MALACHI
LIVING FOR A LEGACY
Study Guide
Welcome

Our church family has seen God’s faithfulness over the 30 years since we first met in Pastor Eric and Carol’s home to plan the launching of SVCC. A new generation of leaders have been prepared by God to take the church into its future decades of influence for the Kingdom of God. It’s time to look toward this future and ask again, “What can we do to leave a legacy of faithfulness that blesses the next generation and helps our kids and grandkids accomplish the work God has yet in store for them?” With that in mind, we are starting a new series for Sunday Sermons and Small Groups in the last book of the Old Testament.

The book of Malachi closes the Old Testament Scriptures with an illustration of what Israel had become—children who have been placed on the Father’s lap only to spurn His loving overture. Imagine a loving, patient father that chose to adopt a stubborn child, long beyond the baby stage where cuteness covers a multitude of sins. Imagine this child climbing on the lap of the father, only to slap that father in the face. Israel was that child and God was that father.

Despite this figurative illustration, this spiritual reality existed during the time of Malachi. But God, through his messenger Malachi, seeks to strengthen the weak links in the chain of faith and insure that Israel will not lose her spiritual legacy. Today, each of us are being asked the question, what type of legacy do we want to leave behind? We hope you will join us and take the challenge of answering that question personally and as a congregation!

Lead Teaching Pastor, Isaac Serrano & Founding Teaching Pastor, Eric Smith
South Valley Community Church
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1 The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.
2 “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob
3 but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.”
4 If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.’”
5 Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!”
A doption is a term most are familiar with and perhaps, a reality that many have personally experienced, either as babies or children. While legal adoption does not occur into adulthood, spiritual adoption is a Biblical concept that transforms the life of every believer, both young and old. In fact, adoption is the initial start of every redemptive story and an integral part of every believer’s identity. God, the loving father, adopts believers as his children into an immediate and intimate parental relationship where endless grace abounds. God chooses his children. His children do not choose him. At the onset of the book of Malachi, God reiterates his deep love for his chosen children while recounting the historical example of his grace granted. As evidence of that grace, God speaks of the preservation of the line of Jacob and destruction of the descendants of Esau.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the impact that spiritual adoption through Christ has had on you! How does knowing you are adopted change your view of yourself and God?

2. How do you feel about the quality of love of the One who has chosen you? How does this affect your love for others?

3. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Discuss this quote with your small group.

4. Some think that people are just “a little off” spiritually, but not really that “bad off.” What does the Bible teach about man’s standing before God?

**HE PREDESTINED US FOR ADOPTION AS SONS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIS WILL.**

**Ephesians 1:5**

**“EVERYBODY DESERVES HELL, BUT SOME GET GRACE INSTEAD.”**

- Read Malachi 1:1-5 (found on page 4) & open in prayer.
- Share your message notes and thoughts from the sermon.
- **Warm Up:** Have you ever considered adopting a child? What unique joys and difficulties might be involved in adoption?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

AN ORACLE: THE WORD OF THE LORD TO ISRAEL THROUGH MALACHI. V. 1:1

5. When is the last time you heard the “word of the Lord,” or felt directly convicted or moved by God?

6. How have you experienced long periods of God’s silence in your life?

7. In what areas have you had expectations that resulted in disappointments and discouragements?

8. How do you refocus your spiritual eyes on Jesus and give these disappointments to him?

Earthly expectation breeds disappointment and discontent.

God the father was attempting to get the attention of his wayward children through a strong letter of rebuke, a profession of love and a proven history of grace.

Malachi, meaning “messenger,” was the last of the prophets chosen to deliver God’s message. It was Malachi’s voice, but God’s words, thoughts, and heart toward his people.


The nation of Israel was disappointed by unmet expectations when it came to receiving the restoration promises of God. These expectations bred disappointment and discontent.
God referenced events from the book of Genesis to give his people the historical proof of his love. Genesis 25-27 focuses on the brotherly feud of Jacob and Esau.

Esau was a manly man and Jacob was a mama’s boy. Esau foregoes his birthright while Jacob tricked his father.

Israel was accusing God of being unloving and distant, grumbling, complaining, and accusing God after unmet expectations.

God responds graciously to these allegations. You know who someone is when he or she is tested in high-pressure situations. God responded to this high-pressure situation with a gentle patience and reassurance.

God does not save good people but demands glory from those he chooses to save.

Both brothers were bad. God gave favor (grace) to Jacob and detested Esau. God chose Jacob to reveal his glory. God decided to bring Jesus from the lineage of Jacob.

