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YOU...  
EVEN WHEN  
YOU DON'T  
FEEL IT**



A STUDY IN  
**MALACHI**





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MARK DRISCOLL

God Loves You...Even When You Don't Feel It: A Study in Malachi  
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# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER 1: LEARN TO BE LOVED AND TO LOVE</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER 2: WHY DOES GOD CHOOSE SOME PEOPLE BUT NOT OTHERS?</b> .....	11
<b>CHAPTER 3: HONOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER</b> .....	19
<b>CHAPTER 4: EVERYONE IS SPEAKING, BUT IS ANYONE LISTENING?</b> .....	29
<b>CHAPTER 5: BRINGING HEAVEN HOME</b> .....	35
<b>CHAPTER 6: GOD WINS IN THE END</b> .....	43
<b>QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND GROUP DISCUSSION</b> .....	51
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b> .....	56



# PREFACE

Reading the Bible is a bit like bingeing on Netflix. Each book reveals a bit of the storyline God is writing in history, and many books end with a cliffhanger leaving you anticipating the next episode of God's work in our world. The Old Testament ends in just this way with a little book called Malachi. This is the last book of the Bible written for roughly four hundred years as people waited for the coming of Jesus. In some ways, to the people at the time, Malachi was like Revelation – the last book God wrote that tells us what happens next as we wait for Jesus to show up.

Very little is known about the author mainly because He focuses all the attention on God and none on himself. He tells us both his name and ministry as a mouthpiece for God in Malachi 1:1, "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." In 3:1 he is simply called by God, "my messenger". Curiously, the name Malachi literally means "messenger" as God had chosen his name to reflect his mission to be God's mailman.

As we study Malachi together, it will be most helpful for you to simply read it for yourself multiple times. You can read the entire book quickly in maybe 15 minutes. As you read it, you will notice that of the 55 verses, 47 of them are God speaking to His people. This is an action-packed book where God does most of the talking. If you have ever wished you could just sit down with God and have Him speak to you, this is precisely what will happen as you read Malachi. The entire book is a conversation

## GOD LOVES YOU...EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL IT

that God had with His people and wants to have with you. If you want to also listen to a sermon series on Malachi, you can find those messages for free at [MarkDriscoll.org](http://MarkDriscoll.org), or the Mark Driscoll Ministries app.



# CHAPTER 1

## LEARN TO BE LOVED AND TO LOVE

Malachi 1:2a: “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?”

Sometimes, life is incredibly disappointing, discouraging, and deflating. As believers, we read about the power of God over and over in the Bible. But, we often don't see it show up in our lives. We also read of heaven and how wonderful everything will be when God is done with history. But in the meantime, life can feel like we are carsick kids stuck in the back of a crowded car on a long road trip to Disneyland – it will be great once we get there but it's an awful ride in the meantime.

In the book of Malachi, God's children (young and old) were struggling. Perhaps you can relate to them? Financially, they were in a crisis as their economy had collapsed and no relief was in sight. Politically, their little nation was getting kicked around by other nations and armies. Morally, it became the norm for people to stop obeying God and do pretty much whatever they wanted without consequence. Spiritually, folks were still dropping in on church now and then, but they just went through the motions giving little money, energy, or passion to the Lord. To make matters worse, the spiritual leaders had developed some newfangled popular teaching that God had failed. Yes, they added to God's attributes a new one – failure! People are largely the product of the teaching they receive, and once the people were convinced that God had basically sinned

against them by failing them, most everyone who was hurting starting blaming God.

Eventually, there were trendy slogans that people had against God not unlike trending social media hashtags in our day. These included the following:

“How have you loved us?” (1:2)

“How have we despised your name?” (1:6)

“How have we polluted you?” (1:7)

“What a weariness this is.” (1:13)

“How have we wearied him?” (2:17)

“Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them.” (2:17)

“Where is the God of justice?” (2:17)

“How shall we return?” (3:7)

“How have we robbed you?” (3:8)

“How have we spoken against you?” (3:13)

“It is vain to serve God.” (3:14)

“Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.” (3:15)

How does this list of grievances against God strike you? Is there anything on the list that is something you have thought or maybe even said? Is there any complaint you might have against God? If so, the good news in Malachi is that God knows what you're thinking, hears what you're saying, and wants to meet with you to work things out for the sake of a healthy, loving relationship with Him.

## HAVE YOU EVER JUST FREAKED OUT ON GOD?

Every parent has had “THAT DAY”! When this day hits, all the forces of chaos align and the child we care for has decided to unleash terror on the earth by completely and totally melting down. If you think this is rare, you either have never had a child or your name is Mary or Joseph. When THAT DAY goes off like a

bomb, the child can be found screaming, hitting, and freaking out. Their parent can be found sighing, praying, and losing.

The book of Malachi is about THAT DAY! The children of God (young and old) have decided to declare war on God with a tantum of biblical proportions. Observing God's response teaches us a lot about our relationship with Him and also has some tips for parents.

For starters, God reminds everyone who is on the floor kicking and screaming that He is their loving Father. In Malachi 1:6 He says, "I am a father". In Malachi 2:10, He reminds everyone that they don't really have any other parent since He's their "one Father". By revealing Himself as our Father, God is to be known as both in authority (sovereign) and relational (love). Next, we learn five things about God as our Father.

1. God the Father knows what His kids are saying, doing, and thinking. The entire book of Malachi is a conversation between the Father and His kids as he responds to the litany of accusations that they are hurling at Him for being a bad dad.

2. God the Father calls a family meeting. If your dad ever called everyone to together to sit on the couch, or gather around the table, to have an important family discussion then you understand the tone of Malachi.

3. God the Father does not act like a sibling. When a child declares war on a parent by yelling accusations, throwing a fit, and making a scene, it's a tempting moment for the parent to stop acting like a parent and start acting like a sibling. Worn down, a parent can start yelling back at the child, getting offended by the false accusations, and throw their own form of a fit. When this happens, the parent loses their authority and starts acting like one of the kids rather than the parent. God does not do this.

4. God the Father meets us where we are to walk us to where we should be. As you read Malachi, you'll quickly

realize that it is raw, real, and rough. But like any great parent, God the Father comes to the kids, speaks calmly, takes their hand, and begins the walk with them from where they are to where they should be.

5. God the Father starts with love. Despite the children of God inciting the equivalent of a prison riot at the church, God answers their nasty accusation disguised as a question in Malachi 1:2, "How have you loved us?" not by getting defensive but rather remaining devoted saying, "I have loved you,' says the Lord."

## GOD THE FATHER CAN HANDLE YOUR FRUSTRATION

The more you read the Bible and learn about the Kingdom of God (what life will be like when Satan, sin, and suffering are no more), the more frustrated you can be. Paying your taxes is really frustrating when you know there's a free place for you to live in God's house complete with streets paved in gold (since apparently there's so much wealth they had to find something to do with it). Imagine experiencing perfect health, enjoying perfect relationships, and eating the perfect taco?

In the days of Malachi, God's people were sick of being sick, poor, harassed, and being on what seemed like the losing team every season. They wanted Jesus to show up, flip the handle and flush the world, and then start over. If you have ever been frustrated and fed up, broke and battered, or sick and scared then you know how they felt. In their hearts, conversations, and pulpits, they were accusing God of failing them. The people of God are hurting and their painful questions for God have turned into sinful accusations against God.

Lovingly, patiently, and perfectly, the Father showed up and took the time to build the relationship and build up those who felt beat up. It just goes to show that sometimes you just need a word from God. Nonetheless, they get a word from God in the form of the book of Malachi where 85 percent of the verses are

God speaking and answering false accusations about Him failing them.

How did they get a Word from God? They were given the Word of God. In Malachi 1:1 the book is called "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." Did you catch that? The book of Malachi is "the word of the Lord" delivered "by Malachi" who God calls, "my messenger" (3:1). It is Malachi's voice, but God's words. God wrote the mail and Malachi is just the mailman. The point is simple but profound. God speaks to us firstly and mostly through the Word of God.

## OUR FATHER HAS SOME NAUGHTY KIDS

Have you ever seen a parent sitting down holding a child on their lap and the kid winds up and slaps the adult in the face? If so, then you are able to pretty much picture what's happening in the book of Malachi.

Spiritually speaking, the children of God (young and old) just keep slapping away while accusing God of not loving them (1:2), being evil and delighting in evildoers (2:17), being unjust (2:17), not worth serving (3:14), and blessing evildoers and making them rich while the godly remain poor and oppressed (3:15).

