

Malachi
Leader Guide
(NASB and ESV)

REVERING THE LORD,
STANDING IN AWE
OF HIS NAME

Malachi Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)

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USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

Using the Leader Guide with In & Out


When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

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**MALACHI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 1**

Lesson emphasis:

- Malachi 1

OVERVIEW

To begin your discussion you might ask your group what the book of Malachi is.

It's an oracle, which can mean a burden.

What seemed to be the spiritual condition of the people this message was directed to?
Tell your group to look at the chart in the lesson "But I Say / Yet You Say" as a visual aid for this discussion.

They were disputing with the Lord about certain things.

- His love for them
- Defilement / pollution
- His acceptance of their offerings
- Justice
- Profit in serving Him

They didn't fear or respect ("respect" is not used in the ESV) His name, Him.

They were not honoring God nor listening to what He said.

Give time to discuss if or how that relates to now.

Tell your group to look at "The Rulers and Prophets of Malachi" as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

What is the historical setting for Malachi?

It was after Judah's captivity and return to their land.

The remnant had been back in their land for about 100 years.

They had finished rebuilding the temple in 516 B. C., about 80 years prior to Malachi.

They had finished rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem about ten years before Malachi.

It was the time of Nehemiah. The chart shows the dates for Malachi as 435–415 B.C.
The people in Israel were ruled by the Persian kings.
Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament.
There was no recorded word from God for approximately 400 years until Matthew.

MALACHI 1

Verses 1-5

Who and what is the first part of this chapter about?

God said that He loved Israel, but the people of Israel in Malachi's time questioned that He did. They wanted to know how He loved them.

They were ruled by the Persians, and the promises God had made to them about restoring their kingdom were not fulfilled. It had been 100 years since their return from Babylon.

The Lord used Jacob and Esau to remind them of His love for them.

Ask your group what they learned about Jacob and Esau and how it compares with the context in Malachi.

Genesis 25 and 28

Jacob and Esau were twins; Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and Esau was Edom.

Although Esau had the birthright as the oldest son, he sold it to his brother Jacob.

And their father Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau.

The Lord chose the younger over the older before they were even born.
That's when He made His choice of Jacob—Israel—to be His people (nation).

Romans 9:6-13

God's choice / election was not based on what Jacob or Esau did. It was for His purpose.
Verse 13 quotes Malachi 1:2-3.

Hebrews 12:15-17

Esau was an immoral and godless / unholy person. When he sought the blessing, he was rejected because there was no real repentance (ESV—found no chance to repent)—only tears.

Obadiah

At some point in history, Edom was violent toward his brother Jacob/Israel.

That might have been when Assyria or Babylon went against Israel or Judah.

Because of that, God foretold His judgment on Edom.
They'll be cut off forever when the day of the Lord comes on all the nations.
Edom will receive from the Lord what they did to Israel.

What does Malachi 1:1-5 say about Esau?

Because the Lord is indignant (ESV—the Lord’s anger is) toward Edom forever, He’ll tear down even if they rebuild what was beaten down / shattered before.

Edom had suffered destruction from Assyria, Babylon, or surrounding nations. Some might read in commentaries that it was the Nabateans.

They, like Judah, wanted to rebuild their kingdom.

But unlike God’s people Israel, even if they did, God would tear it down.

The Lord hated “the wicked territory” (ESV—“the wicked country”), and is indignant (ESV—His anger is) forever against Edom.

The opposite is true of Israel, but they didn’t think so in their current situation.

What do these verses say about Israel?

They’ll see what happens to Edom and know that the Lord did it.

They’ll realize that He controls more than their future.

How does Romans 9:14-21 relate to Malachi 1:1-5?

God Himself determines whom He has mercy on. It doesn’t depend on man or what he does; it only depends on the Lord of mercy.

Man cannot question the Lord about what He does or the choices He makes.

Give time for your group to discuss how these truths about the Lord are applicable to their lives.

Was the problem in verses 1-5 that the Lord didn’t love Israel or that the people really didn’t love Him? How so?

The latter

The rest of this book shows that they didn’t love the Lord.

