

Sermon highlights from January 12, 2025

KEEP IT REAL

by Pastor Joe

Aligning and Abounding: A Journey to the Center of God's Heart

At the start of a new year, we felt the Lord's leading to make our 2025 spiritual focus, "The Year of Aligning and Abounding." The promise of Scripture, from one end of the Bible to the other, is this -- when we align our hearts with God's heart, it always leads to a life that abounds.

Today in the book of Malachi, we explore how God's message through the prophet is a passionate plea to God's people: "Align your hearts with mine and return to me." This call is not just directed to the Old Testament people of God, it's also a timeless invitation for us today.

The Promise

Aligning with God means arranging our lives to match His will, character, and purpose. It requires movement, a shift from our own understanding to trusting in His ways. Proverbs 3:5-6 encourages us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Why would we do that? Because God's heart posture is clear: He is for us, and His plans are for our good. As God declares in Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

The Challenge

But the universal condition of humanity leaves us with this challenge: we have a natural bent that leads us to drift from the heart of God and begin to just going through the motions. God had to bring a hard word to the people in Malachi's day: "Our relationship is in disrepair and you're living in denial of this reality; you even question My love and show contempt for My commands." This disconnect was evident in their worship, fellowship, and service.

God's message through Malachi was clear: "Return to me, and I will return to you." This call to return, or "shuv" in Hebrew, is a recurring theme throughout all of the Old Testament prophetic books. It actually appears over 1,000 times. It's a call to realign our hearts with God's heart, to be authentic and genuine as we engage in relationship with Him.

A Call to Action

As we reflect on this message, we are invited to examine our own hearts. King David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). Are there areas in your life where you have drifted from God? Are you willing to pray the dangerous prayer, "Lord, align my heart with your great heart"?

This journey of alignment is not just a personal endeavor but one that involves the entire community of God's people. To align requires movement of some kind. We invite you to join us in this journey at our next worship service as we continue to explore what it means to align with God and abound in God's love. Come and experience the transformative power of aligning with God's heart and the abundant life that follows.

May we all experience the fullness of life that comes from being in genuine relationship with God our Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.