God the Father began by reiterating his relentless love for his people. Not impersonal and distant, but a personal and intimate father! Grace is antithetical to every other religious teaching. Religions value individuals based on works – If you do, then I will...

Only the God of the Bible says, “I love you” despite the actions of the individual! Your obedience does not compel God to love you more, rather, your love for God should compel you to obedience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. What is the relevance of God beginning with the words, “I have loved you”? Why did they doubt his love?

10. In what ways have you doubted God’s love? How do you expect God to show his love to you? What gives you reassurance?

11. How do you see grace working to bring transformation to your family lineage?

12. What are some things that you are doing to influence your children or grandchildren toward a God honoring life?
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What might “beyond the border of Israel” be referring to?

How has the Lord shown his greatness to you? In what ways are you still waiting on God to make good on his promises?

- Malachi uses a question-answer form of dialogue to develop his themes. Seven questions or complaints raised by the people are recorded.
- The book is dominated by God’s voice. The voice of an effective father. He dishes out “tough love” to his children.
- Malachi addresses the sins of a people “just going through the motions” of their faith. They doubted the love and justice of God.
- God makes it clear that he would ultimately make good on all his promises.
Conclusion

YOUR OWN EYES SHALL SEE THIS, AND YOU SHALL SAY, "GREAT IS THE LORD BEYOND THE BORDER OF ISRAEL!"

V. 1:5

- When you do not see yourself as very bad, you cannot see God as very good.
- God the father is greater than we feel and we are worse than we fear.
- If you begin with faith in the love of the Father, it will alter your legacy.
- God expects us to change our attitude even though he might not change our circumstances.
Pray that the depth of God’s love would penetrate your mind, soul, and spirit, transforming you from the inside out while propelling you to a life of greater obedience and service.
6 “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ 7 By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the Lord’s table may be despised. 8 When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts. 9 And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. 10 Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. 11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. 12 But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. 13 But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord. 14 Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations...”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is wrong with the gift-giving of the priests in verses 6-8?

2. How might your attitudes or actions be honoring or dishonoring to the Lord?

3. Why is spiritual leadership so important? In what ways are contemporary spiritual leaders like or unlike the priests in Malachi’s day?

4. Where has God placed you in an area of leadership? Since we are all called to follow and lead, discuss how you function in each of these roles.

It was the winter of 1777. General George Washington and his men had just lost a key battle to the British, and were also battling the fierce cold, hunger, and sickness that resulted from a harsh winter. Of the eleven thousand men that settled into Valley Forge, few were properly equipped for the months ahead, as evidenced through the lack of coats and shoes. By the spring, one in four soldiers had died from sickness. Despite horrid living conditions and delayed pay, none of the soldiers deserted the camp. In the midst of pain, hunger, and death, the soldiers remained steadfast and determined. Why did they stay? It was because of the exceptional leadership of their general. As with this historical leadership legacy, the same principal applies to spiritual legacy and leadership. People become like their leaders, children become like their parents, and employees become like their CEOs. Furthermore, the culture of a church flows from the nature of church leadership. In the days of Malachi, God addressed the poor leadership exemplified by the priests, emphasized his demand for honor, and stated his detest with their second hand sacrifices he called evil.

STUDY GUIDE: Where is the honor?

- Read Malachi 1: 6-14 (found on page 12) & open in prayer.
- Share your message notes and thoughts from the sermon.
- Warm Up: Everything stands and falls on leadership. How have you found that statement to be true? Who has been influential as a leader in your life?
The temple was the center of worship for the entire old covenant. The priests would offer sacrifices on behalf of God’s people, where death of an acceptable sacrifice was equivalent to the atoning for sin.

God was angry after receiving sacrifices in the form of rotten food, lame animals, and halfhearted devotion from the priests and people. He desired honor as father and fear as master.

The children and grandchildren following the 2nd temple rebuild apparently did not understand or value spiritual legacy.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

5. **What does this progression say about God and his character?**

6. **How have you experienced this progression in your own Christian walk?**

7. **How has God revealed his ultimate authority in your life? Is that comforting or frightening to you?**

8. **How have you come to understand what it means to fear the Lord? Is that a difficult concept for you?**
Controversy

- God is both father and master and reiterated this identity to the priests. Father – illustrated his personal, intimate, and affectionate nature. Master – illustrated his authority, power, and possessive nature.
- God implied that honor and fear are imperative responses to who He is. Priests – lacked honor, fear, and consequently despised the Lord. People – became like their leadership.
- God addressed the priests first because of how their leadership affected the people. Priests – inferior sacrifices and halfhearted devotion. People – became hardhearted, non-legacy living followers.

