

READ

Malachi 2:10-16

CONSIDER

There are many types of relationships in life, family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, church community, etc., etc. Out of all the relationships you have, which one do you cherish the most? What does that relationship build on and what makes it last? Do you have any broken relationships? What are the things that make or break a relationship? Malachi 2:10-16 takes us to think about the relationships that occur in God's people and how God sees them.

If you are reading from an old NIV or RSV or even Message version of the bible, you may be taken back or even feel offended by this statement, "I hate divorce, says the Lord". It seems inconceivable that the statement comes out so strong, so direct, so hard and firm. Given the ambiguity of the original Hebrew text, many newer translations render the line with a softer tone as "he hates divorce", that either "God hates divorce" or "the man hates and divorces his wife". No matter what, God's displeasure about divorce is clear. But divorce has become so common these days that we may not think ill of it at all. There were about 2.78 million divorcees in Canada in 2022, compared to 1.88 million in 2000. Divorce is simply a common way out of an unhappy marriage, sad it may be, but nothing wrong as most people see it. But God sees it as an act of violence. Why is God so upset? Read v. 15-16 carefully and consider how God's view of marriage and divorce is different from how the world sees it today.

The subject of concern here is not only about marriage and divorce. God is very indignant about the relationships found among his people. He is very upset about broken relationships in his people. Three broken relationships are cited here, relating to one another in the community, relating to God with their acts of apostasy, and relationships in marriage. Five times broken relationships are described as "broken faith". We need to ask what faith has to do with a relationship? What part does faith play in each of these relationships? Why would such breaking faith and broken relationships evoke God's anger?

The word 'covenant' appears six times in Malachi, five of which is found in this chapter. It reminds us that the relationship that God has with his people is a covenantal relationship, a sacred binding agreement and promise made in good faith. This shall be the building block of our relationships with one another as God's people, in marriage and in all aspects of life.

Join us this Sunday to learn more from Malachi 2:10-16.

Josephine Chow

PRAY

Father, we are your people. Redeemed by Jesus, restored from sin, you called us into your household, that we can enter into this covenantal relationship with you. Help us to be a true covenant people of yours, reflecting your mercy, goodness, good faith and fidelity in all that we do and to all whom we meet. May your peace be our peace in community, that we can show forth your light and glory. Amen

DIVING DEEPER

What does "broken faith" look like among God's people (v. 10)? Name some scenarios of people breaking faith with each other in community. Why is it that the covenant is profaned when this happens?

Examine your relationships in our church community. Are there any broken relationships that need to be healed? In what ways might we have broken faith with one another? How shall we anchor and build our relationships?

Read v. 11-12. How has Judah broken faith with God? What is detestable in God's eyes? In what forms would breaking faith with God look like today? What steps can we take to guard against a broken relation with God?

What can we learn about God's intent and design for marriage? In what ways is marriage a covenant relationship? What part does faith play in marriage?

How does God see divorce? In what ways is this a broken faith?

The call to "guard yourself in your spirit" and "do not break faith" are both repeated in this passage. What does this signify? What do we need to guard against? What has faith to do with 'guard your spirit'? What practical steps can we take to put this to practice?

What can we learn about God and God's heart from this passage?