



EXPECTATIONS

A STUDY GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

TOOLS NEEDED

1. A Bible
2. A journal
3. A Pen

WHAT TO DO BEFORE EACH DAY

1. Quiet your mind and let go of any distractions you may have.
2. Pray that the Lord would speak through His Word and grow you in His grace.
3. Open up the Bible and your guide and begin.

INTRODUCTION

We all have expectations. We bring them into everything we do, they underpin every situation we enter into to, and they define every relationship we participate in. Expectations are a powerful set of assumptions that are defined by our past, informing our present, and setting the course for our future.

And they are everywhere!

In fact, most of us even have an expectation for God.

But what if our expectations for God are wrong. What if the things we are currently believing about Him are keeping us from experiencing Him? Would we be willing to let those expectations go? Would we let God redefine our expectations?

This season, that is exactly what we are going to do. We are going to let go of all the wrong expectations we have been carrying so we could find our satisfaction in Him. And if we do that, this really could be the greatest season that we have ever had with God. Will you let Him define your expectations?



Malachi 1:1-5

How have You loved us?

WEEK 1

DAY 1:

WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROMISES?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-2

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Isaiah 14:1-2

REFLECT:

What did the people think God was promising them?

How did their expectations color the way they viewed God and His promises?

APPLY:

What kinds of things does God promised to us? Have you ever felt like God was unfaithful?

What does our life look like when we misunderstand God's promises?

DAY 2:

WHAT ABOUT MY CIRCUMSTANCES?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-5

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Jeremiah 29:10-14

OBSERVE:

How do the people respond to God's claim to love?

REFLECT:

Why are people frustrated with God? What are the underlying expectations they have?

APPLY:

What are some of the expectations God has not met? Is it wrong to be frustrated or upset with God?

Do you believe God is faithful? Even when our expectations are not met? Why or why not?

DAY 3:

WHAT ABOUT OUR NATIONS?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-5

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

OBSERVE:

What promises does God make to Israel as a nation?

REFLECT:

What expectation did Israel have for “blessed”?

APPLY:

What do we think a “blessed nation” looks like? Does our expectation match up with God’s?

DAY 4:

I HAVE LOVED THEM!

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-5

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

OBSERVE:

How does God say He has loved Israel?

REFLECT:

What things have the people of God done to deserve His love?

APPLY:

What have we done to deserve God's love?

How have you experienced God's love recently? How did that compare to your expectations?

DAY 5:

TRUE LOVE LOOKS LIKE JESUS

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-5

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

John 3:16-17; 15:13; Romans 5:6-8; 9:6-13

GOSPEL NOTE:

The Gospel is the good news that God is unbelievably loving—despite our numerous failures he remains faithful to us. So good in fact, that he gave His only Son Jesus Christ to die in our place. Just like the Israelites, who could confidently expect that God would always love them, we can have that same expectation. Because of what Jesus has done we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God truly cares and that He will never break His promises! Our expectation for love is fully met in Jesus Christ, the one who fully and perfectly loved us!

OBSERVE:

How does God show his great love to sinners?

REFLECT:

How does Jesus meet and exceed our expectations for love?
How does God's love address our hurts, pains, fears, trials, etc.?

APPLY:

How can you enjoy Jesus' love today?

DAY 6:

LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:5, 11, 14

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 4:7-8; 19-20

OBSERVE:

Why does John say we should love?

REFLECT:

How does God's love extend beyond the borders of Israel?

APPLY:

What is God's expectation for sharing His love?

What would God have us do about it?

God promises to love us and has fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ.

No matter what our circumstances look like and no matter what shape our country is in, God loves us! And because He loves us, we can adopt His expectation for love by sharing His love with others.

SUMMARY



Malachi 1:6-2:9

How have we dishonored You?

WEEK 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

To be an Israelite meant to feel God's love in a special way. It wasn't just about knowing His promises and obeying all of His commands, it was about being His child (see Exodus 4:22). God had a unique and beautiful relationship with Israel as their Father. He pursued them like a daddy and He loved them unconditionally. But like a good Father, God expected that His children would reciprocate His love and respect. He expected His children to be grateful for His love and honor Him.

This week, we are going to look at how the people of Israel were dishonoring to their Father, how we sometimes dishonor our Father, and how Jesus gives us the right expectations for children honoring their God. Then, after we have the right expectation, we will not only be equipped to honor God most fully but we will also be a people of honor who shares that honor with others!

Welcome to week 2 of EXPECTATIONS!

DAY 1:

WHERE IS MY HONOR?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:1-9

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Exodus 4:22; 20:12

OBSERVE:

What honored roles does God compare himself to?

REFLECT:

Why does God picture Himself as Father? What is God's expectation for His children?

