



MIND
session page

Prepare the Way

Malachi 3:1-4 | Session 10.49

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the FaithElement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Start by asking:

- - What does Christmas mean for those who truly try to follow Jesus in a culture where it has become much more commercial and social than religious?
- - Considering the different meaning it has for us, how can we as believers prepare differently than others do?
- - How might the Advent season give us a unique way to prepare?

Content

Read Malachi 3:1-4, and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- - At what points can we foresee the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus in this prophecy?
- - The people are waiting eagerly for God's messenger to come, but how will that arrival be different than they expect?
- - What kind of discord and conflict did Jesus bring, according to Matthew 10:34-39 and how do we as Jesus' followers also sometimes bring this kind of unrest?
- - What is the point of all this unrest and how will this restore the relationship between God and God's people?
- - In what ways is Jesus' message causing unrest today?

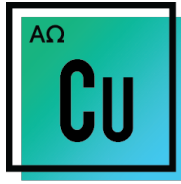
Closure

Continue by asking:

- - When have you heard or experienced something from God that caused unrest in your life or relationships?
- - Why might God allow these things to bring discord into our lives?
- - What kind of difficult messages might God be speaking to you or to our community this Advent season?
- - How might we use the season of Advent to be prepared – not just for the peaceful coming of Jesus in the manger, but also for the fiery and divisive Messiah who brings us healing through conviction and conflict?

Close with prayer.

Writer: Jon Parks



CURRENT

session page

Prepare the Way

Malachi 3:1-4 | Session 10.49

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Thoroughly review all the referenced resources for this session in advance.
- Encourage your group to listen to the FaithElement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
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Context

Summarize or read [this article on a pharma executive](#) and remind the group that "We all know examples like this. It is easy to find villains in society, especially those who look to profit off others." Ask:

- - To what degree is there a moral obligation for companies or individuals to make money?
- - At what point do you think a company makes enough money?
- - What is most troublesome about the decisions made by the companies mentioned in the article?
- - Where does one find justice when people are hurt by the greed of others making profit at their expense?

Content

Read [Malachi 3:1-4](#), and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- - While we might read this prophecy as a precursor to John or Jesus, how do you think they originally saw it and why?
- - What did you think the first readers of this passage thought of as "justice?"
- - In what ways were they longing for a messenger to come and deliver justice, and how does that differ from our situation?
- - What does purifying justice, as described in this passage, look like to us?
- - To what degree do you think the people at that time were prepared to suffer at the coming of this messenger and why?
- - Reading this passage through modern eyes, do you see it more as a promise or a threat?

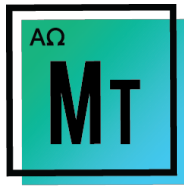
Closure

Watch together the ["Rushing Wind" video](#) and ask:

- - In what ways do the words and images of this video reflect our scripture passage?
- - In light of the call to be purified through Christ's coming, in what areas in our lives do we need refining and purifying?
- - What does this image of preparation and purification have to do with the Advent theme of "Peace?"
- - What do you think needs to change inside us in order for us to find peace?
- - How might we help others find peace?

Encourage the group to think about, think about how they can be refined and purified as you together listen to ["Oh Come Emmanuel"](#) and close by praying to be open to the messenger who comes during this season.

Writers: Crystal Shepherd and Steve McClain



MYSTIC
session page

Prepare the Way

Malachi 3:1-4 | Session 10.49

Before the Session

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Context

Read Malachi 3:1-4, and watch the Bible Background Video.

This is a modified *lectio* activity, based on the Advent theme.

Reflection

Gather the group around an Advent wreath (a circle of 3 purple candles and one pink one, with a white one in the center) and invite them to a time of meditation. Encourage everyone to listen as you re-read the scripture passage, seeing if any particular words or phrases stand out to them as they hear it again.

Give the group a couple of minutes to process what they heard, then invite them to listen again as you re-read the passage, but this time with a thought for

something that is happening in the international community that illustrates the need for peace.

Give the group a couple of minutes to process what they heard, then light two purple candles and invite them to listen again as you re-read the passage a third time, but this time with a thought for how a lack of peace is affecting life in their country or community.

Give the group a couple of minutes to process this last reading, then invite volunteers to share what they discovered through this process. Continue by asking:

- - What meaning could you find in this passage as you considered the lack of peace in the world and in your community?
- - In what ways does the larger absence of peace affect your relationships with people who are close to you?
- - What sorts of thoughts or concerns are most likely to keep you up at night and why?
- - How might the cleansing and purifying described in this passage help you find peace in the face of all these concerns?
- - What concerns do you need to address before you can offer peace to others?

Close with a prayer that the peace of Christ's coming in this season may be shared by all who seek it.



