

RED LETTER

CHALLENGE



DAILY QUESTIONS

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
BEND, OREGON

RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK ONE: 5 PRINCIPLES



DAY ONE: BEING

The author says that there are two opposing sides to the coin (notice he doesn't say that either side is bad ... but he does caution we don't want to be on the extremes). *"Some people are better at being. They like the idea of spending time with God but never doing anything. Then there are others who enjoy doing. They think that just being is boring."* Which side of that spectrum do you tend to lean toward? _____

The author says, *"Psalm 46:10 says; 'Be still, and know that I am God...' but we don't know how to just be. We know how to DO. But we struggle with BEING."* Why do we often find just being still and trusting God, so challenging? _____

Where does Psalm 46 say we get the strength to BE at peace during difficult times? _____



DAY TWO: FORGIVING

Why is it often so hard to forgive others? Why is it so hard to ask for forgiveness? _____

Read
Ephesians 2:8-9 and
Matthew 18:15-20



See the quote on pg. 23 from Brennan Manning; "The American Church today accepts grace ... in theory, but denies it in practice. How can we as a church and as a small group model practicing grace by putting **Ephesians 2** and **Matthew 18** into practice in our lives? _____

The author says; *"There is no sin too big that God did not die for on the cross."* What does that statement say to you as you are... Struggling with your own sins: _____

and struggling to forgive others who've sinned against you: _____



DAY THREE: SERVING

On page 28 the author says; *"Jesus had a heart of service. When we serve, we reflect who God is. A big piece of the 40-Day Challenge is changing people's perceptions of Christ followers."* Why do you think our world doesn't see Jesus as loving and serving, the way He is actually portrayed in the Bible? _____

WEEK ONE: 5 PRINCIPLES

If they did, do you think more people might actually follow Him? Why? _____



DAY FOUR: GIVING

The author says; *"I think it's impossible to be a stingy Christian."* Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not? _____



Read ➔
Mark 3:35

DAY FIVE: GOING

What does Jesus tell you about your need for control? _____

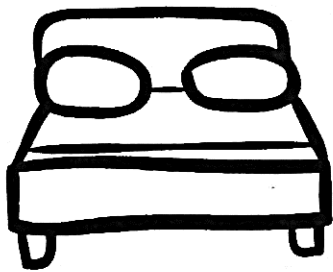
What do they say about how surprises, challenges, trials and hard times build us up like in the story the author gave about hiking? _____

The author ends this day saying; *"When God calls you to go somewhere, you never go there alone."* When have you experienced this in your life, and what comfort does that give you today? (See Psalm 23; Joshua 1:9; 2 Chronicles 20:15; Matthew 28:19–20)

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

Which of these five practices do you think will most challenge you over these 40 days? _____

What might God be teaching you about yourself through this challenge? _____



RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK TWO: BEING

DAY 6

Have you ever turned to the Bible for comfort or direction in a difficult time? If so, please share how you went about it. _____

What gets in the way of our reading the Bible? How do we overcome those obstacles? _____

What happens when the Bible comes into conflict with something I think or feel, or something our culture believes and teaches ... who wins? How do you practically wrestle with it? _____

DAY 7

Why do we sometimes struggle to pray regularly? _____

Think about the worship service you attend ... how do you see it modeling the A.C.T.S. structure you learned about in this chapter? _____

What does that say about how we should structure and order our lives and prayers? _____

DAY 8

On Page 54 the author says; "*our whole lives are worship ... pretty soon you'll be asking yourself, 'If I'm worshipping God right now, would I do this? Would I go here? Would I buy this? What would I do here?'*" How does this view of worship change how you live your life? _____

If you're actually worshipping all the time, why should you still go to church on Sunday? _____

What is one thing you can do to daily remind yourself that your life is an act of worship? _____

DAY 9

What does it say to you that most Christians, and even pastors say that they are too busy to pray? _____

WEEK TWO: BEING

Why is it so hard to spend significant time with God? What are some "Interesting/but not important" things you spend time on each day that keep you from prayer? _____

Did you choose to engage the challenge of Day 9? Did you find 30 minutes away from distractions? Where did you go? What did you do? When did you do it? Would you do it again? How can you make it a priority? If you didn't do the challenge? Why did you choose not to? _____

