

# Middle School

## Teacher's Plans



March 29, 2020

Youth Topic:  
**Follow the  
Right Leader**

Unit I. God  
Requires Justice

Lesson  
**5**

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

**General Lesson:**  
**Leading Justly**



"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*)

### PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, index cards, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Just leaders act honorably toward those they serve. They not only answer to the people, but also to God. Malachi admonishes the priests to turn from their wickedness, honor God, and reap a rich harvest for promoting godly justice.

### INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

#### STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

*Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.*

**Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "Why do you think some leaders are easily influenced to do wrong things?"**

#### It's Go Time! (illustration)

*Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.*

Provide each student with an index card and a writing instrument. Say, "When I say 'Go,' write down all of the words you can think of that describe attributes

that good leaders should possess. Give the students the command, "Go." After about three minutes, say, "Stop." Have each student read his or her list of words.

### WAKE UP! (10 minutes)

*Have the students read this week's contemporary story and connect it this week's lesson.*

After the story is read, emphasize that God expects believers and appointed spiritual leaders to make a faithful effort to live above worldly standards and commit themselves to godly standards of living. Ask the students to discuss ways Adrian could have participated in the talent show and still remained true to his Christian values and principles. Allow them time to discuss their thoughts about Adrian's decision.

### WORD UP (10 minutes)

*Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.*

### Back Up! (background)

*Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.*

In today's lesson, Malachi is confronting the priests, warning them to turn from their wickedness. The priests were God's appointed people. Here is some history about the priests: Levi was the ancestor of the tribe of Levites, the tribe set apart for service to God (see Numbers 1:47-54). The Levites became God's ministers—first in the tabernacle, then in the Temple. They had a very important job of carrying out God's laws and teaching the people how to live according to God's will. These priests failed to carry on the important assignment that was passed down from their ancestors.

Despite numerous warnings from prophets, the priests consistently disobeyed God. The priests' behavior showed 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 the words that came from their lips. But this was not the case for the priests. The priests were so corrupt and dishonest that people did not consider them to be godly, spiritual leaders. The priests were guilty of applying laws unjustly. People they liked were given better treatment than other people who were not viewed as being as important. Because of this partiality, 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 it 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 leaders and disobedient ways. To restore things back to God's order, Malachi spoke of how God would 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.

### It's Text Time! (Scripture)

*Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.*

### (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."

### WORK OUT (10 minutes)

*Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?*

After the text in this section of the student book is read, remind the students that God held the priests to a high standard. It was their responsibility to model godly character and teach the people about God's laws, standards, and commands. The priests' behavior not only impacted them, but also caused chaos and widespread sin among the people.

Emphasize the point that Malachi was called to confront the priests and make them understand that what they were doing was wrong. Tell the class that God may want to use them to point out injustice. Assure them that if God chooses to use them in that way, He will equip them to be successful at what He is asking them to do. Remind the students that even though Israel continued to disobey and disappoint God, He never stopped loving them.

### **Inside Out (interpretation)**

*Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.*

After the students ask and answer their own questions about the text, discuss how people's actions can influence the actions of others. Explain that, whether for good or bad, someone will likely be influenced by their words and actions. Encourage the students to choose good over evil and influence others in a positive way. Remind them that God is counting on them to be a positive influence.

### **There's an App for That! (application)**

*Show how this Scripture applies to present day.*

After the text in this section of the student book is read, share this: "What do you think about people who demonstrate Christian character at church (or around certain people), but live by worldly standards when it's popular or convenient for them? Why would this kind of behavior cause a problem?" Tell the class that godly character is not something that can be put on and taken off for convenience; sincere Christians strive to demonstrate godly character wherever they go, regardless of who is watching.

### **WALK OUT (10 minutes)**

*Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.*

After the text in this section of the student book has been read, have the students think about how many times people disappoint God—yet, God never stops loving or caring for His people. Help the students understand that God's love is a special gift they should never take for granted. Lead the students in a prayer of repentance to model how they should repent and ask for forgiveness when they are guilty of wrongdoing.

### **Stepping Out! (challenge)**

*Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!*

Challenge the students to interview three believers to get advice on how to handle individuals who continue to make wrong choices. Invite them to write down the interviewees' comments and compare their notes. The students should learn different ways to handle conflict when they are frustrated or concerned about someone's continual wrongdoing. Tell the students you are interested in hearing the results of their interviews next week.

### **It's Game Time! (Answer Key)**

**Answers:** (1) priest; (2) guard; (3) instruction; (4) messenger; (5) knowledge; (6) hosts

### **MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)**

*Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.*

Encourage the students to complete this week's "Media Mission." Tell the students how the Bible records many verses that address how believers should use their speech in a godly manner. Remind them about Adrian's decision to sing a song that had ungodly lyrics. Help the students understand that all their speech should be pleasing to God. They can review the Scripture list at [https://www.openbible.info/topics/our\\_speech](https://www.openbible.info/topics/our_speech). Encourage the students to further their research by finding more resources that examine godly speech.

