



11

Worshipping God

Key Theme

- God's Word is the foundation for our lives.

Key Passages

- Malachi 1:6–8, 1:13–2:2, 2:7–9; Psalm 51:17

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the proper attitude of worship.
- Explain the important role of teachers.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by working on a crossword puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: Worshipping God Class Notes

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Students will fill out the Worshipping God Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The priests were leading the people in disobedience to God's commands by sacrificing blind, lame, sick, and defiled animals. After they were warned, the priests were unrepentant. God was greatly displeased and put a curse on them.



Activity 2: Aim2Please God Game

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In teams, students will answer questions from the lesson. For each correct answer, the team will get a chance to flick a disc at the target to earn points.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



WORSHIPPING GOD CLASS NOTES

- Print one Worshipping God Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- Worshipping God Class Notes for each student
- Worshipping God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



AIM2PLEASE GOD GAME

- Print the Aim2Please God Teacher Guide and Questions from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Print one Aim2Please God Target for each team of 2-4 from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print one Aim2Please God Answer Sheet for each team of 2-4. from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Bring in a water bottle cap for each student or team.

- Aim2PleaseGod Teacher Guide and Questions
- Aim2Please God Target for each team
- Aim2Please God Answer Sheet for each team
- One water bottle cap per student or team
- Tape
- Pencils



Memory Verse

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

The final book of the Old Testament was written by the prophet Malachi. We know Malachi only from this writing; there is no mention of him in any other books of the Old Testament. Based on the themes of his prophecies, Malachi may have been a contemporary of Nehemiah and Ezra, or his ministry may have come shortly after their prominence in Israel. This places the writing of Malachi between 440 and 400 BC (see historical section below for more details).

Malachi was surely writing after the restoration of the Temple since he talked about the role of the priests in offering sacrifices. Like Ezra and Nehemiah, Malachi confronted Israel's sins: offering improper sacrifices, marrying foreigners, not paying the tithes and offerings, and the leaders unfairly treating the people. The book has two main thrusts: to call the people to right worship and to point forward to the coming of the Messiah. In this lesson we will be looking at the worship aspect and then deal with the coming of the Messiah in the next lesson.

At the beginning of Malachi, God reminded the Israelites that He chose them as His special people even though they continually rejected Him (Malachi 1:1–4). He then rebuked the priests for their failures in conducting the worship in the Temple in the way God had commanded Moses. Specifically, the priests were offering the blind, lame, and sick animals as sacrifices to God—animals they would not offer to their earthly governors. They either didn't care that they were offering defiled sacrifices or they were unaware of what God had commanded. In either case, they were responsible for their failure to study and obey the Law. God had clearly commanded them to offer only animals that were without blemish, and He clearly described the things that were unacceptable to Him (Leviticus 22:18–25).

In chapter 2, God reminded the priests that He had made a covenant with the priestly line of Levi—Aaron being the first priest of the Levites—and they had broken that covenant. Since they had failed in their duty to teach the people the truth, the sins of the people were also on their heads (2:1–8). For this failure, God was angry with them.

The people were also divorcing their wives and marrying foreign women, another clear violation in

worshipping God as He desired. On top of this, the people were not giving God the tithes and offerings He had commanded the Israelites to give. In this, the people were robbing God, and He was withholding His blessing because of their disobedience (3:8–12). These offerings were to support the Levites serving in the Temple (Numbers 18:21–32), as well as to pay for the festivals and to care for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28–29), but the people rejected God's plan and went their own way. By robbing God, they robbed themselves of His blessing.

If the people had stayed married and paid their tithes, would God have been pleased? Well, God is not concerned only about outward actions but also about the motives of the heart. God addressed this in Malachi 3:13–15. The Jews had thought it was useless to serve God, so they were just going through the motions. Because their hearts were not attached to their actions, God was not pleased. They pretended to be sorry for their sins, but they were faking it. Their actions did not match their attitudes, and God knew it.

The proper attitude in worshipping God was also addressed by King David. After he had sinned against God by committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed, David confessed his sin to God. In Psalm 51, David described the connection between worshipping God with our actions and our hearts. God does not desire sacrifices that are offered with the wrong attitude. Only when a sacrifice was offered with a broken spirit and heart—recognizing the true nature of sin—was it pleasing to God (Psalm 51:16–19). The Jews had not heeded the wisdom of David and thus failed to please God with their actions because their hearts were in the wrong place.

