



ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH

# FAITH STRONG

HOLDING ON WHEN LIFE GETS HARD

## *Faith Strong Kids*

**Children's Conversation Guide • Ages 9 and Up**

**Quarter 4 • Faith Strong • October 4 – November 29, 2026**

**St. Paul Baptist Church • Peoria, Illinois**

**"Hold on when life hits hard."**

This guide is for the kids' table at your small group's monthly meal gathering. It is the companion to the adult Faith Strong Small Group Conversation Guide. Each of the three gatherings here matches the adult gathering of the same number: same Bible passage, same three questions in kid-sized language, same closing refrains, and the same 40 Days of Stillness. That way, families can compare notes on the drive home.

Kids this age can handle real questions. They notice when life isn't fair, when grown-ups let them down, and when faith feels boring. Malachi is full of people asking exactly those questions. Our job isn't to give kids perfect answers. It's to help them bring their real questions to a God who loves them and doesn't change.

### **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

- Read the gathering's theme aloud together before the first question.
- Take your time. Three questions for one evening are enough. Go deep, not fast. Pick the question that fits your group best and spend most of your time there.
- There are no wrong answers here, only honest ones and unspoken ones. No one is forced to share, and no one gets laughed at.
- Do the "Try It" activity. Kids remember what they do longer than what they hear.
- Close each gathering by saying the two Weekly Refrains together (printed at the end of each section). The adults say the same words at their table or in their group.
- **Between gatherings**, keep the 40 Days of Stillness (November 1 – December 10) together. The kids' version is introduced at the end of Gathering 2.
- Pray for each kid before you leave. Specifically. By name.

**Safety first:** Follow St. Paul's child protection policy at every gathering. If a child shares something that suggests they are being hurt or are unsafe, don't promise to keep it a secret. Thank them for telling you, and tell the designated leader right away.



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## The Weekly Refrains

These two lines come from Malachi 3:6–7. The adults say them at every gathering and in every sermon, and we say them too. By the end of the quarter, kids should know them by heart.

***"I the LORD do not change."***

Malachi 3:6

***"Return to me, and I will return to you."***

Malachi 3:7

*Optional motions: Plant your feet and stand still for the first line. On the second, turn all the way around to face the group again. Kids 9 and up may roll their eyes at first, but do it anyway.*

## Meet Malachi

Malachi's name means "my messenger." He lived about 450 years before Jesus was born. God's people had returned home after years of exile. They rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, where they worshiped God. Everyone expected life to be amazing after that. It wasn't. Life became ordinary, then it became hard.

So, the people's faith started to go cold, like a campfire nobody keeps feeding. They didn't stop believing in God. They kept showing up. They stopped giving Him their best and started asking Him questions with a bad attitude: "How have You loved us?" "Where is God? This isn't fair!"

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. After it, God's people waited about 400 years without hearing from a new prophet. Then John the Baptist showed up, just as Malachi promised, to prepare everyone for Jesus.

### THREE GATHERINGS • THREE MOVEMENTS

| Gathering | Movement                                 | Kids' Theme            | Malachi Is Asking...                                   |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | Faith That Still Believes It's Loved     | God Still Loves Me     | Do I believe God loves me, even when life is hard?     |
| 2         | Faith That Keeps Its Word                | I Keep My Promises     | Am I keeping my word to the people God put in my life? |
| 3         | Faith That Returns Before It's Forced To | I Can Always Come Back | What will I trust God with while I wait?               |



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*"Faith isn't proven by never going cold. It's proven by returning."*

This is the closing line the whole church says together at the end of the quarter.

## Gathering 1 — Faith That Still Believes It's Loved

**Malachi 1:1–2:9 · Weeks 1–3**

**Kids' theme:** God Still Loves Me

**Malachi 1:1–2:9  
Weeks 1–3**

**MALACHI IS ASKING...**  
Do I still believe God loves me?

**GATHERING ONE  
Faith That Still  
Believes It's Loved**

### READ THE THEME ALOUD

Malachi starts with God saying, "I have loved you." God's people answered, "How?" They hadn't quit on God. They still came to worship. But they had quietly stopped bringing Him their best. Tonight we're not trying to fix anything. We're trying to be honest about whether we believe God loves us, what we really give Him, and who is watching how we live

### BIG IDEA

**God's love doesn't change, even when my feelings do.**

*Leader note: Consider also asking this as an open question tonight: Is it hard to tell God how you really feel? Why?*

### WARM-UP (5 MINUTES)

Go around the table: "Name something you know is real even when you can't see it or feel it." (Wi-Fi, the wind, the sun at night, your heartbeat.) Then ask: "How do you know it's there?"

