

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide  
SB 07.17.2022

Worship God our Father – MALACHAI 1:1-6

## Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

The name Malachi meant “my messenger” to his contemporaries. Malachi was God’s messenger. He called his message an oracle or “burden.” It was an urgent word of the Lord to Israel—the Lord’s covenant people. Although Malachi’s audience numbered no more than 100,000 to 150,000 people living in the small area around Jerusalem known as Judah, the prophet addressed them as the heirs of the promises and obligations God gave to all Israel. Malachi’s oracle began on the note of God’s covenant love: “I have loved you.” The people of Israel needed to hear of God’s love. They had a deep question about it: “How have You loved us?” Malachi’s hearers probably believed they had good reasons to question. They lived under a Persian appointed governor long after returning from the Babylonian captivity (Mal. 1:8). Their nation’s territory was a mere 600-900 square-mile plot of land, 50-75 percent the size of Rhode Island. Within this little area they suffered crop failure (3:9-11). They probably thought, “Love? Where’s the love?” For many of us, worship is equated with “going to church.” However, worship is about much more than that. In fact, people can go to church weekly and never worship sincerely. Sure, we may attend the services, sing the songs, and stand when Scripture is read, but if our attitudes aren’t worshipful, then we’re just pretending. Worship is our heartfelt response to what we recognize about the person and character of God. If we recognize God’s majesty, glory, holiness, righteousness, grace, and love, we respond with adoration, praise, confession, repentance, commitment, and service. Anything less is going through the motions. And an apathetic approach to worship indicates an apathetic attitude toward God, which was the root issue Malachi addressed. Malachi combated the spiritual lethargy of the people of Judah by demonstrating to them the relentless and merciful love of God. Let’s get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most or spoke to you from the message this last weekend?
2. What is your most memorable worship experience? Why was it so special?
3. Discuss ways it’s easy to “go through the motions” when it comes to worship. Why is this such a struggle for most of us?

## Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MALACHI 1:1-2.

Malachi is filled with indictments against Israel for their disobedience, arrogance, and other failures against God. We may find it strange, then, that the opening declaration from God is “I have loved you” (v. 2). However, that’s exactly what God wanted Israel to know: He loved them. Any disciplinary actions that had taken place or would follow were rooted in God’s love for His people, not His desire to inflict pain on them. He loved them and showed His grace in the midst of difficulty.

1. The word “oracle” literally means “heavy burden.” Has God’s Word ever felt like a heavy burden to you? Why might God’s Word feel that way to Malachi at the time he wrote these words?
2. Some perceive the God of the Old Testament as strict and harsh in His punishments. What other Old Testament passages can you recall that show God to be a God of love?
3. What life situations might lead someone to the conclusion that God doesn’t love him/her?
4. What evidence of God’s sovereign love and grace can you point to in your life?

## **“Breakthrough!” in 2022**

The love of God is demonstrated throughout the Old Testament (see Exodus 34:6-7, Deuteronomy 7:7-8, Psalm 136, and 2 Chronicles 20:21). Using his trademark question-and-answer style, the prophet posed a question as it might come from the people: “How have You loved us?” (v. 2). According to verses 2-3, God’s love for Israel was evident in His choice of them as His people, as opposed to His rejection of Edom: “I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau” (v. 2). Esau was the father of the nation of Edom. Love versus hate is a method used in Scripture to express contrast. God chose and accepted Israel; He rejected Edom.

1. Read Genesis 25:19-26. Who were Jacob and Esau? What do we know about their relationship?
2. Based on what you know about Jacob, do you think Jacob is deserving of God’s covenant love?
3. What does it mean to be chosen by God? Why is this significant in affirming His love for us?

When God says, “I have loved you,” this means that God is saying, “I have set my choice on you.” This choice had nothing to do with the number of people (Deut. 7:7-8), their character, or their works. God’s love is free and He chose to set His love on the Israelites despite the fact that they did not deserve it. God’s love is relentless and merciful. God’s love is not based on our worthiness—this is what makes it so profound.

### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MALACHI 1:3-6.**

God referred to the nation’s history as further evidence of His love for them (vv. 3-4). While God had disciplined Israel, He hadn’t destroyed them. Furthermore, He allowed them to return to their homeland from exile. But Edom, Esau’s people, had been driven from its land, never to return (v. 3). Even if Edom attempted to restore itself, God wouldn’t permit it (v. 4).

1. Read Hebrews 12:3-11. How do you explain the relationship between love and discipline? What do verses 3-5 teach us about God’s love?
2. Why is it important for us to understand the wrath of God if we hope to understand the depth of God’s love for us in Christ?
3. How had the people dishonored God as a Father?

God’s mercy and grace are only rightly seen and experienced against the backdrop of His righteous fury against sin. This is what makes the cross such a profound act of love, God, in Christ, chose to take upon Himself the wrath we deserve for sin. We can be certain of God’s love for us because of the cross. God brought us to Himself through the cross. We were unworthy sinners, but God demonstrated His love in that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). If we ever wonder whether God is for us or against us, we have only to remember that He “He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all” (8:31-32).

### **Applying God’s Word**

**What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.**

**Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.**

1. What do your thoughts and actions say about what you love?
2. What needs to change in your life for you to begin prioritizing the love of God?
3. How can believers demonstrate God’s love to a doubting world? What are some other Scripture passages that you would use with unbelievers to assure them that God loves them?

## ***“Breakthrough!” in 2022***

**PRAYER** - Praise God for His reconciling work through Christ that brought you to Him at the right time when you were hostile and helpless. Pray that the people in your group would understand their need for a Savior and trust fully in Christ because of the price He paid for them. Pray for our church, that believers will encourage one another in their walks and that they would share the good news of God’s grace with non-believers. Pray that as a group you will cling to the benefits of faith in Christ.

*“A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?.’ {Mal. 1:6}*

### **GOD THE FATHER**

Yeshua claimed God as His Father and taught His followers to do the same.

#### **God is our “Abba” Father**

While all the names of God are important in many ways, the name “Abba Father” is one of the most significant names of God in understanding how He relates to people. The word Abba is an Aramaic word that means “Father.” It was a common term that expressed affection and confidence and trust. Abba signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father and his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his “daddy.”

### **SONSHIP**

We are all God’s creation. However, those who have accepted Jesus as Lord have been adopted into the family and we become children to the almighty creator.

### **THE NECESSITY**

We need to reflect and ask ourselves, do I have an intimate personal relationship with Jesus?