

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Book of Malachi and Its Themes of Covenant Love, Faithfulness, and Hope

Day 1: The Love That Will Not Let You Go

Reading: Malachi 1:1-5 — God's declaration of covenant love for Jacob over Esau, affirming that His chosen relationship with Israel was not based on circumstance but on sovereign, determined commitment.

Devotional:

God opens the book of Malachi not with judgment but with a declaration: "I have loved you." The people of Judah were living in rubble, surrounded by enemies, pressed on every side. Their circumstances looked nothing like what a blessed people should look like. And yet God's first word to them was love.

This is not the sentimental, feeling-based love that fades when circumstances grow difficult. This is covenant love — the kind that is decided, determined, and unbreakable. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He was not making a conditional promise. He was binding Himself to His people with an oath that their failures could not dissolve.

Consider your own life. There are seasons when the evidence of God's love seems buried under financial pressure, relational strain, or unanswered prayer. In those moments, the enemy whispers the same question Israel asked: "How have you loved us?" The answer God gives is not a feeling. It is a history. Look at what He has preserved. Look at what He has carried you through. Look at the covenant sealed not in animal blood but in the blood of His own Son.

God's love for you is not a response to your performance. It is a declaration of His character.

Reflection Questions:

- In what area of your life are you tempted to question whether God truly loves you?
- How does understanding love as a covenant commitment rather than an emotion change the way you relate to God in difficult seasons?

Practical Application:

Write down three specific moments in your life where God's faithfulness was undeniable, even if the circumstances were hard. Keep that list somewhere visible this week as a reminder that His love is not measured by your comfort.

Day 2: What We Bring to the Altar

Reading: Malachi 1:6-14 — God rebukes the priests for offering blind, lame, and

sick animals on the altar, calling out the dishonor of giving God the leftovers while reserving the best for themselves.

Devotional:

There is a telling pattern in Malachi's second dispute. God does not accuse the people of abandoning worship altogether. They were still coming to the altar. The fires were still burning. The sacrifices were still being made. The problem was not the absence of worship but the quality of it.

They were giving God what cost them nothing.

This is one of the most convicting passages in the Old Testament because it holds a mirror up to a tendency that lives in every human heart. When life is hard, when God feels distant, when our prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling, we quietly begin to downgrade what we offer Him. We show up less prepared. We give less generously. We pray with less urgency. We serve with less passion. We tell ourselves that simply maintaining the appearance of faithfulness ought to be enough.

But God asks a penetrating question in Malachi 1:8 — would you offer this to your governor? Would you bring your worst to someone whose favor you desperately needed? The answer is obvious. And yet we do it to the Lord of hosts.

The standard God calls us to is not perfection. It is wholehearted sincerity. He is not looking for the most polished offering. He is looking for the offering that cost you something — the first fruits of your time, your attention, your resources, and your devotion.

Reflection Questions:

- In what areas of your spiritual life have you been offering God the leftovers rather than the first fruits?
- What would it look like this week to give God your best in one specific area — prayer, generosity, or service?

Practical Application:

Identify one area where your devotion to God has become routine or half-hearted. Make one deliberate, costly change this week — whether that is waking earlier to pray, giving more generously than feels comfortable, or serving in a way that requires sacrifice.

Day 3: The Covenant We Share With One Another

Reading: Malachi 2:10-12 — God confronts the people for dealing treacherously with one another and profaning the covenant by prioritizing personal gain over the well-being of their brothers and sisters in the community of faith.

Devotional:

Malachi 2:10 asks one of the most searching questions in all of Scripture: "Do we

not all have one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother?"

The people of Judah had convinced themselves that their failures toward one another were separate from their relationship with God. They could come to the temple, offer their sacrifices, and perform their religious duties while simultaneously undercutting, exploiting, and abandoning their brothers and sisters in the covenant community. God makes clear that these two things cannot be separated.

The covenant was never only vertical. It was always also horizontal. To be in relationship with God is to be in relationship with the people He has claimed as His own. This is why the greatest commandments, as Jesus would later summarize them, are inseparable — love God with everything you have, and love your neighbor as yourself. One cannot be genuine without the other.

The treachery God describes in Malachi's day looked like economic exploitation, broken promises, and a willingness to harm a brother for personal advantage. In our own day, it may look like gossip, indifference, competition within the body of Christ, or the slow withdrawal of genuine care for those around us.

The family of God is not a collection of individuals pursuing private spiritual journeys. It is a covenant community called to build one another up.