APPLY:

What does your relationship with God look like? Is it hard to call Him daddy? How has that relationship shaped your expectations for God?

DAY 2:

WHAT ABOUT MY SACRIFICES?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:6-14

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Leviticus 22:17-30

THEOLOGICAL NOTE:

Within families, fathers and children make sacrifices for each other. In fact, sacrifice is a window into the human heart. The things we are willing to give up tells us a lot about the way we love others.

OBSERVE:

How does God say the people have dishonored Him?

REFLECT:

What do their sacrifices tell us about their love?
What expectation did the people have for God?

APPLY:

In what ways are you currently making "sacrifices" for your Father?
What do those sacrifices say about your love for Him?

DAY 3:

WHAT ABOUT MY ATTITUDE?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:6-14

OBSERVE:

What kind of attitude do the people have towards God's commands and expectations?

REFLECT:

Why is this attitude dishonoring to their Father?

What does an attitude of honor look like? Does that match your current expectations?

APPLY:

What should a relationship with our Father look like?

How does an attitude of honor play out in your life?

DAY 4:

A SELECTED FEW

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:1-9

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Matthew 27:51; 1 Peter 2:4-10

HISTORICAL NOTE:

In God's family, priests were a chosen few who were tasked with ministering in God's house, the temple. They were selected exclusively from the tribe of Levi and from the descendants of Aaron (Moses' brother).

OBSERVE:

In Malachi, what things does God say he expects from priests?

REFLECT:

Why does God single out the priests for their role in dishonoring Him? Why do priests bear a greater responsibility?

APPLY:

What does being a priest of God look like today?
What responsibility do all Christians bear?

DAY 5: JESUS, THE GREAT SACRIFICE AND THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:1-9

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

2 Corinthians 2:15; Hebrews 9:11-14

GOSPEL NOTE ON SACRIFICE:

The Gospel teaches us that we were just like the lame and blind sacrifices the people were trying to offer. While we were far from God, we were incapable of honoring Him. We were a dishonorable and displeasing offering to Him. But at just the right time, God sent the true and perfect lamb—a pure and pleasing sacrifice—who came to purify us and make us honorable to God again. Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, underwent the punishment we deserve—sacrificed upon the altar of God—in order to heal our brokenness and transform us into a pleasing sacrifice.

GOSPEL NOTE ON PRIESTS:

The death of Jesus removed the barrier that separated all people from God's presence. This was symbolized by the tearing of the curtain in God's Temple. The earliest Christians realized that this meant all people, not just a chosen few, now have access to God and do not need a priesthood to intercede for them. In fact, every Christian is now a priest of God because our true High Priest has brought us back into God's presence and sent us out into the world to love and serve!

DAY 5: (CONTINUED...)

OBSERVE:

Describe Jesus as a sacrificial lamb and great High Priest.

REFLECT:

How is Jesus the best sacrifice? How is He the best High Priest?

APPLY:

Do you view yourself as honoring and pleasing to God?
If not, how was Jesus' perfect sacrifice not enough?

Do you view yourself as a priest? How does what Jesus did transform our expectations?

DAY 6:

REVERED AMONG THE NATIONS

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 1:6-2:9

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Isaiah 2:2-3

OBSERVE:

How many times does Malachi refer to other nations or peoples in his book?

REFLECT:

How does a faithful priest honor God and serve the people God is drawing?

APPLY:

How is our walk with God helping others honor Him?
How are we caring for and serving the people God is drawing?

God reveals Himself as Father to His people. He cares for us and expects us to give Him the honor He deserves. And because of what Jesus Christ has done, now we can. Our bodies, minds, and souls have been made into a pleasing sacrifice to God—able to enter into the most Holy Place and enjoy God’s presence like never before. Now because of what Jesus has done, we can experience God’s wonderful and beautiful presence—not only that we will be transformed into honorable creatures but into a people who can honor others and teach others to honor Him. We are a sacrifice to God. We are Priests of the most High. That is a proper expectation.

SUMMARY



Malachi 2:10-16

How have we been unfaithful?

WEEK 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Two weeks ago, we looked at how God really loves His people. Last week we looked at one very special way He does this—as a good Father. The people were His children and He was their Father. But there are also times in Scripture when God loves His people in an even more intimate way than that. In Scripture, Israel is sometimes called the bride of God (see Jeremiah 3:14 NIV). Just like a faithful husband, God pursues Her even when she is unfaithful (remember the story of Hosea).

This week, we are going to look at how the people of Israel were unfaithful to their husband, God. We will also be looking at the ways we are unfaithful and how Jesus gives us the right expectations for faithfulness. After we have the right expectations we will not only long to be faithful to God, we will also long to help others develop a faithful walk with God!

Welcome to week 3 of EXPECTATIONS!

