

# Malachi Study



Book 1

(22nd February 2012 to 2nd March 2012)

"Aiming to be like Jesus"  
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## **Meadgate Church Malachi Study 2012**

Most people I know and come across are looking for an aid to living. That is why there is a proliferation of self-help books; 'Networking - the Art of Making Friends', 'The Little Book of Calm', 'Developing Self-Esteem', 'Becoming More Assertive' and so on. In addition, the life coaching industry has seen a phenomenal growth in recent years, further indicating the needs at the heart of our human experience today.

Yet the answer has always been there before our eyes, and isn't it often the case that we miss the very thing that stares us in the eye? That 'thing' is the Bible.

God in His love for us not only provided a book to help us live, but also to help us connect with and develop a relationship with Him. It is often quoted as the most published book the world has ever seen, yet there is also an indication that it is read by a very low percentage compared to its availability. The sad reality is that this percentage also includes Christians.

That is why this Lent we are looking at the Bible; during the first ten days there will be an introduction of what it is all about (I know many of us already know, but a refresher won't do any harm) and for the remaining 30 days there will be a study of the book of Malachi, as an application and example of what is covered in the first ten days.

The house groups will be looking at a series of DVDs to accompany our study – those of us that have seen the DVDs have found them immensely inspiring.

I would like to encourage you to commit to the study and commit to attending a house group, maybe even just for Lent - the house group coordinators are Alan and Sarah Dixon who will be more than pleased to help if you would like more information about joining a house group.

In the famous words of Mrs Doyle from Father Ted; go on, go on, go on, go on, go on, GO ON!

Rev M Farah

## Day 1 - Wednesday 22nd February - Speak Lord

Every Sunday in many churches up and down the country, the reader of the Bible passage declares 'This is the Word of the Lord', the congregation responding with 'Thanks be to God'. This is one of the most poignant moments in the service, as it assures us all of the reality that God has decided to continually communicate with His people throughout the ages.

The prophets of old would stand before the people and declare with such conviction, 'Hear the word of the Lord.' Sometimes the word would fall on deaf ears, while at other times it would fall on receptive hearts. However, whether on deaf ears or receptive hearts, the word was intended to speak of the Father's thoughts whether received or not. When received it brought hope and reassurance, regardless of whether the future brought blessing or disaster, for they knew that by the word of the Lord that had been spoken all things were held in the hands of God, who loves and cares for His people deeply.

The Bible contains numerous references of the call to 'Hear the word of the Lord'; 'This is what the Lord says' or the 'Lord says'. The same call still goes out; 'This is the word of the Lord' whether in public as the word is read within the context of a worship setting or in our private reading and prayer. To this call our response should always be *Speak Lord your servant is listening* (1 Samuel 3:1-11) and thanks be to God.

## Day 2 - Thursday 23rd February - The Fruit is in the Word

Isaiah 55:11 *So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Father God is committed to His word, for he knows it's importance. It was through the word of His mouth that all things came into being. It was a spoken word of 'Yahweh' that made all that is visible and invisible, everything in all creation. In fact as we go just below the surface of the Bible we begin to discover that Jesus Himself is the word of God and through Him all that is was made.

So as we encounter the word of God we are encountering Jesus the living word, and in that encounter there is immense intimacy and power.

2 Corinthians 1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

Jesus is the guarantee of God's promises, so go to His word, learn it, love it and spend time with it so that you can articulate and comprehend the promises it contains and then know for sure that as He has spoken it, it will come to pass.

Find out the word of salvation, word of hope and future, word of provision, word of healing, word of forgiveness, word of reconciliation, and word of truth.

It will not return to Him empty.

## Day 3 - Friday 24th February - The Authority of the Bible

In order for us to appreciate scripture and to regard it as a love letter from God to us we need to have confidence in scripture.

To provide that confidence, we shall look at the authority of scripture today and tomorrow we shall see how God's love is communicated through the Bible. It is one thing to read the Bible, which claims to be the Word of God, but it is another matter to believe in it. The problem is that the Bible never sets out to prove that God exists but assumes this always to be the case. Facts in the Bible are helpful but how can we have that confidence in the Bible's claimed authority? Our conviction that the words of the Bible are God's words comes only when the Holy Spirit speaks in and through the words of the Bible to our heart.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church says these words: *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

And the writer to the book of Hebrews states: *For the word of God is living and active... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

No other book is capable of this – it tells us that it has that authority.

## Day 4 - Saturday 25th February - God's Steadfast Love

Yesterday we learnt that the authority of God is embedded within His word. Today we can take that thought further by having confidence that if His word is inerrant; i.e. incapable of error then we can have confidence that if God says He loves us then that is a true and eternal statement; it is a promise. Psalm 119 (the longest in the bible) links this authority (or law) of the Bible with his love:

Verse 66 says, *The earth Lord is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!* Verse 76 says, *Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.* Verse 88 says, *In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.* Verse 159 says, *Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love.*

Notice that in each case love is linked to a word that denotes authority; statutes, promise, testimonies and precepts and if we were to delve into the psalm much deeper we would also find the words 'commandments' and 'rules'.

The authority of the Bible is a two-way street. God absolutely and irrevocably states that He loves us. In return we must love His authority because it is through this that His love is shown to us and or love to Him.

In case you think this is difficult, then consider the words of Jesus: *Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends...*

Dr Wayne Grudem says that the words 'You are my friends' implies a stunning level of comfortable personal interaction with one who is also the eternal, omnipotent Creator of the universe.