That’s why He called them to return to Him.

To summarize these verses you can ask who said what.

The Lord said that He loved Israel.

They said, “How?”

Edom said they’ll rebuild.

Israel will say, “The Lord be magnified” (ESV—“Great is the Lord”), looking to the future.

Verses 6-14

Who and what are these verses about?

The priests didn't honor or respect / fear the Lord.

How did they dispute that?

Again they asked the Lord, "How...?"

How have we despised Your name?
How have we defiled / polluted You?

And again, He answered them.

Who were the priests and what were their responsibilities to the Lord?
Ask your group what they learned from Leviticus.

Leviticus 21:6, 8, 17

They were to be holy to the Lord and not profane His name.

The priests presented / offered the offerings to the Lord that the people brought to the temple.

Leviticus 22:1-2, 20-25

The priests were to be careful with the holy gifts / things dedicated to Him by the people who brought the gifts to be offered at the temple.

The Lord was very specific about the offerings and the priests.
No defect / blemish or it was not an acceptable offering.
The offerings were to be perfect to be accepted by the Lord.

He was very specific about which offerings He would accept.

What was happening in Malachi 1:8-9?

The priests were offering the very things the Lord said were not acceptable.

They wanted Him to be gracious to them; they sought His favor.
But they didn't do it with proper offerings. Therefore, they didn't receive His favor.

How do verses 8-9 answer their question in verse 7?

Offering blind, sick, and lame animals was defiling / polluting. It showed that they despised His name instead of respecting it.

What does verse 10 mean? What did the Lord want instead of defiled / polluted offerings?

He wanted one of the priests to shut the gates / doors to the temple so that the defiled / polluted offerings would stop.

What are verses 12-13 about?

They were profaning the Lord's name; they defiled His table and despised its food.
They thought their job was tiresome.

They offered:

what was taken by robbery
the lame and sick

The Lord said He'd not receive what they offered.

You might ask your group if they can relate to any of this. Are they bringing their best to the Lord—time, money, etc.? Has serving Him become tiresome?

According to verse 14, what was to happen to the one who brought defiled / polluted offerings to the Lord?

Cursed instead of gaining His favor

Ask your group what they learned about the Lord from verses 5, 11, and 14.

His name is great in more places than Israel. Among the nations His name will be great.
Verses 5 and 11 seem to indicate a future time.

Incense and pure grain offerings will be made. There is a reference to other places where incense and grain offerings will be offered to His name.

He is a great King and will be feared among the nations.
He's the Lord of hosts—over all nations.

Israel, God's chosen people whom He loves, was not honoring His great name, but a time is coming when even the nations will fear Him.

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask about a possible theme for chapter 1.

The priests not honoring or fearing God's great name

To end this discussion, you might ask about the kind of offerings believers now make to the Lord.

Be sure to discuss [Romans 12:1](#) as application and how it compares with Malachi 1.

This verse speaks of a living and holy sacrifice which is acceptable to the Lord.
This sacrifice is not rejected or cursed by Him.

**MALACHI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 2**

Lesson emphasis:

- Malachi 2

REVIEW

To begin your discussion, tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart. Then ask what the book of Malachi is.

It's an oracle, which can mean a burden.

What is repeated throughout Malachi?

God's people were disputing with Him about:

His love for them
Defilement / pollution
His acceptance of their offerings
Justice
Profit in serving Him

What is the historical setting for Malachi?

Tell them to look at "The Rulers and Prophets of Malachi" if they need help.

It was about 100 years after Judah's captivity and return to their land.

They had finished rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem about ten years before Malachi, and the temple about 80 years before Malachi.

The people in Israel were ruled by the Persian kings.

What is Malachi 1 about?

The Lord said that He loved them, but they said, "How?"

Verses 1-5 are His answer telling how He loved them.

It's a contrast between Jacob—Israel and Esau—Edom.

God chose Jacob, not Esau.

Verse 6 begins addressing the priests.

The Lord said that they were not honoring and respecting / fearing His great name, but they said, "How?"

They were offering defiled / polluted things to Him.

