

Intro

1. The book talks about the 5 principles of a Christian: Being, Forgiving, Serving, Giving, & Going. Do you think any principle should be added to this list? Why?
2. The author says that he and his congregation have been blessed by doing this challenge. What Bible study have you done in the past that has blessed you? What was there about that study that was really meaningful to you?
3. 40 days is a biblically significant number. Correlation have also been found in sociological and psychological areas. Which biblical 40s can you recall? What other significant 40s do you know?
4. Why does the author stress so much about putting Jesus' words into practice? Where have you seen in your life where practicing something has been beneficial to you?

Day 1 – intro to Being

1. Being involves many of the things that grow our relationship with God like prayer, worship, and devotional time. In which spiritual activities do you feel like you grow the most in your relationship with God? Which spiritual activities are hardest for you to do consistently?
2. One of the "5 Love Languages" is spending quality time. When do you spend quality time with those you love (spouse, children, other family, friends)? When do you spend quality time with God?
3. The author talks about knowing about Jesus and doing what He says. What is the balance between faith and deeds? Why do you think so many people can't keep a proper balance?

Day 2 – intro to Forgiving

1. One of the great blessing of worshipping in a Lutheran congregation is the public confession of sins and the reminder of forgiveness from the worship leader. In light of the reading for Day 2, what are the benefits of the whole congregation confessing together and then being forgiven together?
2. A popular saying for some Christians is "I'm not perfect, but I'm forgiven". How is this a good saying for us to remember? How can this be an excuse in our lives?
3. The author reminds us that Christianity is the only world religion where you receive "salvation" or "eternal life" without having to "do" something. How is this a blessing for us? How can this become a problem for us?
4. What role does "membership" in a congregation have to do with our Christian walk?

Day 3 – intro to Serving

1. There are some that say our good works are practice for living in heaven. What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree with this statement? WHY?
2. What are the reasons the author gives for why we do good works? What are some of the “side benefits” for us as we help others?
3. Have you ever had a chance to share the Gospel when someone asked you why you were helping them or doing something nice? Can you remember a time when you could have shared the Gospel and didn't?
4. In what ways did/does God serve us?

Day 4 – intro to Giving

1. People often accuse preachers of always asking for money. How often do you actually hear your pastor(s) preach about you giving in the offering? How often do they actually mention money?
2. Make a list of the necessities of life that God provides to you daily. Make a list of the luxuries that God provides for you daily. How does this correspond to what the author says about us being rich?
3. Why do you think that there are so many storage units in our country? Why do you think people accumulate stuff?
4. What stuff do you have that you never use? Where do you keep it?

Day 5 – intro to Going

1. The reading today reminds us that Jesus worked with an urgency. Why do you think that most Christians don't feel that same urgency to share the Gospel?
2. What keeps Christians from sharing their faith – with family? With friends? With neighbors? With strangers?
3. The author states that the fun in an event is participating in it. How have sporting events tried to capture this participation experience?
4. What things can you do to equip you better to share your faith with others?

Day 6 – Abide in the Word

1. How often do you read the Bible directly? How often do you read it only as part of something else – a worship service, a devotional book, or a Bible study? How can you change this pattern?
2. What makes the Bible hard to understand? How can it be better understood?
3. The book states that “The Bible is the one true story of life”. What does that mean? How do we apply that concept to how we live?
4. Some Bible scholars have asserted that Jesus didn’t say anything that wasn’t already in the Old Testament. What do you think about this? Can you think of any exceptions to this?

Day 7 – Pray Earnestly

1. If your prayer life with God was compared to your discussions with a friend which would best describe that relationship and why:
 - * A best friend with whom to share every aspect of life
 - * A close friend that you call on when you need help
 - * Someone you work with that you only talk about superficial things
 - * A casual acquaintance who only hears about the weather
2. Why do people think they need to use “churchy” words when they pray? How do “mature” Christians perpetuate this misunderstanding?
3. The Lord’s Prayer was an example of how to pray. Take each line of the Lord’s Prayer and discuss what you are talking to God about in it.
4. What does A.C.T.S. stand for? Have you tried using this as an outline from prayer?

Day 8 – Worship the LORD your God

1. Be honest – by your time and expenditures, what things do you “worship” in your life besides God? Do you feel like any of them sometimes move into the place that only God deserves?
2. What did the author mean about worshipping God in every aspect of our lives? How are you doing that? Where are you falling short?
3. How can you prevent the wrong things from becoming the center of your life – of becoming the false god that you worship? How do we help our children and grandchildren avoid that also?

