**Explanatory Note to CopyPress:** I have aB.A. in History/Classical Civilization from UCLA (June 1983, Magna Cum Laude) and a Certificate in Bible from Logos Bible Institute (June 1981, Summa Cum Laude). I worked as a Book Editor for the international Grace to You ministry ([www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)) full time from 1984-1994, when my first child was born, and on a freelance basis since then. That first child is getting ready to start college so I am seeking to supplement my family's income with more writing jobs.☺ These are some of the most popular GTY books I've edited (my name is mentioned in most of them): *The MacArthur Study Bible, The Gospel According to Jesus, Charismatic Chaos, Anxious for Nothing, Saved Without a Doubt,* and *Different by Design: Discovering God's Will for Today's Man and Woman*. What follows is the preface I wrote for my most recent GTY project.

**PREFACE TO *AT THE THRONE OF GRACE***

There is great power in godly prayer. You are probably convinced of that fact already since you are reading the preface to a book that seeks to lead you by prayer to the throne of grace, where we who are God’s people may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our times of need.[[1]](#footnote-1) That plural pronoun *us* is all important because it follows the pattern established by our Lord Jesus Christ in answer to this all-important request from His disciples: “Lord, teach us to pray.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Ponder anew the comprehensive scope and majesty of what has become known as The Lord’s Prayer:

**Our Father, who is in heaven, *(The Paternity of Prayer)***

**Hallowed be Your name. *(The Priority of Prayer)***

**Your Kingdom come. *(The Program of Prayer)***

**Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. *(The Plan of Prayer)***

**Give us this day our daily bread. *(The Provision of Prayer)***

**Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. *(The Pardon of Prayer)***

**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *(The Protection of Prayer)***

**For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Consider how strange this sounds instead: “*My* Father, who is in heaven … Give *me* this day *my* daily bread. And forgive *me my* debts, as *I* also have forgiven *my* debtors. And do not lead *me* into temptation, but deliver *me* from evil.” Aside from the issue of familiarity, I suspect the reason that sounds so strange is we who love the Lord cant’ help sensing that the most vital things we pray about go way beyond just ourselves. The Spirit within us compels us to lift up our brothers and sisters in Christ at the same time. This book is all about helping us as God’s people to pray like that more than we actually do because of the natural temptation to focus on self and immediate circumstances than what our Lord said to focus on when praying.

I have been preaching at the pulpit of Grace Community Church for over forty years now. Since the beginning, I have regarded as among the most sacred and enjoyable parts of our worship the time when I lead my congregation before the throne of grace in my own humble version of a high priestly prayer.[[3]](#footnote-3) Many members of my flock through the years have told me that prayer is a highlight for them as well each week. The prayers offered here take you with us before the throne of grace.

My habit is to start this special time of prayer by first reading a somewhat lengthy portion of Scripture out loud. My prayer usually reflects that Scripture, at least in part. It never fails that while I am right there at the throne of grace in spirit with my congregation, the Spirit of God reminds me of other Scripture verses as well so I can bring before our Lord what I’m sensing He most wants to hear from us. That, of course, is what we most need to pray. The prayers that follow have been selected from a span of years, and the categories that emerged from this collection are these:

* **Prayers Focused on Worship and God Himself**
* **Prayers Focused on Joy and Longing**
* **Prayers Focused on the Cross and the Gospel**
* **Prayers Focused on Personal Holiness**
* **Prayers Focused on Family Matters**
* **Prayers Focused on Useful Service**
* **Prayers Focused on Holy Seasons**

These prayers are written so you can simply read and pray at the same time when you are ready. To help you get ready, I know that some of you will want to have a focused time in God’s Word that relates *directly* to what you will be praying about. Therefore, you will find discrete footnotes at the bottom of each prayer. They are there for you to use or ignore as you will. I am sure at least a few of you will have fun *after* praying to see if you can figure out on your own what main Scriptures I had in mind when praying!

One final thought I leave with you to ponder: Some of you come from Christian traditions with spiritually rich model prayers and prayer books; many more of you come from spiritually impoverished traditions with little to no emphasis on prayer—corporate or otherwise—or with prayers that far more resembled the vain repetition and showy, grandiose prayers Jesus warned against than the model prayer we find in His Sermon on the Mount.[[4]](#footnote-4) *I want you to realize that just because model prayers and prayer books have been abused and badly used, that doesn’t forbid the right use of them.* To reassure you that there really are good ones out there, here are two masterful prayers that take us right before the throne of grace:

* **Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Your ways, like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devises and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Your holy laws. We have left undone those things that we ought to have done, and we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. But You, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults! Restore those who are penitent according to Your promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live godly, righteous, and sober lives to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**
* **Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen**.[[5]](#footnote-5)

I don’t claim that my prayers come as close to scraping heaven as those do, but if they lead you to the throne of grace on behalf of your brothers and sisters in Christ as well as yourself about what really matters to our Lord, I am richly rewarded for my labors. May all of you be even more richly blessed by the magnificent King who invites us to His throne of grace!

Sincerely in Christ,

**Pastor John F. MacArthur**

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1. Hebrews 4:12-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:9-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Read the entire chapter of John 17 slowly and carefully if you want a feel for what motivates me when I pray this kind of prayer, and the divine model I keep in mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew 6:5-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The first prayer is a general confession. The second is a prayer of humble access. In 1552 they both were written by Thomas Cranmer in his greatest contribution to the English Reformation: *The Book of Common Prayer.* Four years later, Cranmer was martyred for his faith when Mary Tutor, the elder daughter of King Henry VIII, made a bloody but unsuccessful attempt to destroy the English Reformation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)