

It's Not About Me

Lesson 3—It's All About Him

OVERVIEW

Bible Passages: Malachi 1:6-11; 2:1-6

Key Verse: Malachi 2:6—“True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.”

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider the extent of your passion for Christ.
- Consider how your passion for Christ affects your daily life and helps turn others to God.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed Sunday School.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Challenge students who have made recent decisions to continue following and growing in Christ.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Discussion

SAY: I want you to rate how passionate you are about the following activities. Rate them on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning no passion at all and 10 being extremely passionate:

- *Movies*
- *Sports*
- *Internet*
- *Music*
- *Books*
- *Writing*
- *Clothes/Fashion*
- *Worship*
- *Video Games*

- *Academics*

- *What are some other things that students your age are passionate about?*

SAY: We invest in the things about which we're most passionate. We invest our money, our time and our skills. We talk about our passions and a lot of the time we have friends that share the same passions.

- *What is the opposite of passion? (Apathy—lack of excitement or enthusiasm, contentment or laziness.)*
- *Which of the two words—passion or apathy—best describes your feelings toward God in worship?*

Activity—Word Association

Choose a volunteer—with whom to do a “Word Association.” A word association is where you say a word and the student immediately says the first word that comes to his or her mind. Use the following words. Say them quickly and the student should answer just as quickly. You want them to say aloud their first thought: *Football, building, bat, pig, Texas, dictionary, cake, school, movie.*

Choose a different volunteer—with whom to do another word association. Use the following words: *giraffe, lamp, Granny, Play-do, cough, book, game, food, finger, song.*

- *What's the first thought that comes to your mind when I say “cheerleader?”*

SAY: Many people associate excitement or enthusiasm when they think of a cheerleader. Excitement is what cheerleaders are known for.

- *What do you think students at your school associate with your name? What are you known for? (Examples might include: being smart, being kind, being snobby, hanging around certain friends, playing sports, being wealthy, etc.)*
- *What would your best friends say that you are enthusiastic about? (Video games, sports, music...God?)*

SAY: Cheerleaders have to express their enthusiasm for their team visibly and vocally, while onlookers often are less enthusiastic. Many times in worship, the people singing and leading are excited but others are like “the people in the grand stands”—just a bunch of spectators who have come to watch worship instead of interacting with God personally through it.

- *Why do you think that many Christians are less than enthusiastic (apathetic) about their relationship with God?*
 - *What do you think it takes for a student to have a passion for Christ?*

SAY: Today we're going to take a look at a time when God spoke against His people because of their apathy in worship.

BIBLE LESSON

See who can find the book of Malachi the fastest.

While turning there, *SAY:*

In Malachi, God spoke against His people because they had become apathetic in their relationship with Him. They had become lazy in their offering, their leaders were no longer examples of righteous living, and they thought that remaining faithful to God was fruitless. God challenged the people to repent from this apathy and return to Him.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Malachi 1:6

- *What two pictures are given in verse 6? (A son honors his father and a servant respects his master.)*

SAY: As we read the next few verse, listen to ways that the people had shown dishonor and disrespect to God.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Malachi 1:7-11

- *In what ways had God's people shown dishonor and disrespect? (By bringing unworthy offerings, with unholy and dispassionate worship.)*
- *Why would God rather have His temple closed that receive apathetic worship?*

SAY: While the people claimed to honor the Lord, their actions didn't match their words. Priests were showing disrespect by offering sick, lame, and blind animals for sacrifice. Such disrespect was offensive to God, who always desires the best for sacrifice and had commanded that only unblemished animals be sacrificed. The priests mistakenly thought that any sacrifice was better than no sacrifice at all. To show the flaw in their logic, Malachi used the illustration of serving ruined food or food that had not been prepared properly to their governor.