Day 9 – A Quiet Place of Rest

1. Where are the places where you feel most relaxed? How do those places contribute to your relaxation?
2. What activities help to make you feel the most refreshed? How do those things do that?
3. When in your life do you experience something truly “quiet”? How does it make you feel?
4. What is one thing in your life that just burns up time that you might quit doing to free up time to rest?

Day 10 – Fasting

1. Many Christians consider fasting to be an out of date practice or something we only do during certain times of the year or in certain denominations. What did Jesus actually say about fasting?
2. When or from what have you ever fasted to intentionally draw closer to God? How did it work?
3. What are some of the excuses you personally have about fasting? How might Jesus respond to those excuses?
4. Jesus is pretty clear that when we fast, we shouldn't draw attention to ourselves. Why does He say that?

Day 11 – Feasting

1. List the occasions where the Bible tells us Jesus ate a meal with people. Why was that important for Him to do?
2. What's the balance between feasting and fasting? Why do Christians often go to one extreme or the other?
3. The author includes a quote from Brennan Manning that our lives as Christians ought to be fun so others want to be a part of our faith. What do you think about this statement?
4. How is Communion a spiritual feast? Why is it important to celebrate Communion often?

Day 12 – The Sabbath

1. Our author says that “corporate” worship is different than our daily lives of worship. Explain the differences?
2. Does it matter which day of the week we celebrate “the Sabbath”? Why do some Christians get caught up on Sunday as the only day -or- Saturday is the “true” Sabbath?
3. What are the benefits of being in a “formal” worship service with other Christians?

Day 13 – Repent & Believe

1. The word “repent” means to “turn” or “return”. If we truly repent, we turn from our sin and return to following God’s rules. How does this apply to Christians when they ask God for forgiveness?
2. God forgives us based on nothing that we do – that’s His mercy. He showers us with blessings also based on nothing we have done – that’s His grace. What does that mean for our lives?
3. Is there any sin that God can’t forgive? How is this a comfort to us? What does this mean about who we might see in heaven?
4. We all have “pet sins” or sins which we have a hard time resisting. What does this mean about our repentance? How can we better “turn away” from these?

Day 14 – We Are All Sinners

1. What do you think Jesus was scribbling in the dirt in the account of the woman caught in the act of adultery? Why do you say that?
2. Is there any sin for which you still feel guilty? How might you release this guilt?
3. Which sins do you often consider “worse” than others? Why do we as Christians “rank” sins this way?
4. Why did the Old Testament have harsher consequences for certain sins? Which sins does Jesus seem to “judge” harsher?

Day 15 – Judge Not

1. Why do you think that Christians have gotten the reputation as “judgmental”? How can we change that reputation?
2. When in your life have you been judged? How did it make you feel? How can that feeling help you be more sympathetic to another person who has made a mistake?
3. A common saying is “Love the sinner, hate the sin”. What does this really mean? How do we accomplish this?

Day 16 – Be Merciful

1. What movies/books are about revenge? Why is this such a compelling focus in a story?
2. Our desire to strike back starts early. Toddlers often swat at their mothers when they have been punished. As we get older, our revenge often takes more subtle forms. How do people “get back” at others in daily lives?
3. This reading reminds us again of the difference between Grace and Mercy. How is mercy the opposite of revenge?
4. How can you use God’s mercy and grace to help you be more merciful to those who wrong you?

Day 17 – Forgive Others

1. How is forgiveness related to mercy? What’s the difference?
2. The book relates the story of the Nazi requesting forgiveness from the Jewish author Elie Wiesenthal. Why should or shouldn’t forgiveness be granted?
3. Why does it get harder to forgive someone who keeps doing the same thing wrong to you? How do you think God feels when we keep doing the same sin?
4. Share the times when we see Jesus granting forgiveness? What can we learn from these examples?

Day 18 – Love Your Enemies

1. Who would you categorize as your “enemies”? Why?
2. Who suffers the most when you hold a grudge against an “enemy”? Why is that?
3. What is the benefit of “making up” with someone who has hurt you? Why is it difficult?
4. How can we forgive someone who isn’t sorry?

