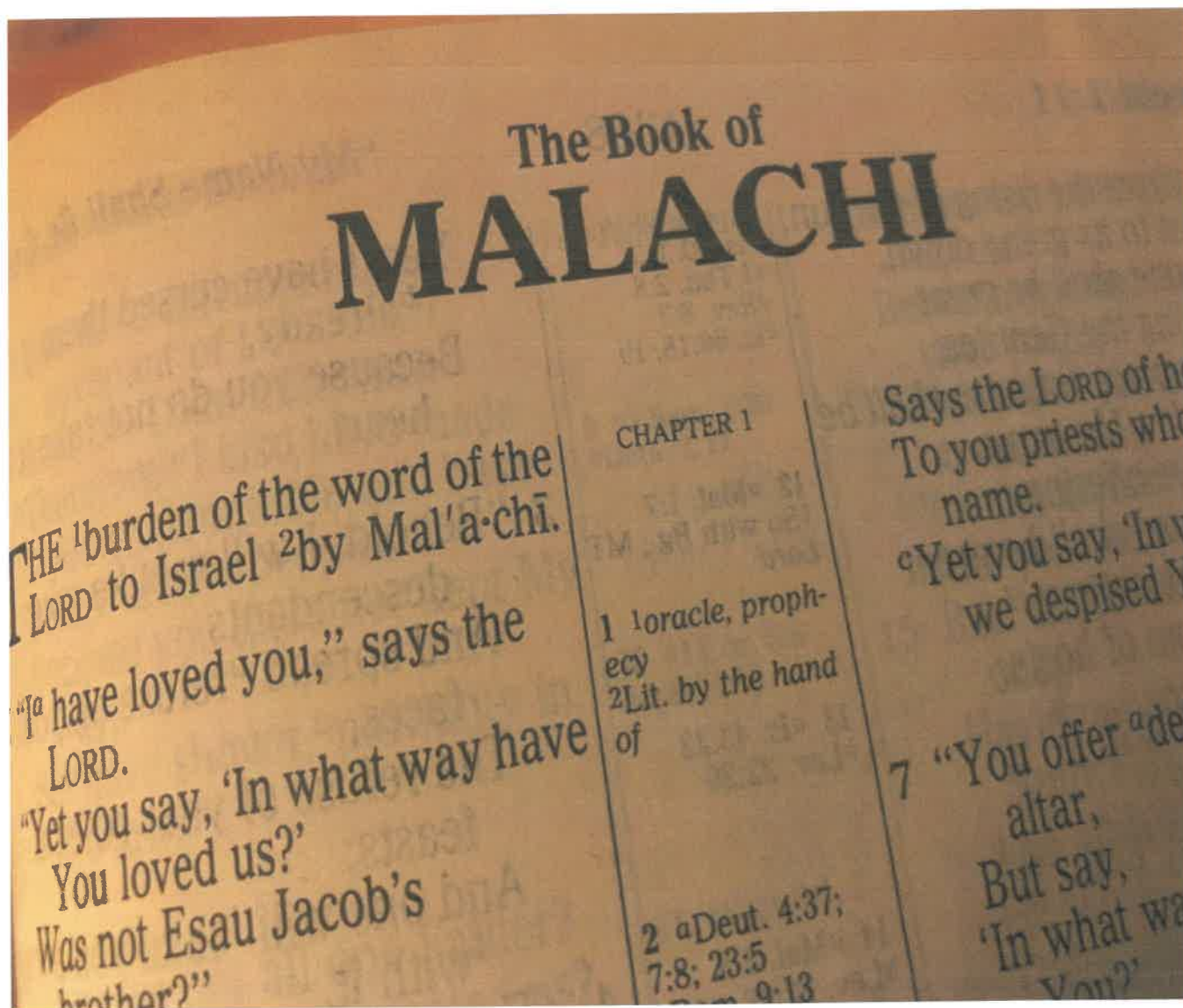




Study Guide for October 11- November 22

Mt. Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

255 Washington Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15216

MLEPC.ORG

Book of Malachi

RNM Study by Dave Cornes

Week	Scripture	Topic
10/11	Mal 1:1-5	Love
10/18	Mal 1:6-2:9	Devotion
10/25	Mal 2:10-16	Faithfulness
11/1	Senior Sunday	
11/8	Mal 2:17-3:5	Justice
11/15	Mal 3:6-12	Generosity (InGathering)
11/22	Mal 3:13-4:6	Righteousness

Love

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: God is love.

Head Change: To know that when we doubt God's love, the problem is with us, not with Him.

Heart Change: To feel grateful that God's love isn't based on our performance but on His promise.

Life Change: To allow the warmth of God's love to flood our hearts and motivate us in all we do.

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VIEW

As you watch, write down how Dave answers these questions.

Who starts the conversation – God or the people?

How would God's people already have known that He loved them?