Discussion Questions

9. God said he is both father and master. Do you identify God as an affectionate father or an authoritative master or both?

10. In what ways do Christians show honor to their heavenly father?

11. In what ways might believers today be guilty of this same offense in their serving and giving to God?

12. How would you describe your motivation for giving to God?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

13. How does Jesus and the Gospel address this problem?

14. What should our response be in light of Jesus becoming the acceptable sacrifice? How can we give God our best since He has given us His?
Conclusion

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations. V. 1:14

- God gave us his best without blemish in Jesus!
- God demands devotion without compromise.
- God’s glory needs to be taken seriously.
- Jesus was not a lame sacrifice but the best and first.

Share and journal any conclusions you have come to understand through this study.
Pray that serving the great King would not be a burden, but a blessing; not something you have to give your life to, but something that you get to give your life to because he first loved us and then gave us his best and first.
Malachi 2:1-9 ESV

1 "And now, O priests, this command is for you. 2 If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. 4 So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. 5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name.

6 True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. 7 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8 But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts, 9 and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."
Sunday Message

NOTES:
What’s in a book? Besides the obvious like pages and words, books are comprised of themes, characters, setting, grammatical devices, and other elements that entice the reader to engage in the content. The best books tend to have strong characters, takeaway values, satisfying endings, some unpredictability and defined tone. The last element of tone is not as widely understood as the rest. Tone is the attitude of the writer conveyed to the reader. It is the emotion that the writer intends for the reader to feel. It is the context within the content. In the Bible, there are many tones that are conveyed, often several different ones within the same book. Sometimes the Bible is celebratory, exciting, and climactic, like a wedding. Sometimes it is more constant and stable, resembling the feel of a traditional classroom. Often, the Bible conveys the tone of battle, in which one is roused to fight and defend. In Malachi Chapter 2, the tone is one of intensity, urgency, anger, and vulgar honesty. God is still addressing the priests for their dishonor, promising curses on their blessings, as a result of their deafened ears and hardened hearts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this passage, Steven rebuked the Jewish audience of his time for the same sins of their ancestors. How does this illustrate the spiritual legacy of hardened hearts?

2. Can you recall a time when you were resistant to the Holy Spirit’s conviction? What was it about and what were the resulting consequences?

3. How do people’s hearts become darkened and hardened?

4. What role does willfulness and disobedience play in this process?

YOU STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE, UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS, YOU ALWAYS RESIST THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS YOUR FATHERS DID, SO DO YOU. ACTS 7:51

THEY ARE DARKENED IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING, ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD BECAUSE OF THE IGNORANCE THAT IS IN THEM, DUE TO THEIR HARDNESS OF HEART. EPHESIANS 4:18
The priests were the descendants of the tribe of Levi and the leaders chosen to do the mediating between man and God, prior to the coming of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. The priests were acting unholy while still trying to mediate — this was hypocrisy at its finest.

The priests were the Bible teachers of the day and were to serve as the ultimate example of character, devotion, and commitment, as modeled by Levi, the priesthood’s originator. During the days of Malachi, the priests were allowing divorce, divorcing themselves, having affairs with unbelieving women and allowing their children to do the same.

God was angry and his message was one of urgency, because the actions of the priests were corrupting the ministry that ultimately belonged to Jesus! God could not allow them to be irresponsible with the ministry he gave them by allowing them to continue to dishonor, pervert, and corrupt such a sacred calling.

**Discussion Questions**

5. Why were the priests the continued focus of God’s attention? What was at stake?

6. As New Covenant priests where has God given you a place of influence? Have you ever even thought of yourself as a priest?

7. What does it mean to “set your heart” to do something? What does that look like?

8. How can you show more honor to the Lord? How are you influencing others to do the same?
Controversy

- God deliberately addresses the priests, as they are the ones that had the greatest impact on their followers, including the people and their own children. Leadership – is always held to a higher standard because followers are watching. Legacy - is always sacrificed when leadership is corrupted.
- God specifically commanded three actions of the priests: To listen - To hear something with thoughtful attention. To take to heart - To internalize or live according to something. To honor - To esteem, value, or greatly respect.
- God promised a curse for the actions of the priests and specifically on their “blessings.” The blessings referred to the children and legacy of the priests.

Discussion Questions

9. How are listening and the heart connected, and ultimately necessary to give honor to God?

10. How have you seen this progression working in your life? How can you begin by listening more to what God is saying?

God’s language was strong because the situation had become a crisis.

- The very leaders that were appointed to instruct the people in how to worship God were in gross violation to everything God had instructed them to do. The bottom line was that the priests were not giving glory to God.