Day 19 – Sin No More

1. In Day 13 we talked about repentance. Day 19 digs into this deeper. How does the story of Zaccheus show how he truly “repents”?
2. What is to be our motivation for turning away from sin to how God wants us to behave?
3. What does it say about our relationship with Jesus when we continue to do the same sins over and over?
4. Besides showing our love for Him, what is the benefit of our obedience of the Commandments?

Day 20 – If You Love, You Will Obey

1. How do God's rules for us compare to parents' rules for their children?
2. How does the summary "Love your neighbor as yourself" help us live in obedience to God's desires for our behavior?
3. How can our trust in God help us to be obedient to His commands that don't seem to make earthly sense?

Day 21 – Servant to All

1. How does it feel to be last in line? When might it be an advantage to come at the end?
2. Name all the ways that you can where Christianity is opposite of what our culture or human nature says. Why would this be?
3. Who are some of the people you might have trouble letting move ahead of you in a line? Why would you have a hard time letting them go first?
4. Besides His life, what else did Jesus sacrifice in order to save us? Why would He be willing to do that?

Day 22 – Help Those Who Can't Give Back

1. Zach tells us that his wife's family invite to holiday meals those who don't have family living close. How do you feel about that? Is it wrong to celebrate holidays with just your family?
2. How has technology made us more impatient? How can that hinder our Christian witness?
3. What did God require of us before He sent Jesus? What does this mean for our Christian life?
4. Who are some of the people in your life who wouldn't be able to give you back something if you helped them? How would you handle it if they felt "obligated" to pay you back?

Day 23 – Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

1. The story of the Good Samaritan is very familiar. When have you been the person injured on the side of the road? When have you been the priest or Levite? When have you been the Samaritan? When have you been the innkeeper?
2. How do we balance helping others and personal safety? Where does trust in God fit in?
3. It has been said that sometimes we are the answer to our own prayers? What does this mean? How does this apply to the story of the Good Samaritan?

Day 24 – Serving Little Children

1. Who are some of the children in your life to whom you are not related? How do you currently help serve those children?
2. Why do you think Jesus had such a heart for children? Why don't all people demonstrate that same love?
3. How can reflecting on God as our Father help us in dealing with somewhat temperamental children?
4. What are some ways that you can serve children?

Day 25 – Care for the Sick

1. Why don't people want to care for those who are sick?
2. What are practical ways you can serve someone who is sick other than being at their bedside?
3. Jesus acknowledges the sacrifice of the paralytic's friends. What are you willing to do for a friend who is sick? What are you not willing/able to do?

Day 26 – Let Your Light Shine

1. What is the balance between letting our light shine as we serve and not doing things to get recognition? How do we maintain that balance?
2. Timothy Keller has a quote about salt bringing out the flavor of corn. How does this apply to our Christian lives?
3. We often talk about light in Christian circles. Why do we compare our Christian lives to shining a light?
4. Zach makes a comment about shining our lights in places that are already well-lit. What does he mean? How do we avoid doing that and actually lighting up the dark corners?

Day 27 - Lend, Expecting Nothing in Return

1. Do you think people would be as generous if there wasn't a tax benefit? Why or why not?
2. It has been said to never lend more than you are willing to lose. What does that mean? How does that apply to this reading?
3. If I lend and don't expect something to be returned, am I encouraging stealing? Explain your answer.
4. How does this lending without expecting compare with our Day22 reading on helping those who can give nothing back?

Day 28 – Share Your Resources

1. List off some of the things for which you have extra (like 3 coats where you only need 1). How has God blessed you materially?
2. In the story of the loaves and fish, Jesus multiplies the resources to match the needs. Where have you seen this in your life?
3. The story about Morgan and Mother Teresa spoke about being blessed in non-material things. What are some of the non-material blessings God has given you? How might you share these with others?

Day 29 – Feed the Hungry

1. Zach begins this day's reading with how much food is eaten by Americans as well as thrown in the trash. How can we change this pattern?
2. What practical ways exist in your community to feed the hungry? What are some other ways that you can think of to do this?
3. If God provides our needs, why do some people go hungry?
4. Why do we often think more about the hungry at holiday times? When do you think food pantries have their biggest need for more supplies?

Day 30 – Clothe the Naked

1. Today's reading begins with a long story about "paving material". What does this story teach you?
2. When have you considered if you have too many clothes? Why do we accumulate so much clothing?
3. We are often ready to share old, worn, or outdated clothing. How could you serve someone better by giving them something new?