Rather than slapping back, God speaks love. In Malachi 1:2, God gets the first word saying, "I have loved you". Do you know that everything begins with the Father's love? Some think that God is a force; he's impersonal. He's not. God is a Father; he's personal. A force does not speak to you. A force does not love you. A Father speaks to you because he loves you. "I have loved you." This is where the Father begins.

This revelation is antithetical to every other religious system and teaching in the world. In varying ways, every other religious system is about something called "works". It's about what you do to earn God's love. And if any other religion were to rewrite this, it would say, "If you obey me, then I will love you." It starts with you. It rises and falls with you. It's predicated upon you. "If you obey me, then I will love you." Only the God of the Bible says this: "I love you, and because I love you, you're going to obey me. Your

obedience does not compel me to love you. My love will compel you to obey me.” Do you see the difference?

Works-based religions are like a man who walks into an orphanage with a bunch of children and says, “I’ll observe the kids for a while and I’ll adopt the best one.” The God of the Bible walks into the orphanage and says, “I’m going to adopt a lot of kids and some of them are horrible, rebellious, terrible, and awful. Nobody else wants these kids. And I’m going to love them, and my love is going to change them.” God did not pick you because you’re great. God picked you because He’s great. “I have loved you.”

Now, what should their response be? “And we love you, Father!”—that’s not their response. “But you say, ‘How have you loved us?’” The entire book is a series of disputations, where God the Father tells his children in various ways, “I love you,” and they say, “No you don’t.” They’re accusing God of sinning and failing. They’re accusing God of being unloving. They’re accusing God of saying one thing and doing another. They are demanding that God repent to them and change for them. This same spirit exists in every age, including our own.

This leaves us with two options. One, we can read it and say, “I can’t believe they did that”. Two, we can admit, “I can’t believe I still do that.”

How many of you today, if I told you, “God is a Father who loves you,” you would say, “I don’t feel that. I don’t see that. I don’t believe that”? These people are not atheists; they’re just angry.

How many of you have been there? How many of you are there? The answer is everyone. Everyone. “It doesn’t look like God loves us. It doesn’t feel like God loves us. I know that God says that He loves us, but He’s not showing that He loves us. Why am I so broke? Why is it so dark? Why are things so hard?” Be honest with God. He already knows your heart.

He’s already heard their grumbling, He’s heard their complaining, He’s heard their accusing. And, He’s still listening to us.

Some people are good parents as long as our children are good. As soon as our children become bad, all of a sudden,

we're bad parents—meaning, the way we respond is very different. You know who someone is when that is tested. They are testing the Father and then they're going to see who he truly is – loving.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW GOD LOVES YOU?

Imagine that you were having a rough day and told God in prayer, "I don't feel like you love me". That is precisely the context of Malachi chapter one. God's response is not likely what we would have guessed.

Malachi 1:2b-4: "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." 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'."

Going back to Genesis 25:19-34 many, many years prior, God reminds His people of the story of Abraham, their father in the faith. The promise was made that through that family would come Jesus Christ. Abraham's son Isaac had twin sons – Jacob & Esau. Like many families, the boys are polar opposites. Esau is older, daddy's favorite, tough, drives a truck, wears boots, eats what he can kill, likes country music and cage fighting, and was apparently a hairy redheaded kid as the prototype for Elmo.

Jacob is younger, a momma's boy, got 'most huggable' in high school, drives a hybrid, wore Crocs, ate devoutly vegetarian cuisine grown through sustainable farming, and likes Disney Broadway musical soundtracks.

The boys started fighting in their momma's womb and the battle still rages. From Jacob came the nation of Israel. From Esau came the nation of Edom. These nations have always warred against each other and, to some degree, their descendants still do. Jesus came from Jacob, and King Herod, who tried to kill Him, came from Esau.

When the descendants of Jacob asked God in Malachi 1:2,

"How have you loved us?", God reminded them that He had loved their family for generations. Unlike Esau, who was not chosen to carry forth the promise of the Messiah, their family was the chosen one.

The truth is, both boys were bad. Jacob's name means "trickster" and he and his mom were known to manipulate and fool dad for the family blessing. Esau was an impetuous, uncaring man who traded his rights as the firstborn son in the family for a mere bowl of stew. The descendants of Esau became a godless nation judged by God. They got what they earned. The descendants of Esau became God's nation blessed by God. They got grace that they did not earn.

For us who are, by faith, God's people, the lesson is simple. Rather than looking up to heaven and wondering why we are not living there today, we should look down to hell and thank God that we are not living there today. This raises the question as to why God chooses some people but not others, which we examine next.



# CHAPTER 2

## **WHY DOES GOD CHOOSE SOME PEOPLE BUT NOT OTHERS?**

If you were to ask the average person to pick one word to describe the character of God, which word do you think would likely be the most common?

Holy? Maybe.

Powerful? Perhaps.

Loving? Likely.

When most people think of the God of the Bible, the first verse that comes to mind is 1 John 4:8 which says, "God is love."

Not surprisingly, there is a verse in Malachi that is among the most confusing and controversial in the entire Bible. Speaking of twin brothers born to Isaac, God says in Malachi 1:2-3, "I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated."

Words are like colors in that they have differing degrees of shading and intensity. Just as the color blue can be so soft that it appears nearly white or so dark that it appears nearly black, so too words can have a range of meaning. The academic types with more degrees than Fahrenheit have spent a lot of hours debating the meaning of the original Hebrew word that we translate into English as "hate". It is commonly said that the word can mean things like pass over, not to choose, work through one person and not the other, prefer one over the other, or have one hold priority over the other. Here are some ways that various English translations state Malachi 1:3:

- “rejected” (The Living Bible, Contemporary English Bible, Jubilee Bible, New American Bible Revised Edition, New English Translation, New Living Translation)
- “did not accept” (Easy to Read Version)
- “chose Jacob instead of Esau” (New International Readers Version)

If this is the case, then the point made in Malachi is not that God has capricious, unwarranted, emotionally-intense hostility toward someone much like a raging, violent thug. Instead, God promised that Jesus Christ would be born through the family line of either Jacob or Esau. God chose Jacob and not Esau.

Perhaps another Scripture will help clarify the best way to maintain the integrity of Malachi’s words without making God into an ogre. Jesus, the most loving person in the history of the world, also used the word hate. In Luke 14:26, Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

We know that Jesus loved his mother, as well as his siblings and godly dad. We know that the Bible says that a husband should love His wife like Christ does the church. The Bible also says that we should honor our mother and father. So, in context, Jesus’ words regarding hatred are about preference. We are to value our relationship with Jesus above every other relationship and hold our loyalty to Him above all else. In this regard, Jesus uses the word “hate” to speak of priority and preference much like Malachi did.

On the first day that my parents tried to teach me to drive, I had barely gotten out of the driveway when someone ran in front of the car and I had to slam on the brakes. The book of Malachi is like that. Only a few sentences into the book, God says he hated one brother named Esau, but loved another brother named Jacob. This statement is quoted by the Apostle Paul in his treatise on election and predestination in Romans 9. So, we need to slam on the brakes and take a look at this issue before we keep rolling along in Malachi.

Romans 9:10-14: "...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'. As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!"

The story of Abraham is this: He's a godless man. He comes from a godless family. We read in Joshua 24:2 that his dad was a godless man. Abraham's family is listed among the godless in Genesis 10-11. Generation after generation of the men in his family are godless sinners stacked up like cord wood for the flames of hell.

Then, God shows up and says, "I pick Abraham." He's not a great guy. God doesn't pick us because we're great; God picks us because He's great. God is saying, I'll start with Abraham, and I promise to give him a son. And through that son, I'm going to bring a nation. And through that nation, I'm going to bring my Son Jesus.

Abraham starts as a Gentile, not a Jew. He's saved by faith. He trusts in the promises of the God of the Bible. He circumcises himself and the nation is born. The Jewish people begin. The promise was given that he would have a son, even though his wife is barren and they're elderly. This is going to take a miracle. But if God needs to pull off a miracle to give you a legacy, He's glad to do that. Abraham and Sarah had a son. What was his name? Isaac, which means laughter, because God always gets the last laugh, right? That's how it works. And then Abraham dies, and he leaves a son and grandsons, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob had a brother named Esau.

