

# Study Guide

## For the Week of April 19, 2009

*This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Message manuscripts are available at [www.spwired.com](http://www.spwired.com).*

**This week we will begin reading the Old Testament book of Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament). Malachi is a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, paving the way for the arrival of Jesus.**

**Monday.** The name “Malachi” means “the messenger.” Malachi saw himself as a messenger from God sent to help the people reconnect to God. The Jewish people had started to slide in faithlessness and were suffering the consequences of that. Malachi responds to several questions the people were asking about God, about life, about the future. Typical of a prophet of old, Malachi has some harsh words to say, but don’t overlook the grace that is also offered. **Read Malachi 1:1-5** in the Old Testament. The people were asking, “God, do you really love us?” Verse 2 states it directly. The following verses describe God’s protection and restoration of his people after they had been desolated by invading armies. This may seem strange to us, but in that day people saw this as a sign of God’s presence and thus his love. How do you know God loves you? What signs do you look for? Where do you look for that evidence?

**Tuesday.** **Read Malachi 1:6-14** in the Old Testament. At that time the Jews were required to bring animal sacrifices to God. The law was that the animals brought to God were to be the best, without defect. But instead the people had begun to bring the worst—animals that were dead or dying or diseased. The people were giving to God their leftovers, rather than that which was their best. What is God’s response to getting leftovers? Do you bringing God the very best of your time, talents and treasure? Are you doing that? If not what would it look like if you did?

**Wednesday.** **Read Malachi 2:1-9** in the Old Testament. In this section Malachi addresses the priests of that day. It is a scathing indictment. The priests had settled into making the relationship with God a mere ritual. They went through religious motions, but their hearts were not in it. This is a word for pastors today, but also for all Christians. What does this tell us about being fully engaged in our faith lives? What does it look like when we drift into just going through the motions? How do we get back to a place of vibrancy?

**Thursday.** **Read Malachi 2:10-12** in the Old Testament. This passage was central to the message on Sunday. God is all about covenant making and covenant keeping. A covenant is a sacred pledge that God becomes a part of. Why is God so concerned about how we keep the covenants we make with each other?

**Friday.** **Read Malachi 2:13-17** in the Old Testament. In this section Malachi specifically brings out the marriage covenant. He points out how the people had broken those covenants. What is the result of a broken covenant? How does it affect our relationship with God when we make and break covenants? In this section God says, “I hate divorce.” But God does **not** say that he hates divorced people. This is an important difference. How are our other covenants (parenting, friendship, business) important? What can you do to strengthen your part of those covenants?