

Background Scripture: Malachi 2–3 • Print Passage: Malachi 2:1-9; 3:5-6

**KEY VERSE:** “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)



Adrian is an assistant Sunday school teacher and the lead singer in the youth choir at his church. The younger children and youth of the church look up to Adrian and consider him to be a great role model and leader. Although Adrian loves to sing different genres of music, his mother often mentions that his singing gift has been given to him to glorify God and open the hearts of God's people to receive the Word of God.

The Boys & Girls Club in Adrian's community decided to host a city-wide talent show. The winner of the competition would receive a one-thousand-dollar gift and an exclusive interview with the city's entertainment news reporter. After some encouragement from his friends, Adrian decided to participate in the

talent show. Adrian thought about what he should sing. He has many gospel favorites, but he felt the crowd would be more accepting of a song where he both rapped and sang. Adrian spent hours preparing for the talent show to get his song just right.

Adrian's mother had concerns about his song choice.

“Adrian, can I share a concern with you?” his mother asked.

“Sure, Mama, what's up?” Adrian inquired.

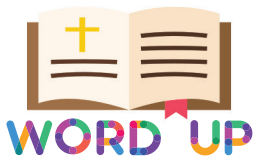
Mother said, “Well, the song you are singing does not really reflect your true lifestyle. I mean—it is okay, but the words ‘thug like this’ and ‘wildin’ out’ is a contradiction to your Christian witness; and those



words certainly do not glorify God! I even think I heard a couple of curse words. I think you should change your song.”

Adrian answered, “Do not worry, Mama, it's just a song. I have to give the crowd what they want to hear if I want to win the talent show! I am still the same person who sings in church. I'm just adding a little flavor.”

Should Christians change their standards to “give people what they want”? Why or why not?



### 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.”

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**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.”



In today's lesson, Malachi is confronting the priests, warning them to turn from their wickedness. The priests were God's appointed people. They had a very important job of carrying out God's laws and teaching the people how to live according to God's will. Despite numerous warnings from prophets, the priests consistently disobeyed God. The priests' behavior showed that they did not love or respect God. They did whatever they wanted to do. Because the priests did not honor God, the people did not honor God either.

Malachi told the priests that people should be able to trust and look up to them in their God-appointed positions. But this was

not the case for the priests. People did not view them as godly spiritual leaders. In fact, because of their wickedness, God caused the priests to be despised and humiliated in the eyes of the people. The priests' wickedness not only separated them from God, but also caused many people to sin simply because they were never taught to do things God's way.

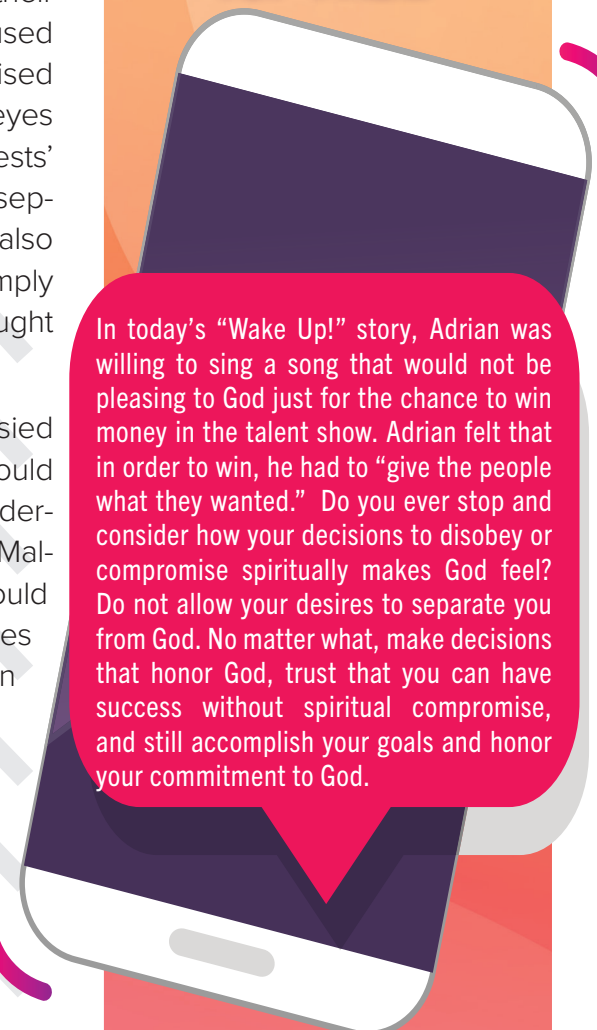
In chapter 3, Malachi prophesied about the day when God would judge Israel for its corrupt leadership and disobedient ways. Malachi spoke of how God would someday purify the Levites (priests), putting them back in the position where they could rebuild their relationship with Him. God is always willing to restore His relationship with sinners, but sinners must repent and commit to living a life that honors God.

## INSIDE OUT

Malachi was disappointed in the priests' behavior. Not only did the priests disobey God, but they also caused other people to disobey God. Do you realize that your conduct, whether good or bad, can influence other people? It is often easy to follow the crowd and do what everyone else is doing to be cool or popular. But, sometimes God may require you to separate yourself from the crowd and stand for His honor. Are you willing to stand up for God, even if you have to stand alone?



## There's an App for That!



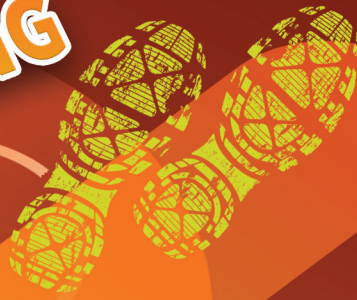
In today's "Wake Up!" story, Adrian was willing to sing a song that would not be pleasing to God just for the chance to win money in the talent show. Adrian felt that in order to win, he had to "give the people what they wanted." Do you ever stop and consider how your decisions to disobey or compromise spiritually makes God feel? Do not allow your desires to separate you from God. No matter what, make decisions that honor God, trust that you can have success without spiritual compromise, and still accomplish your goals and honor your commitment to God.



## Walk Out

Today's lesson reminds us that throughout history, God's people have continued to disobey; yet, God still loves His people and He always makes provisions for them to repent and restore their relationship with Him. Pray and repent for anything wrong you may have done. Ask God to redirect you anytime you are tempted to disobey His Word.

# STEPPING OUT!



Like Malachi, sometimes we get frustrated with people who do wrong and do not seem to care how their actions may affect others. This week, you are challenged to interview three believers to get advice on how to handle individuals who continue to make wrong choices. Write down the comments that you receive and compare your notes. Use the words of wisdom to keep you focused on finding solutions that glorify God and demonstrate godly character.

## It's Game Time!

Unscramble the following scrambled-up words from today's lesson.

1. TPRISE \_\_\_\_\_
2. URGDA \_\_\_\_\_
3. NNIIUTRCSOT \_\_\_\_\_
4. GESMERSNE \_\_\_\_\_
5. GEWNOLKDE \_\_\_\_\_
6. SSHTO \_\_\_\_\_

## Media Mission

The Bible records many verses that examine how Christians should use their speech in a godly manner. In today's story, Adrian did not think it was a big deal to sing a song that had ungodly lyrics. Remember that your speech should be pleasing to God. Visit [https://www.openbible.info/topics/our\\_speech](https://www.openbible.info/topics/our_speech) and review the Scripture list. Challenge yourself to memorize one or two verses.





# 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.