These are both bad boys. See, religion teaches, "God loves the good people." If true, then God doesn't love anybody. But if you believe the Bible you can instead rejoice that, "God loves bad people. Yay, there's hope for me." So, God chose to work through the bad guy Jacob instead of the bad guy Esau so that Jesus could come as the good guy who saves bad guys.

## IS IT UNLOVING FOR GOD TO CHOOSE SOME PEOPLE?

At the beginning of the last book of the Old Testament, the people of God are foot-stomping, fist-pounding, voice-raising mad. They feel that God had failed them and not loved them. In fact, in Malachi 1:2 they poke God in the eye and ask, "How have you loved us?"

Rather than beating them up, God the Father builds them up by reminding them, "I have loved you" (Malachi 1:2). And, He reminds them that He has been loving their often ungodly, ungrateful, and undeserving family for generations. "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated (Malachi 1:2-3)." Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, both bad guys, and God chose to bring Jesus through Jacob instead of Esau and bless the nation of Israel that descended from Jacob in a way that He did not bless the nation of Edom that descended from Esau.

The issue is, regarding salvation, if God chooses some people and not others, does that make Him unloving? In the broadest sense, the Bible speaks to this issue with a constellation of words such as choose, chosen, elect, appointed, God's plan, purpose, and predestined.

Perhaps the most thorough treatment of this issue is Romans 9. There, Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3 saying, "...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!"

Did you catch the connection between being chosen by God and being loved by God? God is not obligated to choose, love, or save anyone. The fact that he chooses to save some shows how loving he truly is. For the Christian, knowing that God chose us is evidence of His love. This is exactly what Ephesians

1:4-5 teaches saying, "In love he predestined us".

There are at least six ways that God choosing some for salvation is loving:

**One.** In love, God saves people from all nations. In most religions, their "god" only cares about people like them. The God of the Bible chooses people from all nations to form His Kingdom.

**Two.** In love, God can save the unborn. With miscarriages, abortions, and other lives lost in the womb through tragedy, it is comforting to know that God can choose to save a baby in the womb before they are able to make a choice to trust in God.

**Three.** In love, God can save the mentally limited. Some people do not have the capacity to fully understand the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as their Savior for their sins. But, if God can choose who to apply the work of Jesus to, then there is hope for those who could otherwise be hopeless.

**Four.** In love, God can reach the unreached. There are reports in closed Muslim countries where missionaries cannot gain access that numerous people are becoming Christians. Jesus is apparently showing up to them in visions and dreams and saving them because He has chosen to do so.

**Five.** In love, God can save the worst people. Perhaps the Bible writer who speaks the most about predestination is the Apostle Paul. You may remember, he was an awful man who murdered Christians before God chose to save him. If there was ever anyone who was chosen by God, it was Paul who would have never chosen God.

**Six.** In love, God is not obligated to save anyone. Think of it like a massive suicide pact where numerous people chain themselves in a home, set it on fire, and decide to kill themselves. This is basically what humanity has chosen to do through sin. See Jesus coming like a firefighter who runs into the burning building to carry numerous dying people out until he dies of smoke inhala-

tion. How anyone could look at that firefighter and accuse them of being unloving because of who they did not save is to miss the entire point.

## DO WE CHOOSE GOD OR DOES GOD CHOOSE US?

My wife Grace and I have been faithfully married for over 25 years. We first met at the age of 17 in high school. Within days (or at most weeks), I knew that I had met my wife. In my heart, I had chosen her to be my bride. Grace, however, had not yet come to that same conclusion. For us to have a relationship, she would have to respond to my choice by choosing me back.

God speaks of His relationship with His people like a groom and bride. I take this to mean that God chooses us for covenant love, and we respond to His love by loving Him back. In any healthy relationship, both parties need to choose to love one another. The question is, who chooses to love first? This leads us to the question of predestination that appears early on in our study of the last book of the Bible.

Malachi 1:2b-4 opens by saying, "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the Lord. 'Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.' 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.'"

Paul picks up this theme and even quotes Malachi saying in Romans 9:10-14, "...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'. As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!"

Nearly every Christian Bible study ends up beating a stable

of dead horses as soon as someone asks, "Do we choose God, or does God choose us?" At this moment, it is always good to pop some popcorn and turn on some carnival music as the fun is sure to commence.

For the sake of simplicity, there are six options for who chooses our salvation:

1. No one is saved and everyone is damned. I cannot remember anyone actually ever teaching this, which is odd. The truth is, hell makes perfect sense. Fallen angels cannot be saved and only go to hell. If fallen people joined them, it seems like a fair deal if hell was the only option.

2. God chooses everyone. This is called Universalism and a heresy rejected throughout church history, so if you believe it, you are a heretic and need to pick another option.

3. We are good people who can freely choose God. This is called Pelagianism and also a heresy throughout church history so, once again, if you believe this, you are a heretic and need to pick another option.

4. We are sinful people, but God grants everyone a free will choice. This is called Arminianism or Wesleyanism where God gives everyone at some point "prevenient grace" which opens their fallen will to make a free will choice to follow God or not (kind of like Adam and Eve existed before the Fall). This is not a heresy so, if you believe this, you are within historic Christian belief.

5. God chooses some sinners for heaven and some sinners for hell. This is also called Calvinism, or double predestination. This, too, is not a heresy but can appear to be a very capricious version of the kids game "Duck, Duck, Goose" renamed "Elect, Elect, Damned". This is also an orthodox position throughout church history.

6. Everyone chooses hell through sin and God chooses

to save some people through His loving grace. This is called Lutheranism, or single predestination, where the non-Christian gets what they want, and the Christian gets what God wants for them. If you believe this, you agree with me as this is my position.

The battle between believers is often regarding open-handed issues. Our faith has closed-handed issues which all faithful Christians must agree upon. Our faith also has open-handed issues which Christians can disagree about without dividing over. This is one of those issues with at least three options that I conclude with above.

Since we are in Malachi, let's will close with an illustration. Throughout the book, God tells His people that He is their "Father" (1:6, 2:10). That makes believers the children of God. The Bible actually speaks of salvation as being adopted by God the Father. In every adoption, it is not legally possible for the child to fill out the paperwork and adopt the parent. Instead, the parent must decide to adopt the child and the child is then given a voice as to whether or not they want to be adopted into this family. In Christianity, I do not see how we adopt God as our Father. Instead, I see the Father choosing to adopt us, sending the Spirit to give us a new nature and will, and from that new heart, we love and choose the Father who has chosen us in love. This allows us to honor our heavenly Father, which we learn next.



# CHAPTER 3

## HONOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

God had a great plan. To love and lead His people, he created something called the priesthood. The priest was supposed to function as a bit of a mediator in the relationship between God and His people. The priest was supposed to bring the Word of God to the people through Bible teaching and bring the burdens of the people to God through prayer.

The priests were descendants of the Old Testament leader Aaron. God's intent was that the leadership of His people would be passed on through families from one generation to another. This would ensure relational ministry so that people were loved and cared for generation after generation.

The priesthood was centered in the city of Jerusalem at the Temple. This was the most sacred place on earth – the place where heaven and earth connected and the location for people to meet with God, who was present in the Holy of Holies. The first Temple was destroyed and, after a long season, was finally rebuilt at great work and expense to God's people. The entire point of the Temple was to have a place where the Kingdom of God came down to the earth and theocratic rule of God over His people occurred.

The plan was wonderful, but the priests were awful.

Malachi 1:6: "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?'"

The priests stopped living Kingdom down and instead started doing ministry that the people desired but God despised. They stopped teaching God's truth and leading the people to obey God. Instead, they created a discount form of religion where people could disobey God morally, rob God financially, and go through the motions spiritually without any correction from the priests. In exchange, the priests were lazy at their jobs, cared little about God, and turned a calling from God into yet another job.

The Bible has three major themes: sin, suffering, and stewardship. Much of the book of Malachi is about stewardship – how God wants us to invest our life and money for His Kingdom. The people's sin was in regards to their stewardship. Since everything rises and falls with leadership, God begins by dealing with the pathetic priests. In God's rebuke, we learn three things that are crucial to all of life.

**One.** Honor is supposed to go up to God so that blessing can flow down from God. Throughout Malachi, the people repeatedly complain that blessing is not coming down from God. God's response is that honor is not going up to Him. In the same way that a good parent does not reward bad behavior, God will not bless sin.

