



RED LETTER CHALLENGE



- STUDY GUIDE -



RLC Introduction ~ Days 1-5 / Feb 21 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

How did your online assessment go? (It's never too late to take it!)

Theme Verse

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

- How do the five principles – Being, Forgiving, Serving, Giving, and Going - connect to this text?

Day 1 Being - "Spiritual Disciplines"

"The healthiest way to follow Christ and seek Him first is for our *doing* to flow out of our *being*. Our doing flows out of who we are and who we become when we spend time with Christ."

- What gets in your way of spending time with Christ?

Day 2 Forgiving - "Accepting Grace"

"In every world religion besides Christianity, you have to do something to have "salvation" or "eternal life." And many of those religions are growing more quickly than Christianity because they make more sense. Grace is free! We don't deserve grace! So it's difficult to accept."

- How do you relate to the statement that *Grace* is difficult to accept?

Day 3 Serving - "Gratitude leads to Service"

"We must live our lives so that others will ask, 'What is different about that person?' - 'Why do they care so much?' - 'Why do they serve so much?' And when they ask us, we can tell them we serve because Jesus first served us."

- How does the following statement from St. Francis Assisi relate to this?
"Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary, use words."



Day 4 Giving - "Generosity"

"It is impossible to be a stingy Christian. If you are truly following Jesus, you are generous."

- How is generosity tied to following Jesus?

Day 5 Going - "Living Witness"

"We are naturally wired to want to be in control of everything and go at a comfortable pace. When we decide to follow Jesus, we surrender our need to be in control." / "Many of us want to follow Jesus when it is easy and safe. The moment it gets hard, we tend to lose faith and question God."

- How does "control" and "easy and safe" present a challenge to our relationship to Jesus?

Apply

Identify *takeaways* from this week's challenges.

What was most difficult from this week's challenges?

Closing Prayer

WEEK OF BEING ~ Days 6-12 / Feb 28 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Theme Verse

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)

- How does this passage connect with the concept of *being*?



Day 6 The WORD - "Abiding in It"

"Every time you spend time in Scripture, you are being trained, corrected, and equipped. You are always hearing from God.... He wants to make the Bible, His words a part of our life."

- How have you experienced this in your own life? Why is making this time so challenging?"

Day 7 Prayer - "Tool of Power"

"Prayer is about being in a relationship with God, and God wants you to be who you are. It's not about coming to God with all the right words. It's not about saying everything perfectly. It's about talking, listening, and spending time with Him."

- Why do you think prayer is such a difficult discipline for a Christian?
- How will you make prayer a priority this week?

Day 8 Worship - "Living Sacrifice"

"Worship describes who we are 24/7... The worship of God ... should be free at the table, in private rooms, downstairs, upstairs, at home, abroad, in all places by all peoples, at all times." ~ Martin Luther

- How is this picture of worship different than perhaps the definition of worship you've grown up with?

Day 9 Solitude - "Alone with God"

"Jesus wants to be our top priority. We fill our lives with interesting and important things, but fail to create time for Jesus, THE most important thing."

- Why do you have to say "no" to many good things, so you can say "yes" to the best thing?
- What is ONE thing you can do to carve out some alone time with Jesus each day?



Day 10 Fasting - "Not giving up, but intentional replacement."

"Some might choose to fast from food. For others it might be a fast from television, video games, your cell phone, or Facebook. Whatever you do, use the time you free up for prayer, and be open to what God might want to do in your life."

- Why has fasting gotten such a bum rap in our western culture?
- How will you create time to fast in your life this week?

Day 11 Celebration and Thanksgiving - "God is Good!"

"We ought to attract people to the church quite literally by the fun there is in being a Christian. If God gave us an abundant life and if we have all received His grace, then our lives should show it."

- How might the abundant life in Christ be more evident in your life to others?

Day 12 Celebrating the Sabbath

"The more we keep the Sabbath, the more we will find the life we were made for."

- How important is it to make Sabbath rest in God a regular habit?
- What happens when it is not part of our regular routine?

Apply

Identify *takeaways* from this week's challenges

What was most difficult from this week's challenges?

Closing Prayer



WEEK OF FORGIVING ~ Days 13-19 / March 7 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Theme Verse

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5)

- What are the roadblocks to forgiving others? Yourself?

Day 13 Grace - Covered by It

"Sometimes we don't really believe that our sin is that big of a deal. On the other hand, others of us wallow in our mistakes and think we are beyond forgiveness."

- How often do you find yourself torn between these two extremes?
- How does the evil one distort the power and purpose of God's grace?