Connect it: Malachi's people couldn't feel God's love, so they decided maybe it wasn't there. Tonight we'll see how God answered them.

### READ IT TOGETHER

- Malachi 1:2 · God says, "I have loved you." The people answer, "How?"
- Malachi 1:6–8 · The people were bringing God sick, hurt, and blind animals as offerings. They kept the good ones for themselves.
- Malachi 2:7–8 · The priests, who were supposed to teach people about God, stopped living what they taught.

**QUESTION 1**

Has there ever been a time that you knew God loved you, but didn't feel it?

**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING**

- What would God have to do to prove He loves you? Is that a fair thing to ask?
- What's the difference between not feeling loved and not being loved? Have you ever mixed the two up?
- God starts Malachi with "I have loved you." He doesn't say "I might" or "I will if you're good." What would change if you believed His love is already true, even before you feel it?

**QUESTION 2**

The people gave God their leftovers: the sick and broken animals nobody wanted. What are some "leftovers" you might give God?

**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING**

- Examples: a sleepy prayer at the very end of the day, half-listening in church, giving away only the stuff you don't want anymore.
- Is there a place where you show up physically, but your mind is somewhere else?
- If you loved God the same way you love your favorite electronic device or toy, what would change ?

*Leader note: Keep this about honor, not guilt. God wants our hearts, and what we give shows where they are.*

**QUESTION 3**

Who is watching how you live right now?

**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING**

- The priests taught one thing and lived another. What does it feel like when a grown-up does that?
- Does it change who God is when a person who represents Him makes a mistake?
- Who looks up to you? (A younger sibling, a cousin, a friend, a teammate.) What are you teaching them without saying anything?
- What is one small way you could make what you say and what you do match this week?

*Leader note: Some kids have been let down by adults in real, painful ways. Take their answers seriously and remind them that God is never like the people who fail us. If anything a child shares raises a safety concern, follow the safety steps at the front of this guide.*



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### WHERE IS JESUS IN THIS?

The people asked God, "How have You loved us?" God gave His biggest answer when He sent Jesus. Jesus is God's love you can point to. Even on days you can't feel it, the cross proves it.

**Read more:** *Romans 5:8; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9–10*

### TRY IT: START THE REMEMBER BOX

Bring a small box or large envelope labeled "Remember Box." Give each kid a slip of paper. Ask them to write one true thing that shows God loves them, something that doesn't depend on having a good day. Fold the slips and put them in the box.

Keep the box safe. You'll open it together at Gathering 3. It connects to Malachi 3:16, where God keeps a "book of remembrance" for the people who kept trusting Him.

### BEFORE YOU CLOSE

Take a quiet minute to think about tonight's conversation. What is one thing you want to remember? What is one thing you'll do differently this week because of it? If you're comfortable, share it with the group. You're not performing. You're letting friends help you keep it.

**Take it home:** Before bed each night this week, tell God one thing you know is true about Him, even if you don't feel it yet.

### CLOSE TOGETHER — SAY THIS ALOUD AS A GROUP

*"I the LORD do not change."*

*"Return to me, and I will return to you."*

Pray for each kid by name. Ask God to meet them in the specific thing they shared tonight.

*"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you ask, "How have you loved us?" — Malachi 1:2, CSB*



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## Gathering 2 — Faith That Keeps Its Word

**Malachi 2:10–3:5 · Weeks 4–5**

**Kids' theme:** I Keep My Promises

**Malachi 2:10–3:5  
Weeks 4–5**

**MALACHI IS ASKING...**  
Am I keeping faith with the  
people closest to me?

**GATHERING TWO  
Faith That Keeps Its  
Word**

### READ THE THEME ALOUD

Malachi turns from how God's people treated God to how they treated each other. When they stopped trusting God's love, they started breaking promises to the people closest to them. They also started complaining that doing the right thing didn't pay off. Tonight we'll talk about keeping our word, and about what to do when life feels unfair.