**Two.** In ministry, God is to be the focus and people the beneficiary. The problem in Malachi's day, and in our own, is that people became the focus of ministry. Ministry leaders can slip into the error of thinking that their primary job is to do what people want and quickly forget that their primary job is to do what God wants.

**Three.** The first duty of godly leaders is to seek the will of God for His ministry and His people. Ministry is to be done Kingdom down and not people up. When torn between the desires of the people who paid them and the desires of the God who called them, they choose to obey the people and disobey the Lord. Sadly, it just goes to show that for two and a half millennia since the days of Malachi, if you want to disobey God and appear spiritual, you can find someone to teach what you want to hear and

call you godly even if you are not.

Thankfully, we have someone other than the failed priests. Jesus Christ came as our great High Priest as the New Testament book of Hebrews continually explains. Unlike the failed priests, we now have the faithful Jesus. He's our perfect High Priest who, as both God and man, mediates between God and men reconciling our relationship, forgiving our sins, and lifting our burdens without fail. Amazingly, He also places the Holy Spirit in us so that our bodies and lives become little temples through which God's presence goes forth into the world to serve others as Jesus has served us. This is what 1 Corinthians 3:16 means saying, "...you are God's temple...God's Spirit dwells in you...God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

## THE FALSE TRINITY OF LAME, SICK, AND EVIL

God is so holy that "holiness" is the most frequently mentioned attribute of God in the entire Bible. This means that God is good, pure, right, true, and light without any darkness. God made humanity holy, but we soon rebelled against God and became sinfully unholy. This broke our relationship with God.

In love, however, God devised a plan to deal with our sin and restore our relationship. At great labor and expense, the Temple was built as the place where God's presence would dwell so that people could meet with Him. Priests were commissioned into ministry to serve the people and help them give their sins and burdens to God for forgiveness and healing. This was God's loving way of helping and healing us.

Since the consequence of sinful unholiness was death, a substitute was chosen to spare people from having to suffer for their own sin. Unblemished animals representing purity and perfection were supposed to be brought by the sinner to the Temple and sacrificed by the priest. The sin of the worshipper was imputed or reckoned to the animal who then died in the place for the sinner.

As lazy worshippers, God's people stopped going through

the hard work of transporting their animal to the Temple which might include regular and lengthy walks over many days. Sensing a business opportunity, animals were put up for sale at the Temple at a premium price. Those selling the animals made a hefty profit off of lazy worshippers. Since the priests had to inspect and approve of any sacrifice, before long they were given a cut of the profits from the booming business. Some priests would only accept animals bought from the high-priced vendors who then gave the priest a cut of the revenue. Poorer people with acceptable sacrifices were sometimes turned away and told they had to go buy another animal. Burdened with the animal they brought and needing money to buy a new one, the poor worshippers would sell their animal at a discount, buy another animal at inflated prices, only to see their animal then sold as an acceptable sacrifice at a massive price increase. This is an evil but highly profitable business plan where the priests and the animal sellers made huge profits in the name of worshipping God.

Malachi 1:7-9: "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. 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. '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."

As if that were not bad enough, eventually the priests also allowed some people to bring sacrifices that were "blind", "lame", and "sick". The priests were paid to accept what God rejected and call it holy. Incensed with the corruption, God reminded them that even though "church" might be working for the people, it was not working for Him. Furthermore, God's reminded His people that they did not try the same shell game with their taxes as they had more devotion to their government than their God.

Thankfully, the Lord Jesus came as both our High Priest and sacrifice. Perfect and sinless, we are forgiven of sin and spared death by the "precious blood of Christ...a lamb without blemish

or spot". (1 Peter 1:19). Amazingly, in the next chapter that Peter penned, we read how Jesus also sends the Holy Spirit to make each of His followers a priest as we together serve others as "a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...a chosen race, a royal priesthood..." (1 Peter 2:5,9).

## THE TROUBLE WITH THE TEMPLE

In the spiritual universe of the Old Testament, the gravitational center around which everyone and everything orbited was the Temple. At the Temple, people met with God, heaven touched earth, sin was forgiven, holidays were celebrated, and life was given meaning. The Temple was God's way of providing a home for His people to find hope, help, and healing.

Without the Temple, virtually nothing mandated by God in the Old Testament was possible. Without the Temple, there was no priesthood, no sacrificial system to deal with human sin, and nowhere that served as the center for world mission to get the message of God out to the nations.

The Temple was destroyed and, for a season, there was no Temple. Eventually, at great cost, labor, and risk, the Temple was rebuilt. The entire point of the Temple was for the Kingdom of God to rule over His people, preparing them for eternity and providing a prototype for how His people were supposed to live holy lives different than the nations surrounding them. God did not need a Temple or worship. God's people needed the Temple so that they could worship. This makes God's command shocking:

Malachi 1:10: "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."

In what would have been a staggering statement, God Himself said that He wanted to have His Temple shut down. Why? Because both the priests, who were leaders, and the people, who were followers, were not worshipping in the way that God wanted. The big idea is that true worship is not what works for

us but rather what works for God. Godly worship is about service, sacrifice, and surrender. Their ungodly worship was about selfishness, stealing, and sinning. It seems that this form of "church" was very popular. The ministry leaders got high approval ratings from the people and the people had a "church" that made them feel very comfortable as it worked for them like a modern day country club. But, God was unhappy with the priests and the people. In this discount religious business, it seems that everyone forgets that they, and all they have and do, belongs to Him.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ came to the earth. His body was the Temple where God's presence was to be found on the earth and the connection between heaven and earth. Today, we no longer have a Temple since it was destroyed in 70 A.D. We do not go to the Temple, but rather we go to Jesus Christ who has made our bodies and churches the place where His Spirit dwells and God can be worshipped. This is what Paul means saying in 2 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

## YOU EITHER WORSHIP YOUR WEALTH AS GOD OR WORSHIP GOD WITH YOUR WEALTH

When I was a little kid, our public school took us city kids up into the woods for a day to learn about nature. Before we jumped on the bus for the return trip home, they gave each of us a small sprout that they said would turn into a giant pine tree if we planted and watered it.

Excited to see if I could grow a tree, upon arriving home I found a shovel and dug a hole in the front yard where I buried the seedling. I kind of forgot to ask my parents' permission, and before long they were surprised to see a small pine tree growing in our front yard. Eventually, that tree grew up to hold a birdhouse and provide shade on warm days.

In 1 Peter 1:23, we are told that the "word of God" is also a

“seed”. God’s intent was to plant it in the nation of Israel, have it grow up, and then send forth that seedling to be planted among the nations. His desire was to bring the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to the world. For this to happen, God’s people in Israel would need to also have the seed of truth take root in their lives causing them to be generous to get God’s Word out to God’s world.

God’s plan was that people would give the first fruits (or first and best) of their wealth. For the rancher, this meant giving livestock. For the farmer, this meant giving food. This wealth was supposed to be used for missions and reaching the nations but the people were failing.

Malachi 1:11-12: “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. “But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised.”

In Malachi, at the end of the Old Testament, things are not going well. The ranchers were bringing animals that were “blind” and “sick”. Can you imagine giving a puppy with that description to a child for Christmas? The dishonor to God was deep. In addition, the farmers were giving the rotten leftovers to God because they thought that’s all He deserved for being a rotten God.

Rather than being generous, they were greedy. The bad offering in their hand merely reflected the bad attitude in their heart. So, God was honest that they needed to be grateful for what they had, share it with others, and trust Him to provide for their needs. Roughly 2,500 years later, the old adage holds true – you either worship your wealth as God or worship God with your wealth.

## HAS MINISTRY BECOME A MISERY?

God is constantly serving. Every minute of every day, He is holding the universe together, battling demonic plots, saving sinners, teaching people, forgiving sin, and answering prayers. To

help Him love and serve people, God created a group of ministry leaders to help Him help people. They were called the priests.

The priests, however, got sick of their job. Many priests got bored with the routine of leading worship, doing counseling, teaching the Bible, visiting the sick, and lifting burdens. Others tried to turn what was supposed to be a divine calling into yet another dreary job. You know the drill – show up late, leave early, slack off, and do as little as you possibly can without getting fired. If possible, they would sleep on the job, go through the motions, and when the boss was not looking, feel free to increase their compensation but steal from the company.

Since God was their boss, He felt free to give them a performance review. Apparently, they did not know that God could hear their bellyaching about Him, the job, and the people He gave them to care for as they sat out back smoking cigarettes when they were supposed to be working. But, God hears all and knows all – including our eye-rolling, deep-sighing disdain for serving others.

