

GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Malachi: The Dangers of Half-Hearted Devotion

Sovereign Love | Malachi 1:1-5

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Theme: God's covenant love for Israel means that all things will work together for their salvation. God calls us to respond to his sovereign love with faithful lives.

Series Theme: God called Malachi to declare a powerful message to his people: Beware of half-hearted living. God doesn't want the leftovers. He wants all that we are. He has called us to be a nation of priests, and our lives are meant to be a living sacrifice. In this, the last book of the Old Testament, we discover just how precious Jesus really is, because he has done everything we could not and empowers us for every good endeavor.

Malachi comes in the form of a disputation: God is leveling charges at Israel.

Disputation [dis-pyoo-tey-shuh n]

noun

1. the act of disputing or debating; verbal controversy; discussion or debate.

GO OVER; reviewing the sermon

Start by re-reading the passage and beginning with prayer.

Malachi 1:1-5 (ESV)

1 The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

The LORD's Love for Israel

²“I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.” ⁴ If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the LORD of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.’” ⁵ Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!”



After you've read the passage and said a word of prayer, begin by going over your notes and reminding yourself of the sermon. Spend a few moments in quiet doing this.

Leader, after a few moments, start with a few opening questions:

- Start by asking: What was Pastor Adam's big idea as we launched this new sermon series?

[Leader note: This is not a time to discuss the quality of the sermon, but the content and application. Ensure that the conversation remains in the proper focus.]

- What do we know about a divided heart? How is this question relevant to the message of Malachi?
- Briefly, following the sermon, what do we know about Malachi? Both the man and the book, and their place in redemptive history?

[Leader, say: Each sermon in this series will be essentially broken down into two sections: Diagnosing the Danger, and Living Devoted. We'll basically follow the same flow as we review the sermon and reflect on how to move forward]

● **DIAGNOSING THE DANGER**

Pastor Adam summarizes this section like this: God's people are *blind* to his sovereign love. When we are blind to his love, we do not live lives of true, heartfelt obedience. We become libertines or legalists.

How would you restate this summary?

What stood out to you about God's dispute with Israel? [Israel questions God's love for them]

In all honesty, where in your life could those same charges be levied against you?

How confident are you in God's love for you? What would you say backs up your answers?

[Leader, say: The next section is about living devoted to God, fully devoted. Let's process that section before we Go Deeper by watching our video and discussing further implications of our faith and life.

● **LIVING DEVOTED**



[Leader note: Be sure you are taking notes during the sermon and so be sure to have ready some of your own answers or insights to share with the group - setting the example for opening up your life and faith to the group.]

Pastor Adam's summary in this section is stated like this: *We're called to respond to God's sovereign love.*

Can anyone think of a better way to say that?

What is meant by "sovereign love" and what makes sovereign an amazing qualifier?

Of the four points in this section, which one is either the most challenging or commissioning to you, and why?

1. Respond with humble hearts
2. Respond with deep trust
3. Respond with holy lives
4. Respond with worship

Does anyone remember what was stated about our security and devotion?

"Our SECURITY is not based on our inconsistent devotion, but God's sovereign love!"

[Leader say: Now that we've rehashed the sermon and reminded our hearts and minds about the message from God's Word, let's talk more about integrating this into not just our beliefs but our lives...]

GO FORTH; take this material and live it

Watch the Sermon Follow-up video; this is available at PeaceChurch.cc

What from that video gave you more insight or depth into the message from the sermon?

What questions would you have asked the pastor about the sermon?

As we consider how we can more fully live into God's call...let's first read these verses
[Leader note: it's best to announce these verses, and have your group read right from their own Bibles]

- *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. -Matthew 5:16*



- *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. - 1 Peter 2:12*

What do these two verses hold in common?

[Leader Note: This final section really is the heartbeat for this discussion; that is, how we can take what we've heard and "do something with it." One of your jobs is to help your group see how they are to integrate this into their lives. Have fun!]

For this final question, let's fully flesh out this discussion as best we can by mutually encouraging each other, setting a game plan, and planning action for accountability...

What did you understand as the primary call on our lives through this sermon? What is God calling us to "do with this sermon"? Or we could ask it like this: What about this content, both from the sermon and from the interview, is supposed to be most evident in our lives? That is, "evident" in that something tangible in our lives is produced as to a) give glory to God and b) give a testimony that will cause others to praise God.

How will we see this happen and know that it has?

How will we mutually encourage each other through accountability to continue to live into God's plan for us through the challenging and commissioning of this sermon?

Close by asking if there are any final thoughts.

[Leader Note: Be prepared for the "final thoughts" to be a section of the night that could go long. Remember, guard against gossip, grumbling, nit-picking, and sermon-grading during this discussion, but also be prepared for this to possibly be a great part of the night!]

Close in a time of a round-table prayer (try to get everyone to pray out loud, it helps to deepen friendship).