Today, we don't offer burnt offerings, but we do offer worship to God in many other ways. We offer Him the praise of our lips as a sacrifice (Hebrews 13:15). We offer Him our good deeds for others as a sacrifice (James 1:27). We offer our money and time to our local church and other ministries as a sacrifice (Philippians 4:18). But if any of these things are done without love, for selfish motives, as a religious practice, or to appear holy before others, they are not pleasing to God. We should seek to serve God out of a pure heart. Jesus's sacrifice as the unblemished Lamb has paid the penalty for sin and purified our hearts to serve God. As we seek to obey God, we can do it with a pure heart because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Because there are no clear references to kings (or other people) in Malachi's writing, assigning an exact date to his prophecies is difficult. He was surely writing at a time when Israel had forgotten about worshipping God properly and when the teachers had failed to fulfill their God-given role. There are a couple options, however, for the time of writing. One possibility is during the time that Nehemiah returned to Persia after re-establishing the Law with the help of Ezra and other teachers. This would date the book of Malachi around 442 BC during a period of backsliding before Nehemiah returned to govern the nation again. Malachi touches on several of the same problems Nehemiah sought to reform, so this is a reasonable conclusion.

The second option for a date of writing is after Nehemiah had died and the people had again turned from truly worshipping God. Malachi may have been reminding the people of the truths Ezra and Nehemiah had taught them, exhorting them to continue to follow the Law until Elijah would come to announce Messiah's arrival. This would place the date closer to 400 BC. In either case, the text clearly called the people to worship God as He had prescribed.

Many people today believe they can approach God in any way they want to. They fail to recognize that God demands to be worshipped in very specific ways. For the Israelites during the Old Testament period, that involved the Law and sacrificial system. But it is only those who approach God with a pure heart that can be accepted. The problem is that no one has a pure heart. Apart from Christ, even our good deeds are

filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Only in Jesus can we rightly worship God. Those who reject this idea are working against Christ (1 John 4:1–6). As Christians, we must help people understand that they can only come to the Father through the Son (John 14:6). Apart from receiving Jesus by faith, no one will have eternal life (John 5:19–27). Even though the gospel is an unpopular message, it must be taught so that God can be worshipped as He desires. Let's not be like the priests of Malachi's day, but let us faithfully teach what God has revealed to us in His Word.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

God, you are holy and mighty. What a great privilege I have to come to you in prayer because Jesus redeemed me. Examine my heart now, O Lord. Have I been offering you pure worship? Have my sacrifices of praise, service, money, prayer, and study been offered with a heart that is humble and faithful to you? Convict me, Lord. Show me if there is any offensive way in me. And by the power of your Holy Spirit, open the eyes and hearts of my students today to see that worship is only acceptable if presented with a repentant, humble heart and a right attitude. Move in their hearts that they will one day desire to worship you with the worship you are worthy of.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Worshipping God Class Notes

MATERIALS

- Worshipping God Class Notes for each student
- Worshipping God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will complete the class notes today as we study the Bible passages. Do not

work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will learn that God would not accept the imperfect sacrifices offered by the priests.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We are coming to the very last book of the Old Testament today.

- ? Who knows what the name of it is? *Malachi*.

Refer to the History of Israel Poster as you discuss the time Malachi lived. Malachi was another prophet of God. Malachi was prophesying and warning the people about some of the same things Nehemiah and Ezra wrote about.

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

Refer to Lesson 5 Theme Poster. When Malachi wrote, the Temple was already restored. Zerubbabel had led the way in finishing the Temple. Refer to Lesson 10 Theme Poster. Ezra had proclaimed God's Word from the Book of the Law, and the people had come back to God.

But now Malachi noticed something. The priests making the sacrifices to God in the Temple were not obeying God's commands for a perfect sacrifice. This wasn't good because it did not honor God. God's commands had always been that any animal sacrificed in the Temple should be one that was perfect—not crippled, or blind, or faulty, or weak. The animal had to be the BEST animal they had as they were offering it to a holy God for the covering of their sins.

God would use His prophet Malachi to warn the people that they must stop sacrificing imperfect animals to Him. Open your Bibles to Malachi 1. Malachi is right before Matthew. Let's read Malachi 1:6–8. Choose students to read the verses.

Malachi 1:6–8

EXAMINE THE WORD

Remember, this is God speaking through His prophet Malachi. He sent Malachi to speak to and warn the people. We'll see what God had to say!