Malachi 1:13: “But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts.”

To be sure, there is such a thing as a godly weariness in ministry. Jesus Himself was so tired that He took naps and slept through a raging storm on a boat at sea. Paul said that his energy was sometimes poured out like a glass that was completely empty. In Malachi, God is not talking about the godly occasion of being weary in ministry but rather the ungodly occasion of being weary of ministry. This is what happens when a married couple, lukewarm toward the Lord and one another, go through the motions of caring without any real passion to serve God or one another. This happens when a person in vocational ministry secretly hates their job, has hardened their heart toward their people, and hurls insults at God in their mind.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ came down from the Kingdom as our humble servant. He did not grow weary of ministry, and pressed forward through seemingly impossible obstacles and oppositions. In love, He died that we might live, and lives that we might live with Him forever. He also sent the Holy Spirit so that we can live by His power and serve others like Jesus has served us. In this



way, Jesus ministers for us, in us, and through us.

## REALLY LIVING STARTS WITH GIVING

God is the most generous person there is. From the planet we walk on, to the food we eat, water we drink, air we breathe and grace we enjoy, everything is a gift from God.

In response to His generosity, God had a plan to have us also be generous. In the Old Testament, there was a base tithe of 10 percent of one's gross income to fund ministry. In addition, with various offerings, feasts and festivals, charity for the poor etc., the total amount God's people were expected to give was at a minimum somewhere between 25-27 percent depending upon which Bible scholar you trust to run the numbers. Admittedly, in a society where much of the giving was done with such things as crops and livestock, getting precise percentages is more difficult than dealing with dollars.

Before long, however, some people kept trying to find a way to cheat God by keeping a higher percentage of His wealth for themselves. This just goes to show that most people are generous, but they are only generous to themselves.

Malachi 1:13b-14: "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. 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."

Some people brought the most pathetic offering possible. God always wants our first fruits, meaning we give to Him first and we give Him our best. This includes the first and best hours of our day and dollars of our paycheck. But, people from Malachi's day to our own try and give God their worst instead of their first. This included lame, diseased animals that were worthless even though God had given them an unblemished male in their flock to present to Him. Perhaps even worse, rather than giving to God of their own portfolio, they stole things and gave them to God hoping He would not notice the theft. These are the spiri-

tual ancestors of Judas Iscariot who stole from God and kept the money so they could buy a rope with which to hang themselves.

Thankfully, when God sent Jesus Christ, He did not send a lame, worthless sacrifice. No, Jesus is God's first fruits – the first and best of all who have walked the earth. For those who belong to Jesus Christ, we learn four things about giving in the Scriptures.

**One.** Giving is a blessing. Acts 20:35 says, "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**Two.** Giving is a joy. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

**Three.** Giving straightens out your heart. In Matthew 6:21, Jesus says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

**Lastly.** Giving is for all of life and not just your wallet. Generous people give their money, time, love, encouragement, blessing, words, deeds, and time to others. Giving people are more naturally forgiving people. Giving people make better Christians, spouses, parents, friends, co-workers, leaders, and siblings. The key to really living starts by giving. This includes giving our ears to God so He can speak to us, which we study next.

# CHAPTER 4

## **EVERYONE IS SPEAKING, BUT IS ANYONE LISTENING?**

When each of our five children were little, my wife Grace was amazing to watch. For her entire life, she had studied health and nutrition. Once the kids showed up, she knew exactly what to feed them and what not to feed them. As I asked her to inform my ignorance, she explained that the children's digestive system meant that their little body could not process all foods. Many would make them sick or even cause them to develop life-long allergies if they were introduced into their diet too early.

I had no idea, and had I been the one feeding the kids, it would not have gone well. The old adage "you are what you eat" is apparently quite true. And what is true of your body is also true of your soul. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said that we should feed our soul the word of God and that God's "word" was soul "bread". Practically, when I teach the Bible at church, I am to feed the souls of our church family with the same care that Grace feeds the bodies of our family at home.

In Malachi, God, through the prophet, keeps rebuking the Old Testament pastors (called priests) publicly. These are the leaders who are also supposed to be the feeders. But they are not listening to God and feeding the people healthy doctrine. God is passionate about seeing His children well fed so they can be healthy rather than sick. This is a bit like the conversation Jesus had with Peter when He told him "feed my sheep".

Malachi 2:1-2: "And now, O priests, this command is for you. 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.”

Like the priests, there are many people who God expects to feed the souls of others – pastors, ministry leaders, moms, dads, teachers, coaches, spouses, counselors, authors, friends, etc. To feed someone is a great honor, and great responsibility. This is why James 3:1 says, “...we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

Who feeds your soul?

Whose soul do you feed?

What are you eating? What are you feeding others?

In Titus 2:1, the Bible tells us to “teach what accords with sound doctrine”. That word for “sound” is sometimes translated “healthy”? Why? Because when rightly taught, the Word of God makes the soul of a person healthy so that they become increasingly healthy from the inside out. When we hear the passionate rebuke from God the Father to those who were feeding His children spiritual garbage, it is not because He is mean but because He loves us and wants us to be healthy.

## TAKING GOD’S WORD TO HEART

There’s an old adage that says perhaps God gave us two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak. That insight holds a lot of truth.

The God of the Bible is a relational God. Because God is relational, He also speaks to us and wants us to listen. The problem addressed in Malachi is one that is true in every day. Leaders who were supposed to listen to God and then echo His instruction to the people were not listening. We don’t know exactly why. Maybe their life was a mess and they didn’t want to change? Maybe the powerful people, big donors, and exhausting religious types in their ministry would declare war on them if they told them everything that God said to say? Maybe they were lazy and didn’t

like to go to all the work of studying and teaching God's Word?

Whatever the reason, the result was ruining both the leaders and their followers. In our relationship with God, everything rises or falls with our willingness to listen.

Malachi 2:1-2: "And now, O priests, this command is for you. 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."

Here is a little equation to help simplify things:

Listening + Obeying = Honoring

Taking something in our ears is much easier than welcoming it into our heart. That means we are supposed to love the truth, obey the truth, and submit to the truth. When God speaks (and He always is starting with the Bible and our conscience both lead by the Holy Spirit), we have two options on how to respond. There's a clue in this Scripture as God is called "the LORD of hosts". That little phrase is pregnant with military meaning and refers to God ruling over holy angels and unholy demons. In heaven, God spoke to all the angels. Those who listened and took it to heart remained angels. Those who did not listen or take it to heart became demons.

When God speaks, our response is either angelic or demonic depending upon whether or not we obey.

## PERHAPS THE MOST AWKWARD THING GOD HAS SAID

Growing up, my kids watched a lot of animated Bible stories and fun Christian shows like the Veggie Tales. This verse was never an episode.

Malachi 2:3: "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."

Admittedly, this is a bit of a surprising verse and much worse than having egg on your face. But, since we are studying Malachi, let's assume that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16). God doesn't waste words, so why is this in His Word?

Like any conversation, context is crucial. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, and in it, God is giving a performance review of sorts to His leaders, the priests. They were supposed to teach people the Word of God and lead people in the Way of God. After this book was written, there would be 400 years during which no more books of the Bible would be written and then Jesus would come. If the preachers and teachers did not teach the Word of God, then the people would not be ready for the Son of God.

God was telling them that since dung was coming out of their mouths with false teaching, He would smear some on their mouth unless they stopped. The word used here means unclean as unclean leaders were offering unclean sacrifices to God and teaching unclean doctrines about God. The word refers to the part of the sacrifice that was defiled and taken out of town to be burned (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11-12, 8:17). In the strongest possible language, God is telling them that what they are saying and doing is disgusting to Him. The problem was, outwardly, these looked like pious holy religious leaders. Externally, they looked wonderful to man, but internally they looked woeful to God. So, unless they changed what was inside them, God would reveal outwardly who they truly were internally for all to see.

Why does God use such strong language? There are at least three reasons:

**One.** God rarely uses strong language. He only uses it on occasion to grab the attention of people who have not listened to anything else and are running headlong into trouble. If you've ever raised your voice, changed your tone, or picked a colorful word as a last resort to get someone to listen then you understand how this works. Since God uses such language sparingly, we should do the same.

