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Worshipping God

Key Theme

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

Key Passages

- Malachi 1:6–8, 1:14, 2:2, 2:7–9

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the proper attitude of worship.
- Explain how God reacted to the priests' disobedience.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by spilling out the Memory Verse Strips and putting them in the correct order. Then, they will say the verse aloud to each other and/or to the teacher. You will use these strips for Lessons 8–12.



Activity 1: Worshipping God Class Notes

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Students will circle the correct answers on the Worshipping God Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

page 5

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



Activity 2: Worshipping God Beanbag Toss

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Students will play a game in teams to review the lesson material.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each group of 2–3 students. Print the strips on cardstock.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Strips for every 2–3 students
- Containers with a lid or small paper bags for each set of strips so students can mix them up and spill the verse



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



WORSHIPPING GOD BEANBAG TOSS

- Print one set of Worshipping God Question Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM on cardstock (or glue them to construction paper).
- Print one Worshipping God Answer Key and Instructions from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Tape a start line on the floor and lay the Worshipping God Question Cards in a grid pattern away from the line.

- Worshipping God Question Cards
- Worshipping God Answer Key and Instructions
- Tape
- Beanbag



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.

➤ Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will spill the Memory Verse Strips out and put the words from the memory verse in the correct order.
- They will practice saying the verse aloud to their group and/or the entire class.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided this activity 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
- 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 be completing the class notes as we study the Bible passages. Try not to work ahead. We'll do it together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we study today and fill in our class notes, we will see that God was not pleased with imperfect sacrifices. God wanted the best from the priests and the people.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

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

- ? Does anyone know what book it is? *Malachi.*

Refer to the History of Israel Poster and the Lesson Theme Poster as you discuss the time Malachi lived. Malachi was a prophet of God. He warned the people about some of the same things Nehemiah and Ezra wrote about. Refer to Lessons 8, 9, and 10 Lesson Theme Posters as you review. When Malachi wrote, the Temple was already rebuilt. Nehemiah had led the people in finishing the city walls. Ezra had

- 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.

read 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 command was that any animal sacrificed in the Temple needed to be perfect—not crippled, or blind, 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. And the food being offered had to be the best food—not old, rotten, or spoiled.

God would use His prophet Malachi to warn the priests that they must stop making imperfect sacrifices to Him. Let's open our Bibles to Malachi 1. Remember that Malachi is right before Matthew. It is the last book of the Old Testament. I am going to read Malachi 1:6–8. *Read the verses enthusiastically emphasizing the answers to the questions.*

Malachi 1:6–8a

► Re-read the verses as you ask the questions so your students will hear the answers directly from God's Word.

Reverence:
honor,
adoration,
glory, and
respect.

Despise: to
hate or reject.

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 was telling the people that a son would honor his father and a servant his master. What did God then say about Himself? *Malachi 1:6. He is the Father and a Master.*
 - ? Yes, God described 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 the Master? *Malachi 1:6. Reverence.*
 - ? Because God is Father and Master, He expects to be treated with honor and reverence. Look at #1 on your class notes. How will you answer that? Which word and picture should you circle? *Assign a reader. God.*
- God is both Father and Master. He demands reverence and honor.
- ? What does it mean to give reverence and honor to God? *Allow discussion.*
- It means to adore God, to glorify and respect Him. To love Him as Creator of the universe!
- ? Listen again as I read Malachi 1:6. Does this sound like God was getting the reverence due His name? What did the Lord say about the priests? *Read Malachi 1:6b. You despise My name.*
- Yes, God knew that the priests were despising His name. Do you know what despise means? It means to hate or reject.

The priests were not obeying God. They were turning away from Him by disobeying His commands, acting like they hated God.

- ? Now will someone read #2 on the class notes? Who can answer that for me? Which answer is correct? *Assign a reader. Did not.* Circle that picture and answer.

So our holy God, who demands honor and reverence, was not being obeyed by the priests in the Temple. The priests were rejecting God and His Laws to do things their way.

- ? What kind of food were the priests offering on God's altar? *Malachi 1:7. Defiled food.*

- ? What does that mean? Anyone know? *Allow discussion.*

Defiled food would have been food that may have been rotten or spoiled. It was not the best food from the garden!

Defiled: rotten, spoiled.

- ? And this mentions something about the animals that were being offered. Listen to Malachi 1:8 again. What kinds of animals were the priests sacrificing to God? *Re-read Malachi 1:8a. Emphasize the answers. Blind, lame, sick.*

The priests were supposed to make perfect sacrifices of food and animals to God on God's altar in the Temple. But instead they were offering rotten food and blind and sick animals. These sacrifices were not acceptable to the Lord. The Lord's name is to be praised but the people were not praising and worshipping the Lord the way He had commanded them to.