At this point, you might ask what your group remembers about the priests from their study of Lesson 1. Tell them to look at the list they made on Day Two of this lesson.

They were to be holy to the Lord and not profane His name.

The priests presented the offerings to the Lord that the people brought to the temple.

The Lord was very specific about the offerings and the priests.

No defect / blemish or it was not an acceptable offering.

The offerings were to be perfect to be accepted by the Lord.

What were the priests of Malachi's time doing in Malachi 1?

The priests were offering the very things the Lord said were not acceptable.

They wanted Him to be gracious to them; they sought His favor.

But they didn't do it with proper offerings.
Therefore, they didn't receive His favor.

What was to happen to the one who brought defiled / polluted offerings to the Lord?

Cursed instead of gaining His favor

MALACHI 2

Verses 1-9

Who and what are these verses about?

Since the priests were not listening to the Lord, not taking it to heart to honor His name, then He cursed their blessings.

He said that it even extended to their offspring.

When cursing and rebuke takes place, then they'll know that it was His commandment and that His desire is for His covenant with Levi to continue / stand.

What do these verses say about the covenant with Levi?

It was a covenant of life and peace from the Lord. (ESV adds "a covenant of fear.")

God gave Levi life and peace because he revered / feared Him and stood in awe of His name. That's a direct contrast to the priests of Malachi's time.

Verse 8 says that they corrupted the covenant of Levi.

- they turned aside from the way they should have lived
- and instructed others so that they also stumbled

As a result of what the priests did, the Lord made the people of Judah despise the priests and look on them as abased. That's the opposite of what priests were to be.

Ask your group what they learned from the other references about the covenant with Levi.

Numbers 3:1-12

Aaron's sons served as the priests.

Aaron was Moses' brother, and they were from the tribe of Levi.

Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange fire to the Lord, and they died before Him. He destroyed them.

Eleazar and Ithamar were the remaining priests at that time.

The tribe of Levi was given to the priests—Aaron and his sons—to serve them in performing duties as described by the Lord.

Numbers 18:21-32

The Levites received the tithe from Israel as their inheritance for their service.

Then the Levites gave a tithe of what they received, the best of it, to the priests.

Deuteronomy 33:1-11

Moses blessed the tribes of Israel.

The sons of Levi were to observe God's word and keep His covenant.

They're to teach Israel His law and make the offerings.

Then the Lord will bless and accept his works.

Numbers 25:1-13

Israel was being carried away into idol worship at Shittim. The women of Moab and Midian seduced men of Israel as part of worshipping Baal of Peor.

Phinehas, Eleazar's son and Aaron's grandson, turned God's wrath away from Israel. He killed an Israelite man and a woman of Midian, an idol worshiper.

The Lord gave the covenant of peace to Phinehas and his sons as a result of his righteous act in being jealous for the Lord. The priests came from Phinehas.

Lead your discussion back to Malachi 2.

What do verses 6-9 say about the priests and instruction?

The priests were to give true instruction from God's Law to the people of Israel.

They were to instruct so that the people turned from their iniquity.

Knowledge of the Lord's word, what is right, was to be taught to the people by the priests. The priests were to be the ones to preserve that knowledge. They were the ones to know what the Lord said.

The priest was the Lord's messenger to the people. The message was His Word or His Law.

But the priests of Malachi's time had turned from that knowledge and what was right.

As a result, they caused people to stumble in sin by their instruction.

As a result, the Lord made them despised by the people.

Those priests were showing partiality in the instruction.

Ask your group how this relates to believers now and to them specifically. Discuss the cross-references.

Exodus 19:1-6

God made a covenant with Israel that they would be His people, a kingdom of priests.

They were to obey His words and keep the covenant.

But they didn't, as Malachi shows.

1 Peter 2:1-5, 9-10

All believers are a royal priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus.

Believers are priests now to proclaim His excellencies.

Revelation 5:6-10

Jesus purchased people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God.

Matthew 28:16-20

Believers are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them Jesus' commands, just as Old Testament priests were to teach God's commands.