### BIG IDEA

**Loving God and keeping my word to people go together.**

*Leader note: Some kids may be carrying real pain from a broken promise, including families that have changed through divorce. Malachi 2:13–16 talks about marriages breaking apart; you don't need to read it aloud. Handle Question 1 with care. Keep the focus on the promises kids themselves can keep, never suggest a child is responsible for choices adults made, and remind them that God's faithfulness holds even when families change.*

### WARM-UP (5 MINUTES)

Would you rather: have a friend who is super fun but sometimes breaks promises, or a friend who is kind of quiet but always keeps their promises? Why?

### READ IT TOGETHER

- Malachi 2:10 · "Don't all of us have one Father?" God asks why His people are treating each other badly.
- Malachi 2:17 · The people complain, "Where is the God of justice?" In other words: "Where is God? This isn't fair!"
- Malachi 3:1–3 · God says He is coming. He will be like a refiner, someone who melts silver in a hot fire so the dross rises out and the silver comes out pure.



## QUESTION 1

What promise is harder to keep than you expected?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- God asked, "Don't all of us have one Father?" Why do you think the way we treat each other matters so much to God?
- Is there a brother, sister, cousin, or friend you've drifted away from, not because of a big fight, but just because you stopped paying attention?
- What happens to trust when a promise gets broken?
- What's one specific way you could keep your word to someone this week?

## QUESTION 2

Have you ever felt like doing the right thing doesn't pay off?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- Have you ever watched someone cheat or cut corners and get ahead while you did the right thing?
- The people complained, "Where is God? This isn't fair!" God didn't ignore them. He answered. What does that tell you about bringing hard questions to God instead of keeping them inside?
- God says He will be like a refiner who cleans the junk out of silver, and He starts with His own people. What might God want to clean out of our hearts first?
- What's one way you could help someone who is being treated unfairly this week, even in something small?

*Leader note: Kids this age have a strong sense of fairness. Let them name real things, then point them back to this: God sees it, God cares about it, and God is going to make things right.*

## QUESTION 3

Is there a worry or a hard question about God that you've been keeping to yourself?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- Which is harder for you right now: getting along with the people close to you, or trusting that God is fair?
- What would it be like to say it out loud here instead of carrying it alone?
- Who in this group could you check in with before our next gathering, not to fix anything, just to ask how you're doing?

*Leader note: Don't push anyone to share. Some kids will answer silently or want to talk with you afterward, and that's fine. If anything a child shares raises a safety concern, follow the safety steps at the front of this guide.*



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### WHERE IS JESUS IN THIS?

Jesus is the friend who never breaks His promises. People sometimes let us down, but Jesus said, "I am with you always." Malachi promised God would come to His temple, and when Jesus came, He did exactly that.

**Read more:** *Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20; Luke 2:22–32*

### TRY IT: THE PROMISE CHAIN

Give each kid two paper strips. On the first, they write one promise they will keep this week to someone at home or at school, like "I'll help my sister with her homework without complaining." On the second, they write the name of someone who has kept a promise to them.

Link all the strips into one chain. Point out that each link only holds because the next one holds. That's how trust works.

### BEFORE YOU CLOSE

Go around the group. Each kid names one person they will move toward this week: a kind word, help with something, an apology, or keeping a promise. That is what keeping faith looks like. It's the same thing the adults are naming at their table tonight.

### CLOSE TOGETHER — SAY THIS ALOUD AS A GROUP

*"I the LORD do not change."*

*"Return to me, and I will return to you."*

Pray for the person each kid named. Ask God for the courage to go first.

*"Don't all of us have one Father? Didn't one God create us?" — Malachi 2:10, CSB*

*Note: The adult guide closes with Malachi 2:16. The kids' guide uses 2:10, the gathering's other key verse, which fits this age better.*



## 40 Days of Stillness

**Kids' Version • November 1 – December 10 • A practice to carry between gatherings**

Malachi is the last message from a prophet in the Old Testament. After it, God's people waited about 400 quiet years until John the Baptist showed up, just like Malachi promised (Malachi 4:5–6; Luke 1:17). Starting November 1, our whole church is practicing 40 days of being still with God. Kids too! Being still isn't about escaping the noise. It's a way of waiting for God to speak.