Day 14 Forgiving "Yourself"

"You have been forgiven! And as forgiven people, we are to emulate Jesus. If Jesus dropped His rock for us, we need to drop our rocks as well. We are here to help save others and not to condemn them."

- This is a powerful truth. If we are forgiven, we need to forgive others and ourselves. Which do you think is more difficult to forgive?
- Why do you think so?



Day 15 Judging Others

"If God is known for grace, how can we, His followers, be known for judgment, the exact opposite?" / "Rather than seeing everything that is wrong with everybody else, God is giving us an opportunity to love people."

- How has this section challenged your thinking about people or groups you are critical of?

Day 16 Be Merciful

"Mercy is not having to endure the punishment we all deserve. God had every right to punish or harm us, He had every right to throw us where we belong, but instead He had mercy on us. If grace means heaven, mercy means "not hell."

- Why is mercy easier to accept than to practice?
- Who is your challenge to extend the hand of mercy to today?

Day 17 Be Forgiving

"There's nothing that can be done to us or against us that we cannot forgive."

- Why is this statement a hard pill for us to swallow?
- Why is the evil one so successful in distorting our power to forgive?

Day 18 Enemy Treatment

"In Christ, we are not to be people of vengeance and bitterness. We are to be people of forgiveness. When you hold grudges or seek revenge, you are not acting like Christ. I'm not saying it's easy, or that you won't have to wrestle with things, but ultimately, God wants us to have a heart of forgiveness."

- Give some examples of how Jesus modeled forgiveness for those who least deserved it in His life?
- What does the Lord's prayer say about forgiving others?



Day 19 Breaking the Bond of Sin

"God loves you for who you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay the way you are." The more we are with Jesus, the more we should want to become like Him and leave our former lives."

- How is a life of faith in Christ to be transformational? What are we moving "from" and "toward?"

Apply

Identify *takeaways* from this week's challenges

What was most difficult from this week's challenges?

Closing Prayer

WEEK OF SERVING ~ Days 20-26 / March 14 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Theme Verse

"And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you discussing on the way?' But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:33-35)

- What does it mean for you that Jesus had joy in serving and that His disciples (and us followers) should also have joy in serving?

Day 20 Obedience

"The more we do what He is asking us to do, the more we find the abundant life we were made for." / "Your actions do matter. That's why James, the brother of Jesus said, "Faith without works is useless."

- Why is it important for those who know and follow Jesus to actually obey His commands? (BYSSIW attitude) Why is it more convenient to pick and choose what to obey?



Day 21 "I Am Second"

"Jesus is calling us to put ourselves last, not first. This is not at all what we hear in our world today. We are told to promote ourselves, to put our own needs first. We are taught to take care of ourselves and look out for number one. In Jesus' countercultural kingdom, the ones who are blessed are the ones who put others before themselves."

- How does Jesus expect us to live out this counter-cultural life in practice.

Day 22 Giving Freely

"Many times when we serve we expect to receive something in return. But God wants us to be people who just naturally serve and don't expect to receive anything in return."

- How does this expectation actually draw us closer to Jesus?

Day 23 Love Your Neighbor

"I think what Jesus is telling us is that if we see a neighbor in need and we really legitimately have the ability to help, then by all means, do what you can to help. Use your gifts and talents to the benefit of your neighbor."

- Can you name a "neighbor" that you have avoided that may need your help?
(Do you know your neighbors?)

Day 24 Childlike Faith

"Time and time again in His ministry, Jesus mentions how important children are. The principles we are learning and the themes we are putting into practice are the things every child should know. We have a responsibility to model to our children what God's love looks like."

- Name a child who you will let know how important they are to you?

Day 25 Caring for the Sick

"One of the ways hurting and sick people know you care about them is when you take time out of your day to show them you are thinking of them. You can do many things to care for someone who is sick: visit, provide a meal, give encouragement, give a gift, and pray."



- Name someone who you know that is not well and needs your encouragement. What will you do to let them know they are loved?

Day 26 Being Salt and Light

"It is easy to shine your light and serve in church or in a Christian small group; it's very hard to shine your light in dark places or places where there are no Christians or where your viewpoints and opinions are not the majority."

- What "dark" areas in your life do you have the opportunity to be salt and light?

Apply

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Closing Prayer

WEEK OF GIVING ~ Days 27-33 / March 21 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Theme Verse

"And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, 'Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?' But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, 'Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' And they brought one. And he said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to him, 'Caesar's.' Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at him." (Mark 12:13-17)

- It's been said, "The last part of a man that is converted, is his wallet".
Why do we have difficulty giving?