Discussion Questions

11. What is your reaction to God using this type of language to communicate his disapproval?

12. Has God ever needed to speak to you in a stern, strong voice? What was it about?

God uses the analogy of spreading dung on the outside of their faces. The hearts of the priests were dirty and dishonoring. This would bring a congruency and exposure to the inward dirtiness of their heart condition.

- Their condition brought judgment upon their offspring.
God referenced his covenant with the Levites, the first of the priests. The terms of a covenant are binding. The terms of a covenant cannot be renegotiated — it’s not a contract! The fruits of this covenant were life, peace, character and courage and they were blessings from God!

It is said of Levi that he stood in fear and awe of God. Through the covenant he was blessed. He exemplified true leadership.

Both the priests and the people were responsible before God. The priest was to “guard knowledge...for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 2:7. The people were to “seek instruction from his (the priest’s) mouth.” Malachi 2:7

The priests wanted to redefine the covenant on their terms and receive from the Lord but not give anything back. The rotten fruit that the priests produced included hypocrisy, corruption, and partiality.

Discussion Questions

13. Reread Malachi 2:4-6. Does this description of Levi reflect the Christian life you are living? In what areas are you struggling?

14. What do you think it means that Levi “stood in awe of my name.” What was the result of Levi’s reverence for the Lord? V2:6

My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him. V. 2:5
Conclusion

But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction. Vv. 2:8,9

- God commands full devotion and truth, especially from his leaders!
- God commands fear and awe from his followers.
- Jesus Christ is your Great High Priest.
- Every good teacher should point you to Christ!

Share and journal any conclusions you have come to understand through this study.
Pray that, like Levi, your life of devotion to God and Christ would turn many from sin! Pray that your fear and awe of the Lord would be sincere and that your hearts and ears would be fully attentive to the Spirit of God.
10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11 Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. 12 May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts! 13 And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”
Contracts allow one or more parties to enter into a formal, legal binding agreement and contain terms, dates, deadlines, and decisions that both parties have agreed upon. So how does a contract differ from a covenant? With a contract, if one agreeing party does something in violation of the contract then it is considered broken. The whole contract becomes null and void. With a covenant, both parties agree to hold up their ends regardless of whether the other party keeps their part of the agreement. A violation of a covenant by one party does not matter, as far as the other party’s responsibility to continue to do what they agreed to do. God makes covenant, not contracts, with his people. People often make contracts, not covenant, with God. Furthermore, Christians often make the mistake of approaching their spiritual legacy with a contractual perspective rather than from the covenantal commitment that God has always intended. In this portion of Malachi 2, the priests are the continued focus of God’s rebuke, specifically relating to their irreverence, disrespect, and disregard of God’s covenant with them, particularly in relationship to their marriage covenant. There was a legacy at stake!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. David is referenced as one who was shown mercy although he committed gross sin. What is the difference between David and the priests in Malachi’s day?

2. Why do you think the priests were in so much trouble with God?

3. In what ways have you struggled to remain faithful to God and his word?

4. How does a covenantal versus contractual faith look different? What has helped you to internalize God’s unconditional love?
The priests were profaning the covenant that God had established with their ancestors through marriage to non-believers, divorce, and disregard for covenantal commitment.

God the Father hated divorce but loved his children the priests. His fatherly love stirred up with righteous anger and rebuke for the priest’s intolerable actions that profaned the covenant and harmed the legacy of all believers.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Profanity not only refers to words but also deeds and how you live.
- As a concerned Father, God has the right to give his children instruction.

5. How do Christians today profane the New Covenant?

6. Can you recognize any “profanity” in your own life?

7. How do you primarily hear from God? When was the last time you felt he was speaking to you?

8. Where is God giving you instruction? How are you being receptive or rebellious?
Controversy

- God is reestablishing himself as Father and Creator and reminding the priests of his love and authority.
- Father – Spiritually saved us (illustrates love).
- Creator – Physically made us (illustrates authority).
- God shows the priests that their faithlessness has resulted in “profaning the covenant”:
  - Profaning – The act of irreverent behavior.
  - Covenant – A pledge or promise.
- God referenced the covenant of Levi that the priests would have been very familiar with.
- Their faithlessness in marriage had devastating consequences that included divorce, marrying non-believers, and legacy destruction.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. What is the appeal being made by God asking these two questions?

10. What does this verse imply about the connection between our relationship with God and with other believers? Read 1 John 4:20-21

- Judah referred to Jerusalem, the broader Israel, and all God’s people.
- Profaning through marriage – The priests of God marrying non-believing women.
- Malachi pronounced judgment on any Israelite who married a pagan worshipping woman.