Observe the Text

- ? God describes Himself as a Father and a Master. What does God expect from someone who knows He is a Father? *Malachi 1:6. Honor.*
- ? And what does God expect from someone who knows He is their Master? *Malachi 1:6. Reverence.*
- ? Because God is Father and Master, He expects to be treated with honor and reverence. Will someone read #1 on your class notes? How will you answer that? *Malachi 1:6. Assign a reader. God.*
- ? And will someone read #2? How will you answer that? *Malachi 1:6. Assign a reader. Honor.*
- ? Great, and #3? Someone read it and give the answer. *Malachi 1:6. Assign a reader. Reverence.*
- ? God demands reverence and honor. Can someone read the definition of reverence from the class notes? *Assign a reader. To honor, adore, glorify, and respect.*
- ? I'm afraid God was not getting the reverence and honor He demands. Look back in Malachi 1:6. How did the priests feel about God's name? *Malachi 1:6. They despised His name.*
- ? And will someone read #4 on the class notes? What is the answer to that? *Assign a reader. Despised.*

Reverence: To honor, adore, glorify, and respect.

? Someone read the definition of despise from your class notes. *Assign a reader. To hate or reject.*

So our Holy God, who demands honor and reverence, was being despised—or hated—by the priests in the Temple.

? Why did God say this about the priests? Look back at Malachi 1:7. What were the priests offering on God’s altar? *Malachi 1:7. Defiled food.*

? What does that mean—defiled food? Look on your class notes. Someone read the definition of defiled for me. *Assign a reader. Something that is ruined, spoiled, not perfect.*

? And in Malachi 1:8, what kinds of animals were the priests sacrificing to God? *Malachi 1:8. Blind, lame, sick.*

The priests were to make sacrifices of food and animals to God in the Temple. God demanded perfect, pure sacrifices—the best there was. This was not happening.

? Someone read # 5 on your class notes. How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Defiled.*

? And someone read #6 on your class notes—about the animals being offered. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Perfect.*

The animals and the food being offered were defiled. And that was a big problem! The Lord did not want imperfect sacrifices but perfect ones. These sacrifices were not acceptable to Him. God required the best, and these were not the best. The Lord was not pleased with the offerings the priests were sacrificing. He was not pleased with the priests. And the Bible tells us what God did! Go to Malachi 1:13, and we’ll read through Malachi 2:2. *Choose students to read the verses.*

? In Malachi 1:13, God saw that the offerings were stolen, lame, and sick. Far from perfect. What is the question God asked in this verse? *Malachi 1:13. Should I accept this from your hand?*

? What do you think the answer would be? Should the God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Giver of all good gifts—should He accept defiled, lame, stolen, and sick sacrifices? *Allow discussion. No!*

God demanded perfect sacrifices. He would NOT accept these defiled and imperfect offerings.

? Now look at #7 on your class notes. Will someone read that for us? And how will you answer it? *Assign a reader. Not.*

Look at Malachi 1:14. God declared Himself the King. His name alone is to be feared. And the sacrifices were NOT perfect.

Despise: to hate or reject.

Defiled: Something that is ruined, spoiled, not perfect.

Malachi 1:13–2:2

Malachi 2:7-9

- ? So what did He say to the priests? What was God going to do because of these sacrifices? Look in Malachi 2:2. *Malachi 2:2. Send a curse.*
- ? What was God going to curse? Still in Malachi 2:2. *Their blessings.*
- ? Look at #8 on your class notes. Will someone read that? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Blessings.*

God did not like the sacrifice. And God knew that the priests were setting a bad example for the people. The priests' job was to lead the people to OBEY God. They were not doing that. Let's go on to Malachi 2:7-9. God was talking about the priests here. *Malachi 2:7-9. Assign a reader.*

- ? What does God say about priests? What are they? *Malachi 2:7. The messengers of the Lord.*
- ? The priests were supposed to be messengers of the Lord. But what had they caused the people to do? *Malachi 2:8. Stumble at the Law.*

The priests, who were messengers of God, were causing the people to stumble at the Law. This means they were turning away from God and His Law. They were sinning and disobeying God.

- ? Back to your class notes. Someone read #9. What is the answer to that? *Assign a reader. Priests.*
- ? Why was God angry with the priests? What were they making the people do? *Malachi 2:8. Stumble at the Law.*
- ? Look at #10 on your class notes. How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Stumble.*

Discover the Truth

God gave very clear directions about the sacrifices to be made to Him. He required the best. He demanded perfect sacrifices of food and animals. He would not accept anything that was defiled. The priests were not honoring God with their sacrifices. They were rejecting God's Law and showing their hatred for God. They were despising the Law of the Lord! And because the priests were disobeying God's Law, they were causing the people to sin against God. The priests were the spiritual leaders. They were supposed to be messengers of God. The people were following the priests into sin. What a mess!





Aim2Please God Game

MATERIALS

- Aim2Please God Teacher Guide and Questions
- Aim2PleaseGod Answer Sheet for each team
- Aim2Please God Target for each team
- Pencils
- One water bottle cap per student or team
- Tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into teams of 2–4 depending on the size of your class. You may want to adapt so each student plays on his/her own.