DAY 10

Have you ever practiced the discipline of fasting, prior to this challenge? If so, describe that experience. _____

Why do you suppose giving up food is supposed to bring us closer to God? _____

Did you choose to fast on day 10? Why or why not? If so, reflect on that experience? Would you do it again? _____

DAY 11

Why do you think that Christians are known more for what we are against, than for what we are for? _____

How should we seek to change that perception? _____

DAY 12

What does it say/mean to you that God rested, not because He was tired, but because He was so pleased with creating us that He wanted to enjoy His handiwork? _____

Why would God take rest so seriously that He would put His people to death for breaking this commandment? _____

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

What is God teaching you to believe differently about being in His presence? _____

How is God calling you to actually be in His presence more next week? _____



RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK THREE: FORGIVING

DAY 13

Many of us pray a prayer of repentance or confession on Sunday mornings. Some asked for forgiveness when they asked Jesus into their heart, others were baptized as an infant. Today, the author says that repentance is not just a one-time prayer. What do you think that he means by this? _____

And how can you live a life of daily repentance? _____

DAY 14

Read ➔
John 7:53-8:11

Why is it so much easier to point out others sin than recognize our own? _____

The impression that we get from this reading is that Jesus looks down while the people walk away. He knows their sins and could have confronted every single person, yet he doesn't. He allows each person to reflect on their own lives and admit their sin. How can we do this for people in our own lives? _____

What does it mean for you to "Drop Your Rock" today? _____

DAY 15

There's an old saying that says; "That's like the pot calling the kettle black." How does that saying shed light on Jesus words today? _____

At my ordination service, a pastor once said; "If you're focusing on serving God here, then you'll be too busy to notice or complain about what other people are, or are not doing. You'll be too busy to point fingers at others, because God's work is never done." What do you think that he meant by that statement? _____

And how does remembering that help us to be more forgiving? _____

WEEK THREE: FORGIVING

DAY 16

The author says that there is a difference between Mercy and Grace. Share an example of a time that someone showed you mercy, and a time that someone showed you grace?

Mercy _____

Grace _____

How did it feel to live out challenge number 16? Do you find that challenging to do? Why or why not? _____

DAY 17

What would it look like if you really did forgive "that person" in your life, like Jesus would?

Read ➡
Isaiah 43:25 and
Hebrews 8:12

Only God can forgive AND forget. The rest of us just forgive. If we cannot ever really forget when others sin against us, how do we practically live in forgiveness, while remembering past sins but choosing to restore our relationship with those who have hurt us? _____

In Jesus command to Peter He says to forgive "70 times 7 times." What do these numbers say to you about how we forgive others when they repent and ask for forgiveness? _____

Did you follow through on Challenge #17? Did you do BOTH parts (forgiving AND reaching out?) why or why not? What difference did/could it make in your or their life and your relationship with them? _____

DAY 18

Read ➡
Matthew 5:43-48
and Luke 6:27-36

Maybe you haven't heard the Bible verse quoted on pg. 114 exactly that way before, but sometimes we as Christians can re-interpret it that way. How does the author's interpretation differ from the actual quote from Jesus in the two passages above? _____

Why should our attitude be more like Jesus' than that quoted in the book? _____

Have you ever actually prayed for God to bless an enemy? Why or why not? If so, what happened? _____

WEEK THREE: FORGIVING

DAY 19

Read ➡
Luke 19:1–10

What do you think Jesus means to “go and leave your life of sin”? Does it mean you’re perfect? If not, what do you think it means? _____

How did Jesus respond to Zacchaeus’ life of sin? _____

How did Zacchaeus respond in repentance? _____

In our lives we usually don’t see these dramatic turnarounds in character like Zacchaeus. Instead, we struggle to make life changes, we falter, and often fail. How do we live with that in our lives? _____

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

At the end of this week, what has God taught you about forgiveness in your own life? _____