Verses 10-12

What and who are these verses about? Also, ask about the word study.

This goes beyond the priests to all of Judah.

They all came from one father. The text doesn't say which father, maybe Jacob or Abraham or God.

NOTE: ESV capitalizes Father indicating that it's God.

They all were created by the One God.

They were one. So why were they dealing treacherously (ESV—faithless) with their brothers? That's the main point. They profaned the covenant of their fathers by dealing treacherously against their brothers (ESV—been faithless to one another) with whom they were one.

dealing treacherously / been faithless—"to be traitorous, to act unfaithfully, to betray"¹

What had they done?

An abomination in Israel and in Jerusalem, which was to have been the holy city with God's holy temple in it

They profaned the sanctuary that the Lord loved.

Judah married the daughter of a foreign god.

Ask your group what they learned about this from the cross-references.

Exodus 20:1-6

The Lord was Israel's God, and they were to have no other. They were never to worship other gods or make idols / carved images. God is jealous for those who belong to Him.

Exodus 23:31-33

Israel was not to make any covenant—marriage is a covenant—with the people of the surrounding nations or with their gods. The people of those nations weren't to live in Israel's territory so that they wouldn't tempt Israel with their gods.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6

Make no covenant with the people of the nations whom Israel was to have destroyed, but didn't. Marriage is specifically mentioned here. The same reason is given—those who worship idols will turn Israel away from serving the Lord alone.

Exodus and Deuteronomy are part of God's Law. This is some of the knowledge that the priests were to preserve and instruct the people. If they had, then there would have been no abomination in Malachi's time.

When were other times Israel turned from God's Law? Ask about the cross-references.

¹Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003, c2002), p. 117.

1 Kings 11:1-11

King Solomon married foreign wives who turned his heart away from the Lord. As a result, the Lord tore the kingdom away from him in the days of his son.

Ezra 9 and 10

That was 457 B.C. when Ezra returned after the Babylonian captivity, maybe 22 years before Malachi. Ezra confronted the people of Judah for marrying the people of the surrounding nations. When confronted, they covenanted with the Lord to put away the foreign wives and separate themselves.

Nehemiah 13:23-29

This was maybe 30 years after the events in Ezra 9 –10. The same thing happened again, even with the grandson of the high priest. Malachi was the same time as Nehemiah.

If wise Solomon and the grandson of the high priest of God can be led astray by idolatrous wives, then all people need to beware.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

This is a warning to New Testament believers.

Don't be bound together / unequally yoked with unbelievers, which is similar to being in covenant with.

What did Malachi ask for the one who did this, Malachi 2:12?

Cut off from Jacob all who awake and answer (ESV—does this) or who make an offering
All, anyone who commits that abomination

Verses 13-16

What else did they do?

A second thing they did was to weep on the altar because the Lord no longer regarded their offerings. He didn't regard them because they didn't do what He said.

Ask if that kind of thing happens now. Do people weep and moan because they don't think that the Lord accepts their offerings, while they're living in sin?

Some people are willing to make offerings to God, but they aren't willing to repent and live by what He says is right.

How does verse 14 continue?

They asked why the Lord didn't accept their offerings, why He didn't show favor to them for their offerings.

The reason is that they were dealing treacherously (ESV—been faithless) with their wives.

Wife of your youth
Your companion
Your wife by covenant

The covenant of marriage is binding.

Ask your group what they learned about marriage in the cross-references from Day Five.

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

God instituted marriage.

He made a helper for the man because it wasn't good for him to be alone.
Husband and wife became one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:15-18

This defines one flesh as the physical sexual relationship between a man and woman. Therefore, immorality—sex with anyone other than one's spouse—is a sin against one's own body.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21

A woman's virginity was an important part of the marriage covenant. Evidence of it was important. A man was not allowed to divorce a wife if she was a virgin when he married her.

Lead the discussion back to Malachi 2:15-16. How does the flow of thought continue?

The NASB says that no one who has a remnant of the Spirit had dealt treacherously with his wife of covenant. (ESV—Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?) That one was seeking a godly offspring, so he didn't sin by divorcing his wife—breaking the covenant with her.

