

**Week 1 Participant: Six Things About God That Don't Change**

**Session 1: Week of October 12, 2025**

**God's Love – *Malachi 1:1-5***

**Brewster Baptist Church**

**Connecting question**

When you think of God's love, what's the first word or image that comes to mind?

**Healthy Habits for a Small Group**

Take turns reading aloud the **Healthy Habits for a Small Group**. It's wise to remind ourselves of the habits that help groups thrive.

**Introduction to Malachi**

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi is the final book in the collection of the Twelve Prophets, also called the Minor Prophets because they're brief. **There are only fifty-five verses in Malachi and forty-seven are presented as spoken by God, the highest proportion of all the prophets.** The name Malachi means "my messenger". We don't know anything about the person who composed this book, and there are no references in it to help us place these words in a specific historical context. The consensus is that the book is from the time of the Persian Empire, after the Babylonian exile and the reestablishment of the Temple in 515 BC, somewhere between 500-430 years before Christ. **The central theme of Malachi is faithfulness to the Lord's covenant and teaching.** As in most of the prophets, there are words of judgment and salvation directed to Israel (1:1) – either to the people as a whole or to the priests (1:6; 2:1). We also hear the voices of the people and priests in response. One of the distinctive features of Malachi is **the question-and-answer format**. The priests and people state their questions in a way that sets up an ongoing dialogue. **There are twenty-two questions in this brief book**, some rhetorical and some accusatory. The book begins with a statement of love by the Lord followed by a question of the people.

**Malachi 1:1-5 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> An oracle. The word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

<sup>2</sup> I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” Is not Esau Jacob’s brother? says the Lord. Yet I have loved Jacob <sup>3</sup> but I have hated Esau; I have made his hill country a desolation and his heritage a desert for jackals. <sup>4</sup> If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says: They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the Lord is angry forever. <sup>5</sup> Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the borders of Israel!”

**Questions**

1. In *Malachi 1:2*, God says, “I have loved you.” What does this statement reveal about God’s heart for people, even when they doubt or turn away?
  
2. The people ask, “How have You loved us?” Why do you think we sometimes fail to recognize God’s love in our own lives? What are some ways we can remind ourselves of God’s love when we don’t feel it?
  
3. God contrasts the divine response to Jacob and Esau and their descendants. How does this remind us that God’s love is based on God’s promise, not on our performance?

4. When life feels unfair or distant from God's blessings, how can we hold onto the truth that God's love never changes? Can you think of a personal example when you saw God's steadfast love during a hard season?
  
5. God wanted Israel to recognize His love and respond with love and faithfulness. What does it look like to genuinely love God in return today — in our worship, priorities, and relationships? Where might God be inviting you to renew your love for the Lord?
  
6. In verse five, God promises that the Lord's greatness will be seen "beyond the borders of Israel". How does sharing God's love with others reflect our love for the Lord? What are some practical ways we can live out our love for God this week?

### **Closing thought:**

Malachi begins by reminding Israel of something we all need to hear often—God loves us first. When that truth settles deeply in our hearts, our natural response is worship, gratitude, and a renewed desire to love God back with our whole lives.

### **Praying for Each Other**

#### **Are there any joys to celebrate, any burdens we can share?**

**Prayer:** "Dear God, thank you for your boundless love that reaches every part of our lives. Help us to receive it fully, to let it transform us, and to share it with others. May we rest in your grace, knowing that nothing can separate us from the love you have for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen."

### **Healthy Habits for a Small Group**

**Come with 100% of yourself.** Each of us brings all of who we are to the group – our joys and successes, as well as our fears and failures.

**Presume welcome and extend welcome.** We all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us. Know that you are welcome, that you belong, and extend this welcome to others.

**No fixing.** Offer advice or reflection to another person *only* when invited to do so, but otherwise avoid the temptation to fix, set-straight or counsel another member of the group.

**Share the air.** Pay attention to how much of the group time you take. Every voice is important, and no single voice ought to dominate.

**Speak for Self.** A helpful practice is to use “I” statements. This is a time to reflect on your own faith journey and not on someone else or “the world.”

**Pay attention to people, put your phone away.**

**Listen to Silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. Allow silence to be another member of the group.

**Observe Confidentiality.** This is especially important for trust to develop. What’s said in the group stays in the group.

**Believe that it’s possible to emerge from this experience refreshed, surprised, and less burdened than when you came.** Expect that our time together can provide for renewal, refreshment, and helpful perspectives for our spiritual journeys.