

*Day 1*  
*March 12*



*Pray / Give thanks to God for his blessings.*

Pessimists can spend most of their lives focused on what **isn't** rather than what **is**. God, in his mercy, gives a simple solution for the problem of pessimism: thankfulness. Being thankful – naming the blessings he has provided – forces us to focus on what is. It makes us fix our eyes on our Creator; the One who wove us; breathed us to life; and who gives love, hope and everything we need. Thankfulness for what **is** dims the ‘what isn’t’ until it disappears.



*Read / Malachi 1:1-5*



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Instead of trusting God and focusing on his blessings, the Jews suddenly have amnesia, unable to remember any time that God showed his love for them. What practices can you put in place to keep you from sudden amnesia; to help you remember and give thanks for what God has done for you?

The Jews had heard many prophets declare God's promise to bring his kingdom to Earth 'soon'. But when God's 'soon' turned into years upon years, they started to doubt. Has there been a time when you've doubted God's promises? How did you recover from your doubt?

Malachi repeats the Jews' response to God's gracious declaration of love: "How have you loved us?" If you were to ask the same question of God – "How have you loved me," what would he say?

## *Day 2*

*March 13*



*Pray | To give God the best of yourself.*

There's a new ice cream shop opening at the Mall of America called Sweet Jesus. To some, using Jesus' name in this way can feel flippant, even disrespectful. Seeing his name next to a chocolate-caramel-marshmallow ice cream confection doesn't exactly inspire fear and awe of his perfect holiness and majesty.

So what, then, does? In our ordinary routines of our everyday life – brushing teeth, going to work, caring for kids, doing laundry, eating dinner – God's majesty easily fades to a sort of academic knowledge rather than a fall-on-your-face, heart wrenching experience. The greatness of God should drive us to our knees and cause us to give the absolute best of everything we have in adoration to him; the best of our work, our finances, our energy – he deserves our best even in the ordinary routines of our everyday life. Maybe even while we're enjoying a bowl of sweet ice cream.



*Read | Malachi 1:6-14*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

The Jews' offerings of crippled and diseased animals trivialized God's greatness. Do you think that your personal worship of God rightly displays his greatness? If not, what is God prompting you to change?

Have there been times in your life when you have demonstrated a lack of respect and honor toward God? Spend some time in reflection on the 'why' behind your actions.

Giving God our absolute best in everything we do is an incredibly high bar to reach! Thankfully, our God is full of grace for our weak efforts. He is reaching down his hand to you, ready to help pull you up. Will you take hold of his hand? If you want to know more about what it means to give your life to God, talk with a pastor or a Christian friend. It will be worth the effort!

## Day 3

March 14



*Pray | For your heart to be turned toward God.*

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "...in this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

We know Jesus certainly gives us victory over the grave! And in the book Mark, Jesus' words remind us to give God what belongs to him.

Maybe tax season is a non-event for you. For others, God uses it as a time of conviction. He hears our internal arguments about tithing on pre-tax versus post-tax income; and how our total of charitable contributions doesn't include the dollar value of our volunteer time. He listens and then he starts peeling away the layers. Our selfishness is exemplified by thinking this money is ours to do with as we please; by fearing not having enough; and, at the core, by lacking trust that God will provide. And then he gently reminds us that it's not money that he's really after – it's our hearts.



*Read | Malachi 3:6-12; Matthew 6:19-21; Mark 12:13-17*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

How do our spending habits and our hearts relate? What do your finances say about your view of God?

How does this passage in Malachi relate to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:19-21 about our hearts being where our treasure is?

God invites the Jews to 'test' Him in this. He promises them blessings for obedience. How should we understand and apply God's promise of blessing for obedience in light of what Christ has done for us?

*Day 4*  
*March 15*



*Pray / For God to transform your heart.*

When asked what she thought about God, Jane responded, “What has God ever done for me?” Jane regularly attended church. She had recited the Lord’s Prayer a thousand times and sung countless hymns in the pews. But this external worship hadn’t reached her heart. Her response wasn’t so much a question as it was an accusation. Beneath it lay years of discontent and a growing bitterness against God for not changing her circumstances.

For Jane, the heart of the problem was a problem of the heart. She didn’t love God for who he is; she merely believed in the idea of him. And every time he didn’t do what she expected him to and didn’t show up when she wanted him to, her heart hardened. And, though painful to admit, God will judge her for it.



*Read / Malachi 3:13-18*



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

What types of things might we take pride in as evidence that we are close with God when actually we are not?

Is there someone in your life who looks like a Christian on the outside but that you know is far from God? Take time to pray for God to soften the person’s heart.

Malachi 3:18 reminds us that even though the wicked may prosper in this life, they won’t escape God’s judgment. What would you say to someone who sees the promise of judgment and responds by trying to get his or her life together? What is the biblical response?

## Day 5

March 16



*Pray / Thank God for his Word.*

Dr. Barry Black has been Chaplain of the US Senate since July 2003. He grew up in a Baltimore ghetto, one of eight children. Even though his mother had only a fourth-grade education, she had the wisdom to teach her children the importance of learning Scripture. Dr. Black recalls how his mother gave her kids a nickel for each verse they memorized. He jokes, “She had to put me on a flat rate; I was breaking the bank!” If you heard him speak, you’d be amazed at the amount of Scripture he can cite from memory. The verses stored in his heart as a young boy living in poverty and hardship gave him the courage to overcome his circumstances.

Immersing ourselves in God’s word- truly implanting Scripture in our hearts- is vital to living out our part in God’s story. How can we fulfill God’s purposes for us if we don’t know his story, or don’t remember who he is and what he has done? Fulfillment is realized when we get into the Word of God and the Word gets into us.



*Read / Malachi 4:1-6*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Malachi, chapter 4, reveals God’s final words to his people before a 400-year silence. In verse 4:4, he reminds them to stay immersed in his Word – his statutes and rules. Why do you think he included this reminder just before the subsequent extended period of silence?

God describes in Malachi 4:1-3 the coming Day of the Lord. Does his description make you feel nervous or excited – or something else? Why?

The Jews of the Old Testament waited more than 400 years to hear again from God in what we now have access to as the New Testament. We’ve been waiting nearly 2,000 years for Christ’s second coming. What specific things can you do to remain faithful in the waiting? How might Scripture reading and memorization help?

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