

Devotional Calendar

March
2020

Unit I. God
Requires Justice

1



Meditate: Psalm 97

Listen: "There Is None like You" by Kierra Sheard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsQ3A4uQqxs>

Pray: Rejoice because the Lord Is Righteous and Just

8



Meditate: Psalm 73:1-3, 21-28

Listen: "I Almost Let Go" by Kurt Carr and the Kurt Carr Singers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfW95aLhu-c>

Pray: Ask God to Draw You Closer to Him and Help You to Do His Will

15



Meditate: Psalm 130

Listen: "May Have to Wait" by Vashawn Mitchell (featuring Ron Poindexter)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGeTnWDv5Pc>

Pray: Ask the Lord to Give You a Patient Heart and to Teach You to Wait on Him

22



Meditate: Zechariah 7:8-10; Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Listen: "I Give Myself Away" by William McDowell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gik2CHG48fs>

Pray: Ask the Lord to Use Your Heart and Hands for His People

29



Meditate: Psalm 50:1-15

Listen: "Hear Me, Lord" by Youthful Praise (featuring J. J. Hairston)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWAP7NQQJKg>

Pray: Thank the Father for Hearing Your Cry

How to Do a Devotional

Daily devotionals are important to help you grow in your relationship with God. Pray, meditate, and read the Word of God, and you will grow spiritually. Devote ten minutes at the beginning of your day to clear your mind and heart and prepare to receive God. Daily devotions will prepare you for any obstacles that may come your way. Take time each morning to hear from God. Even Jesus used time in the morning to be with God. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35, NIV).

Follow the Right Leader

LESSON 5

Background Scripture:

Malachi 2-3

Print Passage:

Malachi 2:1-9; 3:5-6

.....
 "The lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth."
 (Malachi 2:7)



Michael's dad is a widely popular politician who has represented the Fifth District in the State House of Representatives for three consecutive terms. Michael's dad has done a lot for his constituents. He created jobs and sponsored a bill that provides healthcare to those in need, regardless of their ability (or inability) to pay. His healthcare bill passed and became the state law. Michael's dad has also brought back

millions of state dollars to his district in support of grants for summer youth employment and neighborhood beautification. With all the good that Michael's dad has accomplished, everyone was surprised during reelection campaigning when a false rumor began circulating about him. One Sunday, during the campaign, Michael went forward at prayer time to ask the church to pray for their family.

Throughout the entire ordeal, Michael's dad was gracious. He did not appeal to the public or make a public response to his accusers, but he was kind to them. Michael's dad had already put his reputation in the hands of God and trusted Him to silence the false accusations. A month prior to the election, the accusations were proven false and Michael's dad was vindicated! When asked by a reporter how he was able to withstand the charges, the questions, and all the negative media attention, Michael's dad said that he gathered with his family in prayer each night and trusted God to reveal the truth. Then, he turned to his son and said, "Son, share with the lady the verse we repeat together every night from 1 Peter 2:23." Michael spoke up eagerly and said, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

When the family gathered for prayer later that night, Michael's dad asked him what he learned through the entire situation. "I learned the importance of having a good name and reputation. And I learned that my dad is a really good dude!" Michael commented.

What are the characteristics of a godly leader?





Malachi 2:1-9; 3:5-6

1 “And now, you priests, this warning is for you. 2 If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me. 3 Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it. 4 And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD Almighty. 5 “My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. 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. 7 For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth. 8 But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the LORD Almighty. 9 “So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.”

.....

5 “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty. 6 “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”

Intersect

It was a sad day in Jerusalem when the prophet Malachi boldly called out the priests for their sin. The priests were God’s servants and messengers. They were expected to live holy and upright lives according to the Word of God. But, they were guilty of neglecting the worship of God and not living according to God’s will. If the priests were corrupt, then how could they lead God’s people? Malachi may have struggled to understand how the priests could have become so corrupt. But Malachi had to rebuke them for breaking the covenant, misleading and encouraging the people to sin. For many generations, God’s people had looked up to their leaders. But when leaders began to live sinfully, lie, steal, and cheat, they were no longer a positive godly example for the people. The priests dishonored God’s name with their disobedience, and for it, they were cursed. God’s people continued in sin as though they thought God approved of their actions. So, God put His people on trial for not keeping the ways of God. In Malachi 3:5-6, God testifies against them for the sins of sorcery, adultery, lying, fraud, withholding wages, oppressing of widows and orphans, and committing injustice toward foreigners (strangers).

But true to His nature, God ends His rebuke of the people, later in the chapter, by lovingly calling His people to come back to Him; “Return to me,” God says, “and I will return to you” (Malachi 3:7b).

Inside Out

Leaders have a big responsibility to live right before God. Like God, Malachi was disappointed in the priests. Not only did they disobey God, but they also caused others to disobey God. Always remember that your conduct, whether good or bad, can influence other people. God holds everyone accountable for their own sin and for influencing others to do wrong instead of right.

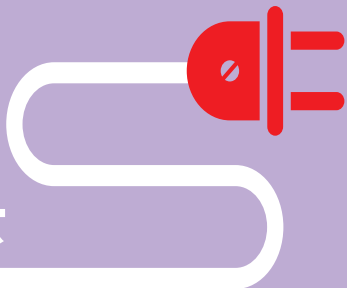
The big question is this: Can God count on you to live right before others?



There's an App for That!