### THE DAILY PRACTICE

- **Set a time.** Pick the same time every day, like after school or before bed. Start with 3 minutes. When that feels easy, add a minute. (Grown-ups start with 5.)
- **Find a quiet space.** Turn off distractions: phone, tablet, TV, and music.
- **Be present.** Breathe in slowly and think, "I the LORD..." Breathe out slowly and think, "...do not change." Invite God to meet you there.
- **Listen and reflect.** Read this week's verse from "Readings for the Quiet" or pray silently. Don't rush to fill the quiet. It's okay if it feels long.
- **End with gratitude.** Thank God for being with you and for anything you noticed.

### BEFORE YOU GO

- **Practice right now.** Leader, set a timer for one minute of silence at the table. Afterward, ask: "Was that easy or hard? What did you notice?"
- **Name it out loud.** Each kid says when and where they will keep their stillness. Saying it out loud makes it something we do together.
- **Pair up.** Choose a stillness partner: a grown-up at home or a friend in this group. Once a week, ask each other, "How's the quiet?" Don't count minutes. Just keep each other going.
- **Use the readings.** "Readings for the Quiet" at the back of this guide gives a verse and a question for each week. They match the ones the grown-ups are using, tied to Sunday's sermon. Color in a box on your tracker each day.
- **Miss a day? Return.** Stillness isn't proven by a perfect streak. Like faith, it's proven by returning.

*Leader note: If your group's Gathering 2 falls after November 1, introduce the 40 Days at the end of Gathering 1 instead so no one starts late.*



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## Gathering 3 — Faith That Returns Before It's Forced To

**Malachi 3:6–4:6 • Weeks 6–9**

**Kids' theme:** I Can Always Come Back

**Malachi 3:6–4:6  
Weeks 6–9**

**MALACHI IS ASKING...**  
What will I trust when the wait  
feels endless?

**GATHERING THREE  
Faith That Returns  
Before It's Forced To**

### READ THE THEME ALOUD

This part of Malachi starts with God saying, "I the LORD do not change." Then He says, "Return to me, and I will return to you." God talks about trusting Him with what we have, about a small group of people who kept loving God when nobody else seemed to care, and about a day when He will make everything right. Tonight we look back at the whole quarter.

### BIG IDEA

**God never changes, so I can always come back to Him.**

*Leader note: Before Question 1, give every kid a chance to share how the 40 Days of Stillness is going. "I've missed more days than I've done" is an honest answer and a welcome one. Celebrate the kids who came back after missing, not just the ones with perfect streaks. The invitation is to return, not to keep score.*

### CHECK-IN AND WARM-UP (5 MINUTES)

- Thumbs up, sideways, or down: how is your stillness time going?
- How did your Promise Chain promise go? "I forgot" is an honest answer too.
- Name something that changes all the time (the weather, your shoe size, your favorite song). Now name something that never changes. Is that harder?

### READ IT TOGETHER

- Malachi 3:6–7 • "I the LORD do not change... Return to me, and I will return to you."
- Malachi 3:10 • God asks His people to bring their gifts first and trust Him to take care of them. It's the one place in the Bible where God invites His people to test Him.
- Malachi 3:16–17 • The people who loved God talked to each other about Him. God listened and wrote their names in a book of remembrance.
- Malachi 4:2 • "The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings," and God's people will jump like calves let out of the barn.



- Malachi 4:4–6 · God tells His people to remember what He already taught them, and promises to send "Elijah" to turn families' hearts toward each other.

## QUESTION 1

What does the way you share and give say about how much you trust God to take care of you?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- God invited His people to test Him by giving first. What could it look like for you to trust God with something this month? (Part of your allowance, your time, your snack, help with a chore that isn't yours.)
- Is it easier to share when you have a lot or when you have a little? Why?
- Does trusting God with your stuff feel smart or a little scary? Be honest.

## QUESTION 2

What good thing do you keep doing even when nobody notices?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- The people who loved God kept talking to each other about Him, and God noticed. Who do you talk to about God, really talk, not just say the right answers?
- Does doing the right thing ever feel pointless when nobody sees? What would change if you knew God was keeping a record of it (Malachi 3:16)?
- For those keeping the 40 Days of Stillness: What have you noticed in the quiet these past weeks that you wouldn't have noticed otherwise?