- The Judgment – The man would die or his line would die out. This curse would apply to him, even though he brought offerings to Yahweh at the temple.
- God loves the sanctuary, his church! A holy set apart sanctuary - to reveal and reflect his grace and glory.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

11. What was the issue God had with his people marrying a pagan? What was the consequence of doing this? V. 2:11

12. Does this apply to believers today? Why or why not?
The covenantal marriage vow encompasses three facets:

- **Sexual component** – Oneness.
- **Relational component** – Companionship.
- **Spiritual component** – the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of a Godly marriage is of infinite importance. God desires Godly children from the marriage covenant!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**DID HE NOT MAKE THEM ONE, WITH A PORTION OF THE SPIRIT IN THEIR UNION?**

**AND WHAT WAS THE ONE GOD SEEKING? GODLY OFFSPRING. SO GUARD YOURSELVES IN THE SPIRIT V. 2:15**

**13. In what areas do you need to recommit to your marriage covenant? How can we produce “godly offspring” whether married or single?**

**14. What steps can we take “guard ourselves in the Spirit?”**

Legacy is at stake if parents are not aligned in devotion to the Lord.

Little earthly marriages are to be pictures of the big heavenly marriage between Christ and the church! God wants us to be holy and happy, but never happy at the cost of holiness.
STUDY GUIDE: Where is the commitment?

Conclusion

SO GUARD YOURSELVES IN YOUR SPIRIT, AND LET NONE OF YOU BE FAITHLESS TO THE WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH. “FOR THE MAN WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS WIFE BUT DIVORCES HER, SAYS THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, COVERS HIS GARMENT WITH VIOLENCE, SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS. SO GUARD YOURSELVES IN YOUR SPIRIT, AND DO NOT BE FAITHLESS. V. 2:15-16

- Be on guard and protect the faithfulness of your marriage.
- God hates divorce, but not the divorcees.
- Legacy is not only for married people!
- Jesus was single, never married, and left the greatest legacy ever known.
- God desires Godly offspring from Godly marriages to produce a Godly legacy.

SHARE AND JOURNAL ANY CONCLUSIONS YOU HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THROUGH THIS STUDY
Pray for strength in your singleness or oneness in your marriage, and complete commitment to Jesus through his covenant of grace.

REQUESTS
1 You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, “How have we wearied him?” By saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them.” Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

1 “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.
Sunday Message

NOTES:
The process of refining consists of purifying an impure material. Unlike smelting or calcining in which the chemical state is altered, the final material produced in the refining process is usually chemically identical to the original one. The one exception is that it is purer in form following the refinement process. When a silversmith is in the process of refining, he must sit with his eye steadily fixed on the furnace. If the time necessary for refining is exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured. For the majority of Malachi, God has spoken through the prophet in strong and stern language, yet rooted in a deep love for the priests and people. They have dishonored and damaged their legacy, both familial and spiritual. However through the prophet Malachi, God answers the people with an unlikely response that points to a coming time in which the people will be purified and pleasing to the Lord once again. The text is foreshadowing Jesus who will come 400 years later, as the ultimate refiner, to purify the hearts of the sons of Levi and the gentiles alike, while judging those who he is a “swift witness against”.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Can you relate to this verse? How have you been tested and refined?

2. According to Malachi 3:4, how does God’s refining and testing process impact legacy?

3. What purpose did this strong message (read vs. 5) serve for the spiritual legacy of both Jews and Gentiles?

4. Who was Jesus a “swift witness against?” And why?
At the end of Malachi 2, Israel complained that God seemed to reward the wicked and did not exercise his justice in the world. Where is the God of judgment?

God responds to their complaint by saying He will set things right with the Messiah (Jesus), and before Jesus will come his messenger (John the Baptist).

Malachi means “Messenger.”

Malachi foreshadows Jesus and describes him using adjectives, such as fire, fullers’ soap, a refiner and a purifier of silver, and a swift witness.