At the end of this week, what is God calling you to do differently? _____

How can you model forgiveness this week? _____

TANGIBLE FORGIVENESS

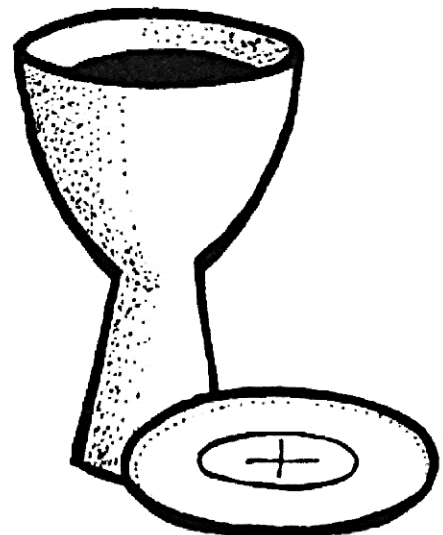
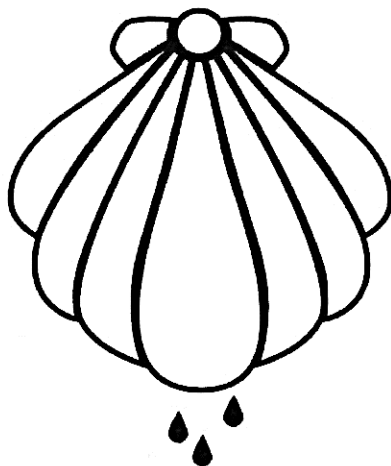
As we think about forgiveness, sometimes it is hard for us to really believe God can forgive “that sin!” We sometimes need something we can experience that helps us believe and then remember.

Have you ever confessed that secret sin to another person and had them still accept you and remind you of God’s forgiveness? How is this like when we admit our sins together in worship? _____

How are the sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion connected to forgiveness? _____

Has God ever used either or both baptism and the Lord’s Supper to assure you of your forgiveness? If so, how? _____

Have more questions about this? See [Luther’s Small Catechism](#) on these topics. We would be glad to give you a copy of it, if you don’t have one.





RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK FOUR: SERVING

DAY 20

Read
Matthew 22:36–39;
John 13:35;
John 14:15;
Ephesians 5:1–2



How is the motivation of love different from that of obligation when we serve? _____

See John 13:35: why do you suppose the command to love is so strongly emphasized in the Bible? Do we as a church and as Christians emphasize it that strongly today? _____

Sometimes we don't always have the most altruistic intentions to serve ... is it ok to do things simply because God tells us to, even if your heart is not fully in it? Why or why not?

DAY 21

The author says, "In Jesus' countercultural Kingdom, the ones who are blessed are the ones who serve others and put others before themselves." Why is this so countercultural? _____

Why is serving others oftentimes so hard? _____

See Philippians 2:5–11 on page 135. If we really had the same mindset of Christ Jesus, what would that look like for how we treat others? _____

DAY 22

Read
John 13:6–17



Have you ever had someone wash your feet for you (having it done at a nail salon doesn't count)? Have you ever done a foot washing at a church group event? If so, how did it feel?

If you're like me (and Peter in the reading) it felt awkward. Why do you think it feels so awkward? _____

In Jesus day, they didn't have shoes, so the feet would be dirty from walking on the roads all day long. Washing someone's feet was the job of the lowest servant in the house. What did it say to Jesus' disciples that He was willing to do this ultimate dirty job for them? _____

What does that say to us as his followers as we serve others? _____

WEEK FOUR: SERVING

DAY 23

Read ➡
Luke 10:25-37

Notice what Luke says in verse 29, "BUT he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus..." Why is the question; "Who is my neighbor?" the wrong question to ask? _____

What is the right question we should be asking instead? _____

How do the actions of the Samaritan set an example for how we should live for others? _____

DAY 24

Read ➡
Matthew 19:13-15

The author also says; "It is important that as we are doing the Red Letter Challenge, we invite our children to come along with us." Why should we invite our children to come along on this journey with us? What's at stake if we don't? _____

Thinking about our topics the last several weeks, how can we better model Jesus' words; "Blessed are the poor in spirit." For our children, grandchildren and the next generation? _____

DAY 25

Describe a time when someone helped you out in a meaningful way that you really appreciated. _____

How can you help a sick person by showing that you are thinking about and care for them? List 3 ways that you could help someone using the gifts and passions you've been given (such as pray, bake food, visit them, babysit their kids...etc...) then live out challenge number 25 by visiting them using the gifts you mentioned. _____

Did you Visit someone who was sick? If so, tell us about the experience? Would you want to do it again? _____

Note: You don't have to be able to perform miracles like Jesus. We need people who can cook/bake, good listeners, those who can pray and those who are encouragers, and those who just like people. If you are interested in helping to show others as a part of your church family that they are cared for (especially when they are going through a tough time)? If so, contact Pastor Tim (tduerr@cclphoenix.org). There are many opportunities such as: prayer ministry, Stephen Ministry, Making meals for those who are sick, Visiting the sick or homebound.

