

Small Group Guide: Malachi 1:1-5
Hard Truths That Heal - Part 1, 09/13/26

Key Takeaways:

- God speaks hard truths not to condemn but to call people back to Himself. His rebukes are rooted in covenant love.
- When circumstances disappoint us, we are prone to question God's love — but our circumstances are a poor measure of that love.
- God is actively at work in our lives even when we cannot see it, often working beyond the borders of what we can perceive.
- Confidence in God's love is not passive — it is the foundation that heals doubt, fear, and insecurity.

Icebreaker Questions:

- Has there ever been a moment when you asked a question and then immediately wished you had not heard the answer? What happened?
- Have you ever looked back on a difficult season of your life and realized, only in hindsight, that something good had come from it? Briefly share what that was like.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Malachi 1:1-5. The Israelites in Malachi's time had returned from exile with high expectations that went largely unmet. In what ways can unmet expectations damage a person's relationship with God?
2. God's first words in Malachi are "I have loved you," and Israel's immediate response is to question it. Why do you think it is so easy for people—then and now—to doubt God's love when life is hard?
3. The real mystery in the Jacob and Esau story is not why God rejected Esau, but why He didn't reject Jacob. What does that say about the nature of God's love?
4. Read Psalm 77:2-11. How does reminding yourself of your previous experience of God's love help you trust in His love today?
5. God told Israel that His continued suppression of Edom was actually evidence of His love for them—something they could not see from where they were standing. What does that suggest about how much of God's activity in our lives goes unnoticed?
6. Several biblical figures—Joseph, Esther, Moses, Ruth, Paul—couldn't see what God was doing in the middle of their circumstances, but eventually recognized His hand at work. Which of those stories resonates most with you right now, and why?
7. Read Genesis 50:15-21 and Philippians 1:6. What situation in your life right now feels purposeless or forgotten? How does Joseph's story invite you to trust that God is still at work, even in the silence?
8. Read 1 John 4:16-18. John describes how knowing and relying on God's love drives out fear. Where in your life right now is fear or insecurity most present? How might confidence in God's love speak directly to that?
9. Read Daniel 3:13-18. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego told the king that God was able to deliver them—but that even if He did not, they would still not bow down. Their confidence wasn't in a guaranteed outcome but in God's love regardless of the outcome. How does that kind of faith differ from the way we often approach God when we are in trouble?
10. Looking back at your life—like Joseph, Ruth, or Paul—how has God been at work showing that He loves you, despite your feelings and the circumstances that made you feel unloved? What are some specific things you can point to as evidence of God's love for you?

Prayer:

- pray for each another, specifically asking God to make His love visible to each person in the week ahead—even beyond the borders of what they can currently see.