DAY 1:

HOW HAVE WE BEEN UNFAITHFUL?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Jeremiah 3:6-8; Ezekiel 16:8-15

HISTORICAL NOTE:

God betrothed Himself to Israel at a mountain called Sinai. He drew her out of slavery in Egypt and entered into a marriage covenant with her in that place. While this was not a human marriage, all of the emotions were present. God and Israel committed to a very special, faithful, covenantal, and exclusive relationship with one another. But along the way Israel was terribly unfaithful to God. So unfaithful in fact, that God issues ten of Israel's tribes a statement of divorce!

OBSERVE:

What intimate role does God describe for Himself in these verses?
What does this tell us about His expectations?

DAY 1: (CONTINUED...)

REFLECT:

What (not-so-nice) role are the people cast with? What does this tell us about their expectations?

APPLY:

How is our spiritual relationship with God similar to a marriage? List several qualities.

Do you feel that kind of intimacy with God?
What might change that?

DAY 2:

WHY WON'T YOU ACCEPT OUR WORSHIP?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Isaiah 54:6-8; 62:4-5

THEOLOGICAL NOTE:

It should be apparent that God deeply loved His people. He not only chose the most intimate human relationship available (marriage) to describe that love, He also vividly details the hurt, pain, and jealousy He felt when His bride was unfaithful to Him (see the entire book of Hosea). For a moment, God admits that He hid His face from her because of the pain and anger she has caused Him. This statement and all that it entails, applies to the exact period when Malachi was written.

OBSERVE:

What emotions does God feel over Israel? What does this teach us about God?

REFLECT:

How does sin make God feel?

APPLY:

How does God feel towards us? Does God turn His face away from us?

DAY 3:

HOW HAVE WE BEEN CRUEL?

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Ezra 10:10-14

HISTORICAL NOTE:

At the time Malachi was written, men were abandoning their wives and marrying foreign women who worshiped idols. Today, the issue of marrying foreign women who lead men astray is a foreign concept. But there are many things which we "marry" ourselves to that drag us away from God.

OBSERVE:

Who are the parties that are hurt by divorce in this passage?

REFLECT:

How does unfaithfulness heap cruelty on others? On God?

APPLY:

What is God's expectation for faithfulness? What does that look like toward others?

What relationships, emotions, fears, items are pulling your heart away from God? How do these things cause you to become unfaithful? Why do you think this is?

DAY 4:

GUARD YOUR HEART

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Proverbs 4:23

OBSERVE:

How many times does God command His people to guard their hearts? Why is this so important?

REFLECT:

What do you think guarding your heart means? Why is this God's expectation for faithfulness in relationships?

APPLY:

How can we guard our heart in all circumstances?
Do we ever measure up to God's expectation?

DAY 5:

OUR TRUE AND FAITHFUL HUSBAND

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Hosea 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27;
Revelation 19:6-9

GOSPEL NOTE #1:

In day two, we said that God turns His face away from His faithless people so that they could face the punishment they had earned. The Gospel teaches us that we have been unfaithful. We deserve God to turn His face from us, allowing us to face the punishment we deserve. But, the irony of the Gospel is this: He who was perfectly faithful was treated as though He was utterly unfaithful. How? On the cross—God turned His face away from Jesus treating Him as we deserved to be treated. Why? So that we could be made faithful through the faithfulness of Christ.

GOSPEL NOTE #2:

The Gospel also teaches us that while we were unfit, Jesus engaged us and promised us a future marriage feast with Him, our true husband. One day, we will stand spotless in heaven, married forever to Christ.

DAY 5: (CONTINUED...)

OBSERVE:

Describe Jesus as a husband from these and other Scriptures.

REFLECT:

What does this teach us about His faithfulness?

What is His expectation?

APPLY:

In light of this, how do you understand your new identity in Christ? Do you view yourself as faithful and pleasing to God?

DAY 6:

FRIEND OF THE BRIDE

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:10-16

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

2 Corinthians 11:1-5; Revelation 19:6-9

OBSERVE:

Who does Paul present to Christ as His bride?

REFLECT:

What role does Paul play in the bride's life?

APPLY:

As a maturing Christian, what role do we play in the ongoing development of other Christians? How are we helping them prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb?

How does this reflect God's expectation?

God reveals Himself as Husband to His people. He is not only faithful to us but He expects us to be faithful to Him and others. And because of what Jesus Christ has done, God is now pleased with us. He no longer turns His face away from us because He turned His face away from Christ. He punished Jesus as if He were unfaithful to make sure we would become faithful! Jesus gave us what we couldn't earn to give us what we couldn't deserve! And now that we have experienced God's faithfulness, it not only transforms us into faithful people to God, but it also transforms us into people who are faithful towards each other!

