

# THE WHY BEHIND

## THE RED LETTER CHALLENGE

**W**hy does the world around us and the life we live not look anything like the reality Jesus talked about? Why is there no significant difference between the lives of those who call themselves Christians and the rest of the world? What kind of witness can we be in this world if we simply look the same as everyone else? If we are a poor representation of who God is, then what needs to change? What can we do? Rather than shrugging it off, isn't it time to change people's perceptions about the followers of Jesus Christ?

These questions kept bothering me. I kept thinking there has to be something we can do about this. That's when something so simple came to me – something so simple it was genius. What if we take the words of Jesus and actually put them into practice? If we could actually do this, surely that would change people's perceptions about those who follow Jesus!

I know what you are thinking: "That's the big idea?" Yes, that's it. And it wasn't even my idea! That's why I knew it was genius, because I actually stole this idea from Jesus Himself.

Jesus finishes the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached, by saying this in Matthew 7:24-27:

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

Jesus is saying, "If you want your house to stand up, practice what I'm preaching. Do what I say." Jesus says in Luke 11:28: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." James, the brother of Jesus, says it even more simply in James 1:22: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

That's the big idea. Taking Jesus' words, the ones that are written in red letters in your Bibles, and putting them into practice. Literally. That's the very unoriginal yet revolutionary idea that's going to change not just the followers of Jesus, but the world in which we live!

I looked and looked for something that gave followers of Jesus clear, practical action steps to take what He said and then put those words into practice. There are many great books and resources out there, but I couldn't find anything that organizes the literal words that Jesus spoke and then issues a clear challenge based on that teaching.

I decided this idea needed to be tested. At the time, I was a young pastor in the first full year of a small new church plant. We were looking for ways to get involved in the community and advance the Kingdom of God in our area. Personally, I was trying to awaken the members of my church. You see, at the time, my church was made up mostly of long-time Christians. These were people who had believed in God most of their lives. They were used to church and had gotten into patterns of being surrounded only by Christian friends and serving three or four days a week (but always at the church building). The biggest way they stepped out of their comfort zones was ushering during a church service. Really? People who were forty, fifty, even sixty years into their faith and the way they were being "stretched" by God was by showing someone to a seat, passing an offering plate, and counting heads! My five-year old could have done that - well, as long as the counting didn't go into the hundreds!

However, they were open to trying something new and they were excited about all of the possibilities that might come from it. They were especially eager to see how this Challenge would work. They were committed to doing whatever it took to reach our community, and especially those who didn't believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

That's when we implemented the Red Letter Challenge at our church. What would it look like for a whole church, new to the area but excited about the future, to literally practice the words of God together? The results were amazing and lives were changed! The community was changed! The individuals who took part were challenged to new heights in their relationship with Christ, and ultimately our church grew as well. God did incredible things through the Challenge!

People were doing things they never thought were possible. And because we were doing it together, they knew they had the support and accountability of everyone else in the church. We had so many amazing things happen during that first Challenge that we decided to do it again the following year!

I've been blessed by this Challenge. Those who have been through it have been blessed by it. Our church has been blessed by it. Most importantly, our communities were blessed by it and we are changing the perception in our area of who Jesus Christ is. We know this workbook you have in your hands right now is going to bless you and many others if you take this Challenge seriously.

People who are new to the faith have often asked me, "How do I follow Jesus? What am I supposed to do?" Even people who have believed and followed Jesus for much of their life struggle to answer that question. As I explored Christ's words, I found that He asked His followers to do many things, but He spent a good portion of His time focused on five main principles.

1 Being 2 Forgiving 3 Serving 4 Giving 5 Going

We re-organized the Challenge to introduce each of these five principles over the first five days. The following five weeks then focus on each of these principles for one full week. And what you have in your hands right now is the complete 40-Day Red Letter Challenge!

**By putting God's words into practice, you will find the life God has made for you!** You will be led to spend more time with the God who loves you. You will serve and sacrifice more than you ever have before. You will forgive people you never thought you would be able to. (That person may even be yourself!) You will become a more generous person. You will be more bold and courageous in what you say and in how you live. And through the entire Challenge, you will celebrate and enjoy the life God has given you!

Another thing that will probably happen is you will fail! Sorry for the harsh words. But I've never done the Challenge perfectly. There's been a day I missed here and there or an idea that was too hard for me for a particular day. If this happens to you, I invite you to write down your thoughts for that day and why you struggled. You will find that perhaps you are stronger in some areas than others in your faith.