A warning is repeated in both verses to take heed / guard oneself and not deal treacherously / be faithless.

God hates divorce. It breaks covenant; it's dealing treacherously.

The ESV says that the man who hates and divorces covers his garment with violence.

NOTE: There are several translations and interpretations of verse 15 which your group will probably read. Be sure when discussing this verse that the interpretations hold to the clear context of the surrounding verses.

Ask what your group learned about divorce and godly offspring from the cross-references.

Matthew 19:1-9

Jesus said that Moses gave permission to divorce because of their hard hearts.

He said that there was only one reason for divorce, and that is adultery.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

If a man divorced his wife, he was to provide her with a certificate of divorce.

This was for her protection as evidence if she remarried.

Leviticus 21:7-15

Priests were not to marry divorced women or harlots.

The high priest was only to marry a virgin from Israel so that he would not profane his offspring. He was set apart to be holy among his people. He was anointed by the Lord and separate from others. His children were in the priestly line.

Isaiah 61:6-9

Israel, in the future, will be called priests of the Lord. They'll again be in covenant with Him. The nations will recognize their descendants as those blessed by the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

This addresses believers who are married to unbelievers.

Although believers are not to marry unbelievers, sometimes after two unbelievers are married one of them gets saved. That results in a believer married to an unbeliever.

In that case, the believer is to remain with the unbeliever in marriage unless the unbeliever does not want to stay married.

The believer in a marriage with an unbeliever has a sanctifying influence on both the unbelieving spouse and the children. When two unbelievers are married, there is no influence of godliness. But when one is saved, that influence is there.

Lead the discussion back to Malachi 2.

What is the dispute in verses 17?

The Lord said they wearied Him with their words, and they asked how.

They called evil good and the opposite.

Then they asked where the God of justice is.

You might ask your group where they think the God of justice is, and what He thinks about calling good evil and evil good. Then ask how this applies to their lives.

Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they noted as a theme for Malachi 2.

Maybe something like:

Priests corrupted covenant with Levi; people dealt treacherously

MALACHI
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 3

Lesson emphasis:

- Malachi 3–4
- Tithes, offerings, and giving

REVIEW

To begin your discussion, you might ask your group what Malachi 1–2 is about. Use the At a Glance chart as a visual aid for this part of your review.

Malachi 1:1-5	The Lord said that He loved them, but they said, “How?” Verses 1-5 are His answer telling how He loved them. It’s a contrast between Jacob—Israel and Esau—Edom.
Malachi 1:6–2:9	God said the priests despised His name, and they asked how. They offered defiled / polluted food on His altar. They caused people to stumble with their instruction. They corrupted the covenant of Levi.
Malachi 2:10-17	Judah dealt treacherously / faithless with their brothers. They wept on God’s altar because He didn’t accept offerings. They asked why. He said it was because they dealt treacherously / faithless with their wives. They wearied Him by saying evil is good. They asked where the God of justice is.

What is the primary point of Malachi?

Return to Me, and I will return to you.
The burden of the Lord was that even His priests didn’t honor or respect His name.
The Lord of hosts called His messengers and His people to fear His name.

NOTE: Remind your group that this is one burden and not originally divided by chapters.

MALACHI 3

Verses 1-4

Ask how chapter 3 continues the flow of thought from chapter 2.

The priests were to be messengers of the Lord, 2:7, but they turned from the way.
They caused many to stumble and corrupted the priestly covenant.

3:1 says the LORD will send His messenger, and he'll clear the way before Him.
Then the Lord Himself will come, the messenger of His covenant.
This coming will be to refine and purify the sons of Levi.

2:17 asked, "Where is the God of justice?" and chapter 3 answers—He's coming.

Malachi 1 and 2—the priests were offering defiled / polluted food on God's altar, and the Lord didn't accept them or show favor.

3:4 says that when He comes, Judah's and Jerusalem's offerings will please Him.

Ask your group what they learned about 3:1 from the cross-references in the lesson.
Who is "My messenger" referring to?