WEEK FOUR: SERVING

DAY 26

See pages 158-159. Reflect on Mr. Keller's illustration about salt on corn on the cob. If we are salt, what does that mean that people should say about us? _____

How have you intentionally shared salt in the various places you are planted (work, home, your HOA, the gym, sports teams ... etc.)? _____

Read ➡
Exodus 19:3-6
and 1 Peter 2:9-12

How do they describe the life of someone who follows God? _____

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

What did this week's discussion teach you to think differently about how you serve God and others? _____

How does God want you to serve differently this week? _____

As we are coming to the middle of this sermon series, how can we continue connecting and growing together as a small group when this sermon series ends in October? _____



RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK FIVE: GIVING

DAY 27

Who taught you what giving and generosity looks like? _____

What were your thoughts about the "honesty box" on page 166? How does the idea that "someone is watching" affect the way we act and give in church? _____

Acts says; "Lydia responded to God's message by opening her home to the church." Every church needs countless lay people to make the work of God a reality, yet usually only 20% of members do 80% of the work. How can we as a group find an area of the church that is currently under resourced and volunteer and give of our time together? _____

DAY 28

See the Mother Theresa quote on pg. 171. What was her point? _____

How does her statement reflect Jesus statement; *"Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."* (Matthew 10:38-39)? _____

How can you serve God and bloom where you've been planted at work or in your family this week? _____

DAY 29

Read
Matthew 25:31-46



The author says; *"We've learned in this challenge that one of the ways people will see God in us is when we actually do what he says to do... 'The people who believe in Jesus are the people who help the least privileged' That's just what they do! The stronger a person's relationship with God, the more natural it becomes to take care of God's children in this world."* (177) How have you seen this in your own life? _____

The author spoke about statistics of hunger, poverty and abundance of food in our country, how do those statistics hit you when you read them and think about your own consumption? _____

WEEK FIVE: GIVING

1 John 4:19 says; "We love because He first loved us." and Luke 12:48 tells us; "To whom much has been given, much will be required." God's economy of love is a trickle down economy. He gives to us, then we pass it on down the line to the next person. How does this principle apply in our lives as we steward our resources and give to those in need? _____

DAY 30

Read
Matthew 6:11,
19–21, and 24–34



Earlier in the book; back on day 4 (pg. 30) The author said; "Most of us are living paycheck to paycheck and are drowning under debt ..." It insinuated that living paycheck to paycheck is a bad thing. In Matthew 6, Jesus calls us to both plan, but yet also to trust that He has our needs in His hands and that He will provide. He wants us to be good stewards so we can be prepared to give when needs arise, yet He wants us to trust in God and not worry about the future. How do we balance both sides of this coin in this apparent paradox? _____

DAY 31

Why does it make us cringe to talk about money in church? _____

See the quote on page 185; "You cannot truly go all in for God if you can't trust God with your money. I believe in our nation, tithing could possibly be the number one indicator of an abiding faith in Jesus Christ." How does giving 10% of my income "Show that we fully trust Him to provide for us"? _____

Read
Micah 3:6–12 and
2 Corinthians 9:6–9



Why does Micah tell us that God considers it robbery when we don't consider Him first? _____

In 2 Corinthians 9:6–9 do you give simply because the Bible says we should? Is it honoring to God if you're not cheerful about it? In what sense should you give simply because it's a responsibility and/or the practice of doing things you don't like to do helps you to grow? _____

WEEK FIVE: GIVING

DAY 32

The author used the illustration of exercising. When you start out it hurts, you may not be very strong, and it may hurt for a few days afterwards, but then when you are consistent and you make it a habit you get stronger and you start to see results. How is giving like God like that illustration as well? _____

