

Malachi, the Prophet

Bible Story: Malachi

Key Passage: ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

1 Peter 5:10

Big Picture Question: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Bottom Line: God will never forget me.

Christ Connection: *Malachi was a messenger—a prophet—who told God's people to repent.*

Malachi also told about another messenger God would send. This messenger, John the Baptist, would call people to repent and get them ready for a final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation.

LARGE GROUP: Communicating God's truth in engaging ways.

Say This:

We had learned a lot about the time when God's people returned to their land after the exile. We know that God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. We have learned that God's people repented and promised to be faithful. As often happens, God's people choose sin once more. They turned away from God and turned toward selfishness instead.

Our big picture question has helped me understand our Bible stories these past few weeks. **Who is in control of everything?** Does anyone remember the answer to that question? That's right!

God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. God's people had been through some pretty hard times, but no matter what, God was still in control. We might not always understand God's plan of His timing, but we can trust **God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.**

In our story today, God's people need a reminder of the big picture that God had planned for them. They had begun choosing sin again, so God sent a prophet to speak to them and guide them to obey God. God wanted them to be ready for the coming Messiah, and He spoke through the prophet Malachi to help prepare His people

Play Video

Have you ever been in the car with your family and saw a sign that said, "Warning: Road Closed Ahead"? Do you think it would be very smart to keep driving? Of course not! You would probably end up crashing your car because of a big hole in the road. Warning signs are meant to keep us safe and help us make the right choice about what to do.

The Bible has warnings too. God loves us and wants us to make choices that honor Him. The Book of Malachi contains lots of warnings. People were sinning and had turned their backs on God. In this short book, God warned His people that a day was coming when He would judge them for their sin. He was essentially telling them that they faced danger ahead. It was time to stop and turn around- to turn back to God.

Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah. God sent a prophet to point

out the people's sin because He loved them. God knew that the way His people were living was hurting them. Their hearts did not fully love Him. God knows what is best for us; He is best for us! He wants to restore our broken, sinful hearts and bring us back to Him.

Next Steps

As we continue our journey through the Bible, it is important to always remember that we are studying the bible so that we will grow to love, follow, and obey Jesus. We aren't just learning to know things. We are learning so that we will do things that honor God. What your next step?

You can talk about this in your group, but begin to think about it now:

- Believe- believe that you are a sinner who needs a Savior and Jesus is your Savior because He died for you and rose again.
- Get baptized- show your faith by getting dipped back in the water and raised out of the water.
- Read your Bible and pray- read your Bible and pray every day so that you get to know God personally
- Serve others- serve others at home, at school, and at church.

If you need help identifying and taking your next step please talk to you small group leader or me. Pray, ask God to show you your next step and then take it.

Christ connection

Malachi was a messenger- a prophet-who told God's people to repent. Malachi also told about another messenger God would send. This messenger, John the Baptist, would call people to repent and get them ready for the final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation. Four hundred years would go by between the last words of Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament. The next time God spoke directly to people, it would be through angels proclaiming the births of two special babies.

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (Small Groups, 40 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

1. Bible Review and Skills

What You Need: Bibles

What You Do:

Distribute Bibles. Guide your group to open their Bibles to the Book of Malachi. Explain that Malachi the prophet wrote the Book of Malachi. The name Malachi means "My messenger." God sent Malachi to remind His people that God still loved them and expected them to obey Him. Choose a volunteer to read Malachi 3:17-18 aloud.

What You Say: “ God's people made wrong choices and became lazy in their worship, but God still loved them and cared for them. God showed compassion, treating them with kindness even though they did not deserve it. Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah. God also show us kindness, even though we do not deserve it.

2. Discussion Questions:

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

- Who was the last prophet in the Old Testament? (*Malachi*)
- What kind of sacrifices were the people offering? (*They brought lame or sick animals, Mal 1:8*)
- God promised that when the Messiah comes the righteous would jump like what kind of animal? (*calves, Mal 4:2*)
- Why was God so unhappy with the people's sacrifices? *Guide kids to see that God's people were going through the motions of worship, but their hearts were not in it. By offering sick and lame animals, they communicated that they did not believe God deserved their best. They were trying to save their best animals for themselves. God always deserves our best.*
- When is it easy to obey God? When is it difficult to obey Him? *Guide kids to see that obedience is easier when our hearts are full of love for God and those around us love Him too. Help them see that obedience can be difficult when we are surrounded by people who do not love God. But God promises to be with us and strengthen us. He promises that the reward will be great for our obedience.*
- What can we do when we realize that we are living in sin? *When we confess our sin to God, we can ask Him to restore us. Jesus had paid the price for our sin once and for all, so we can have forgiveness through Him.*
- Why do you think the people offered God their sick animals instead of their healthy animals? *Point out that we sometimes try to make shortcuts to obey God because we don't trust Him like we should or we act selfishly. But God wants us to obey Him completely, offering Him our very best. The people were supposed to make a sacrifice to worship God, but they gave Him their leftovers instead of their best. (1 Samuel 15:22)*
- What does it mean to sacrifice something? *Help kids recall that to sacrifice means offering God our very best of everything. The people in the story were supposed to be making a sacrifice to worship God. Sacrifice expresses love, thanksgiving, or the need for forgiveness; and sacrifice often comes at great cost to ourselves. (Psalms 51:16-17)*
- What is something you can give to God this week? *Encourage the kids to think beyond belongings, such as toys, and to think about sacrificing time or effort. For example, they may give God 10 minutes a day to read the Bible and pray. (Romans 12:1-2)*

Memory Verse Activity

What You Need: Memory Verse Poster, balloon

- **What You Do:**
Ask kids to say the Memory Verse with you 1 time.
- Blow up the balloon. As you are blowing the balloon and tying it, ask kids to form a circle.
- You are going to toss the balloon in the air and kids need to keep it in the air as you say the memory verse.
- Each bounce of the balloon is one word.
- Variation: See if you can say the whole memory verse while the balloon is in the air.

What You Say: “Have you ever gone through something really difficult and you weren’t sure if you would ever get through it? Our memory verse reminds us that God will restore us and strengthen us. God knows that we are weak, but our weaknesses point us back to our need for Jesus. When life is hard we know that we can’t do anything apart from God.

Pray and Dismiss

What You Need: Journal page (1 for each kid), markers/crayons, Bibles

What You Do:

- Distribute journal pages and pencils.
- Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:
- **What do we learn about following God from today’s passage?**
- **What is one thing that God is teaching you right now?**
- **Where is one area that you would like to be closer to God?**
- **What is your next step to keep loving, following and obeying Jesus? (Believe, Baptism)**
- When your kids identify their next steps, take note and circle back to them so that you can help them and give them/their parents resources to help them take their next step.
- As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas and write in your small group journal.

What You Say: God, You are faithful. When we are going through trials, we can trust You. Your character does not change. We confess that like the people in the story today, we can grow lazy in our worship of You. Thank You for never leaving us. Even though we cannot see You, You are there. Help us trust You and follow You closely. We love You. Amen.
As adults arrive to pick up, tell kids to recite the memory verse to them.