**Being a follower of Jesus is not always pretty, and sometimes we mess up.** We have forgiveness for those times and God urges us to come back to Him and keep following after Him. Whether you are experiencing success or failure, I want to encourage you not to get frustrated. Just keep moving on. What we are hoping to create is a new habit in your life. We don't want you to just do what God says for 40 days and then never think about it again. I hope the practice of implementing Jesus' words in your life will become a daily occurrence for you. Habit formation isn't an overnight process. It takes a while. But you have to start somewhere, so let's start with His words and embark together on the Red Letter Challenge!

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#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

# HOW TO DO

## THE RED LETTER CHALLENGE

Okay, you are ready for the Challenge, but how does it work? What's this going to look like?

The first five days will serve as an introduction. You'll learn a bit more about each of the five major principles from Jesus. From there, on each of the following 35 days, you will see a quote directly from the mouth of Jesus.

The quotation will be followed by a devotion, one or more companion Bible readings, and a Challenge of how you might live out those specific words on that day. Some will be very specific and others will be very broad. Each day you will be encouraged to complete the Challenge.

**The rhythm of a follower, or a disciple, of Jesus is to be both a hearer and a doer of what God says.** That's why for each day there's a corresponding Bible story or passage as well as a Challenge for how to implement Christ's words into your life. Too many followers of Jesus read the Bible but never put those words into practice. Likewise, there are many who do good works but aren't sure why they are doing them.

Putting God's words into practice is much more effective when you are not alone. Many times it is hard to do what God asks. Some of the days you might feel like you want to give up. That's why I suggest bringing someone along with you in this Challenge. Pick someone you trust. Do the Challenge with this person and use each other as accountability partners. Or even better, grab a few friends, your staff, or even your entire church, and invite them to come alongside you on this journey.

We live in an interactive world, and we want to know how this Challenge is going for you and how it is impacting you and your community. This Challenge will move you in many ways. You will have a lot of feelings and emotions as you go through it. This workbook is designed to capture those feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Be honest and fair with yourself as you complete the Challenges.

Finally, I encourage you to post your thoughts on our Facebook page (fb.me/redletterchallenge) and use the hashtag #RedLetterChallenge whenever you are referencing it on any social media platform like Instagram. Let us know how putting God's words into practice went for the day. Was it easy? Was it hard? Why? Why not? Were you unable to complete the Challenge for today? If so, what got in the way?

# DOING

## THE RED LETTER CHALLENGE AS A CHURCH

Pastors and church leaders, do any of the following apply to you?

- 1 You want your people to spend more time with God on a daily basis.
- 2 You want a greater presence in the community in which you serve.
- 3 You want your people to live greater lives of service and sacrifice.
- 4 You want your church to be more generous.
- 5 You want your people to be bolder in their faith.
- 6 You want your people to experience the freedom that comes from God's forgiveness.
- 7 You want your church to have active, engaging home groups that meet during the week.
- 8 You want a resource to point people to after they have received Jesus Christ in their life that gives them very clear direction on what to do next.

I'm betting that many of these apply to you! You are hoping for deeper spiritual formation in your church, yet you know that many people have grown stale in their faith and confuse being disciples of Christ with being volunteers.

**This Challenge will awaken the members and attendees at your church.** It will invigorate your church and you will find people in your church doing things they (and you!) never thought were possible!

There is nothing better than a church doing the words of Christ together. **Doing what God asks us to do is not meant to be done alone.**

We have organized small group curriculum as well as full sermon manuscripts and videos on our website ([www.redletterchallenge.com](http://www.redletterchallenge.com)), and you can access all of it for free. This Challenge is best done when everyone is not only doing the Challenge on a daily basis by themselves, but also regularly meeting in home groups to discuss the Challenges together. It's also extremely valuable for people to hear you as the pastor talk about the importance of the five main principles as part of a weekend teaching series. Also, we recommend that your church come together at least a couple of times during the Challenge to do what Christ says. Check out the appendix "Community Rally Ideas" for suggestions.

Finally, we want to encourage you as a leader to get fully immersed in the Challenge yourself. If you want your people to invest in it and grow, it's important for you to model it.

**WWW.REDLETTERCHALLENGE.COM**

# WHO IS

## THE RED LETTER CHALLENGE FOR?

As the great NBA theologian Allen Iverson once said in a press conference,

*"I mean listen, we're sitting here talking about practice, not a game, not a game, not a game, but we're talking about practice."<sup>1</sup>*

Okay, so maybe he's not a theologian, but the former NBA star points to a reality that is true for nearly everybody – practice isn't as much fun as the game!

Too many people think that to follow Jesus Christ, they have to wait on the sidelines until they have all of their life in order. They believe they have to wait until they understand the Bible and have read through the entire thing before they can do what He says to do.

I believe **the time to do what Jesus is asking is today**. This Challenge is for you, whether you have been firm in your faith for decades, you've just come to faith in Jesus Christ, or you're wrestling with this whole God thing for the first time.

