



February 26, 2017

Learn

Malachi 3:13-4:2 (ESV)

“Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’”

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. “They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

Main Idea

Oftentimes, it’s not the big curveballs life throws at us that cause us to lose our way or accidentally reset our course for the opposite direction. Rather, it’s the little grievances, the small emotional nuisances we experience that change our trajectory. We make little concessions here and there and before we know it, up is down and we can’t remember where we were even headed in the first place.

This week reGROUP Director, Kailey Newkirk, shows us through the book of Malachi how those little stresses and seemingly insignificant coping mechanisms can bring us to a place of questioning God’s goodness and distrusting that he always keeps his promises to us. We learn the value and necessity of relationships and community in combating the many obstacles that cause our faith to waver.

Think...

1. Upon entering into the story of the Israelites and their period of waiting, we see that their impatience and lack of faith in God's promises has led them to a place where they are still following God's rules and commandments, but only as a rote ritual. There is no repentance to their sacrifices and there is no passion behind their praise. Has a time of waiting ever led you to allow your faith to become ritualistic rather than a sacred act of worship? What aspects of your faith are you currently slacking on due to impatience or frustration with God's timing?
2. Kailey notes the crux of Israel's broken relationship with God was a breakdown of trust. The Israelites felt betrayed and deceived by God's lack of action in their lives and as a result they began to slowly walk away from him. How does your trust level in your relationship with God fluctuate with the changing of your circumstances? What do you think most affects your level of trust in God and his promises to you?
3. The Israelites felt they knew better than God. They wanted to correct him rather than obey and trust him. Are there areas in your life in which deep down you truly believe you know better than God?
4. The Israelites made valid excuses for their lack of fervor and repentance, but more than anything God desires us to be in relationship with him. What "valid" excuses are you currently making to God? Ask God to grant you the faith to return to a relationship with him in spite of the valid obstacles that stand in your path.

Discuss...

1. In this passage in Malachi we see the Israelites losing sight of the forest for the trees. They were so preoccupied with the yet-to-be-fulfilled promises that they couldn't see the many blessings and miracles God had already provided for them, both in the far past and in their very real present. Which of God's promises have you seen come to fruition in your own life? Take an inventory of the ways in which God has been faithful to you in the past and the ways in which he is currently providing for you. Say them out loud. Celebrate them, even in this moment of waiting for him to come through in other areas. Commit to remembering those kept-promises as you wait for the ones yet to be seen.
2. Where have you lost sight of the goodness of God? What promises have you been waiting on so long that you've started to question if they'll ever happen? Be bold in declaring those promises and invite those you love and trust into them with you. Ask your community to hold you accountable as you fully trust in the goodness of God.
3. Kailey shows us the astonishing act the Israelites engaged in that stirred the action of God: They talked with one another. Who do you have in your life to talk with about the goodness and provision of God? Do you remind one another of the truths about God that never waver (his goodness, his love, his provision, his plan to make all things new in our world)?

4. We see from the Israelites that it's the tiny adjustments and compromises we make that move us away from God's plan for our lives. What tiny adjustments have you been making in your life just to get through the day? What medicine are you taking regardless of the side effects?

Next Steps

Kailey spoke earnestly of the dangers of living in “rock middle”. We can all identify the markers and characteristics of someone who has hit rock bottom, but can you see the people in your life, maybe even you, who is currently sitting at rock middle? This can be an isolating and lonely place to set up camp, but for many of us, it is a necessity if we want to survive our day-to-day lives. Our recovery ministry, reGROUP, exists to provide a community of healing and recovery for those willing to acknowledge the rock middles of their life. [reGROUP is Monday nights at 7 p.m. in the Herndon Sanctuary and we would love for you to consider joining us.](#)