GROWTH GROUP



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Created to Draw Near

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### CREATED TO DRAW NEAR

**MALACHI** 

Coming out of the Covid-19 restrictions could be likened to coming out of exile. We've been isolated from family, banished to our houses, uprooted from our routines, and outlawed from meeting together. But now as we begin to emerge from Covid-19 restrictions, this exodus brings with it a strange sense of discouragement, disarray and dissonance. Because what emerges with us isn't just the good changes. But what also emerges is a new normal and unhealthy behaviour to face.

In Malachi we're given a window into what it was like for God's people to come out of exile. We see that God changed His people through their exile. Although they went into exile with an idol problem, it does seem as they emerge this is no longer an issue. But what's also revealed is they're hearts still have an unhealthy attitude towards God. Although God's people are physically returning to the land, the sad reality is their hearts still seem to have not returned to God.

We don't know anything about the person Malachi ('my messenger'). Assuming Malachi was one person, his messages from God have been recorded because they are God's words for God's people. The occasion was when the exiled people of Israel had been allowed to return to Judah from captivity in Babylon about 460 BC. The small minority of people are now back in the land God gave them but they are far from the heights of yesteryear. They know they must hold to the covenant relationship with God to remain his people. That means upholding things like the Mosaic Law including the sacrificial system. But they are surrounded by foreigners prospering in their pagan lifestyle.

Malachi's message is a collection of 6 speeches reflecting a similar structure of an assertion ("God lays charges"), questioning ("what have we done wrong?"), response ("but you say") and implication spelling out the warnings and promises of the future.

These four elements are well illustrated by the first disputation (1:2-5):

- Assertion (by God) "I have loved you" (1:2a)
- Questioning (by Israel) "How have you loved us?" (1:2b)
- Response (Is not Esau ... the people with whom the Lord is angry forever!" (1:2c-4)
- Implication "You own eyes shall see it ... beyond the borders of Israel!" (1:5)

Malachi points out, at the very least, Israel's spiritual apathy and contempt for God, and at the very worst, their spiritual adultery and breaking faith with God. However Israel's failures are not addressed first, but God's ancient love for his people is the prior and primary concern on the Prophet's mind.

This emphasis of God's love reveals that Israel lacked a sense of God's love (2:2-5). This lack was expressed through their contempt in worship (1:6-2:9), unfaithful marriages (2:10-16), wrong attitude to giving to God's work (3:6-12) and the consideration that living for God was a waste of time (2:17-3:5, 3:13-4:3).

What becomes clear in Malachi is that Israel is nursing a sense of neglect and unfair treatment from God. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah will be written shortly after Malach to address the same issues.





Navigate Devotional is a podcast that's designed to help you engage with the God of the Bible.

Each episode is a 10 minute devotional released each day Monday to Friday. We hope that this can be a part of your routine each day as you encounter God.

You can find Navigate by searching Navigate Devotional on Spotify or go to our website www.navigatedevotional.com.

PERSONAL GROWTH: NAVIGATE



### **GROWTH GROUP GUIDE:**

**CONNECTION WITH GOD'S WORD** 

Each week we will be exploring the passage by trying to connect with our genuine human experience of people with God. It's one thing to come away from the passage having learned something new and interesting about God, but that's not the goal God has in mind for those who listen to him. He wants our knowledge of him to change us.

 God invites his people to engage with him in conversation and to air grievances. What is the issue raised in this passage? Can you identify with this issue?

[When you think 'Life'. We are thinking about experience: what we are told about what life is like, God (Father/Son/Spirit), people, themselves?]

- How is Israel's behaviour (the horizontal) a reflection of their relationship with God (the vertical)?
- How does God instruct them to get their relationship right with Him?
- How is Jesus the answer we need for us to be the person God wants us to be?
- If how we relate to God is reflected in how we live, what does your actions show about your relationship with God? How is God challenging this area of your life? How does this inspire a new hope for you into the future? What would that look like?

Thinking of our 'relationship with God'. Think with your heart. Although I might know this in my head, does my heart know this? Although I know this to be true of the Christian experience, is this my experience? Although I know this, do I live this way?]

#### **WEEK 1: LOVE STARTS WITH GOD**

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 1:1-5

1 A prophecy: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. 2 "I have loved you," says the Lord. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob, 3 but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." 4 Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the Lord Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord. 5 You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the Lord-even beyond the borders of Israel!'

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# GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 1:1-5

| 1.  | God   | invites | his | people | to | engage | with | him | in | conversation | and | to | air |
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| gri | evano | ces.    |     |        |    |        |      |     |    |              |     |    |     |

What is the issue raised in this passage? Can you identify with this issue?

- 2. How is Israel's behaviour (the horizontal) a reflection of their relationship with God (the vertical)?
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How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

How are you going with others God has placed in your life?

Something God's put on your heart from the passage?

Who are the people you are on mission to?



## WEEK 2: WHOLEHEARTED WORSHIP

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 1:6-2:9

6 "A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord Almighty. "It is you priests who show contempt for my name. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' 7 "By offering defiled food on my altar. "But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' saving that the Lord's table is contemptible. 8 When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty. 9 "Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?"—says the Lord Almighty. 10 "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands. 11 My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations," says the Lord Almighty.



TUNE INTO NAVIGATE
DEVOTIONAL PODCAST

## GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 1:6-2:9

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#### **WEEK 3: GOD CARES ABOUT MARRIAGE**

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 2:10-16

10 Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another? 11 Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god. 12 As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob f-even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty. 13 Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. 15 Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your quard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. 16 "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.





TUNE INTO NAVIGATE DEVOTIONAL PODCAST

# GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 2:10-16

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#### **WEEK 4: COME NEAR TO GOD**

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 2:17-3:5

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?" 3 "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, 4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. 5 "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

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# GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 2:17-3:5

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### WEEK 5: REJECTING OTHER LOVERS

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 3:6-12

6 "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse-your whole nationbecause you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.



# GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 3:6-12

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#### **WEEK 6: GOD IS WORTHY**

PERSONAL GROWTH MALACHI 3:13-4:6

13 "You have spoken arrogantly against me," says the Lord. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?' 14 "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? 15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it." 16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. 17 "On the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. 4 "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. 3 Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty. 4"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."





# GROWTH GROUP: MALACHI 3:13-4:6

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## EXTRA NOTES

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