**Two.** It's important that we use good words for good things and bad words for bad things. When our language is not clear, our morality becomes unclear. God sets this example. Here, God is speaking to families of ministry leadership called the priests. The adult kids were serving with their parents and all that they knew they learned from their parents. Rather than echoing God, the next generation of leaders is echoing their parents, so God corrects everyone clearly.

**Three.** The goal of the strong language God is using is a passionate plea to get them to change their ways before it's too late. This is not merely crassness or purposeless, it is crafted and purposeful. When God says, "if...then", He is warning them as time is running out and they need to share his urgent commitment to change.

## WALKING IN BLESSING

Do you remember playing the kids game "follow the leader"? The premise of the game was an important life lesson – someone needs to be the leader and everyone else needs to follow them.

Starting with a man named Levi (Exodus 28-29) in the Old Covenant, the leader was the priest who was a lot like a modern-day pastor. They would help people learn the Scriptures, learn how to pray, and help them with their relationships with God and others.

Since everything rises and falls with leadership, God begins to create change among His people by starting with the leaders. Think of it like a big extended family; if the family is going the wrong direction the key is to get the parents straightened out first. This explains the context for what God communicated.

Malachi 2:4-9: "So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. 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. 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. 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. 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.”

Throughout the Bible, our relationship with God is referred to as a “walk”. The imagery brings to mind a relationship of doing life together continually and making progress headed home to the Kingdom. The simple summary of what God is saying to leaders (e.g. parents, pastors, coaches, bosses, teachers, etc.) is threefold:

1. Walk away from wrong. When going the wrong direction, straying from the Lord or walking away from the Lord, turn around and get back on course. Is there anyone or anything in your life that you need to walk away from?
2. Walk with the Lord. The easiest way to stay out of sin is to stick with the Lord. Those who walk with the Lord are given His presence and provision so that they are blessed. What next step can you take to improve your relationship with the Lord?
3. Never forget who is following you. Sometimes, we walk away from the Lord and walk into trouble, forgetting that others are following us. Who is following you and where are you leading them?

Jesus taught us that heaven is the Father’s House. And, God the Father wants our home to be like His home, which we explore next.



# CHAPTER 5

## BRINGING HEAVEN HOME

Every year ends with a frantic push to prepare for Christmas. Knowing Jesus was coming, in the final book of the Old Testament, God gives final instructions to prepare the family of God for the first Christmas with the last book of the Bible.

If you've ever gotten lost and needed to ask for directions, then you understand where the people of God were when God was speaking to them. In Malachi 2:8, it says "you have turned aside from the way". The good news is that we have a Father with a home for us to enjoy forever. The bad news is that we have gotten lost and need to find the way home.

The primary purpose of the book of Malachi was to prepare people for the coming of Jesus as the first Christmas. Once Jesus arrives on the scene, He says something about "the way home". In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way...". Jesus' words are historically remarkable. Various religious and spiritual leaders have, throughout history, said that they could teach us about or point us to the way. But Jesus said what others do not say – that He is the only way to our home in heaven. His words negate any possibility that there are many ways, which means that any and every other possible way is not the way.

After dying for our sins and rising for our salvation, Jesus returned to Heaven. Going before us, He is the only way through death and to our forever Home. This concept of Jesus being the only way was so central to the early Christian church that Christianity was referred to as "the Way" (e.g. Acts 19:9, 23).

In Malachi and the time that followed, they were waiting

hundreds of years for Jesus to come the first time and were instructed to walk in the way of Jesus until He arrived the first time. In Acts and into our own day, we are instructed to keep walking in the way of Jesus until He arrives for the last time.

## LEARN TO PERSEVERE

Malachi 2:10-11a: "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? Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem."

At some point, every relationship hits "that point". This is the time where we decide to hang in or hang up. This is the perseverance test and by deciding to hang in the relationship, we are agreeing to press forward together.

Since the two most important relationships we have are with God and our spouse, it's not surprising to see God turning His spotlight to those relationships.

God reminds us that He is our Maker and Father. As your Maker, you come from God, belong to God, and will give an account before God. As your Father, you are loved by a relational God who wants you to relate to Him like a child with a parent. This relationship is the most important relationship.

A relationship with God models for us what a healthy relationship is like. Since everyone except God is a sinner with faults and flaws, every relationship is, to some degree, unhealthy. Our relationship with our perfect Father sets the template for what a healthy relationship looks like and after which our other relationships are to be patterned.

A relationship with God also meets our deepest relational needs. Only God is always present, never fails, cannot be wearied, and does not need us. If at any point we seek to have our deepest relational needs met by anyone other than God, we set up the relationship for ruin. Simply put, no one can be God for us and we cannot be God for anyone else.

## CONTRACT MARRIAGE VS. COVENANT MARRIAGE

Malachi 2:11b-14: “Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. 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! 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. 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.”

In the final chapters of the Old Testament, to prepare His people for the coming of Jesus at the first Christmas, God the Father calls a family meeting of sorts and speaks to them about their marriages. We tend to think in very short timelines like weeks, months, or years. But God tends to think in very long timelines like decades, hundreds of years, or millennia. The problem in Malachi’s day that continues into our day is that men thought only about having a good time rather than leaving a good legacy.

The result? Marriages were a mess. Some believing men married unbelieving women. Other believing men who were married to believing women ran off with unbelieving women. And still, other believing men married an unbelieving woman but were unhappy and wanted out of their marriage...perhaps because once children entered the picture, the men realized their kids would grow up to be unbelievers like their mothers.

Most problems start with pants. Once a man can get dominion over his drawers, a long list of cultural problems simply subsides. Knowing this, God reminds us that His intent for marriage is that it be covenantal and not contractual.

**Contract**

Between 2 people  
I seek my best interest  
We negotiate terms  
I keep a record of performance  
I punish failure  
The goal is winning  
A professional relationship

**Covenant**

Between 3 people  
I seek God's will for our best interest  
We serve each other  
I keep no record of wrong  
I forgive failure  
The goal is worshipping  
A personal relationship

As a Father teaching His wayward sons in Malachi, a vital lesson can be learned. How you relate to your wife is not a business arrangement where she is an employee who gets fired if you think you can find someone else to do the job better. As men, we are to treat our wives as God treats us - with relational love, forgiveness, patience, and devotion.

## DIVORCE THOUGHTS FROM DAD

Malachi 2:15-17: "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. '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.' 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?'"

God is a Father and His people are a family. Because He cares about His kids and grandkids in every generation, our Father has a lot to say about marriage and divorce. At the end of the Old Testament, we find the little book of Malachi which gives final instructions to the family of God. His instructions are insightful for single people, married couples, children of divorced families and divorcees.

For single people, the reality is that at some point you will most likely marry. Statistically, nine out of ten people marry at

some point in their life. Who you marry is the second most important decision you will ever make, following who you will worship as your God. Who you marry in large part determines what your life will be like, what kind of home your children will grow up in, and what generations of your legacy will experience long after you are gone.

For married couples, the key to marriage is for both the husband and wife to have a healthy, loving, and growing relationship with the Lord. If that happens, God will give love, forgiveness, patience and more to each spouse to share with each other as gifts from the Lord. Long before a couple falls out of love, they fall out of the pattern of apologizing and forgiving when they are wronged. When this pattern is practiced, the marriage endures because the issues they face are never considered as important as the relationship they share. When issues are more important than the relationship, eventually an issue ruins the relationship. But, when the relationship is more important than the issues, issues are overcome for the sake of the relationship.

For children of divorced families, in Malachi we find the Father heart of God comforting and helping those who have endured what you have endured. The key is not to blame God for decisions that were contrary to God. Instead, we must have faith in God, forgive our folks, and find lessons we can learn to help us heal up and have healthier relationships in our future than our folks had in our past.

For those who are divorced, the verse in Malachi 2:16 is sometimes translated, "I hate divorce, says the Lord" (NASB). What this does not say is that God hates the divorcee, because He does not. But God does hate the pain that divorce causes everyone involved, just like those involved hate the complex grief that it brings. Lastly, God will not divorce you. The God of the Bible will never give up on seeking a loving relationship with you, no matter what you do, or what is done by others to you. His is the one relationship that you can always count on.

