

Malachi 3:6-15

Further discussion material

22nd Oct 2017

Share together to start:

1. Do you find it difficult to discuss money with others? What are the barriers to discussing money?
2. Does being a part of the family of God make a difference to your attitude to talking about money?

Work through the passage:

Read v6-7.

3. What would cause the 'descendants of Jacob' (i.e. God's people) to be destroyed?
4. Why were God's people not destroyed?
5. What does God desire from his people?

Notes for leaders: These two verses reveal both the faithfulness of God and the disobedience of the people. Despite this disobedience, God still desires relationship with his people. He wants them to return to Him. This is an important realisation because generosity comes out of this relationship. The relationship comes first, our generosity is a response to God's generous relationship with us.

Read 3:7b-9

6. What specific sin is being revealed here?
7. Who are the people sinning against?
8. What is the result of that sin on the people?
9. What was the purpose of the tithe?
10. Are we expected to give generously now? (read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 1 John 3:16-18)
11. What does generosity achieve amongst people?

Notes for leaders: The specific sin is a lack of financial generosity. God states that this is a sin against Him. That is, they are robbing God Himself not just each other. The result of this sin is that they are living under a curse. The next few verses suggest that at least a component of this curse was a lack of success with their harvests. Generosity is also encouraged for believers today, under the new covenant. Whatever amount we have we are called to be generous with it. This giving should be sacrificial but not burdensome. In faithful generosity we work towards equality amongst our neighbours. When we remember to love our neighbour, it helps to cultivate generosity.

Read 3v10-12

12. What will be the result of faithful giving for the Israelites?

13. Read Matt 16:24-27. Should believers now expect a material reward for being generous with their resources? Should we expect blessings here and now for faithfulness?

Notes for leaders: Under the old covenant, God did promise material reward for faithfulness. This was an era where the people of God were a distinct nation who lived together. This nation was promised blessing for faithfulness. No such promise is made under the new covenant. In fact, Jesus warns that following Him will often be difficult. But Jesus does promise a great reward in heaven for those who are faithful to Him.

Read 3:13-15

14. What do these statements and questions by the Israelites reveal about their hearts?

What does it suggest about their attitude towards serving God?

15. Can you relate to these feelings that the Israelites are expressing?

Notes for leaders: These questions and statements reveal a discouragement with following God. They don't see any reward for them. More than that, they see that wicked people are prospering! This prompts them to question whether any of this is worth it. A lot of Christians can relate to this kind of discouragement that we can feel sometimes as we seek to persevere in our walk with God. Refer to the next few questions to explore how to overcome this discouragement.

Read 3:17 and 4:2

16. What does God want the people to look forward to?
17. How does looking forward change our perception of current challenges?
18. How does this sort of focus help us to be generous?

Notes for leaders: God wants all believers to look forward to the great reward that awaits us in heaven. When we do this, it helps to make sure that the present challenges are viewed with a good perspective. It doesn't mean that the challenges don't exist, and it doesn't mean that all things become easy. But with an eternal perspective we know that these challenges are temporary and that they are outweighed by the reward that is to come. This helps us to be generous because even if we face some difficulties now, we will be motivated to invest in things of the Kingdom, not things of this earth.

Three suggestions were made on Sunday to help us to be generous:

1. Remember that our God is God of relationship:
2. Remember to love your neighbour
3. Remember to look forward to an eternal blessing and work towards building treasure in heaven.

19. Share how these principles can help you to be generous.

20. What do you think God is saying to you about your financial generosity? Do you need to make any changes?

Pray:

- Pray together that God would help you to live with your eyes fixed on things of His Kingdom.
- Pray that this focus would produce generosity in your hearts.
- Pray against discouragement as we face challenges in our walk with God.
- Pray for GWAC's financial situation that, through the generosity of His people, God would provide for us.