Did Jacob earn God's favour through greater holiness or godliness?

Can our actions change God's love?

Show SESSION #1: Love (13 minutes)

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REVIEW

The first conversation God has with His people in the book of Malachi is about love (Malachi 1:1–5). As in all the subsequent conversations, God makes a claim, the people disagree, and God gives His response. In this case, God tells the people how much He loves them, and they immediately say, ‘How have You loved us?’ (Malachi 1:2) **When have you found yourself asking God, ‘How have you loved me?’**

From Genesis to Revelation, God's Word is abundantly clear that God is love. **Do a group brain dump of the scriptures and stories of God's love that the people of Malachi's day would've known. Now share scriptures and stories God has used in your own life to prove His love for you.**

Dave reminds us that God's story is a love story because God *is* love, and His love is unconditional, full, and free. When we don't grasp that, the problem is with us, not with God. **Do you agree that, in seasons when you doubted God's love, it was a *you* problem not a *God* problem? How did you resolve the tension to embrace God's love once again?**

In response to the people's question, God reminds them of Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Their (long and complicated) story is found in Genesis 25–27. The gist is that God gets to choose who He shows love to. Both Jacob (who stole his brother's birthright) and Esau (who despised his father and disobeyed God's commands) were as bad as each other. Neither of them deserved any blessing at all. And yet God covered Jacob with His mercy. **Do you find this story unfair or hard to swallow? Why,**

or why not? Do you relate more to Esau or to Jacob? Why?

Paul unpacks the story of Jacob and Esau a little more in Romans 9:11–16, clarifying in verse 16, ‘[Love] does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.’ **Have you found yourself slipping into the belief that God loves you because you’re somehow better than those around you? Who do you look down upon? Does it change how you feel about them when you picture Jesus joyfully embracing them with all the same tenderness He feels for you?**

Dave says, 'God's love is not based on *your performance* but on *His promise*. God gets to choose who He has mercy on. God loves you because He's chosen to. It doesn't depend on how you feel. He doesn't compare you to a sister or brother. God's love is not based on your performance but rather on His promise. And so if God says He loves you, it's true.' **Do you *feel* God's love, or is it more of an intellectual acceptance? Does this fluctuate in your life? Why, or why not? Consciously or subconsciously, do you try to perform your way into God's love?**

Dave shares that he doesn't question God's love when things are going well, but rather when he's fallen short in some way. He explains that Satan steps in and makes us think we're unlovable because of what we've done. We're hamstrung by regret, shame, and guilt, believing God's love for us has diminished because we've sinned. **Can you relate? Do you know someone who seems constantly anxious about whether or not God loves them? What particular truth from this session could you share with them?**

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BIBLE EXPLORATION

In Psalm 105, David recounts some of Israel's history – ways God came through for His people when they faced impossible odds. **Which of these historical events stands out to you as most magnificent, and most loving? Would the people to whom Malachi was delivering his message have known about all these happenings in the past? How might remembering what God had done in the past have helped them to face their immediate circumstances? How does it help you?**

During dark nights of the soul – times when we can't see any evidence that God stills loves us – it's normal to cry out, like the psalmist did, 'Lord, where is Your former great love...?' (Psalm 89:49)

What does the fact that God allows us to ask Him anything, anytime, reveal about how He feels about us?

Read Deuteronomy 7:7–8. What had Israel done to make them worthy of being chosen as God’s people?

John 3:16 is often the first verse taught to children in Christian homes or schools, or the first verse people memorise when they come to saving faith in Jesus. **What does this verse tell us about the central theme of the God story?**

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LAST WORD

Celebrate the truth that nothing you do can change God's love for you. Don't succumb to the danger of thinking God loves you only when you're living a life of perfect obedience, and He hates you when you're not. Whether your faith feels strong or weak right now, regret, guilt, shame, and failure aren't writing your life script. The story of your life is that God has chosen to bestow His love on you, now and forever, and even the direst circumstances can't diminish it. May you wholeheartedly embrace God's love for you, allowing it to motivate your every move.

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DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: God's people of Malachi's day would've grown up familiar with scriptures like Jeremiah 31:3, in which God declares, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' Read Jeremiah 30 and 31 to understand the context of Jeremiah's prophecy, then spend time meditating on just this verse, putting your own name in that sentence: *I have loved you, _____, with an everlasting love.*

Write: Use a Bible app or website or a concordance and look up a dozen verses on God's love. Rewrite those verses (as is, or in your own words) so they read back to you like a love letter from God.

Pray: Starting this week, form a prayer habit of daily thanksgiving to God for His insurmountable love. Use a regular activity as a prayer trigger – like, every time you switch on the kettle or put your key in the front door or clip the lead onto your dog's collar. Thank God that His love for you will never run out, never hurt you, never leave you stranded. Thank Him that His constant love protects you. Praise Him that His love for you isn't dependent on your performance, but on His promise.

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