Day 27 Lend without expecting return"

"Economists say most giving is "impure altruism": You give not only because you want to help but because it makes you look good, or feel good, or perhaps feel less bad. But I think the heart of what Jesus is saying is that the reason and the attitude behind our giving should never be to get something in return."

- What is easier to give in this way for you - money, time, possessions, talents?

Day 28 Get in the Game!

"For whatever reason, God has chosen to work with us in redeeming and restoring this world. He's chosen us to be the people who speak and act on His behalf. God believes you can make a difference. That's why He's chosen you."

- How do you respond in your life with the following statement?

"God can do a lot with a little."

Day 29 Feeding the Underserved.

"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."

- How can you be intentional in helping to physically feed someone in need?

Day 30 Clothing those in Need

"Do I have too much? Or can someone else benefit from stuff that's just sitting around in my closets and dressers? What about you? How much is too much?"

- How would you answer the above questions?

Day 31 Tithing

"If someone were to look into your bank account, would they know you are a follower of Jesus? You cannot truly go all in for God if you cannot 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 do you respond to the following statement?

"The more you have, the harder it is to give away."

Day 32 Sacrificial Giving

"To follow after God faithfully means following after Him with everything you have, including your money and your possessions. He wants you to be a generous person."

- Why is generosity and sacrificial giving so closely tied to following Jesus?

Day 33 Giving the Best Gift

"The best thing you can do with a good gift is rip it open, enjoy it, and share it with others. We have all been given the most amazing gift in the entire world by receiving the grace of Jesus Christ in our life. As amazing as it is to receive this gift, it is even better when we can give that gift to others."

- Can you identify someone that you will intentionally pray for an opportunity to share the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Apply

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Closing Prayer

WEEK OF GOING ~ Days 24-40 / March 28 2021

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Theme Verse

"And as Jesus reclined at a table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

(Matthew 9:10-13)

- Is it hard for you to "go" to people that seem different from you? The same? What are some of the challenges that hold us back?



Day 34 Household of Faith

"It doesn't matter what our job is, it doesn't matter how tired we are. We are called to be witnesses, and especially in our own family. Before we go out and proclaim to the world who God is, let's first remember that we are living out our faith in our home."

- Why is our home often the hardest place to share our faith and create spiritual habits?

Day 35 Welcoming Strangers

"If we become a Christian and surround ourselves with great Christian friends and only hang out with other Christians, it becomes harder and harder to expand outside those Christian circles. But God never calls us to a life of comfort, safety, and ease. Instead, He calls us to a life that pushes us out of our comfort zone."

- What kind of opportunities do you have to meet new people and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to conversations about faith?

Day 36 Being a Witness

"God has done so much else for us, and each of us has a story to tell. What has God done for you? What difference has God made in your life? I believe answering those questions is far more effective than some of our evangelism strategies. People connect with you when they hear how God has made an impact in your life."

- What is your own God-story? What impact has God made in your life?

Day 37 Life in the Kingdom

"The kingdom of God teaches us that Christ came to offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who believe, but it also teaches us that it's not just about forgiveness. The Kingdom of God is also reaping the benefits and rewards now because our eternal life has already started! AND we get to participate with God in bringing the Kingdom of God to this world right now."

- How can you participate in bringing the Kingdom of God to those God has put in your life right now?



Day 38 Speak Boldly

“There is a time to show people who Jesus is through our actions, but there is absolutely a time to speak as well. It’s not an either/or, it’s a both/and. I need to both show people who God is through my actions, and I need to speak the Gospel. We’ve lost our boldness when it comes to speaking about God. Many of us would rather do anything else.”

- Why is speaking the Gospel so important in connection to the ways we serve?

Day 39 Your Identity

“God is the one who gives you your identity. Who you think you are will determine what decisions you make and how you live your life. Your identity determines your biography. And your identity was given to you by God and it was confirmed when your sins were nailed to the cross. Why would we look to anyone or anything other than God for our identity?”

“Through God’s Holy Spirit, He has placed a longing to follow Him in you.”

- How has this longing been strengthened through the Red Letter Challenge?

Day 40 Dust of the Rabbi

“A rabbi of that day would bless a student with these words: May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi. In other words, may you follow your rabbi so closely that when his feet kick up dust, it covers you. Live in the dust of Jesus!”

- Who do you know that could be a mentor (rabbi) to you, or someone that you could mentor? Just do it!

Apply

Identify *takeaways* from this week’s challenges

What was most difficult from this week’s challenges?

Closing Prayer