Matthew 11:1-10

Jesus quoted Malachi 3:1 and said it referred to John the Baptist.

Luke 1

This chapter gives John's lineage—he was of priestly descent.
John the Baptist cleared / prepared the way before Jesus. His ministry was in Israel.
He preached repentance and baptized those who did.

Verse 16 says he was to turn many in Israel back to the Lord their God.

He gave them knowledge of salvation by forgiveness of sins.

Who is the "messenger of the covenant?" Ask about the cross-references.

The Lord Himself—the Lord Jesus Christ

Isaiah 42:1-8; Matthew 12:15-21

Matthew said Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 42.

God's servant will bring justice to the nations.

The people of Malachi's time asked where the God of justice was.

He, God's servant Jesus, was a covenant to / for the people, a light to / for the nations.

Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:18-20

At His first coming, Jesus shed His blood of the new covenant for forgiveness of sins.

Lead your discussion back to Malachi 3:5-6.

What will happen at Jesus' second coming, according to verses 2-5?

Refine, purify

Judge sin

You might ask your group what they learned about the Lord from verse 6.

He doesn't change, and that was the reason He hadn't consumed His sinful people.
He had made a covenant with them.

Verses 7-12

What was another dispute between the Lord and Judah?

This was the call to return to the Lord of hosts, so that He would return to them.
They asked how they could return to Him.

He said that they were robbing Him; they asked how.
In tithes and offerings / contributions

What does the text say about curses and blessings? Relate this to Malachi 1:14–2:1.

Again, curses and blessings are mentioned as the result of what they were doing.

If they brought the proper offerings and tithes, then Judah would be blessed and the nations would see the delightful land (ESV—land of delight).

Some of the Lord's blessings were abundant crops in the land of Israel.

Ask your group what they learned from the Exodus 23 cross-reference.

Exodus 23:14-17

Three times a year Israel was to gather before the Lord at the feasts.

None was to appear before Him empty-handed.
They were to bring an offering from something He had blessed them with.

What had God taught His people about tithing in the Law?

Deuteronomy 12:10-12; 14:22-29

In the Law, the Lord required Israel to present offerings, sacrifices, and tithes.
From:

all produce, flocks, and herds

The tithe was given to the Levites.

It was 1/10 of what the Lord had given to the people, and they were to give it back to Him through the Levites. It was collected and given in the 3rd year.

Some was also given to the strangers, orphans, and widows in the towns where the people lived.

The Lord said His blessing would be the result.
What had happened in Nehemiah's time—Malachi's time?

Nehemiah 10:32-39 and 13:10-14

Shortly before or during the time of Malachi's prophecy, the people of Judah had decided to make the appropriate offerings and tithes for the temple upkeep, the priests and the Levites.

Then, probably when Nehemiah, the governor of Judah, returned to Babylon for a while, they didn't give the tithes and offerings. The Levites had to go back to their fields for food, instead of receiving tithes from the people.

When Nehemiah returned to Judah, he again corrected the sin.

NOTE: Some think that Malachi presented his message during the time when Nehemiah was in Babylon. But the text does not say when it was given to the priests and people of Judah.

What were freewill offerings?

Leviticus 22:17-25

To be accepted, it must be a perfect animal, no defect.

1 Chronicles 29:6-17

David led the people of Israel to give willingly / freely and generously to the treasury for building the Lord's temple. The result was rejoicing and praise.

He recognized that all they gave came from God's hand.

Ezra 1:4-6

Again, a collection was taken for rebuilding the Lord's temple after the first one was destroyed by the Babylonians. The freewill offerings encouraged those who were returning to Judah and rebuilding the temple.

Ask what they learned about tithes before the Law was given.

Genesis 14:17-20 and Hebrews 7:1-10

A tithe is 1/10 of all.

Even before the Law was given, Abraham paid a tithe to the priest of God Most High, Melchizedek.

Genesis 28:20-22

Jacob—Israel—vowed to give 1/10 back to God of all that He gave him.

What does the New Testament teach about giving?

Acts 2:41-47

At the beginning of the church, believers began giving to meet each other's needs.