## WHAT REASONS DOES THE BIBLE GIVE FOR DIVORCE?

In our study of the Old Testament book of Malachi, the subject of divorce is the focus of chapter 2. Most anytime this subject arises, there are numerous questions that people have, including the reasons divorce is permitted according to the Bible. This subject is one of the most debated and complicated in all of Scripture, largely because of the complex nature of the marriage relationship and great emotions surrounding the family. Here are four scenarios, or grounds, for a possible divorce according to the Bible:

### **1. Death**

- Romans 7:2: "a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage".
- 1 Corinthians 7:39: "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

### **2. Abandonment**

- 1 Corinthians 7:15: "if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved".

### **3. Adultery and Sexual Immorality**

- Deuteronomy 22:22: "If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die." (Old Covenant)
- Matthew 5:32: "everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality..." (New Covenant)
- Matthew 19:9: "whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery". (New Covenant)

### **4. Hardness of heart**

- Mark 10:5-9: "They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.' And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this command-

ment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

The categories above are in order from easiest to the most difficult to evaluate. If someone is no longer alive, obviously the marriage has ended. If someone has abandoned the marriage (e.g. moved far away in an effort to disappear and not have any relationship or is serving a life sentence in prison) then it is impossible to have a marital relationship. Sexual immorality, including adultery, is sometimes obvious but often hidden and secret sin. Lastly, hardness of heart is admittedly a judgment call. But, people with an ongoing hard heart against God and their spouse do some very awful and painful things that make the relationship unhealthy, unsafe, and unlivable. After a few decades of ministry as a senior pastor, I have walked with people through the unimaginable and won't repeat these things because they are unspeakable.

Admittedly, this subject is so important that it cannot be fully addressed in a brief daily devotion. But, as a pastor who loves folks, here are some practical recommendations:

- Your heart is wrong if you are actively seeking to meet some criteria. If you are trying to figure out the grounds for divorce so that you can get your relationship to qualify, then you have a heart problem.
- You do not have to divorce even if you have grounds to. Couples can and do forgive one another, work through a process of healing with a pastor or counselor, and some make it through from awful times to wonderful times.
- You cannot make this decision in isolation. The issue of divorce is so complicated, especially where children are involved, that discreet wise counsel needs to be invited in. These people cannot be friends and family who take your side, but godly people seeking to help everyone involved find God's side (such as professional counselors or godly pastors).

- You cannot make this decision in haste. In anger or hurt, we can make a short-term decision that we later regret.
- You cannot make this decision in lust. If you have an emotional and/or physical relationship with someone other than your spouse and your motivation for the divorce is to move on to another person, then your reasoning and motives are polluted, which will keep you from walking in God's will.
- It is unfair, unjust, and unhealthy to make only one person in the marriage obey biblical commands. Through the Bible, God repeatedly speaks to both husbands and wives about their roles and responsibilities. Subsequently, both husbands and wives should be lovingly encouraged to obey God and trust Him for the outcome of their relationship.

God created marriage and family, and cares for marriages and families. If the people of God remained in covenant with God and their spouse, the stage could be set for the coming of Jesus which we explore next.



# CHAPTER 6

## GOD WINS IN THE END

The Bible is the most honest and amazing book that will ever be written.

As the world's most honest book, the Old Testament ends with the report card for God's people through the prophet Malachi. In the first two chapters, God honestly tells them that relationally their families are a mess, spiritually their churches are a mess, and politically their nation is a mess. The report card is basically straight "F's". The message is clear: on our own, we are hopeless.

The Old Testament ends with prophesy about the coming of Jesus. Roughly 25 percent of the Bible was prophetic when written, as the God who knows and rules the future tells us in advance what will happen. Prophecy is how God prepares His people for the future. In Jesus, hopeless people find hope for their future.

Malachi 3:1-5: "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. 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 fullers' soap. 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. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years."

In Malachi 2:17, the people who are frustrated with God and lacking faith in God ask, "Where is the God of justice?" God then tells them that His name is Jesus and He's already booked a first-class ticket from heaven to earth.

To prepare the way, John the Baptizer would come as God's messenger to preach the repentance of sin and get the people ready for Jesus. Then, "the Lord" Jesus would arrive at the Temple. Since the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D and no longer exists, this proves that Jesus has already come and anyone who is awaiting the coming of the Messiah, such as our Jewish friends, are waiting in vain because He has already arrived.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus every year, we do so at a privileged time in the history of the world. From the prophecy of Malachi onward, the people of God waited 400 years until it was fulfilled at the first Christmas. Today, we, by sight, look back at Jesus' first coming and, by faith, look forward to Jesus' second coming to fulfill the Bible's remaining prophecies about Him.

## SHOULD CHRISTIANS TITHE?

Unlike any other time of year, the holidays are a season of generosity. This tradition of giving goes all the way back to the first Christmas when Jesus was born.

If you remember the story, three Magi (we don't know exactly how many men) showed up to worship Jesus in part by giving Him three gifts. These men are mysterious as we know little about them, but it is commonly thought that they were pagan leaders in another religion, powerful, wealthy, and involved in astrology as they followed a star to find Jesus.

Their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh were peculiar and prophetic gifts for a child. Gold is for kings on a throne and reminds us that, though a poor baby, Jesus was and is in fact the universal King of Kings. Frankincense is for priests in a temple and reminds us that Jesus has come to stand between God and us to remove sin and restore relationship. Myrrh is for dead people in a grave, and reminds us that Jesus came to give His life

on the cross in our place for our sins. Myrrh is basically an anesthetic used for those who are suffering and dying. Myrrh was offered to Jesus on the cross (Mark 15:23) and used to prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39). In summary, Jesus is the greatest gift ever given as John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..."

Before God asks us to give some of our best (money), He asks us to give all of our worst (sin). Before God asks us to give some of our best, He gives us all of His best in the form of His Son.

Jesus taught a lot about giving so we would learn to worship God with our wealth instead of worshipping wealth as our God. Roughly 25 percent of Jesus' teaching is on stewardship. Roughly 800 sections of the Old and New Testament in total talk about stewardship. The basic two premises of stewardship are these: One, God is the owner of all resources. Two, we are the manager of some of God's resources. This backdrop explains the strong language God uses to explain the difference between stealing and stewarding.

Malachi 3:8-12: "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 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. 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. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts."

Just like if the bank, or your retirement plan manager, started spending your money on themselves rather than the way that you directed them, God sees us spending His money wrongly as thievery. To remind us, God even put on American currency, "In God we trust". We usually don't see things in this way, as we tend to be more unaware of financial sins than other sins. So, we are more aware that we have crossed a line when we sexually touch a person we should not touch, than when we touch a dollar we

should not touch.

Tucked away at the end of the Old Testament is the book of Malachi. Most Christians are likely only familiar with one section of the book – the part about giving money. This section of Scripture is sometimes treated like the password to unlock access to God's bank account. Among prosperity teachers, this verse is beaten like a piñata on Cinco De Mayo.

For starters, context matters. Like any conversation, if you don't know the people talking with one another and only pull a few statements out of the middle of their interaction, you can easily rush to wrong conclusions about what was said.

Throughout the book, God reveals Himself as a relational Father having a conversation with His rebellious kids. The context is a bit like a family meeting between an awesome dad and His awful kids. The people were frustrated with God because they felt like He should give them more money, make their lives easier, and make their problems go away. They were saying awful things about God, and protesting by failing to worship, pray, give, or serve. Making matters worse, the spiritual leaders were siding with the people and standing against the Lord.

Jesus was clear that where our treasure is, our heart is (Matthew 6:21). Knowing the connection between our heart and our wallet, God is seeking to open both.

God does something unprecedented in asking His people to test Him. This is the only place I can find that God invites someone to test Him. Jesus said this is not something we should do, rebuking Satan by saying, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" in Luke 4:12.

Some things that happen in the Bible are one-time commands and some things are all-time commands. When Moses had a staff turn into a snake and turned river water into blood, that event is not intended to result in a seminary department teaching others how to do the same with Snakes 101 and Blood 202 as classes. When Jesus spit on the ground and put mud in a guy's eyes, for example, to heal his blindness, He did not command us to excel at spitting in the eyes of blind guys. So, the command from God to test Him seems to be most likely a one-time command to a group of people and not an

all-time command to all people. Behind this, however, is a principle that giving is an act of faith as God wants to give through you and not just to you.

At the end of the Old Testament is a strong word from God about the importance of tithing the full amount that is owed to God. But, this raises an important question about whether or not this command carries over to the New Covenant.

For starters, much of the Old Covenant was about law and what God demands of us and much of the New Covenant is about grace and what God does for us. Romans 6:14 is clear that today, “you are not under law but under grace”.

