

REFINER'S FIRE



A SERIES IN MALACHI



REFINER'S FIRE: MALACHI I

Community Group Study Guide - Week of November 1, 2020

Yesterday, we began a new sermon series through the book of Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament. God gives the prophet Malachi a heavy burden, to deliver final instructions to the people of God, before 400 years of silence from God. God gives His people a word to sustain them until the first coming of Jesus Christ. The people of God have grown spiritually indifferent to God. They're suffering from spiritual apathy, laziness, boredom. They are bored of God. They're going through the ritual motions, but their hearts are far from God.

The book begins with the most important message we can ever hear from God: "I have loved you." These words should thrill every single human being. The God who created the universe by the power of His Word, not only notices me, but LOVES me? God loves me despite all my sin, rebellion, hard-heartedness? Instead of being thrilled by this message, the people of God, indifferently ask, "How have you loved us?" Basically, they're saying, "God loves us? That's nice. Doesn't look like it. What has He done for us lately?" What in the world could warrant such a cold response? They looked at their circumstances, and said, "it doesn't *feel* like He loves us."

What does God say in response to His people questioning His love for them? He points to His sovereign, personal, discriminating, powerful, electing love. He says: "Is not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated." He says, I love you so much, I chose you before the foundation of world to be Mine (when I could have not).

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To be aware of the tendency for all people, even Christians, to grow spiritually indifferent or apathetic.

Heart

To let the knowledge of God's sovereign, personal, electing love move us to have great joy as children of God and give us a great sense of purpose in life.

Hands

To present our bodies as living sacrifices as proper worship and response to His sovereign grace and mercy toward us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In-Person Worship Services

THIS Sunday, November 8 at 9:30AM and 11:30AM.

Please go to <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve> to sign up to serve on the Mini Mo or Usher Team.

A Membership Meeting will be held downstairs in the Temple on **November 15 at 3PM.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Malachi 1

1. Can somebody take a minute to tell the group about the context in which the book of Malachi was written? Where does it fit among the 66 books of the Bible?
2. According to this text and the sermon, what is the opposite of love? Why? How is this shown in our own day when the gospel is preached?
3. How does spiritual apathy set in in the life of a believer? How does a person diagnose it in his or life? Have you ever caught yourself in a phase of spiritual apathy? What caused you to catch yourself in this phase?
4. To whom is our spiritual apathy primarily directed? Why do we grow bored or apathetic when our worship is directed toward ourselves?
5. At the beginning of this passage, what is the first thing that God reminds the Israelites of in order to call them out of their apathy? How could this reminder have been a source of comfort or renewed affection for God and his commands for the Israelites? How can it serve a believer today in the same way?
6. How were the priests mentioned in this chapter (and into the second chapter of Malachi) misleading the Israelites in worship? What standards should they have upheld in worship? What should a Christian be willing to offer/sacrifice for God's glory upon being reminded of his election?
7. How would you try to explain the doctrine of election to a person who doesn't understand it? What are the key emphases to make? What does this doctrine teach us about the character of God?
8. What answer does Scripture provide to those who think that God's sovereign election (of those who would be saved and not saved before the beginning of creation) is not fair? Read Romans 9:14-24.
9. Is it Biblically correct to ask, "Why does God show mercy to some and not others"?