Day 31 – Don't Neglect the Tithe

1. Some people have said that the tithe was an Old Testament thing. How do you respond to that?
2. Should a church worker be wealthy? Should a church underpay its staff? What's the balance?
3. Zach says that being stingy in your offerings is a lack of trust in God. What does he mean?
4. Jesus says that your heart will be in the same place as your treasure. What does your giving pattern say about how much you treasure God?

Day 32 – Give Sacrificially

1. Our author reminds us again of the waste and excess in the US. How is wastefulness a bad witness to our faith?
2. The widow gave her last mite. We might argue about her not being able to care for her family with no money. What's the balance between supporting God's work and supporting family?
3. Why do people get so defensive when church leadership talks about money?
4. What's the balance between giving to a local congregation and supporting worthy missions?

Day 33 – Give Gifts Freely

1. (Other than faith/salvation), what was the best gift you ever received? Why?
2. (Other than sharing faith), what was the best gift you ever gave? Why?
3. Why do some people enjoy watching others open gifts? Why do most people not enjoy having people watch them open gifts?
4. How do you determine what gifts to give to someone you love? How does price figure into your plans?

Day 34 – Share Faith with Family/Friends

1. Zach says that he has a hard time praying with his wife. How true is it for you than sharing spiritual things like prayer or witnessing is harder with family than others? How can you overcome that?
2. Who taught you about Jesus originally? Who have you taught about Jesus?
3. How does the way you treat your family witness to them? How might it hinder your witness to others who observe your family?
4. Who are the people in your family who need to know about Jesus? How can you begin to share with them?

Day 35 – Share Faith with Neighbors

1. Why do you think Americans today don't know their neighbors? How many of the people on your block do you know well?
2. In which community activities do you participate? How can you witness in those activities?
3. How can you balance your participation in the community with your participation at church?
4. Many Lutherans get uncomfortable talking about letting the Spirit prompt them to share their faith. Why do you think that is?

Day 36 – Share Your Testimony

1. When have you been a witness in court? When else have you been called upon to "tell what happened"?
2. Many of us think we need a big flower testimony - Zach says to just share what God has done for you. What are the things God has done for you?
3. Zach again mentions the work of the Holy Spirit. How could you become more aware of the Holy Spirit in your life?
4. Where can you practice your testimony? Who might give you some constructive criticism on how you do?

Day 37 – Bring the Kingdom Now!

1. What is the Kingdom of God? How is it visible in our world today?
2. Our authors say the "Gospel of Forgiveness of Sins" is only half the story. He says the other half is "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God". What does he mean? Do you agree?
3. Justification is when we were declared holy because of the work of Jesus - Sanctification is the process where the Holy Spirit makes us daily more like Christ. Where in your life do you see yourself becoming more like Christ?
4. How are you making a difference as a Christian in the world right now?

Day 38 – Share Boldly

1. Zach says that many people love to think that their actions are all that is necessary to witness. What else is necessary? How do we make sure our actions truly do witness?
2. Why are other false faiths (Islam, Mormon) more passionate about sharing their religion? How can we develop that passion without becoming extremists?
3. Name some of the Bible characters who were at first reluctant to serve God? How did their courage grow?
4. What is the advantage of memorizing Scripture? How could you begin a pattern of memorization?

Day 39 – Bless Someone As God Blessed You

1. What does it mean that God chose us? How do we respond to someone who says they chose Christ?
2. Why aren't things always easy in our Christian lives? How come Christians continue to sin?
3. How can your choosing to love someone and share the Gospel with them benefit their lives?
4. How does God give our lives significance?

Day 40 – Be A Disciple, and Disciple Others

1. What should be the highest priority in our lives? What should give us the most satisfaction?
2. Why don't most Christians spend more time in studying God's Word? How are you doing in this area? How could you improve?
3. What does it mean when Zach tells us to live in the dust of Jesus? How are you doing that?
4. Who are you taking time to mentor? Who do you look to as your mentor?

Day 41 – And on

1. Which of the five areas of the Red Letter Challenge was the hardest for you? How could you make it less difficult?
2. Which of the five areas of the Red Letter Challenge seemed the easiest for you to do? How can you continue to grow in that area?
3. What was something new that you learned during this series? How will you continue to learn more about that?
4. What was something about your Christian walk that this series reminded you was important? How can you improve that?
5. Was there anything that you felt should not have been included in this series? Why do you say that?
6. What is the main thing that you are going to change in your life because of studying this series?
7. What is something that you want to learn more about due to this series?