Give each team a target, an answer sheet, and a water bottle cap.

Firmly tape all the edges of the targets onto a smooth table surface so each team has access to one.

Teams will record answers to the questions you ask on the student answer sheets. Each team that answers correctly may take a turn flicking the bottle cap onto the target and record the score on the answer sheet.

*Students should take turns flicking the bottle cap for their team. **NOTE:** Flicking is done by laying the bottle cap on the table and using pointer or middle finger and thumb to push or flick the cap to the target.*

Repeat the questions if time allows.

Were you paying attention? We are going to play a game. I'm going to tape down one target per team. Each team will get a game disc and an answer sheet. For each correct answer, your team can earn points by flicking your game disc onto the target.

You will keep track of your own score on the answer sheet. After I ask the question, quietly discuss what the answer is with your team and circle it on your answer sheet. Each team with a correct answer can shoot for the target. *Divide the students into teams and hand out the supplies. Demonstrate the correct way to flick the water bottle cap (see note above). Allow them to practice this several times.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

When we play games like this, most of us try really hard to win! Some of you really wanted to win. You worked together to get the answers right and then you tried to get the very highest score on the target!

When we do things that are important to us, we put a lot of effort into it because we want to do it right!

We should do the same thing every day as we live to please God. The priests that Malachi described in the verses we read about today weren't making too much effort to please God with their worship or sacrifices. They ignored God's commands and did what they wanted. He had given them specific directions about what kind of animals to sacrifice. But they wouldn't listen, and God cursed them. We do not want to follow their example. Instead we should try to please God and offer Him our best!





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The priests we read about today were teachers, leaders of the people. These leaders were role models, and they taught the people about God. They taught them the Law. They spoke on God's behalf as His messengers. But they led the people to stumble in the Law and sin by dishonoring God with defiled sacrifices.

God sent His prophet Malachi to speak for Him. Malachi warned the priests and the people that their sacrifices were not pleasing to God. They were not worshipping God honorably. Instead of offering their best, they offered blind and sick animals. And they were stubborn and prideful about it. When God told them to change their ways, they wouldn't! Their disobedience, bad attitudes, and defiled offerings did not please God.

But what DOES please God? God's Word tells us. Take your class notes back out and look at Psalm 51:17 on the bottom. Let's all read it carefully out loud together. *Lead the class in the reading of the verse.*

Psalm 51:17

Contrite:
Feeling sorry
for a sin.

- ? Do you see what this verse is saying? What kind of sacrifices please God? *A broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.*
- ? What is contrite? The definition is on your class notes. Will someone read that for me? *Assign a reader. Feeling sorry for a sin.*

A contrite heart is one that is sorry for sin. This verse is describing a humble person that doesn't tell God what to do. Instead, he humbles himself before our holy God and says, "I'm a sinner. I'm not in charge, and I want you to lead me, and I will obey." God wants us to have a contrite heart. He wants us to be obedient—and be obedient with the right attitude. An attitude that knows that God is our Father and our Master.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

We don't offer God burnt offerings or animals anymore. But we do offer God worship in many ways. We praise Him, pray to Him, and do good

works out of obedience to Him. We need to check our attitudes as we offer these sacrifices to God. We need to come before the Lord with the attitude of humility, love, sorrow for our sins, and gratefulness to God for His blessings. King David gave us a great example of this in Psalm 51:17—the verse on the bottom of your notes. He told us that God wants a broken spirit and a contrite or sorry heart. That is how we are to approach God, too. We should give Him the best we have to offer.

Many people today believe that they can approach God any way they want. You may hear someone mention that they pray to God, love God, have a relationship with God, and worship God—but they don't read God's Word or believe in Jesus as the Son of God and their Savior. What they say and what they believe don't line up with what God's Word says. They cannot truly love or worship the one true God because they don't really know who He is. They may love a god and worship a god, but it's not the one true God.

We can't worship God unless we read God's Word and believe in Jesus Christ. Remember, God demands a pure heart in worship. We can't know the Father unless we know Jesus because Jesus and the Father are one. We can only get eternal life with God by hearing Jesus's Words and believing in God as the one who sent Him. This is the only way to pass from death into eternal life. Your friends may not want to hear this.

But we have to stand on what we believe. And we believe that what God says in His Word is true!



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for He alone is worthy of our worship. For He is the one true God.
- Thank God for showing us what kind of worship pleases Him.
- Ask God to help us to remember to always come before Him with a humble and obedient heart.