SUMMARY



Malachi 2:17-4:3

Returning to God's Expectations

WEEK 4

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Throughout this study, we have been looking at all the ways God loved His people. He really loved them. He loved them like a good dad. He loved them as a faithful husband. Now in week four, we will focus on how God's love propelled Him into action. God was not pleased to abandon His rebellious children and leave them carving out an existence without Him. He was not content to leave His runaway bride alone and tangled up in her sin and wandering. God's expectation was to love His people and He did everything to make sure that happened!

In our final week, we will examine God's heart for us as believers and how we can adopt His expectations moving forward! When we do that, it will literally change everything!

Welcome to week 4 of EXPECTATIONS!

DAY 1:

THE LORD YOU ARE SEEKING

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:17-3:1

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

2 Samuel 7:11-16; Psalm 89:34-37; John 12:12-16; Revelation 1:5

NOTE:

The same God that the people were seeking really did come and suddenly appear at His temple. This verse came true when Jesus came to earth—400 years later.

OBSERVE:

What kind of king were the people expecting?
When were they expecting Him to arrive?

REFLECT:

Why is it difficult to seek after God while waiting on God's promises?

APPLY:

What expectations need to shift in order for us to seek harder after God? Do we anticipate His activity in our lives?

DAY 2:

THE LORD REFINES

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:17-3:4

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Matthew 3:10-12; Romans 9:31-33; Matthew 21:33-46

OBSERVE:

Who are the ones who will be “consumed” by the coming of the Lord? Who are the ones who will be “refined”?

REFLECT:

Why does God refine the people He loves? What things will God use to refine them?

APPLY:

Is there anyone who does not need refining?
Why should we expect this?

DAY 3:

THE LORD JUDGES

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 2:17-3:15

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Psalms 96:13; Matthew 23:13-38

OBSERVE:

What actions were causing the judgment of God to come?

REFLECT:

What expectations do the people have in Malachi 3:6-15?
And what expectations does God have for His people in those same verses?

APPLY:

Are there any areas where God's expectations and your expectations do not align?

DAY 4:

THE LORD WHO IS SEEKING YOU ACTS

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 3:16-18

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Job 28:28; Psalm 33:18; 110:10; 147:11; Revelation 15:1-4

NOTE:

The “fear” of the Lord is not about fearing God (Mal. 3:5), it is revering Him and being in awe and wonder of Him!

OBSERVE:

Who is called “treasured” by the Lord? How does God treat these people differently than the people in yesterday’s lesson?

REFLECT:

Why does God want us to “fear” Him?

APPLY:

What does it look like to fear the Lord?

DAY 5:

THE LORD WHO IS SEEKING YOU HEALS

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 4:1-6 (NIV)

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Proverbs 4:18; Isaiah 9:2; 30:26; 49:6; 60:1-3, 19, 20;
Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-8, 14; 8:12; 12:35-40

GOSPEL NOTE:

In this passage, God promises to bring light to the people lost in darkness. A people who were morally darkened by their sin and incapable of walking along with God. But at just the right time, Jesus came as the light of the world. He came as the "Son of righteousness". He came bringing healing and light to the nations who were stumbling around in the darkness. Now God's one and only Son, not the solar sun, is the brightest light in the world!

OBSERVE:

Describe Jesus as light from these and other passages.
How does this role show more of God's expectations?

REFLECT:

What does this teach us about Him?

APPLY:

How does it feel to live in darkness? How might Jesus call us into greater light? Is there anything that you need to hand over to Him?

DAY 6:

THE END RESULT IS DANCING

SCRIPTURE:

Malachi 4:2

SUPPLEMENTARY VERSES:

Isaiah 49: 9-10; 55:12-13; Jeremiah 31:9-14

FINAL NOTE:

There comes a point in a believer's life where they begin seeking after God. But the great irony is this: the entire time we were seeking Him, He was actually first seeking us.

OBSERVE:

When people experience God seeking after them, what kinds of things do they do?

REFLECT:

Why do you think God pairs the concept of healing with dancing? What is God's expectation for our walk with Him? What should it look like?

APPLY:

Does your life demonstrate God's healing?
Does your worship look like dancing?

Over the last four weeks in Malachi, we have had the opportunity of looking at the expectations God has for love, honor, faithfulness, and even how we seek after God. But the truth we must walk away with is that before we ever sought God, God first sought us. He defines love, honor, and faithfulness for us. He comes to refine our expectations. He comes to judge our hearts. He comes to act on our behalf and to bring healing to our mind, soul, heart, and bodies. He came to declare us righteous and to transform us into a new creation. When we rest in Him we will dance. When we allow God to redefine our expectations, we will sing. In fact, the most appropriate response to what God has done for us is to sing, dance, and live in sheer delight and awe of our precious Savior!

SERIES SUMMARY

GENESIS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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