*Leader note: At Gathering 1, the kids talked about times they knew God loved them but didn't feel it.*

*Return to that here: "Has your answer changed over these three gatherings?" Then open the Remember Box (see Try It below).*

## QUESTION 3

What has God already told you to do that you just need to do?

### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- At the very end of Malachi, before God promises anything new, He tells His people to remember what He already taught them. What is something you already know God wants from you? (Tell the truth, forgive, be kind, listen to your parents.)
- What in your life or the world do you really want God to make right?
- Malachi ends with families' hearts turning toward each other. Is there someone in your family, like a parent, grandparent, brother, or sister, you want to be closer to?

*Leader note: Some kids' family relationships are painful or complicated. Keep the focus on small, safe steps kids can take and never pressure a child to move toward someone who isn't safe.*



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### WHERE IS JESUS IN THIS?

Malachi promised God would send "Elijah" to get people ready. Four hundred quiet years later, John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to get everyone ready for Jesus. God's people waited in the quiet, and then God came Himself. That's what Advent is about: waiting for Jesus.

Jesus also told a story about a son who ran away and then came home. When his father saw him coming, the father ran to meet him (Luke 15:20). That's what "Return to me, and I will return to you" looks like.

**Read more:** *Luke 1:13–17; Mark 1:1–4; Luke 15:11–24*

### TRY IT: OPEN THE REMEMBER BOX

Open the Remember Box from Gathering 1. Read the slips aloud (without names). Then give each kid a new slip and ask them to add one way God has been faithful to them this quarter.

### BEFORE YOU CLOSE: A QUARTER-ENDING PRACTICE

Go around the group. Give each kid a turn to answer: "What is different about you after these nine weeks in Malachi, in how you worship, how you treat people, what you trust God with, or what you've heard in the quiet?" Don't rush it. This is the harvest.

Then, if anyone wants to, name someone who helped them hold on to God this quarter. Give kids a card to write a short thank-you note to that person, and encourage them to deliver it this week.

### CLOSE TOGETHER — SAY THIS ALOUD AS A GROUP

*"I the LORD do not change."*

*"Return to me, and I will return to you."*

*"Faith isn't proven by never going cold. It's proven by returning."*

Pray together. Pray for anyone who came to mind during Question 2. Close by thanking God for what He has done in this group over the quarter.

*"Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. — Malachi 3:7, ESV*



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## SENT INTO THE QUIET

The series ends tonight. The stillness doesn't. The 40 Days keep going through December 10, into the first weeks of Advent. Malachi's last words left God's people waiting in the quiet for a voice. We know how that waiting ended: the messenger came, and after him, Jesus Himself.

Keep your time. Keep your quiet spot. Keep checking on your partner. And take this with you into the quiet:

*"Be still, and know that I am God."* — **Psalm 46:10**



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## *40 Days of Stillness · Readings for the Quiet*

**Kids' Version · November 1 – December 10, 2026**

Use these for the "Listen and reflect" step. Each week has one focus verse to read slowly, maybe a few times. Then think about the question. These are the same weeks and focus verses the grown-ups are using, so families can read them together.

| Days         | Sermon Week                                                            | Read                        | Think About                                                             |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov 1–7      | Week 5 · Where's God When Life Feels Unfair?                           | Malachi 3:3                 | <i>What might God want to clean out of my heart?</i>                    |
| Nov 8–14     | Week 6 · Can You Trust God with This?                                  | Malachi 3:6                 | <i>What am I holding on to too tightly that I could trust God with?</i> |
| Nov 15–21    | Week 7 · Is It Worth It to Keep Believing?                             | Malachi 3:16                | <i>If God wrote down what I said about Him, what would it say?</i>      |
| Nov 22–28    | Week 8 · Judgment Is Coming, So Is Joy                                 | Malachi 4:2                 | <i>What am I waiting for God to make right?</i>                         |
| Nov 29–Dec 5 | Week 9 · Remember the Promise, Return to Hope (First Sunday of Advent) | Luke 1:17 (and Malachi 4:6) | <i>Who is God helping me turn toward: Him, or someone in my family?</i> |
| Dec 6–10     | After the series · Advent                                              | Psalms 46:10                | <i>Now that I've practiced being quiet, what is God saying to me?</i>   |



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## My 40 Days of Stillness Tracker

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ My stillness time: \_\_\_\_\_

Color in a box each day you are still with God. Missed a day? Skip that box and start again tomorrow.  
Returning is what counts.

