

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

RED LETTER

CHALLENGE

A 40 DAY LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

ZACH ZEHNDER

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

Why are you interested in going through The Red Letter Challenge? What are you trusting God to do over the next 40 days?

Go over the Group Promise together. Make sure everyone understands the commitment.

GROUP PROMISE

I commit to these basic Red Letter Challenge Group promises. This is my "ALL IN" pledge to live out Jesus' words, both in my own life and in helping my Group do so.

- ➔ *I will be on time and show up with my whole heart.*
- ➔ *I understand that this Group is 100% confidential. Whatever is shared in the Group stays in the Group.*
- ➔ *I will respect other Group members by participating openly and speaking honestly, without dominating the discussions.*
- ➔ *I will not try to fix people, preach a sermon, or give unsolicited advice.*
- ➔ *When I share in the Group I will share primarily about myself and not about others.*
- ➔ *I will trust God to work in all of us as we live out the Red Letters of Jesus together!*

As we're about to embark on the 40-Day Challenge, what is the most challenging thing you've ever been through or done in your life?

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 1 - Introduction

Describe a time in your life where you've missed the mark.

Read the story of *The Good Samaritan* – Luke 10:25-37

Both the priest and the Levite were trained up theologically the right way, but they missed the mark. When there was someone actually in need, they did completely the opposite of what God wanted them to do.

Part of the problem in the Christian faith is that we don't know what targets to shoot for and what it truly means to follow Jesus.

The Red Letter Challenge has identified 5 targets to shoot for:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|--------|
| 1 | Being | 4 | Giving |
| 2 | Forgiving | 5 | Going |
| 3 | Serving | | |

Take a look at the five targets that we'll be shooting for over the next five weeks together. Thinking about your life right now, which one of these five will be the easiest for you? Which of the five weeks do you expect to stretch you the most or be most difficult for you?

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."*
(Leo Tolstoy)

Spend time praying for your group as you all embark on the 40-Day Challenge together. Ask God for encouragement, strength, and perseverance to live out the words of Jesus.



WEEK 2 BEING

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Share with the group about the most inconvenient time your cell phone died.

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 2 - Being

Read Daniel 6:7-10

Even when facing the punishment of death, Daniel continued to practice being with God—praying three times a day and following closely after God with diet, service, and leadership—while living as an exile in a foreign land without a church building or any organized religion.

Do you think it is possible to love people the way Jesus did if we aren't spending time in His presence? Explain.

The Challenges for the Week of Being focus on several spiritual disciplines:

- ➡ Bible Reading
- ➡ Fasting
- ➡ Prayer
- ➡ Celebrating God with others
- ➡ Worship
- ➡ Sabbath
- ➡ Solitude/Rest

What do these disciplines look like in your life right now?

Which one of these comes easiest to you? Why?

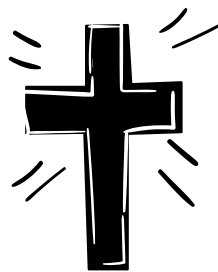
Which one of these do you struggle with the most? Why is that?

Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is "very poor" and 10 is "excellent") on how disciplined you are currently in your relationship with God. If comfortable, share that number with the group.

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"If a man wants to be used by God, he cannot spend all of his time with people."*
(A.W. Tozer)

Pray for the Lord draw each of you near to Him this week. Pray for your group to recharge with God, celebrate with Him, and find rest in Him.





WEEK 3 FORGIVING

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Have you ever thought about how you could get someone back? Ever imagined having the perfect comeback line? Why does it feel so good to do that?

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 3 - Forgiving

Define forgiveness.

How is forgiveness different from excusing what people have done or just avoiding what people have done?

Why would you choose not to forgive someone?

Who is your unforgiveness hurting? You or the person who hurt you?

Has anybody ever wronged you more than you have wronged God?

Is the way God forgives us different from the way we forgive others? Explain.

Is it harder to forgive yourself or forgive others? Explain.

Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is "very poor" and 10 is "excellent") on how you are at receiving and giving away forgiveness. If comfortable, share that number with the group.

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."*
(Louis B. Smedes)

Pray for you and your group to receive God's forgiveness and to make each of you more forgiving.





WEEK 4 SERVING

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 4 - Serving

Zach mentioned Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which reveals that the greatest need for fulfillment in this world is when our Transcendence Needs (helping other achieve their potential) are met. Do you agree?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

God's Word reveals that our purpose is to serve God by serving others. Do you feel like you are fulfilling your God-given purpose for serving? Explain.