The author says, *"To follow after God faithfully means following after Him with everything you have ..."* if that definition is true, what is holding you back from faithfully following God? And how can you change that today? _____

DAY 33

Read ➡
2 Corinthians 8:1-10

They're so excited to give and help! Does that sound like you today? In the midst of your own troubles, stresses and trials, do you plead with God to give generously? _____

How can you grow to be like those mentioned in the verse above? _____

V. 9 *"Know that the grace of the Lord Jesus, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, so that you, through His poverty might become rich."* How does Jesus' example encourage us, and spur us on to growth and generosity in our own lives? _____

WRAPPING IT UP

At the end of this week, what has God taught you about where your heart lies, and what it looks like to give like He has given to us? _____

How can you model Godly stewardship and generosity this week? _____

If you are a parent or a grandparent, how can you model AND teach stewardship and generosity to your children and grandchildren this week? _____



RED LETTER CHALLENGE WEEK SIX: GOING

DAY 34

In this chapter the author shares the struggles of balancing our various responsibilities; *"Parenting, being a good spouse, being a good worker, sharing God's love with my neighbors, serving at Church..."* how have you experienced this tug and pull in your own life? _____

How can you develop more Godly time with your family on a regular basis? _____

DAY 35

The author says; *"If we become a Christian and surround ourselves with great Christian friends and only hangout with other Christians, it becomes harder to expand outside of the Christian circles."* However, the Bible also warns us about who we spend time with; *"Don't be misled, bad character corrupts good character."* (1 Corinthians 15:33) So, how do we find a balance in our relationships? _____

The author also says; *"The more I push myself out of my comfort zone, the more God shows up."* How have you experienced this? _____

Read ➡
Matthew 9:9-13

See the response of the Pharisees in verse 11. Why do religious people like them (and often us) often have an attitude like that towards outsiders? _____

What does Jesus' response in verses 12-13 tell us about Jesus' priorities for himself and for us? _____

DAY 36

How did the author's description of witnessing affect or change your view of sharing the Gospel with others? _____

Why is it important to think of yourself as a witness to Christ, rather than a "salesman" for Jesus? How do these two perspectives differ? _____

Did you write down your "witness" or "faith story"? If so, what do you notice about your story? What type of people might be attracted to your witness of Jesus? _____

WEEK SIX: GOING

DAY 37

Read ➡
Matthew 4:17–22

Notice, Jesus calls His first disciples to follow Him by first calling them to repent, then calling them to follow Him and share His love with the world. Why is asking for God's forgiveness crucial for us BEFORE we seek to spread God's love and word with others? _____

Read ➡
Acts 28:23–31

Sometimes we feel like we have to be responsible for someone else coming to faith. What does the story of Apostle Paul in Acts 28 say to you about how people come to faith, and your role in it? _____

DAY 38

React to St. Francis' quote on page 228; *"Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words."* The author says; *"It's great because it emphasizes that our actions are very important when it comes to living out our faith. But I think far too many people look at this quote and use it as an excuse to never speak."* Why is that a problem? _____

If you wrote down 5 people who don't know Jesus, do you notice any similarities about them or your relationship with them? _____

How do you think God might be using you in their lives today? _____

DAY 39

Look back through your devotion book, which of the challenges in the last 39 days most challenged you, your thinking or your habits in living for Jesus? _____

Read ➡
Jeremiah 1:4–10

What does it mean to you that God chose you, even though He knew your strengths and weaknesses and failures? _____

What does that mean for how we approach sharing the Gospel with others? _____

WEEK SIX: GOING

DAY 40

What impresses you most or strikes you most about how a rabbi was made? _____

What does the process described in this book say to you about the level of commitment required when Jesus calls us to "follow Him"? _____

How can we as a Small Group continue to meet together to build relationships, encourage each other and follow so close to Jesus that we get covered in the dust from the master's feet? _____

WRAPPING IT UP

What is your biggest takeaway from the Sermon/Small group series? _____

What was the most challenging topic/challenge/discussion of the Red Letter Challenge for you? _____

How does God want you to think differently because of this Sermon series? _____

How does God want you to act differently because of this series? _____