No matter where you're starting, **doing the words of Jesus will help you**

**find the life you were made for.** I believe few things stretch our faith more than actually getting involved and doing the things God is asking us to do. When we feel unequipped and unprepared (which you will feel at times in this Challenge), God will use those moments to give, shape, and form your faith.

**This Challenge is for anybody and everybody.** Young and old. Men and women. Churched and unchurched. New Christian, life-long Christian, non-Christian. It's for anybody who's looking for something more in life.

# CHALLENGE EXTENDED!

# DAY 1 BEING

In this Challenge, you will be asked to do many things. But before you can do them, it's important to know why you're doing them – and who you are doing them for. I believe **truly following Jesus means both being with Jesus and doing the things He asks.**

Some people are better at being. They like the whole idea of spending time with God, but they never do anything.

If I tell my son, "Go clean your room," he's not going to come back a couple hours later and say, "Hey dad, I memorized what you said. You said, 'Go, clean your room.'" And he's not going to say, "Dad, I know 'Go clean your room' in Greek. *Pao Katharos sas domatio.*" At this point I'd be impressed, but that's not going to fly! And he's not going to say, "My friends and I are going to gather and study what it would look like if I went and cleaned my room." No, none of that's going to work. So why do we think this is going to work with Jesus?<sup>2</sup>

Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord,' and not do what I tell you to do?" Words without action were never acceptable to Jesus. Faith without action is dead.

On the flip side, there are others (like me!), who enjoy doing. We think just being is boring. We want to get things done! But if we don't spend time being, our doing won't be as productive. If we don't spend the time resting

in God and learning from Him, we'll quickly burn out and our activity will become more about us than about Christ.

I remember when I was dating my wife Allison. We went on a trip with her family to the Chicago Science Museum. Allison warned me her dad likes to take 20-minute naps every day, no matter what. Sure enough, he found a bench near one of the displays and curled up and he was out. His eyes were closed, he was snoring, there was drool dripping from his mouth onto the floor. (Okay, I might be exaggerating that last part.)

At this point in my relationship with Allison I was still trying to make a good impression on her family. Apparently they were all used to their dad sleeping in random places, but I was not, so I volunteered to stay with him. People walked by and gave him weird looks, and then they would look at me. I, of course, acted like I didn't know the man. It was very awkward, but right at 20 minutes, he popped up, awake, and I acted like everything was great. I thought it was crazy.

But apparently there is some scientific evidence that says those who take naps during the day can actually be more productive. It doesn't seem like slowing down in the middle of productive work hours would be helpful, but these naps re-energize them so they can get more done.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." Many of us don't know how to just be. We know how to do. But we struggle with the being.

Before we do what Christ asks us to do, we need to be with Him. That's

what this first week is all about: Spending time with God. So in our “being” week we will explore what are called spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines are good habits that allow you to more closely connect to Jesus Christ. These disciplines have been practiced for centuries by those who follow Jesus.

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.**

Here’s how I see this playing out in my life:

- ➔ When I spend my time with Christ, I can’t wait to start doing what He says.
- ➔ When I come to church and worship Christ, it gives me the fuel I need to keep going in life.
- ➔ When I read the Bible, it doesn’t take long for it to manifest itself in me and pretty soon it becomes like a fire shut up in my bones that I cannot contain. I just gotta share it!
- ➔ When I pray, there’s a peace that comes over me. I can’t even explain it.

Jesus said many things when it comes to being with Him. Over the first full week of the Challenge, you’ll learn different ways in which you can be with Jesus.

1/40

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# DAY 2 FORGIVING

Couches typically look really nice on the outside. But have you ever lifted up the cushions?

Before you do, take a moment to prepare your heart and soul for the horrors you are about to experience. In fact, you may even want to put on a hazmat suit! If you're like our family, you're going to find M&M's, quesadillas, pizza crusts, potato chips, Lego pieces, and possibly the Zika virus. It's all under there.

On the surface the couch looks great. In fact, we've even had people come over and sit on our couch.<sup>3</sup> It looks fine on the surface, but deep down in the cracks is lots of junk.

Our lives are like this. **On the surface many of us look great, but on the inside we are a mess.** We put the highlight pictures of ourselves on social media so everybody thinks everything is great. We look amazing online, so we think we've fooled everybody into thinking we have no major problems in our lives.

We even do this at church. We walk in and act like we're politicians: hugging people, kissing babies, and shaking hands. We try to make everything look flawless, but underneath there's a bunch of stuff we are not so proud of. And sometimes other people can be intimidated because they assume they

must be the only ones with a mess under their couch.