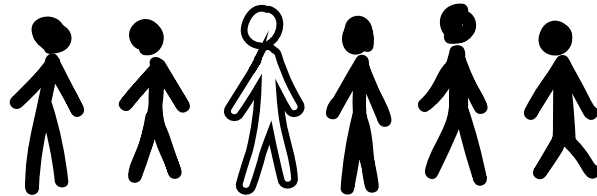
What are you naturally good at doing?

How can God be glorified through your talents, skills, or abilities?

Jesus said, "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" (Matthew 5:41). Explain a time where you have gone the extra mile for someone. What did it mean to him or her? What did it do for you?

Who is someone you know, whether an individual or a group, that is living out their God-given purpose?

Spend some time as a group discussing a way you can serve your community together. Set a date and make a plan for serving together as a group. Make it fun and enjoy serving!



Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is "very poor" and 10 is "excellent") on how you are at receiving and giving away forgiveness. If comfortable, share that number with the group.

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"If you could never speak another word aloud again, how would you preach the Gospel?"*
(Mark Crossman)

Pray for God to reveal purpose in the lives of your group and fill them with a spirit of service.



WEEK 5 GIVING

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Zach says that after reading the words of Jesus, it's impossible to be a stingy Christian. Agree or disagree?

Talk about a time you've been stingy in your life. Be honest.

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 5 - Giving

True prosperity is not how much we have, but rather how much we give. Agree or disagree?

Read Mark 12:41-44

What was it about the widow's offering that moved Jesus?

Have you ever given sacrificially?

Read Acts 4:32-35

Is this even possible for us to live like this today? Why or why not?

How would our lives be different if we gave more?

Why do you think it can be so hard to give away money and resources that are ultimately God's anyway? What keeps us from giving more?

Spend some time as a group discussing a way you can give to a cause.

Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is "very poor" and 10 is "excellent") on how you are at receiving and giving away forgiveness. If comfortable, share that number with the group.

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"If someone were to look through your bank statements and credit card purchases, would they be able to tell that you're a follower of Jesus?"*

(Zach Zehnder)

Pray for God to give everyone in your group a spirit of generosity, and ask Him to lead you as you start to give sacrificially.





WEEK 6 GOING

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Talk about the best and worst television commercials you've ever seen.

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 6 - Going

Your testimony can change lives. Do you believe that?

Is talking about Jesus intimidating to you? Why?

Read each of the following Scriptures.

After reading, discuss what they have in common.

1 Matthew 28:19-20

3 Luke 20:21

5 Acts 1:8

2 Mark 16:15

4 John 20:21

Zach mentioned in the video that sometimes what keeps people from talking about Jesus is the feeling that they need to know everything first. However, what's most important is the difference Jesus has made in your life.

Share your testimony with the group. If you're not sure what to say, start with these two questions: What has God done for you? What difference has God made in your life? (If you have already completed Day 36 of the RLC, you can refer back to what you wrote there)

Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is "very poor" and 10 is "excellent") on how you are at receiving and giving away forgiveness. If comfortable, share that number with the group.

CLOSING THOUGHT & PRAYER:

Say: *"You are God's Plan, and there is no Plan B!"*
(Chris Hodges)

Pray that God would give your group a spirit of boldness for sharing their testimonies and pray for people in your lives that don't know Christ yet.



WEEK 7

CONCLUSION

Celebrate with your group this week! Throw a party. Go out to eat together. Plan a fun event. Praise God collectively for what He's done in your group over the past 40 days!

If you'd like to still have a group discussion, here are some closing thoughts and questions:

Take some time to discuss the previous week's Challenges. Here are some things to discuss:

- ➡ Celebrate a "win" that you had in the Red Letter Challenge over the past week.
- ➡ Share a struggle.
- ➡ What did God reveal to you during the Challenges this week?

Watch Red Letter Challenge Video for Week 7 - Conclusion

Looking back over the past 40 days, how is your heart still wrestling with applying the words of Jesus?

In which ways do you think you've grown the most?

As you move forward, how can you be intentional about continuing to live out the words of Jesus?

End your group time with this blessing from Pastor Zach:

MAY YOU PURSUE JESUS
WITH ALL YOUR HEART, MAY
GOD USE YOU TO DO MIGHTY
THINGS FOR HIS KINGDOM,
AND AFTER ALL IS SAID AND
DONE IN THIS WORLD, MAY
YOU HEAR GOD SAY TO YOU,
"WELL DONE, MY GOOD AND
FAITHFUL SERVANT."