Gladness, sincerity of heart / generous hearts, praising God, and favor with people were the attitudes and result of their fellowship.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Paul gave directions to the Corinthian church about taking a collection for the saints (other believers). He asked that they put aside what they were to give on the first day of every week (Sunday). As the givers prospered, they gave to other believers who weren't as prosperous as they were.

2 Corinthians 8 and 9

The churches of Macedonia gave even out of their poverty. Paul called it grace. They were joyful as they gave in support / relief of the saints.

A cheerful giver is described as:

Purposed / decided in his heart

Not grudgingly / reluctantly

Not under compulsion

The result is:

God gives abounding grace

Always have all sufficiency

Have abundance / abound for every good deed / work

Enriched in everything for liberality / to be generous

Thanksgiving to God

Give time for your group to discuss how these truths about giving apply to them.

Lead your discussion back to Malachi 3.

Verses 13-18

What is the dispute in verses 13-15?

The Lord said that they spoke against Him.

They asked what they had said.

It's vain to serve God.

What profit is there that we've walked in mourning?

They called the arrogant blessed.

The wicked / evildoers test God and escape.

Who and what are verses 16-18 about? What's the contrast with verses 13-15?

Those who feared the Lord spoke to / with one another.
The Lord heard it.

A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared Him and esteemed His name.

They'll be Mine.
I'll spare them on the day I prepare My possession (ESV—make up my treasured possession).

They'll again distinguish (ESV—see the distinction) between:
The righteous and the wicked
The one who serves God and the one who doesn't

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they noted as a possible theme for Malachi 3.

The Lord's coming; robbing God; those who fear the Lord

MALACHI 4

How does the flow of thought continue from chapter 3?

The contrast continues.

The day is coming when the arrogant and evil will be chaff / stubble.
But those who fear His name:

Sun of righteousness rise to heal
Go forth and skip / leap like calves
Tread down wicked, who will be ashes on that day

What is the command in verse 4? How does it relate to the rest of Malachi's message?

Remember the Law of Moses.

If Judah had been doing this, there would have been no burden from the Lord through Malachi.

What and who are the last two verses about?

The Lord will send Elijah the prophet before the day of the Lord—the time of judgment.

Elijah will restore / turn hearts so that the Lord doesn't smite the land with a curse (ESV—strike the land with a decree of utter destruction).

Ask your group what they learned about Elijah from the cross-references.

2 Kings 2:1-3, 11-12 and Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5

He didn't die, but was taken to heaven by the Lord, like Enoch.

Hebrews 9:27

Man dies once.

Matthew 11:7-14

When Jesus came, He told the people of Israel that if they had been willing to accept it, John the Baptist was Elijah—the one who came to prepare the Lord's way by preaching repentance, the one who was to restore hearts.

But they didn't accept it—they didn't repent as a whole.

Matthew 17:1-4, 9-13

Elijah and Moses appeared to Peter, James, and John at Jesus' transfiguration. His disciples asked Him about Elijah coming first before His 2nd coming.

He replied that Elijah is coming to restore.

Then He said that Elijah had already come as John the Baptist, and they didn't recognize him.

There was only about 400 years between the promise in Malachi and John the Baptist and Jesus coming the first time. Israel didn't recognize the first coming, so the second one is for judgment and restoration.

If you have time, ask your group what they think about Revelation 11:1-13 and Elijah.

This is before Jesus comes the second time.

The two witnesses are prophets of the Lord in Jerusalem.

They're killed; therefore, some think that they are Elijah and Enoch because neither of them died and they were both prophets of the Lord. It's appointed for men to die only once.

Ask what your group noted as a possible theme for this chapter on their At a Glance chart.

The arrogant and those who fear God's name at His coming; Elijah sent before

To end your discussion you can ask what they've learned from Malachi's burden that applies to their lives.

- Questioning God's love
- Not respecting His name
- Dealing treacherously / faithlessly with others
- Calling the arrogant blessed or saying evil is good
- Ready for judgment or refinement
- Returning to Him
- Distinguishing / making a distinction between righteous and evil