Reflection Questions:

- Is there a brother or sister in your faith community toward whom you have dealt less than honestly or generously?
- How does understanding the church as a covenant family change the way you think about your obligations to those around you?

Practical Application:

Reach out this week to one person in your church community whom you have neglected, hurt, or simply overlooked. Offer a word of genuine encouragement, an apology if one is owed, or a practical act of service that costs you something.

Day 4: The Danger of a Divided Heart

Reading: Malachi 2:13-17 — God confronts the people for weeping at the altar while simultaneously breaking covenant with the wives of their youth, exposing the contradiction of seeking God's blessing while living in practiced unfaithfulness.

Devotional:

One of the most sobering images in the book of Malachi is found in chapter 2. The men of Judah were weeping at the altar. They were genuinely distressed that God was not responding to their prayers and offerings. They wanted His blessing. They wanted His presence. They wanted His favor.

And yet they were simultaneously divorcing the covenant wives of their youth in favor of women who brought foreign gods into the household and into the temple.

They were seeking God's blessing with one hand while dismantling His covenant with the other.

God names this treachery. Not weakness. Not failure. Treachery — the deliberate violation of a sworn promise.

This passage carries a warning that is urgently relevant today. The church in every generation faces the temptation to blend the gospel with the values and ideologies of the surrounding culture. It happens gradually, almost imperceptibly. A foreign idea is introduced. A cultural value is accommodated. A biblical standard is softened. And before long, the altar is still standing, the worship songs are still being sung, and the prayers are still being offered — but a foreign god has been quietly married to the living God.

God will not share His glory. He will not be joined to what He has not sanctioned. A divided heart is not a partial victory. It is a fundamental betrayal of the covenant.

Reflection Questions:

- Are there any cultural values, ideologies, or personal compromises that you have quietly allowed to share space with your devotion to God?
- What does it look like practically to guard the purity of your faith against the slow accommodation of ideas that contradict Scripture?

Practical Application:

Spend time in honest self-examination today. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where a "foreign god" — whether that is comfort, approval, political identity, or cultural acceptance — has been given a place alongside your devotion to Christ. Confess it and recommit to undivided loyalty.

Day 5: The Day Is Coming — Live Ready

Reading: Malachi 4:1-6 — God declares the coming of a day of burning judgment for the arrogant and wicked, and a day of healing and joy for those who fear His name, closing with a call to remember the law and a promise to send Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers to their children.

Devotional:

Malachi ends where all of Scripture is ultimately heading — toward a day of reckoning and restoration. The final chapter does not offer a comfortable conclusion. It offers a sober, glorious, and urgent one.

For those who have built their lives on arrogance and wickedness, the day that is coming is described as a consuming fire that leaves neither root nor branch. There is no softening of this language. God is not ambiguous about the destination of those who have rejected His covenant and despised His name.

But for those who fear His name — not a trembling, paralyzed fear, but the reverent, trusting, covenant fear of a child who knows and honors his Father — the picture is entirely different. Malachi 4:2 describes the sun of righteousness rising

with healing in its wings, and the people of God going forth like calves released from a stall, leaping and dancing in the freedom of their Lord's victory.

That image is worth sitting with. After all the rubble, all the broken covenants, all the half-hearted offerings, all the treachery and compromise — God's final word to His people is not condemnation. It is healing. It is joy. It is the promise that the day is coming when every enemy will be ash beneath your feet and your Lord will be magnified beyond every border.

And then God closes with a word for fathers. The last promise of the Old Testament canon is that Elijah will come to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. The family is not a footnote in God's redemptive plan. It is the frontline.

Fathers, the call is clear. The day is near. Live ready.

Reflection Questions:

- How does the certainty of Christ's return change the way you prioritize your time, your relationships, and your faithfulness today?
- What does it mean for you personally to "live ready" — in your home, your church, and your community?

Practical Application:

If you are a father, make a specific, concrete commitment today to one action that turns your heart more fully toward your children — whether that is a scheduled conversation, a protected evening at home, a prayer prayed together, or a standard upheld with loving firmness. If you are not a father, identify one younger person in your life whom you can invest in with the intentionality and care that Malachi's closing vision calls for.

This reading plan is intended to be used in personal devotion, small group study, or family worship. Return to the book of Malachi throughout the week and allow its structure — beginning with God's love and ending with God's call to faithful families — to shape not only what you believe but how you live.