

## Getting Started

Who are some of the people that God used in your life to prepare your heart and point you to Jesus?

## Discussion

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will **turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.” (Malachi 4:5-6)

<sup>8</sup> Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup> according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. <sup>11</sup> And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> **And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, <sup>17</sup> and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.**” (Luke 1:8-17)

- What was the spiritual condition of Israel during the time that Malachi was a prophet? How is it similar/different in our culture? In the Church?

The time between Malachi and the coming of John the Baptist is referred to as the 400 Silent Years. During that time, God did not speak through a prophet in Israel. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel comes to Zechariah to announce that his wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son who will be anointed in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah to fulfill Malachi's prophesy. John preached a message of repentance to prepare Israel for the coming Messiah.

- John the Baptist had a love for Jesus and his ministry was to introduce or point people to Jesus. When we love someone, we find great joy in introducing others to the person we love. How passionate are you about introducing people to Jesus?

Kyle Idleman wrote a book in 2013 titled, *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*.

- Explain the difference between being a “fan” of Jesus compared with being a committed “follower”.

When we trust in Jesus as Savior, He changes our relationship with God, and this also begins to change our relationship with others. In the context of a Christian family, true repentance and salvation will lead to transformation of character and relationships.

- Discuss what a family of Jesus followers might look like.

Take time to pray for each other as you deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Jesus by God's grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray also for those in your life who may not know Jesus yet and ask God for open doors to introduce them to Jesus,