the extent to which we are forgiven. It is a beautiful picture of the love of God toward His people. He brilliantly weaves together our sinfulness, our need for forgiveness, and the grace and love of God poured out on humanity through Jesus Christ.

My two favorite portions of the book were in-depth looks at the story of the paralyzed man (Luke 5) and the story of the prodigal son. He helps the reader to better understand the culture of the day in order to fully grasp the depth and beauty of the story. I now have a much greater appreciation for those stories as a result of the teachings from this book.

It is a quick read, but so rich in its concepts and deep in its teachings. It is a fabulous book for individual study or for a small group study. Either way, it should be a must-read for all serious people of faith!

(I've received this complimentary book from Thomas Nelson Publishing House through the Book Sneeze program in exchange for a review. A positive review was not required and the views expressed in my review are strictly my own.)

Debbie says

"The Truth about Forgiveness" is a Christian book primarily about God's grace and forgiveness toward us (though he also made the point that we should pass this forgiveness on to others).

The author started off with 12 pages (out of 112 pages) ranting about modern psychology. His points in relation to forgiveness could have been handled in 2 pages. I was hoping to be able to hand this book to unbelievers, but the rant came across to me as off-putting unless you already agreed with him (and I did), so I doubt that the people who need to know about forgiveness the most would even get past those pages.

What the book actually said about forgiveness was correct, but I was surprised at how often the author made comments--and even built his case for forgiveness--on things not actually mentioned in the Bible. And he could have easily stuck with the plentiful Scriptures that talk specifically about forgiveness.

For example, the author stated with certainty that the Pharisees had come in Luke 5:17-26 to condemn Jesus and thwart his popularity (page 23). This was early in Jesus' ministry, and nowhere in the 3 gospel accounts of this event does it state that this was their intention. And the Bible doesn't hesitate to say when it was someone's intent.

The author also portrayed the Pharisees as the main Bad Guys of the gospel, which books like "Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus" clearly demonstrate isn't true. Even in the Luke 5:17-26 event, two of the three gospel writers that talked about this event only mention the Scribes showing unbelief. Yet MacArthur focused on the Pharisees instead.

While I recognize that this wasn't meant to be a scholarly work, it would have been nice to know where he got his information about what Pharisee's believed (like his comments on page 61), the cultural information behind the parable of the prodigal son, and so on. He seemed to be making a lot of assumptions and even added to the Bible in an attempt to increase the impact of what was actually given in the Bible. For example, the Bible doesn't even mention a village in Luke 15:11-31, but the author spent several pages making a major point out of how the father saved his prodigal son from the shame of having to walk through the village (pages 72-80).

He also commented several times (for example, pages 18, 86) on how the Pharisees had made all these rules

so that they could earn their way into rightness with God. Yet, as I understood it (and, unfortunately, I'm not sure which places I read this), the people came to those who knew the Law really well and asked them to make these boundaries so that they wouldn't sin accidentally.

It'd be like a young woman who wants to be modest asking her mother what, exactly, makes up modest clothing. Yes, it could easily turn into being all about necklines and hem lengths, but that doesn't mean the mother originally made those rules to make her daughter earn her righteousness.

Basically, I think there are books out there on the topic of forgiveness that are more focused on what the Bible actually does say on the topic, and I'd recommend them instead. (For example, "Forgiveness: Breaking the Power of the Past" by Kay Arthur).

I received this book as a review copy through the BookSneeze program.

Lisa says

“The greatest measuring rod of love in the life of a Christian may be forgiveness, because God showed His love to us in terms of forgiveness.” —John MacArthur

Does anyone really want to forgive? Or admit that we need forgiveness? Whether we're giving or receiving, forgiveness is hard. It seems unfair. It feels unnatural. And as best-selling author and pastor John MacArthur demonstrates, forgiveness apart from Christ is unnatural. It is only as we understand our need, Christ's power and example, and what it really means to love that we can embrace two of the most liberating acts of love: forgiving and being forgiven.

My husband enjoys listening to John MacArthur and when I told him that The Truth About Forgiveness was available to be reviewed he strongly encouraged me to read it. I chose the ebook version.

As I began to read the first chapter I realized the book was not quite what I thought it would be. Having read other books on forgiveness I thought this would be another “someone did you wrong, God wants you to forgive them” book. It didn't take long to see that was not where MacArthur would be taking me. I will admit that the first chapter was more “clinical” than I care for but it helped to lay a good, strong foundation for the following 6 chapters.

What I took away from The Truth About Forgiveness was thoughts about my own personal need for forgiveness from God. The teaching on the very familiar story of the Prodigal Son offered some new insight into the story. I had never considered the actions of the father and the repercussions he could have faced. I was also able gleaned more insight into the story about the four friends and the paralytic and the calling of Matthew.

I appreciate the teachings in The Truth About Forgiveness and give the book four stars.

I received this eBook through the Booksneeze program in exchange for an honest review.

Anne says

Pastor John MacArthur is renowned for his clear and precise teaching of God's Word. Although this tiny, truth filled book is a tough one to swallow in the opening pages, I believe it is full of sound and true doctrinal statements about forgiveness.

Reiterating that we must first recognize sin as sin, and not gloss it over as a sickness, disease or disorder, The Truth About Forgiveness is hard hitting and convicting. The truth is...we must confess our sin and repent,

turning away from that which has ensnared us, by the strength and victory that we receive through Christ Jesus.

The book gives solid evidence that God requires we forgive others. That's not always easy to do, but it is necessary. As Pastor MacArthur states, "The blood of Christ cries for forgiveness." (Pg. 113) Contained within these seven short and decisive chapters are a raw and intimate look at God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and how each plays a part in forgiveness.

The thing I love the most about John MacArthur's books, especially this one, is his straight forward approach to the Gospel. There's no glossing over, no making the Christian walk into a life of rainbows and lollipops, but showing me the way to have a deeper and more committed relationship with my Savior.

I received a copy of this book from Booksneeze in exchange for my honest opinion. No other compensation has been received.