- ? Now look at #3 on your class notes. What answer will you choose? *Assign a reader. Altar.*

- ? And someone read #4 on your class notes. Will you circle the animals or the plants? *Assign a reader. Animals.*

The animals and the food being offered were far from perfect. And that was a big problem! God was not pleased. God wanted the very best.

- ? Why was God so angry with the people? Look at #5 on your class notes. Can someone read that for us? What answer will you circle? *Assign a reader. Sacrifices.*

That's right. God wanted the best, and these were not their best. The Lord was not happy with what the priests were sacrificing. He was angry with the priests. Let's read some more about that! Listen as I read Malachi 1:14. *Read Malachi 1:14 emphasizing the answers to the questions below.*

Malachi 1:14

- ? What did God call himself? *A great King.*

- ? And what did He say about His name? *It is to be feared.*

God's name is to be feared. God demands obedience. He was angry with the priests. Listen now as I read Malachi 2:2. The Bible tells us what God did. *Read Malachi 2:2.*

Malachi 2:2

Malachi 2:7-9

- ? There are three things in this verse that God said the priests were not doing. What are they? *Re-read Malachi 2:2 if necessary. They did not hear. They did not take His Words to heart. They did not give glory to His name.*
- ? What was God going to do because of the sacrifices the priests had made? *Send a curse.*
- ? What was God going to curse? *The priests and their blessings.*
- ? Look at #6 on your class notes. Will someone read that? What answer should you circle? *Assign a reader. The priests.*

God did not like the sacrifices. 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. *Read Malachi 2:7-9 enthusiastically so your students can understand God's Words.*

- ? What did God want the priests to give to the people as they spoke to them? *Malachi 2:7. Knowledge, the Law.*
- ? The Bible says the priests are special messengers. Who were they messengers of? *Malachi 2:7. The Lord of Hosts.*

This was a huge job and responsibility! The priests were to fill the people with the knowledge and wisdom of God's Law. They were messengers of the Lord of hosts.

- ? What did the priests do instead? *Malachi 2:8. Departed from the way.*
- ? And what did they cause the people to do? *Malachi 2:8. Stumble at the Law.*

The priests were not obeying God. They were turning away from God and His Law. They were sinning and disobeying God. And they were leading the people of God to do the same!

- ? Now look at #7 on your class notes. What were the priests and the people disobeying? *God's Law.*

Discover the Truth

God gave the priests clear directions about the sacrifices He commanded them to offer. He told them to give their best—perfect sacrifices. Yet the priests were offering food that was defiled and animals that were lame, blind, and sick. The priests had turned away from God's Law and hated God. And they were leading the people into sin and disobedience as well. This was not good. And God had to punish the priests. He did that by cursing them and taking away their blessings.



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



Worshipping God Beanbag Toss

MATERIALS

- Worshipping God Question Cards
- Worshipping God Answer Key and Instructions
- Tape
- Beanbag

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the students into small teams. Print one set of the Question Cards onto cardstock. Tape them to the floor face down. Students will divide into small teams. They will toss a beanbag onto a lesson question taped to the floor. Pull the question from the floor, allow students to answer it, and award the team with the number of points listed on the question. Use the answer key to confirm answers. If the answer is wrong put the card back on the floor.

? **Is everyone ready for a fun review of today's lesson?** *Yes!*

We are going to play a form of beanbag toss! And we will be reviewing the lesson at the same time. I hope you were paying attention. Work together with your team to come up with the correct answer. One

person at a time will toss the beanbag onto a card. If you answer the question correctly, your team will earn the number of points on the card. *Continue with game. Repeat questions if time allows.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God had demanded the best from His people. But the priests we read about in the Bible today weren't making too much effort to please God with their sacrifices. They ignored God's commands and did what they wanted. God had given them specific directions about what kind of food and animals to sacrifice. But they wouldn't listen, so God cursed them. God is the same God today! And He wants us to give our very best. We do not want to follow the example of the priests and people from our lesson today. We should try to please God and offer Him our best!



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. The priests and people we read about today had lost a right view of worshipping God. They were not obeying God. 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 honoring God. Instead of offering their best, they offered defiled food and 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 made God angry. God cursed the priests because of their disobedience.

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 we do good things out of obedience to Him. We need to check our attitudes as we worship God. We need to come before Him with a humble attitude and a grateful heart. We should give Him the best we have to offer.

Many people today believe that they can come to 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 match 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.

We can't worship God unless we read God's Word and believe in Jesus Christ. And we can't know God the Father unless we know Jesus because Jesus and the Father are one. We can only get eternal life with God by believing in Jesus Christ. 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 children 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.
- Praise God for He is the one true God.
- Thank God for showing us what kind of worship pleases Him.
- Ask God to help us have an obedient heart.