A fuller is someone who washed garments in ancient times and often removed stains by stomping or pounding on them.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Have you ever experienced being “scoffed at” when sharing your faith?
2. To scoff is an expression of mockery and doubt. Why is it necessary to guard our minds and hearts during times of waiting on God?
3. John the Baptist is the messenger referred to in this passage. What might be some reasons that John and Malachi were chosen to deliver this message of repentance?
4. “He must increase, but I must decrease” John 3:30. What does this statement spoken by John about Jesus mean to you personally?
Controversy

- God answers the doubters immediately with the truth of the coming King. A messenger will come before the Lord Jesus like an opening act to the main event.
- Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, and Luke 7:27 each point to this promised messenger, John the Baptist. In an ancient royal procession, the messenger went before the King to announce his arrival, to indicate the route, and to remove any obstacles in the road. John the Baptist fulfilled this exact ministry for Jesus.
- Malachi is the messenger of God’s word to the priests in the Old Testament. John the Baptist is the messenger of Jesus in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus himself is the ultimate messenger of the New Covenant. He is the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets and the one who ushers in the covenant of grace.

Discussion Questions

When Jesus appears on the scene, why did some recognize Jesus as the Lord and the “messenger of the covenant” while others rejected him?

How do the words “in whom you seek” and “in whom you delight” relate to Malachi’s audience? In what ways are you seeking and delighting in Jesus?

Jesus will also come with purifying judgment; it will be a fearful coming. Who can stand?
- Jesus will come to burn away the impurities of sin. Refiner’s fire.
- Jesus will come to cleanse the dirty hearts of his covenant people. Fullers’ soap.

Refining silver and cleaning clothes have positive outcomes, but from the perspective of the silver and the clothing, the process holds the prospect of pain.
- “Only when we have felt the terror of the matter (fear of the Lord), can we recognize the incomparable kindness (grace through Jesus)”.

Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. V. 3:2

In what way has Jesus been “like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap” in your spiritual journey?

Why is fear of the Lord truly necessary to appreciate his grace?
God comes into the very midst of evil and of death, and judges evil in order that there may be refining and ultimately righteousness. He is the great refiner and purifier.

The people of the covenant will go from refined to righteousness, like the purifying of gold and silver.

The offerings of the people will be acceptable due to Jesus imparting his righteousness on them! Bring offerings in righteousness.

The covenant people were called to live distinctively different than the nations around them.

They were to reject the practices and lifestyles of sorcerers and adulterers, those who swore falsely, those who oppressed the disadvantaged, those who did not fear God.

They were to be a community where people could find refuge and justice: laborers, widows, fatherless, sojourners.

How have your parents impacted the way in which you see God the Father as well as yourself, either positive or negative?

How has God’s refining and imparting of righteousness through Jesus transformed you to live a legacy?

Who was God going to judge? Who does this describe in our day?

What are practical ways that your small group or you personally can respond in grace and love to the oppressed people listed in this verse?
STUDY GUIDE: Where is the justice?

Conclusion

Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. V. 3:4

God’s refining process may be painful but necessary for lasting legacy!

Your earthly legacy is impacted by your spiritual legacy.

Jesus will purify, refine, and judge the hearts and deeds of men.

God comes into our midst as Emmanuel, to destroy the evil in us and in the world, and to draw us out of death into life.

SHARE AND JOURNAL ANY CONCLUSIONS YOU HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THROUGH THIS STUDY
Pray that your heart would be refined and purified so that you can serve God. Pray that you would lead a life that honors him while you are living an earthly legacy and leaving a spiritual legacy.

REQUESTS
6 “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. 12 Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

13 “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ 14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’” 16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. 17 “They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.
It was during World War II in the country of Italy. Despite the evidence of war, life marched on as normal as possible. For one kiln worker, that life included rescuing a dog that was near death. Fido was nursed back to health and remarkably, dedicated his life to his master. Daily, the dog waited for his master at the same bus stop, refusing to move until he stepped off the bus—and this at a time when Italy was being bombed frequently. But one day, Fido’s master did not return nor step off the bus. He had been killed in an air raid while at work. Fido, ever faithful, turned up to wait for him everyday for the next fourteen years. Fido became a celebrity for his loyal dedication both during the war and long after it ended. Crowds would come to see the phenomenon and witness Fido’s repeated waiting for his master to get off the bus. God’s faithfulness is reversed. He is the master that comes off the bus daily, showing unwavering strength during the wars that wage within us, around us, and against us. In this section of Malachi, God emphasized his faithfulness through the demonstration of his unchanged character, spared consumption, and promised curses for withheld giving!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **God is faithful.** Discuss this verse in light of our study in Malachi.

2. **God is unchanging.** Why do you think God chose to emphasize this part of his character with his people? (refer to Malachi 3:6)

3. **In what ways do we rob God?** What tithe do you need to offer to God?

4. **God fulfills his word.** What are the promises found in verses 3:10-12 and how do they relate to us today?

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**STUDY GUIDE:** Where is the giving?