**Day 1**

Nov 1

**Day 2**

Nov 2

**Day 3**

Nov 3

**Day 4**

Nov 4

**Day 5**

Nov 5

**Day 6**

Nov 6

**Day 7**

Nov 7

**Day 8**

Nov 8

**Day 9**

Nov 9

**Day 10**

Nov 10

**Day 11**

Nov 11

**Day 12**

Nov 12

**Day 13**

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**Day 14**

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**Day 31**

Dec 1

**Day 32**

Dec 2

**Day 33**

Dec 3

**Day 34**

Dec 4

**Day 35**

Dec 5

**Day 36**

Dec 6

**Day 37**

Dec 7

**Day 38**

Dec 8

**Day 39**

Dec 9

**Day 40**

Dec 10

*"Be still, and know that I am God." — Psalm 46:10*



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# *Notes*



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## *A Note for Parents and Grandparents*

This quarter, your child is walking through Malachi alongside you. Each kids' gathering uses the same passage and the same three questions as the adult guide, in kid-sized language. The car ride home is a great time to compare notes: "What did your group talk about? Here's what mine talked about."

### HELPING WITH THE 40 DAYS OF STILLNESS

- Be your child's stillness partner if you can. Kids are much more likely to be still when they see a grown-up doing it too.
- Help them turn screens off and find a spot that is actually quiet.
- Start small. Three minutes is a real accomplishment for a 9-year-old. Let the time grow naturally.
- Don't turn it into a chore or a punishment. If they miss a day, skip the lecture. Just invite them back tomorrow.
- Read the weekly verse together. The kids' focus verses are the same ones in your Readings for the Quiet.
- Ask about it, lightly: "Did you notice anything in the quiet today?" Sometimes the answer will be "no." That's fine.

### ONE QUESTION AFTER EACH GATHERING

| Gathering | Ask at Dinner or in the Car                                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | When did you know God loved you, even if you didn't feel it? |
| 2         | Who did you name to move toward this week? How can I help?   |
| 3         | What's different about you after these nine weeks?           |



## *A Note for Kids' Leaders*

You don't need to be a Bible teacher to lead these conversations well. Your job is to create a safe enough space that kids feel free to bring their real questions to God, the same honest posture Malachi calls God's people back to. A few things that help:

- Start with yourself. If you go first and go honestly, kids will follow. Nine- to twelve-year-olds can spot a fake answer from across the room.
- Protect the quiet voices. Watch the kid who never talks. Sometimes a one-on-one question on the way to the door is the most important conversation of the night.
- Don't fix. Resist the urge to solve a kid's problem the moment they name it. "Thanks for being real" goes a long way.
- Go deep on one question rather than racing through all three. Let the "Keep the Conversation Going" prompts do the work.
- Keep what's shared here, with one exception: a child's safety always comes first. Never promise a child you'll keep a secret.
- Follow St. Paul's child protection policy every time: two adults present, visible spaces, and immediate reporting of any safety concern to the designated leader.

### **QUESTIONS KIDS' LEADERS ASK**

#### **What if nobody talks?**

Give it time. Silence often means kids are thinking. Answer first, honestly, then wait. You can also have kids answer with a thumbs up or down first, then ask one or two to explain.

#### **What if one kid talks the whole time?**

Thank them and make room: "Great thought. Let's hear from someone who hasn't had a turn yet." Passing a small object around the table so only the holder talks works well at this age.

#### **What if I don't know the answer?**

It's okay to say, "I don't know. Let's find out together." Honesty is exactly what Malachi calls God's people back to.

#### **What if a kid gets emotional?**

That's okay. Listen, stay calm, and thank them for sharing. Let the group be kind. Afterward, let the child's parent know, gently, that the conversation touched something important.

#### **What about kids younger than 9?**

This guide is written for ages 9 and up. Younger children can stay with their parents, or a second leader can do the Warm-Up, the Weekly Refrains, and a simple drawing of the gathering's Big Idea with them.



ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH

**FAITH STRONG**

HOLDING ON WHEN LIFE GETS HARD

### **What if a kid shares something that worries me?**

Follow the safety steps at the front of this guide. Don't promise secrecy, don't investigate on your own, and tell the designated leader right away.

*St. Paul Baptist Church · Peoria, Illinois*