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Context

Play the Step Mom movie clip and ask:

- - Who is to blame for Anna's "delusion of her parent getting back together and why?
- - What are the parents doing wrong?
- - What is Anna, the child, doing wrong?
- - Why are we so quick to see other's fault and blame them but seem so often oblivious to our faults and mistakes?
- - Why is it so hard for us to simply say we were wrong?

Content

Read [Malachi 3:1-4](#), and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- - When you hear the phrase "my messenger," what do you think about?
- - Why does the Lord suddenly come to the temple?
- - How do you relate to the images of fire and soap?
- - Why is purification needed especially for the priestly class?
- - What are some ways that you think the Israelites became lazy about following God's law?
- - What are ways that we become weary of doing good in our faith journeys?

Closure

Play the [#Noseblind commercial](#) and continue by asking:

- - What are some reasons we have a difficult time recognizing our errors that need some restoration?
- - In what ways are we "noseblind" to our faults and errors?
- - How might they smell to others?
- - What acts do we need to take to bring the fresh smell back to our relationship with God?
- - In what ways does all this talk about "purification" relate to the idea of "peace," as celebrated during the Advent season?

Close in prayer.

Writer: Jon Self



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Before the Session

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Intro

Show the ["Bridge of Death" video](<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0D7hFHfLEyk>) and ask:

- - What do you think of this video and why?
- - What's the toughest test you've ever taken and how did you get through it?
- - If someone asked you the three most important things to know in order to get through life, what would you say and why?

Context

Gather in the center of your meeting area and tell the group that they are all going to have to take a multiple choice test. You will ask them a series of five questions, and give them a choice of two answers. Depending on their

answers, they will need to move to the left or right side of the room. After everyone has moved, you will reveal the correct answers and those who have answered correctly will return to the center for the next question, while the rest of the group sits down. If someone has missed a question, they are still free to share their best guesses of the correct answer to future questions, in order to help or hurt someone else's chances to get their answers right. No one should look up any answers during this contest!

After making sure that everyone understands the instructions begin asking the questions. You can make up your own, but be sure to make them as obscure as possible. Here are five sample questions (correct answers in **italics**):

- - How long is a rod, as a unit of measurement? (12.25 ft. or **16.5 ft.**)
- - Using stone as a unit of measurement, how much does the average male bulldog weigh? (**3.5 stone** or 4 stone)
- - Which city is windier: **Dallas** or Chicago?
- - Who was the shortest president: Benjamin Harrison or **James Madison**?
- - Which color has a higher wavelength: Indigo or **Umber**?

After determining the winners, ask the group:

- - How did you feel about this exercise and why?
- - What is an obscure fact that you know but doubt that many other people would know?
- - To what degree were other people more or less helpful as you made up your mind on these answers and why?
- - How do we know when we are responding properly to the things in life that test us?
- - What are some things that set us apart and make us more ready to respond to such life tests?

Content

Read [Malachi 3:1-4](#), and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- - What kind of messenger do you think the Jews were expecting, based on this passage?
- - What about this passage might have "tested" the earliest readers to hear?
- - What do you think it meant to be "purified" back then, and what might it mean now?
- - In what ways might this passage point to Jesus' coming?
- - Given that this passage is used on the "peace" Sunday of Advent, what do you think it says about peace?

Closure

Share this [video about Purifying gold](#) and ask:

- - What, if anything, did this video show you that was surprising, and what did you learn from it?
- - In what way does this video relate to the passage of scriptures we just discussed?
- - If someone was to break down your life, what kinds of impurities do you think they would try to filter out in the process?
- - What are some ways you work to refine yourself as you go through life?
- - How do you define "peace" and how might we need to refine our world if we are to actually find it?

Close with a prayer that everyone might find peace within themselves and refine it so that it may be shared with others.

Writer: David Adams



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Context (From the Current Session Page)

Show the "Bridge of Death" video and ask:

- - What do you think of this video and why?
- - What's the toughest test you've ever taken and how did you get through it?
- - If someone asked you the three most important things to know in order to get through life, what would you say and why?

Content (From the Mind Session Page)

Read Malachi 3:1-4, and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- - At what points can we foresee the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus in this prophecy?
- - The people are waiting eagerly for God's messenger to come, but how will that arrival be different than they expect?
- - What kind of discord and conflict did Jesus bring, according to [Matthew 10:34-39](<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=410171411>) and how do we as Jesus' followers also sometimes bring this kind of unrest?
- - What is the point of all this unrest and how will this restore the relationship between God and God's people?
- - In what ways is Jesus' message causing unrest today?

Closure (from the Youth Session page)

Play the Noseblind commercial and continue by asking:

- - What are some reasons we have a difficult time recognizing our errors that need some restoration?
- - In what ways are we "noseblind" to our faults and errors?
- - How might they smell to others?
- - What acts do we need to take to bring the fresh smell back to our relationship with God?
- - In what ways does all this talk about "purification" relate to the idea of "peace," as celebrated during the Advent season?

Close in prayer.