- *How would you feel if someone served you ruined or ill-prepared food?*
- *Would you be offended if they said, "Well, at least we gave you something...isn't something better than nothing?"*
- *In what ways do Christians do this to God?—Give Him "something" as if something is better than nothing?*
- *Why should God be more offended by unworthy sacrifices than you being offended by being given bad food? (You didn't die for your food. Jesus died to give you life and a half-way surrender or worship of Him is a trampling of that sacrifice.)*

SAY: Malachi expressed the point that intentions of the heart are as important as the actions themselves. The priests and people showed that they did not love God with all their hearts because they were disobedient in offering God what He required. It was strictly forbidden in the law to sacrifice blemished animals, but the priests had adopted this shameful practice anyway. Malachi told them that it would be better to not even enter the temple than to give to God a half-way or faulty worship. He told them that God would not accept their offerings.

- *In what ways do some Christians have a half-way or faulty worship of God? (Just like the Israelites, their actions don't match up with their words. They honor God with their mouths but their hearts are far from Him. They "go through the motions" but are not in love with Christ.)*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Malachi 2:1-6

- *In what ways do these verses apply to your life? (Although the Lord here was rebuking priests of the tribe of Levi, the principles hold true for all believers today: We must set our hearts to honor God's name.)*
- *Does anything about these verses surprise you? (Some are surprised by God's statement of judgment, that he would spread the "waste" from their sacrifices on the priests' faces. If this is surprising, please realize that God expressed his judgment in much more "graphic" ways through other Old Testament prophets. However, the point here is simple: The word "waste" or "offal" refers to the entrails of the animals, or the insides of a sacrificial animal that had been burned. In this act, God was throwing back in their faces the remains of what should have been a sacred offering. The last line of verse 3, "you will be taken away with it," most likely means that the priests would suffer the same fate as the entrails. Just as those parts of the sacrificed animals were taken outside the camp and burned, so the priests would be removed from the places of authority and would be destroyed.)*

KEY VERSE

Choose a volunteer to re-read—Re-read Malachi 2:5-6

- *Why is "Levi" a good example of someone who had a passion for God? (He revered God and stood in awe of His name; True instruction was in his mouth; Unrighteousness was not found in his lips; He walked with God in peace and uprightness, and He turned many back from iniquity.)*

SAY: I want you to silently compare your life to the example that God declares here:

- *Does your lifestyle revere and honor God?*
- *Do you stand in awe of His name?*
- *Is true instruction found in your mouth?*
- *Are false words found on your lips?*
- *Do you walk with God in peace?*
- *Do you walk with God in uprightness?*

- *Do you turn many back from iniquity?*
- *If this is the character of a person of passion for God, on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you measure up?*

Think about this:

- (1) A Christian student invites a non-Christian friend to church. The Christian talks, writes notes, yawns, and rolls his eyes during the worship service. After church, they talk about the girls who were at church.
- (2) A Christian student is telling a non-Christian friend about a worship experience at camp. The Christian talks about her love for Christ, her joy in singing, and the intimacy she felt for the Lord during the praise time.

- *How might these Christians' attitudes affect their friends?*
- *How does your passion turn others to God?*
- *How does your apathy turn people away from God?*
- *What might need to change in your life for you to have a true and genuine passion for Christ?*

WRAP IT UP

SAY: Do you remember the list of activities we used to begin this lesson—the ones you rated your passion for on a scale of 1 to 10:

- *Movies*
 - *Sports*
 - *Internet*
 - *Music*
 - *Books*
 - *Writing*
 - *Fashion*
 - *Worship*
 - *Video Games*
 - *Academics*
 - *Remember the other things you said students are passionate about...*
- *If we began to care more deeply about the Lord than some of these things, what changes might occur?*
 - *What do you think your school would be like if every Christian there was passionate about God?*

SAY: You can't change how others will live, but you can choose for yourself what you will be passionate about. So, fall in love with Jesus and cultivate a growing passion for Him.

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will have a genuine and lasting passion for Jesus.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests

¹Based in part on following lesson: *Lifetrack 5.3*, “That Was Then, This is Now” series, lesson one, “It’s All About Him.” (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005), 100-105.