

## "MAJORING IN THE MINORS: EXPLORING THE MINOR PROPHETS" FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 11

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "PREPARE THE WAY"

### OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, Lord of Heaven's Armies, that you sent messengers and prophets to prepare the way for the coming of your Son, Jesus. Open our hearts, minds, and eyes to see who Jesus is and all that he has done for us. Please refine and purify us so that our offerings will be righteous and acceptable to you (Malachi 3:3-4). Thank you that Jesus is the sun of righteousness who heals, restores, renews, and sets us free (Malachi 4:2). In his life-giving name we pray, Amen.

### CONNECTING QUESTION

Both Malachi and Jesus talked about the importance of preparation. Whether going on a trip, beginning a project or making a life-changing decision, how do you prepare? What is your first priority? What happens if you take short cuts or bypass important steps? Share a personal example if you are comfortable doing so.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Malachi 1:1; 3:1-11; Matthew 11:1-15; 17:9-13

### WATCH VIDEO

Video Presenter: Nick Stevens

### EXPLORE THE TEXT

*Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.*

1. Read Malachi 1:1-2a. What does God reassure the people of before he corrects them through his prophet Malachi? G. Campbell Morgan translates this passage as "I have loved you, I do love you, I will love you," says the Lord. Is it difficult for you to remember this when you are going through a time of correction, discipline, or conviction of sin? Please explain.
2. Who do you think the messenger is in Malachi 3:1: Malachi ("my messenger" in Hebrew); John the Baptist (See Matthew 11:10-15; Matthew 17:9-13); a second Elijah (See Malachi 4:5-6); Jesus (See Hebrews 1:1-3)? What will the messenger(s) do? (See Isaiah 40:3-5, John 1:22-23) What obstacles might need to be removed before Jesus comes to an unbeliever? In what ways can you be God's messenger to them?
3. God was silent for 400 years after speaking through Malachi. The people had waited so long for the Messiah that even John the Baptist questioned who Jesus was. How did Jesus respond to him? (See Matthew 11:1-9; Isaiah 61:1-3.) "Malachi's prophecy not only introduces us to the character of John but also to his mission—preparing the people for a transformational encounter with God, which is fulfilled in Christ." (Michael S. Heiser) Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer was and is worth the

wait. How do you live today as you anticipate Jesus' return? (See 1 Peter 4:7-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14.) Choose one or more of these traits to focus on in the coming weeks.

4. How is the Lord described in Malachi 3:2-4? What is God's purpose? What is the result? (See Zechariah 13:9; Psalm 66:10; Job 23:10; 1 Peter 1:6-9.)
  
5. How had Malachi's peers robbed God? (Malachi 3:6-9) The Lord challenges them to put him to the test (verses 10-12). What does he want to give? Please describe how you think God wants to bless you. In what different shapes and forms do blessings come?
  
6. What truth do you discover in Malachi 3:6? This phrase "implies that God's character and eternal purposes do not change, which gives a solid foundation for his people's faith and hope." (ESV Study Bible). Do you believe that God never changes? (See Hebrews 13:8). How does that help you as you face life's challenges?

#### **PREPARING THE WAY**

The Old Testament ends with a curse. (See Malachi 4:4-6) It is the Law of God and his standard of righteousness and holiness that curses us, when we realize we cannot keep it. The Old Testament Law sets the stage for the New Covenant: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) (John Courson's Application Commentary) Praise God for his gift of grace!

Through the Minor Prophets you have seen visions of God's wrath and judgment against his people for their sins, waywardness, and unfaithfulness to him. Yet God gave them – and you - HOPE. Look back at the following verses and give thanks for the hope and bright future the Lord has promised to you: Hosea 6:2-3; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14; Jonah 2:1; Micah 7:7; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Zephaniah 3:17; Haggai 2:9; Zechariah 9:16. You may want to memorize one of these or other verses you found that are meaningful to you.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. (2 Corinthians 13:14) Amen and Amen!

*Our Father...*

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