- Read Malachi 3:6-18 (found on page 44) & open in prayer.
- Share your message notes and thoughts from the sermon.
- Warm Up: Describe your favorite pet either current or past. What were the qualities that made you love him/her?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. God emphasized that he does not change and therefore, would not consume those that have sinned, even though he could and should.

2. Israel was in need of repenting for robbing God by holding on to tithes that were not theirs to keep.

3. The tithe was a requirement of the Law in which the Israelites were to give ten percent of the crops they grew and the livestock they raised to the tabernacle and temple.

4. He challenged the people to out give him and in direct exchange, he would provide and protect.

5. The people who responded in repentance had their names recorded in remembrance.

6. God vowed his treasured possessions would be spared on the day of judgement when the direct distinction would be made between the righteous and the wicked.

7. Read the full verse, Numbers 23:19. Why is it so important to know what this verse says about God?

8. In light of Malachi 3:11, how did tithing demonstrate God’s faithfulness?

9. How does this truth affect your attitude about your possessions and giving to God?

10. How is God the perfect example of giving? What can you do to follow his example?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. What does it mean to you and your legacy that God is unchanging and quick to extend mercy?

10. “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.” (Romans 2:4) What are some barriers that prevent repentance?

11. In most situations God warns us not to test him. Why this exception?

12. God often provides in unexpected ways. Share an example when God proved his faithfulness through provision or protection.

Controversy

- While declaring His unchanging character and mercy, God asks for repentance.
- If it were possible for God to change his mind about us, He might very well do it and we would be consumed. Fortunately the LORD does not change in his love or his choice towards us.
- God’s unchanging love for Israel should have made them more obedient and submissive to Him, but they presumed upon His faithfulness and patience.
- Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. Israel did not know how to return to God. Either they chose not to know or they simply were ignorant.

God’s unchanging love for Israel should have made them more obedient and submissive to Him, but they presumed upon His faithfulness and patience. Fortunately the LORD does not change in His love or His choice towards us.

God often provides in unexpected ways. Share an example when God proved his faithfulness through provision or protection.

Israel was also to be used to help the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28). God promises when His people give as He tells them to, He will bless them both with both provision and protection.

God invites them to test him and his promise. To test is to take measures to check the quality, performance, or reliability of something, especially before putting it into widespread use or practice.
Israel spoke against the LORD in a harsh and sinful way. They saw the prosperity of the proud and those who were wicked. They felt that it was useless to serve God, as long as those who did not serve Him seemed to have it so good.

It cost something to keep God’s ordinance. They had to humble themselves to walk as mourners before the LORD. Unfortunately, to God’s people, that cost was not worth the reward.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

13. Read Malachi 3:13-15. Can you relate to their complaint? How do you respond when unbelievers are blessed?

14. Read Malachi 3:16-18. God paid attention to the repentant and humble of heart. How does this example truth impact your walk of faith?
STUDY GUIDE: Where is the giving?

Conclusion

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. Vv. 3:17, 18

- God is unchanging!
- God spares believers from his wrath.
- Giving is a byproduct of a generous heart.
- Everything we have belongs to God!
- The Lord listens and draws near to repentant and humbled hearts.

SHARE AND JOURNAL ANY CONCLUSIONS YOU HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THROUGH THIS STUDY

________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________
Pray that you would be a generous, giving, and faithful believer. Pray that your attitude would be repentant when necessary and your heart be humbled constantly.

REQUESTS
1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. 4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”
The sun is the single most important energy source for life on Earth. As the physical center of the solar system, it is essentially a gigantic star with a surface temperature of 9941 degrees Fahrenheit. The sun gives life to earth and provides energy to its inhabitants. The sun provides the body with the ability to produce vitamin D, assists plants to carry out photosynthesis, and influences the rise and fall of the ocean tides. But the sun is also potentially dangerous. The very aspects that make the sun powerful are the very same elements that are to be feared. The sun has the ability to blind, burn, damage, and destroy. In the conclusion of Malachi, God is encouraging his people to “behold” (watch and see) that there will be eternal judgment for the wicked. Even so, He also encourages them to recognize that the “sun of righteousness” will also come to bring healing and fulfillment through the covenant of grace that God will make with his people.