# High School

## Teacher's Plans



March 29, 2020

Youth Topic:

# Follow the Right Leader

Unit I. God Requires Justice

## Lesson 5

**Background Scripture:** Malachi 2–3

**Print Passage:** Malachi 2:1–9; 3:5–6

**General Lesson:**  
**Leading Justly**



“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*)

### PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, a ball of yarn, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])
- Prior to class, select a word of the day.
- Pray for God’s guidance as you prepare to teach the lesson.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Just leaders act honorably toward constituents. How do just leaders act toward others? Malachi admonishes the priests to turn from wickedness, honor God, and expect a rich harvest for promoting godly justice.

and have them to list the ten things that Christians can do to become more socially aware and involved regarding the issue.

### INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

#### STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

*Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.*

**Status Update: WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND? “What godly characteristic(s) do you appreciate most in your church leaders?”**

#### It’s Go Time! (illustration)

*Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week’s lesson.*

During your teaching preparation, identify a current social-justice issue. Introduce the issue to the class

### REFLECT (10 minutes)

*Have the students read this week’s contemporary story and relate it back to the main points of this week’s lesson.*

Have the students read the contemporary story and invite them to read and discuss the question posed at the end. Michael’s dad was an honest politician who had served well and refused to retaliate when others spread nasty rumors on him. Ask the class to share their thoughts on the harmful effects of lies in government.

### INSPECT (10 minutes)

*Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.*

#### Back Up! (background)

*Here is some background for today’s text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.*



Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, written by the prophet Malachi dated 430 BC. The Temple that was destroyed by the Babylonians was rebuilt and the people of Judah had returned from exile about a century earlier, but they were committing the same sins that had sent them into exile! Evidently, the people of God had not learned their lesson. Malachi was sent to deliver a word of prophecy to the people who had become lax in their religious responsibilities, especially the kings of Israel and Judah (see Malachi 1:6-8). The priestly failure described in Malachi is summarized as failing to honor God, profaning God's name, breaking the covenant, corruption, and finally the condemnation of the priests (verses 1-9). The beginning of Malachi introduces this concept, implying that disobedience by the priests is equal to rejecting God as Father and master of the nation (see 1:6). God contrasted the priests with Levi, an example of reverence and integrity in priestly ministry. The priests should have remembered the story of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, who were struck dead for their being unfaithful to their priestly duties (see Leviticus 10).

In response to the question by the people who sarcastically asked, "Where is the God of justice?" (Malachi 2:17c), Malachi prophesies of a coming messenger who will purify God's people by way of judgment. Beginning with the words "the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple," He continues to foretell Jesus' first and second comings (see Malachi 3:1-2).

Through Malachi, God threatens to bring swift judgment upon those who ignore His covenant and oppress vulnerable people, referencing commands summarized from Leviticus 19:11-13, 33-34. Malachi then speaks of God's unchanging nature (see Malachi 3:6) and provides a foundation for the faith and hope of those who believe. God does not change—He remains faithful even when God's people change (see 2 Timothy 2:11-13).

Malachi can be viewed as a message that is "to be continued." God put Judah on trial through this last prophet of the Old Testament. The verdict for God's people would not be pronounced until the next prophet, John the Baptist, came onto the scene four centuries later.

### It's Text Time! (Scripture)

*Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.*

### (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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### INTERSECT (10 minutes)

*Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?*

After the text in this section of the student book has been read, say, "The prophet foretold the Messiah's second coming—the time when God will judge everyone. The righteous will have endless joy while the wicked will suffer endless suffering and condemnation. Many youths are afraid to even think

about the end times. But for those who trust God and have committed themselves to living right, *the day of His coming* will be a day of rejoicing. God will return to judge the world. Consider what the world would be if there were no consequences or judgment for wickedness. What incentive would anyone have for doing right? For the unbeliever, *the day of His coming* will be a terrible day. But those who trust and obey God will be able to endure *the day of His coming* with grace through faith in Jesus Christ!"

### **Inside Out (interpretation)**

*Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.*

Have the students read the text in this section of the student book (which is similar to this): "Leaders have a big responsibility to live right before God. Like God, Malachi was disappointed in the priests' example before the people. 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." Allow time for the students to discuss their thoughts on whether God can count on them to live right before others.

### **There's an App for That! (application)**

*Show how this Scripture applies to present day.*

Have the students read the text in this section of the student book (which is similar to this): "Leaders have a responsibility to God, their followers, and their families to be persons of high moral character." Discuss with the class the leadership lessons Michael learned from his father: (1) lead with honor and integrity even if you are not a "church leader;" (2) pray for your own situation—do not 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 (10 minutes)**

*Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.*

Have the students read the text in this section of the student book (which is similar to this): "The priests and people 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 our spiritual life, and quickly confessing and turning from sin—big or small." Ask the students to share ways that Christians can stay connected to God.

### **Stepping Out! (challenge)**

*Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!*

This week, the youth are challenged to write a letter to a leader in their church thanking them for their godly leadership and for modeling the positive qualities that a follower of Christ should possess. Remind them to deliver the letter to the addressee before the next class session; in the letter, encourage them to use such words as *loyal, honorable, dependable, faithful, and compassionate*.

## **MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)**

*Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.*

The students are assigned to search the Internet for the phrase "Habits of Christian Leaders." From the search results, they should prepare their own top-five list to share with the class. When the students share their lists, ask them to consider if the habits of Christian followers should be different from the habits of Christian leaders.