

Message Discussion Guide

CHAPTER 37: THE SIN OF MAN AND THE SILENCE OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

October 3, 2010

Malachi

This guide is designed to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word.

There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Ask group members to share things they have pledged to do over their lives. Examples may range from friendship pacts as kids, to sororities and fraternities, to spending daily time in God's Word, to marriage, to diets. Discuss: **How faithful have you been to these pacts / pledges? What has helped you to remain faithful or what has hindered you from being faithful?** Explain that today's lesson will explore God's faithfulness to us despite our consistent failure to be completely faithful to Him.

Option 2

Begin by asking if anyone in the room knows the name of an ancestor who was alive 400 years ago. (*The odds are slim to none that anyone will know.*) Allow volunteers to name something going on in the world in 1600. How were people's lives different then from our lives now? How was the church different then and now? How many generations have passed since 1600? (*About 6*) Explain that today's lesson will focus on the final prophecy God sent to His people 400 years before Christ came and before 400 years of silence.

Review the Message . . .

The book of Malachi is named for its author, whose name means "my messenger." The book was written in the middle of the fifth century BC. The temple had been rebuilt and the walls around Jerusalem had been reconstructed. Out of the 55 verses in this book, 47 of them involve God speaking directly, first-person, to His people, which is significant because after these words in this book, God was silent for the next 400 plus years. He said nothing. Instead, the sound of these words from this book reverberated from generation to generation to generation.

What We Have Learned About Ourselves . . .

- We are _____ dead _____ in our _____ sin _____.
 - We are prone to _____ defame _____ God.
 - We are prone to _____ defile _____ one another.

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- Sin is too subtle in us.
- Sin is too seductive to us.
- Sin is too strong for us.
- We are desperate for a Savior.

Discussion . . .

- The Israelites had rebuilt the Temple to worship God, yet they were despising God's name with their worship. Read Malachi 1:6-14. What excuses might the people have been making for their dishonorable worship?
- As you skim Malachi 1 and 2, what were the specific sins of the Israelites? Knowing that their hearts mirror our hearts, what warnings do you see here?
- God repeatedly refers to His "name" in this chapter. Why is God so concerned for His name? How do His people reflect His name to the world? Why was this truth significant in these Old Testament verses and how is this significant today?
- Remind your group of the spiritual renewal that happened in Nehemiah 9—10. Why do you think they so quickly fell away from their commitment when Nehemiah left for Persia?

Application . . .

- How is it possible to seemingly worship God and yet defame God at the same time? How can we prevent ourselves from doing the same thing?
- How does half-hearted worship relate to our view of a holy God and our view of our own sin?
- What excuses do we make for half-hearted worship?
- Have you ever made a resolution to turn from your sin, only to find yourself caught up in those very same things just a little later? (*Yes! Don't ask for details.*) Why does this happen? (*Take a moment to emphasize how dead we are in sin apart from Christ's power.*)
- List some seemingly innocent things that can lead to sin, and discuss how this might happen. (*Examples: The Internet. Blogs. Facebook. Twitter. Sports. A hobby. Work. Shopping. Home decorating. Consider how people can lust, covet, or become proud by comparing themselves to others. Also, consider time spent on these things in relation to time spent in God's Word and serving others.*)
- Describe a time when you were especially broken before God over sin and aware of your desperate need for Him. What were the circumstances in your life at that time? How is your life different now—for better or worse?
- How do the truths about us listed above, leave you feeling desperate for Jesus?

What We Have Learned About Our God . . .

- He is overwhelmingly gracious.
- He is inexpressibly holy.
- He is consistently faithful.

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- He is completely just.
 - He will demonstrate His righteousness.
 - He will demand our repentance.
 - He will display His wrath.
- He is ultimately sovereign.
- He is unquestionably supreme.
- He is the only Savior.
 - He will preserve a remnant.
 - He will provide a Redeemer.

Discussion . . .

- Read Malachi 1:2. They were questioning the very love of God for them when God had saved and restored them, just as He had promised to do. God pointed them all the way back to Jacob when He promised to love them as the people of Israel 1500 years ago, and how He still loved His people. What does God's response to their question of His love tell us about His character and His grace?
- Think about what we've studied this past year in the Old Testament. In what specific ways has God shown His love and grace to His people despite their sin? Give examples. (See also Malachi 3:6-7.)
- Though God is gracious, He is holy, and his holiness demands that His people follow His ways. But they didn't. Why do you think the people had such a trite view of God's holiness? How should these prophecies have awakened them to reality?
- God hates divorce (Mal. 3:16) because He loves faithfulness. How is the faithfulness of marriage intended to reflect God's faithfulness to others?
- The Old Testament starts (Gen. 2:16-17) and ends (Mal. 4:5-6) with a choice. How did the people respond to the choice God presented to them?

Application . . .

- Look at the list of God's characteristics above. Which one(s) are you particularly aware of right now? Why?
- How does a right understanding of God's sovereignty and supremacy change your worldview? How can the false belief that God needs people be detrimental to your worldview?
- We are dead and desperate. God is gracious, holy, faithful, just, sovereign, and supreme—our only Savior. How does this truth change how you see your sin?
- When we correctly see our sin, we realize it's too much for us—impossible—for us to change on our own. How can we incorrectly respond to our sin? (*Try to live right in our own power.*) How should we respond to our sin?
- When we correctly see our God, we realize the incredible hope we have in this life for the life to come. How will you share the hope of God's character found in this chapter with the lost world around you? Practice articulating the truths of God's character in this chapter using words that would make sense to an unbeliever.