



5-Day Devotional: Preparing Hearts for God's Return

Day 1: When Wonder Turns to Weariness

Reading: Malachi 1:1-5

Devotional: The Israelites questioned God's love after years of waiting for promises to be fulfilled. Like them, we sometimes look at our circumstances and wonder, "Where is God's love in this?" Disillusionment creeps in when our expectations don't match reality. Yet God's response is profound: He points to His past faithfulness as evidence of His present love. When you're tempted to doubt God's affection for you, remember He chose you before you chose Him. His love isn't proven by your circumstances aligning with your desires, but by His consistent character throughout history. The waiting seasons often feel like abandonment, but they're actually opportunities to deepen our understanding of who God truly is—not a cosmic vending machine responding to our demands, but a loving Father whose timing and ways transcend our limited perspective. Today, reflect on one specific way God has shown His faithfulness in your past, and let that memory anchor your trust in His current love for you.

Reflection Question: What unfulfilled expectation is currently making you question God's love, and how might your view change if you looked at it through the lens of His past faithfulness rather than your present disappointment?

Day 2: Bringing Your Best or Your Leftovers?

Reading: Malachi 1:6-14

Devotional: God confronted Israel for bringing defective sacrifices—lame and diseased animals instead of their best. This wasn't just about livestock; it revealed their hearts. What are you bringing to God? Do you give Him your leftover time, energy, and resources, or your first and best? We often hold back our best because we fear scarcity, doubting that God will truly provide if we're generous. But withholding from God reveals we don't really trust His abundance. The quality of our offering reflects the depth of our worship and the reality of our faith. When we give God our leftovers, we're essentially saying that everything else in our lives deserves priority over Him. This isn't about earning His favor through perfect performance, but about aligning our actions with what we claim to believe about His worthiness and provision. Today, examine one area where you're giving God your "blemished lamb"—perhaps in

your devotional life, your generosity, or your willingness to serve. What would it look like to bring your best instead?

Reflection Question: If someone observed how you allocate your time, money, and energy over the past month, what would they conclude about what you truly treasure most?

Day 3: Preparing Hearts for God's Presence

Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

Devotional: Israel wanted God to show up and fix everything, but God asked, "Are you ready for Me?" His coming would be like refiner's fire—purifying, uncomfortable, transformative. We often pray for God to move powerfully while simultaneously clinging to comfort and control. True preparation for God's presence requires surrender. The refiner's fire removes impurities so only what's precious remains. What needs to be refined in your life? Perhaps it's pride, unforgiveness, materialism, or fear. God sends His Spirit as the messenger to prepare our hearts before He moves. Don't resist the refining process; it's evidence of His love. The refiner knows exactly how much heat to apply and when to remove the metal from the flames—he never leaves it in long enough to destroy, only to purify. Trust that God's refining isn't punishment but preparation for the greater purposes He has for you. Today, invite the Holy Spirit to reveal one area needing purification, and ask for courage to surrender it completely.

Reflection Question: What comfort or control are you clinging to that might actually be preventing you from experiencing the fuller presence of God you've been praying for?

Day 4: The Scroll of Remembrance

Reading: Malachi 3:13-18

Devotional: When wickedness seemed to prosper and faithfulness felt pointless, a remnant continued speaking together about God's goodness. Their conversations were so precious that God recorded them in a "scroll of remembrance." In seasons of doubt, community and remembering become lifelines. We need people who will remind us of God's character when circumstances cloud our vision. We need to rehearse His past faithfulness when present darkness tempts us toward cynicism. The scroll we have today is Scripture—God's recorded faithfulness across generations. But we also need living scrolls: faithful friends who speak truth and hope. Notice that these faithful ones didn't isolate themselves in their discouragement—they gathered together and spoke about the Lord. There's power in voicing faith when doubt is loud, in declaring truth when lies feel convincing. Your words of remembrance might be exactly what someone else needs to keep going. Today, reach out to someone in your community of faith. Share one way you've seen God's faithfulness recently, or ask them to remind you of His character if you're struggling.

Reflection Question: Who in your life helps you remember God's goodness when you're tempted to forget, and when was the last time you intentionally had a conversation focused on His faithfulness rather than your frustrations?

Day 5: Living Between the Already and Not Yet

Reading: Hebrews 10:19-25

Devotional: We live in the tension between Jesus' first coming and His promised return—between heaven's hope and earth's brokenness. The Israelites waited for the Messenger; we wait for His return. This waiting isn't passive; it's active preparation. We're called to be bridges between heaven and earth, demonstrating resurrection hope in the midst of death-like circumstances. When you serve someone in need, forgive when it's costly, or choose faithfulness when wickedness seems rewarded, you're living as someone who knows the end of the story. On the other side of every death is resurrection—Jesus proved it. This in-between space is where faith becomes visible, where our beliefs are tested and refined into unshakeable conviction. The world is watching to see if Christians truly believe what we profess, and our lives in the mundane, difficult, waiting seasons tell the story. Today, identify one "death" in your life—a relationship, dream, or circumstance that feels hopeless. How can you live resurrection hope in that space, trusting that God's promises are true even when you can't see the outcome?

Reflection Question: In what specific situation this week can you demonstrate that you truly believe resurrection follows death, even when your emotions and circumstances are screaming otherwise?