Discussion Questions

1. **To “behold” is to observe, see, or watch. What purpose did God’s instruction to “behold” serve in Malachi 4:1?**

2. **How do Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:20 echo the words of God through Malachi in chapter 4?**

3. **Who is this judgment referring to?**

4. **How does the concept of the blazing fire in Malachi 4 differ from the refining fire discussed in Malachi 3?**

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“**And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20**

The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. V. 4:1b
God is encouraging his people to wait, watch, and see that there will be punishment for the wicked and blessings for those who fear him. God reminded his people to obey the laws of Moses, as this was the last instruction they were to receive from him in between the 400 years of silence that made up the Old and New Testaments. (Exodus 3:1)

Elijah was also referenced as he had ministered to Israel when the nation was far from God, and at time that immediately preceded a terrible judgment. 1 Kings 19:9-18

Both Elijah and Moses met with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-5

The Old Testament ends with the threat of a curse, but also with the expectation of a new dawning of the Sun of Righteousness being Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

5. What promises are there for those who fear him in verses 2-3?

6. Why did God choose to reference both Moses and Elijah to his people at the end of Malachi?

7. What do you think is meant by this reference to turning the hearts of fathers and children?

8. God is the great encourager. How does God’s Word act as a source of encouragement for you?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. What is some “stubble” in your life that needs to be removed in order that your spiritual legacy would be strengthened?

10. In what situation do you need to be reminded of God’s truth in order to give you an accurate perspective?

11. In what ways have you been wounded and need the true healing that only Jesus can give?

12. Malachi speaks of God’s people experiencing joy. How would you rate your joy on a scale 1-10? What keeps you from joy?

God’s people needed to be reminded that the day of the Lord was coming. They were discouraged by the apparent prosperity of the wicked and uselessness of serving the LORD. God still has eternity to right all wrongs and reward all good.

God promised a fire for his people (Malachi 2:2-3) and here he promises a fire for the wicked. There is a difference between the refining fire applied to God’s people and the burning fire against the ungodly. Stubble is the unusable part of grain, and lasts only moments if it is thrown into a fire. The burning fire will destroy the root and branch leaving no hope of shooting up again to life.

God’s Word is a reminder of his faithfulness and power. In his Word you find truth to give you an accurate perspective of your situation or struggle.

Early Christians have regarded the Sun of Righteousness as a reference to Jesus. In many passages God is related to a planet or star (Psalms 8:3, Isaiah 60:19, Revelation 22:16, Numbers 24:17). The Messiah is not only a Sun, but also the Sun of Righteousness who brings healing.

When God’s people see the final resolution of all things, their joy will cause them to jump about like stall-fed calves set free from the pen. As they jump, the wicked are trampled beneath their feet. There is a glorious progression in those who look upon the risen Sun of Righteousness and receive the healing in His wings.

STUDY GUIDE: Where is the Son?
Malachi exhorts Israel to remember what God had already spoken through Moses. At Malachi’s death the voice of God’s prophets would be silent for 400 years. But they would still have God’s written revelation.

The last few words of the Old Testament are a call back to the Law. These Laws are the foundation of the nation’s civil, moral, and ceremonial life. These were the standards they were to live by.

God would send a prophet like Elijah. This messenger was John the Baptist. John would prepare people’s hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ by urging them to repent of their sins.

Malachi closes his message by pointing to that great and final day of judgment. For those committed to God, judgment day will be a day of joy, because it will usher in eternity in God’s presence. (V. 4:2) Those who ignore God will face judgment like “stubble” to be burned up in a furnace. (V. 4:1)

**Discussion Questions**

13. What is the significance of this prophecy ending with an exhortation to remember the Law?

14. Although their relationship with God was based on following the Law, what is the basis for our relationship with God today? (John 1:17)
Conclusion

- Keep your eyes focused on God and behold (observe, see, watch for) his glory!
- God will spare those who fear him and destroy those who despise him.
- The “Sun of Righteousness” is Jesus Christ and He is the fulfillment of true joy!
- Expect the word of the Lord to guide you, encourage you, and fulfill you.

FROM BEGINNING TO END THE BOOK OF MALACHI GIVES US PRACTICAL GUIDELINES ABOUT OUR COMMITMENTS TO GOD

1. God deserves the best we have to offer. Vv. 1:7-10
2. We must be willing to change our wrong ways of living. Vv. 2:1,2
3. We should make marriage and family a life-long priority. Vv. 2:13-16
4. We should welcome God’s refining process in our lives. V. 3:3
5. We should tithe and be generous with our income. Vv. 3:8-12
6. In everything we do, we must remember there is no room for pride. Vv. 3:13-15
7. We need to keep our eyes fixed on the promise of His coming. Vv. 4:1-6

SHARE AND JOURNAL ANY CONCLUSIONS YOU HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THROUGH THIS STUDY
Pray that your eyes would remain steadfastly fixed on God and the promises of the truth in his word! Pray that you would draw near to the “sun of righteousness” and walk in the true joy and freedom that his grace brings.

REQUESTS