In the Old Covenant, believers were required to give of their first fruits meaning the first and best portion of your wealth went to God before anyone or anything else. Tithe literally means 10 percent, and this was the amount to fund the ministry of the priests, which are basically the pastors in the Old Covenant (Numbers 18:21-29, 27:30). In addition to the 10 percent, there were various holiday festivals to be funded, along with special offerings, and mercy ministry to the poor. Altogether, most scholars will estimate that 20-25 percent of one’s gross income was given back to the Lord, and possibly even more.

In the New Covenant, the only real mention of tithing is on the lips of Jesus in Luke 11:42, “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”

Did you catch Jesus’ words? He rebuked them for only giving their wealth without giving their works to help those in need. Jesus said that they should keep tithing as a resource ministry, and add to it relational ministry for the poor and powerless.

In the longest section on New Covenant giving (2 Corinthians 8-9), there are four principles for generosity. One, giving should be cheerful from someone who loves God and loves to give back to the God who gives generously. Two, giving should be sacrificial meaning it varies according to income. Three, giving should be regular in that it is planned out and not just occasionally in response to an appeal. Four, giving should be proportional so that as God increases someone’s standard of living, they should

increase their standard of giving.

The New Testament never commands a believer to tithe. But, the New Testament repeatedly calls New Covenant believers to a higher standard than Old Covenant believers. We who live in the wake of the resurrection with the fullness of the Holy Spirit are called to a higher lifestyle. This explains why, for example, the Old Covenant forbids adultery of the hands and the New Covenant also forbids adultery of the heart. Similarly, the Old Covenant forbids murder and the New Covenant forbids murdering someone's reputation with the words we speak about them. Therefore, God wants each of His people to meet with Him, search our own heart, make our own budget, and give whatever we believe is right for us in the sight of God while using the Old Covenant as a floor and not a ceiling.

## **IF YOU GET THE MEN YOU WIN THE WAR. IF YOU LOSE THE MEN YOU LOSE THE WAR.**

We are all familiar with the power of a grand finale. At the end of a concert, the band saves the best for last. When watching a firework display on a holiday, you need to make sure to stick around for the end. The final words of the Old Testament are these:

Malachi 4:4-6: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 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.'"

God is here summarizing the Old Testament and getting the last word. The principle is key – don't fret about all the shenanigans on the planet as one day God will get the last word. God reminds us that Moses brought us the Law to reveal God's holiness, our sinfulness, and our need for a Savior to meet the demands of the Law for us. God also reminds us that the prophets, like Elijah,

remind us of God's Law and call us to turn from and trust in our Savior.

The next major event in human history from this moment was the coming of John the Baptizer. He would be anointed and filled with the same Holy Spirit as Elijah from His mother's tummy and would come to do heart surgery on men (2 Kings 2:9-10; Luke 1:15-17; Matthew 11:13-14; John 1:21). God is saying that there are two kinds of people – those who are cursed and those who are blessed.

How do we know that a people group is cursed? The fathers do not have a heart for their children and, as a result, the children do not have a heart for their fathers. Practically, this looks like men who love sex but not God, marriage, or children. So, they worship sex as their god, use and abuse women, and murder their children. If their children live, they live without their father involved or invested in their life. This is what Jesus told some men in John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning..." The old adage is true – like father like son and the devil's boys look like their dad. Make no mistake, many, if not most, of our social problems would be solved by dads living, loving, and leading with the Father heart of God.

How do we know that a people group is blessed? The fathers have met God the Father, received a new heart that is the Father heart of God, and love their children like their Father loves them. This is the miracle that God does in the hearts of men. As men learn to become sons of the Father, they learn to father others starting with their own children.

If you get the men, you win the war. If you lose the men, you lose the war.

God ends the Old Testament with men, because change starts with men. God starts with men's hearts because the 'want to' precedes the 'how to'. Only when a man 'wants to' can that man apply the principles of 'how to' live, love, and lead like his Father.

The next stage of human history is now set. God does not inspire the writing of another book of the Bible and for 400 years, people wait for the Father to send the Son. Jesus Christ is the

Son of God and revelation of the Father heart of God. Jesus turns our hearts toward the Father and gives men new hearts to love the Father and live in love like the Father. When this happens, the Kingdom of God begins to overtake the death of this world starting with blessing at home, flowing out to the church, and from there out to transform the culture that is cursed. This is the message of Malachi, God wants His heart in His people, starting with His sons, so that His Kingdom life begins to bring life and health into our family and church family.



# QUESTIONS

## FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND GROUP DISCUSSION

### CHAPTER 1: LEARN TO BE LOVED AND TO LOVE

1. Of the five things listed about God the Father (He knows what you are doing, He calls family meetings with you, He does not act like a sibling, He meets you where you are and walks you to where you should be, He starts with love), which strikes you most? Why?
2. How is your Bible reading going? If you had to pick one issue/struggle/question that you are needing to resolve what would it be? Where can you start studying the Bible for that purpose?
3. Is there any complaint, grievance, or "problem" you have with God that you need to bring to Him in prayer and Bible study this week to sort out?
4. How is your Bible reading going? If you had to pick one issue/struggle/question that you are needing to resolve what would it be? Where can you start studying the Bible for that purpose?
5. How has God blessed you and your family in ways that are simply not deserved?

## CHAPTER 2: WHY DOES GOD CHOOSE SOME PEOPLE BUT NOT OTHERS?

1. What would your life be like, honestly, if God had not chosen to save you and bless you?
2. Are there any of the false views of salvation that you have held in the past or present?
3. Which of the six ways that predestination is loving do you find most compelling? Why?
4. How amazing is it that the God of the universe chose to love you and adopt you as His beloved child forever?
5. How does it help to think of God the Father choosing us as an adoption?

## CHAPTER 3: HONOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

1. Is there any area of your life where you are currently not honoring God (e.g. financial, sexual, vocational, marital, parental, etc.)?
2. Is there any area of your life where you are cheating God or trying to get God on your own terms?
3. What do you consider "good worship" or a "good church"? One that works for you or one that works for God? One that gives you what you want or one that gives you what God wants?
4. How has God been generous to you spiritually, financially, relationally, emotionally, physically, etc.?
5. How faithful are you in your ministry service to God?
6. Do you believe that God is pleased with your level of generos-

ity towards both ministry and those in need?

## CHAPTER 4: EVERYONE IS SPEAKING, BUT IS ANYONE LISTENING?

1. Is there anything you are learning or consuming in the form of content (videos, books, blogs, social media, television, movies, podcasts, etc.) that is not healthy and is making your soul unhealthy?
2. Is there anything God has been speaking to you that you aren't taking to heart?
3. Is there anything in your life that God has recently turned up the volume on to get your attention?
4. Is there anyone or anything in your life that you need to walk away from?
5. What next step can you take to improve your relationship with the Lord?
6. Who is following you and where are you leading them?

## CHAPTER 5: BRINGING HEAVEN HOME

1. Are you walking in the way of Jesus?
2. Is there any big misstep you need to correct?
3. What is your next step to walk with Jesus?
4. Is there anyone you have in God's place in your life?
5. Is there anyone who has you in God's place in their life?
6. Are you confident in God's love and commitment to a relation-

ship with you?

## CHAPTER 6: GOD WINS IN THE END

1. What specific ways have you seen God be generous to you?
2. Who is the most generous person you know personally?
3. What are your stewardship goals for the next year (e.g. giving to God, paying off debt, increasing savings, investing wisely, etc.?)
4. In what specific ways was God generous toward you in this past year?
5. If you are not familiar with the ministry of Dave Ramsey on faithful financial planning, it would be good for you to do so.



# MARK DRISCOLL

With Pastor Mark and Grace Driscoll, it's all about Jesus! Mark and Grace have been married and doing ministry together for over twenty-five years. They also planted The Trinity Church with their five kids in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry ([thetrinitychurch.com](http://thetrinitychurch.com)).



Mark has been named by Preaching Magazine one of the twenty-five most influential pastors of the past twenty-five years. He has a bachelor's degree in speech communication from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University as well as a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. For free sermons, answers to questions, Bible teaching, and more, visit [MarkDriscoll.org](http://MarkDriscoll.org) or download the Mark Driscoll Ministries app.

Together, Mark and Grace have authored *Win Your War* and *Real Marriage*. Pastor Mark has authored numerous other books including *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Vintage Jesus*, and *Doctrine*.