## Day 5 - Sunday 26th February - Go Higher! Go Deeper! Part One

Why would we want to be inspired to go higher, deeper and become more embedded in God's word? To know God's will in all areas of our life? To be inspired to change and become more like Him? To serve Him more effectively? To be filled with His love and Holy Spirit as never before?

If we want these things, what stops us? Are we too busy? Do we have feelings of worthlessness? Perhaps we are lacking in belief and hope that these things can happen - "It's not a priority - I was going watch that new programme on TV tonight."

Isaiah 55:10-11 speaks about the power of the word: *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

With this promise, it should encourage us to trust Him and therefore enable us to go deeper into His word which brings life.

How much do we want to experience God's power, wisdom and anointing every day? Don't we crave that relationship that brings us ever closer to Him, our Father, who can guide us and make us whole? We need to know the word that speaks and breathes His love and Holy Spirit into our beings. His word is like the most expensive fragrance we could buy, filling our senses with a longing to have more. Let us pray and ask God to breathe life into our Bible readings and make it meaningful in a way that we have never known before.

## Day 6 - Monday 27th February - Go Higher! Go Deeper! Part Two

How can we be inspired to go higher?

We can be inspired by:

- Remembering the promises that God has already given to us;
- Earnestly seeking the outpouring and meaning of God's word;
- Challenging ourselves to listen to God's statements;
- Sharing our understanding of God's word with others.

How fantastic to spend time being inspired by God's word and sharing that inspiration with others. Many of the Psalms are inspirational including Psalm 89:5-7:

*The heavens praise your wonders O Lord,  
Your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones  
For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord?  
Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings?  
In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared  
He is more awesome than all who surround him.*

We want more of the word to inspire our walk of faith and to give us the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit to fill our lives day after day. We want to share this inspiration with others like an overflowing stream drenching our being and our mind.

## Day 7 - Tuesday 28th February - Put on all of God's Armour

Ephesians 6:11 *Put on all of God's armour.*

Do you want a fight? Of course not. But what if we are attacked? A burglar slips unseen through the unlocked door. Our assailant approaches as stealthily as a lion stalks its prey. How can we defend ourselves against evil spirits, or subtle tricks of dark satanic powers, even when we realise that they exist? We need all the protection we can get and should equip ourselves fully. God's Word is more than a guide book. Prayer is more than a few words uttered in times of crisis. Take the Sword of the Spirit and pray at all times. We are the children of God. We will be ridiculed, treated as fools and thought of as misguided. Stand up for your beliefs, and do not let godless attitudes pass unchallenged. Do not grow weary in well doing.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to be prepared today to resist evil and to live by the light of His Word.

Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.*

## Day 8 - Wednesday 29th February - Full of Living Power

Hebrews 4:12 *The word of God is full of living power.*

The word of God is sharper than the sharpest knife. It exposes us for what we really are. It cuts deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing can be concealed. At this point we are tempted to close the book, putting it down as too scary. We want to manage life on our terms, to stay in control. Our choice is to be hard, not soft hearted. We are left unsatisfied, never finding the peace intended for us. Come to me, Jesus said, and I will give you rest. It is not just Bible reading that changes us but when we respond like Peter, 'My Lord, my God'. Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive mercy, and will find grace to help us when we need it.

Psalm 100:4 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him and bless his name.  
For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues for ever.*

## Day 9 - Thursday 1st March - The Word is Life and Health

One year my whole family and I arrived in Wales for their Christmas celebrations only to discover we had left all five suitcases back at home in Essex. Don't laugh - I'm sure you've all forgotten something when you're travelling, but what is the most distressing thing to have to do without? I think many people would say that little (or in some cases not so little) bag of medications. Our lives are significantly affected if we've left the heart tablets or pain killers behind. But did you know that God's words to us in the Bible are described as medicine; medicine that brings us life and even health to the body, and we are told to not let these words out of our sight.

Listen to this:

*Proverbs 4:20-22 Pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight; keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.*

For the next few weeks, as you do this course, deliberately choose one verse each week and carry it with you at all times. Take it like medicine, frequently throughout your day and never be without it. For God's promise to you is that if you do this, that verse will become to you life and health.

## Day 10 - Friday 2nd March - Releasing Power in our Lives

George Muller, an awesome hero of faith so believed what was written in the Bible that his heart cry was to 'prove the promises of God.' In other words his passion was to see what God had said made real in our lives.

But how does that come about? How do we go from where we're at to where the bible says we are in reality?

Rom 10: 17 gives us a key: *Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

As we hear the Bible out loud it enters our hearts and faith is ignited and, as Colin Urquhart put it, 'Anything you believe (in this book, the Bible) you will see.'

One of my favourite passages is that of the sick woman who pushed through the crowd of people to touch Jesus' cloak and get healed.

In the Amplified Bible Mark 5:28 records something that I believe helped her towards healing: *For she kept saying, if I only touch his garments I shall be restored to health.*

As we press forward for the promises of God to be made real in our lives we need to do as this woman did. Let's get a little bit bold and start speaking to ourselves, for the results will be life transforming.



# TWO FAT MEN



Cooking lessons  
at Meadgate Church

Good, healthy food doesn't need to be small or expensive!

Come and have fun while you learn.  
All abilities welcome - no experience necessary.

Saturday 10th March - 5.00pm - £2

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Don't forget to collect Book 2 of this study  
before you need it on 3rd March 2012!

# WORSHIP DROP-IN

EVERY WEDNESDAY

12.30pm to 4pm

LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

10am to 2pm



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