

# Pastor MacArthur, What Are You Afraid Of?

Pastor **John MacArthur** issues scathing indictments against all things charismatic in his book *Strange Fire*. But the cessationist flat out refuses to sit down with respected leaders from any camp in the body of Christ that disagrees with him.

Pastor MacArthur is a distinguished man of God. Why won't he sit down with his brothers in Christ and seek understanding? He has said things that have angered some and hurt others—and I believe it comes from a lack of understanding rather than a mean-spirited crusade to tear down what the **Holy Spirit** is doing.

Before going further, let's consider some of the heavy-handed accusations he's launched against an entire movement:

"The **charismatic movement** as such has made no contribution to biblical clarity, no contribution to interpretation, no contribution to sound doctrine."

"If the **charismatic movement** was being produced by the **Holy Spirit**, the glory of Christ would prevail everywhere. It would be Christ-dominated and everyone in the movement would be bowing the knee to the true Christ in belief of the true gospel."

"The actual source from which they obtained their fire is not recorded. Nor is it important. The point is they used something other than the fire God Himself had ignited. This is a sobering and terrifying account, and it has obvious implications for the church in our time."

"If Scripture alone were truly their final authority, **charismatic** Christians would never tolerate patently

unbiblical practices—like mumbling in nonsensical prayer languages, uttering fallible prophecies, worshipping in disorderly ways, or being knocked senseless by the supposed power of the **Holy Spirit**.”

“Those who have had a **charismatic** experience have been baptized with the Spirit, they say—and that supernaturally empowers obedience, fosters holiness, and produces the fruit of the Spirit. If their claims were true, **charismatics** ought to be producing leaders renowned for Christlikeness rather than flamboyance. Moral failures, financial chicanery, and public scandals would be comparatively rare in their movement.”

“The movement itself has brought nothing that enriches true worship.”

Dr. Michael Brown and R.T. Kendall have both invited MacArthur to sit down and discuss his concerns and accusations against the **charismatic movement** with civility and brotherly love. But the controversial pastor is not willing to listen to what they have to say.

How can MacArthur make such sweeping accusations against a move of God and refuse to sit down with any number of godly men who want to bring unity to the body of Christ?

In a letter sent directly to MacArthur, Kendall, who recently released the book *Holy Fire* that deals, in part, with what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones believed regarding the gifts, the baptism and the immediate witness of the Spirit, wrote:

“I hope you will consider reading my book. It will do you no harm and, just maybe, you might hear God speak to you in a way you never thought possible. I only pray with all my heart that you have not gone too far already. In the second panel discussion at your conference you actually said, ‘I know I am wrong somewhere.’ If so, who would you listen to? Would you not want to know as soon as possible if you have got it wrong

on those matters you are so dogmatic about?

“If I knew for sure it would be honoring to God—for the sake of sincere Christians who are fence-straddling on cessationism, I would ask that you and I have a civil debate (presidential style) on the issue of cessationism. Could we pray about this?”

Kendall got no response from MacArthur.

Brown has been making appeals to MacArthur for months, beginning before the “Strange Fire” conference. Brown recently released *Authentic Fire* to address, point-by-point, MacArthur’s accusations against the **charismatic movement**. Brown has been requesting a face-to-face meeting or public debate for the last six months but reports MacArthur refuses to respond. Two months ago, MacArthur’s book publicist scheduled him to join Brown on his *In the Line of Fire* radio broadcast, and she confirmed the interview was set, but when MacArthur learned of it he cancelled the interview.

There’s nothing wrong with having strong opinions. I read (and write) strong opinions every day. God has strong opinions! But when one who has the influence of a **John MacArthur** makes statements like the ones I listed (and others that are just as scathing) that completely demonize a **Holy Spirit**-inspired movement, it’s troubling. And it’s more troubling when one who has the influence of a John MacArthur won’t sit down with men of God like R.T. Kendall and Dr. Michael Brown to work toward understanding and peace in Christ.

MacArthur’s stance: “I’ll start believing the truth prevails in the **charismatic movement** when its leaders start looking more like Jesus Christ.”

Pastor MacArthur, Pentecostal and **charismatic** leaders are forgiving people. We want unity. We want peace. We want understanding. We want to see God glorified through this controversy that you ignited with your books and conferences.

Isn't that what you want, sir? Please, sit down with Dr. Brown or R.T. Kendall. Read their books with an open mind. After all, wasn't it Jesus Christ who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9)?

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