Leaders have a responsibility to God, their followers, and their families to be persons of high moral character. By watching his dad, Michael learned some valuable leadership lessons: (1) lead with honor and integrity even if you are not a “church leader”; (2) pray for your own situation—do not just rely on the prayers of others; (3) in tough times, find encouragement in the Word of God and from the people who love you; (4) look for leadership tools from the life of the ultimate leader—Jesus; and (5) when you have done right and done all you can, trust God.

Connect



The priests and people in the text gradually drifted farther and farther away from God. They neglected the things that keep us connected to God—like prayer, heartfelt worship, connecting with strong spiritual partners, paying attention to the weakest areas of their spiritual life, and quickly confessing and turning from sin—big or small. What about you? What are you doing to stay connected to God?

Stepping Out!

This week, encourage a leader in your church by sending an e-mail and thanking him or her for the example of his or her godly leadership and for modeling the positive qualities of Christian discipleship. Be sure to deliver the e-mail to the addressee before the next class session. Your letter may include such words as *hardworking*, *loyal*, *honorable*, *dependable*, *faithful*, and *compassionate*.



Media Mission

Many teens think that they must be old to be a leader. Throughout the Bible, you will see God calling people to serve in leadership positions at a young age. Search the Internet for the phrase “Habits of Christian Leaders.” From the search results, prepare your own top-five list to share with the class.



NO justice,



NO peace

by Toy Lisa Mitchell

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT BEGAN IN 2013 AS A HASHTAG ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF TRAYVON MARTIN BY GEORGE ZIMMERMAN, WHO WAS ACQUITTED ON ALL CHARGES. When the “not guilty” verdict was announced, protests broke out across the nation, mainly led by young people. Since Martin’s death, a long list of unarmed African Americans have been harassed, brutalized, and killed by persons who are entrusted by their communities to enforce the law. Sadly, studies have shown that getting killed by police is a leading cause of death for young black men in America. The *Los Angeles Times* reported last year that one in one thousand black men and boys in America can expect to die at the hands of police.

As more people came together in live protests and on social media to take a stand against violence against African Americans, the Black Lives Matter Movement gained energy and momentum. For the first time since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, America has heard the voices of African-American men and women and their many supporters from other races.

Video footage of protests from within both movements show speeches, chants, and signs with the message “No Justice, No Peace.” Regardless of the decade in history, some facts remain unchanged—like the fact that no one should be silent or satisfied in the presence of injustice. History bears witness that injustice is not a new trend that showed up in modern times—it existed long before the founding of our nation, for many generations since biblical times.

The presence of widespread injustice causes people to feel many different emotions ranging from spiritual doubt, anger, fear, hopelessness, and despair. Some people become so angry over injustice that they become perpetrators of injustice themselves, withholding justice from others. Others become fearful and worried—they live with the expectation that they, too, will be victimized and imagine that injustice is present even when it is not. Then, there are others whose response to injustice is simply to blame God for the evil and injustice in our world. Injustice is real, but our challenge as Christians is to know how we should respond to it. Here are three biblical answers:

1. “In your anger do not sin.” (Ephesians 4:26a)

Some people respond to injustice by trying to take matters into their own hands, attempting to take revenge or trying to get even. For example, some will say, “I’m going to do to them what they are doing to me.” Not wanting to be thought of as weak, they refuse to control their anger, and believe they have a right to fight fire with fire, even if this means using violence, cruelty, or gunfire. Yes, anger is an honest emotion, but God gives us His Holy Spirit to help us

keep our honest emotions in check. As a Christian, some things ought to make us angry. We ought to be angry when others are abused, mistreated, or denied their rights. These things make God angry too; but being angry does not give us a green light to do wrong, even when others have sinned against us (or someone else).

2. “Do not take revenge my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

There are times when people literally get away with murder and seem to bear no consequences for the evil and injustice of their actions. But even when it seems that they have gotten away with their sin, remember that God sees everything (see Proverbs 15:3). Even when God’s justice seems slow to manifest, never forget that no one can fool or outsmart God. Everyone will receive judgment from God for whatever they do in this world (see Galatians 6:7). No matter what people may do, God will deal with evil. That is why we can keep trusting God’s timing and God’s plan as we remain faithful to Him.

3. “Pray continually.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk wrestled to understand injustice in his time. The people of God had sinned greatly against God, and God had revealed to Habakkuk that He was going to raise up a wicked enemy to punish them for their sins. Habakkuk thought that it was unjust for God to allow the wicked to punish His people. But, the prophet did not just sit still and allow these thoughts to overwhelm his heart. Instead, he started praying. In his prayers, Habakkuk asked God some hard questions. Habakkuk presented God with tough questions; but no question is too hard for Him to answer. God may or may not choose to answer our questions, but we can be confident that no matter what happens, God is always in control of every situation. God assured Habakkuk that He heard his prayers and saw the injustice, and that Judah’s enemies would not go unpunished.

Just as God heard the prophet’s prayer, we can be confident that when we pray, God hears us too. When you are aware of injustice, evil, and tragedy in our world, speak up and take a stand for what is right—just like Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and many unnamed courageous people did. Whatever you do, do not be overwhelmed with anger or fear—pray and trust God to handle everything. God will hear your prayer and your cry for justice. The justice we need may not come immediately, but because God is faithful, we know that delayed justice does not mean that justice will be denied.