The reality is that deep inside each one of us there is a great deal of hurt. All of us carry that around. We're hurting, we're experiencing pain, and many of us are not free because we're held captive to the past. It's like an old couch that we can't get rid of - we keep encountering the mess.

But God doesn't want you stuck in the past, because **if you can't let go of the past you'll never be able to move into the future.** He has taken your mess and nailed it to the cross so you don't have to keep beating yourself up about it. He wants you to experience His grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says it perfectly: "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

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.

Brennan Manning says, *"Put bluntly, the American church today accepts grace in theory but denies it in practice. We say we believe that the fundamental structure of reality is grace, not works--but our lives refute our faith. By and large, the gospel of grace is neither proclaimed, understood, nor lived."*<sup>4</sup>

He goes on to say, *“Jesus comes not for the super-spiritual but for the wobbly and the weak-kneed who know they don't have it all together, and who are not too proud to accept the handout of amazing grace. As we glance up, we are astonished to find the eyes of Jesus open with wonder, deep with understanding, and gentle with compassion. This is the God of the gospel of grace.”*<sup>5</sup>

My grandpa once talked to a woman in her nineties who had only a couple of weeks to live. She said, “I’ve been in church my whole life. I’ve served on every committee. But I don’t know if I’ve done enough good things to enter into heaven. I don’t know where I’m going when I die.” My grandpa was able to explain to her that she is not saved by what she has done, but by what God has already done. He has already forgiven her of her sins and she can be confident of her salvation.

How sad that a woman can hear all the “right” words and be in all the “right” places for over nine decades and still never truly receive God’s forgiveness. I hope that when my grandpa talked to her, she finally felt confidence and assurance in God’s grace. Grace assures you that everything has been taken care of. **There is no sin too big that God did not die for on the cross.**

All of us are in desperate need of God’s grace. The second full week of our 40-day Challenge will focus on receiving God’s forgiveness and learning how to forgive other people.

2/40

THERE IS NO  
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#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

# DAY 3 SERVING

Yesterday we looked at Ephesians 2:8-9 which says we are saved by God's grace and not by our own works. So if my future has already been taken care of, what is the point of good works? The very next verse says this:

**"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."**

It's no coincidence that the apostle Paul wrote this verse after the previous grace-filled verses. There's a flow to this: once you receive God's grace, you can't help but want to do good. If you are filled with gratitude because someone has helped you, you want to repay that person. It's the same with us and God.

Second Kings 4 is the story of a wealthy Shunammite woman. She made a guest room in her house for the great prophet Elisha. And so one day he says to her, "You have gone to all this trouble. Now what can be done for you?"<sup>6</sup> What I love about this story is she didn't build the room so Elisha would one day do something for her. And Elisha didn't ask her what he could do for her because he had to. They both genuinely wanted to serve the other person.

Far too many people come into a relationship with Jesus just wanting to get more from Him. I get really frustrated when preachers twist the true

Gospel and replace it with a prosperity Gospel that says if you are following Him, God will bless you and you will live a prosperous life. You give this much money and God will take care of your debt, or you do something for someone else and next time you'll get the perfect parking spot.

**We don't serve God in order to get more from Him.** We've already received Jesus. He is the prize. He is the great reward! We serve God because He first served us.

However, while the motivation behind serving God is not to get more from Him, we always do!

*"Just as Elisha actively looked for ways to bless the Shunammite woman, God is eager to bless us. Isn't that a perspective-changing, paradigm-shifting way to look at God? I think most of us imagine that God looks for ways to get us. But what if God is actually dreaming about how He wants to bless you and move on your behalf?"<sup>7</sup>*

**Our gratitude for what God has done leads us to serve Him.** We don't serve God because we have to or because it's how we earn our salvation. We serve God because of everything He's done for us, and for this reason:

**While serving others won't save you, it just may help save someone else.**

Only the Holy Spirit can save someone, but the Holy Spirit lives inside all those who believe in Him. That means He can use someone like you to help save someone else. **You are more powerful than you realize!**

I understand that not everyone in this Challenge is on the same spiritual level. And that's okay. Some of you are doing this Challenge because you feel like you "should." But I hope that over the course of these forty days you realize just how good our God is and how much He's done for you, and your "have to" attitude becomes a "want to."

Jesus had a heart of service. When we serve, we reflect who our God is. A big piece of this 40-day Challenge is changing people's perceptions of Christ-followers. When we serve, when we care for orphans and widows, when we feed the hungry, when we clothe the naked, when we let our lights shine before others, people notice and are drawn to us.

1 Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Many times we focus on having the right answers, but before you can give an answer, a question must be asked. 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.

During the third full week of this Challenge, you will begin to serve. You will learn who God calls you to serve and how He calls you to serve.

3/40

WHILE SERVING  
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#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

# DAY 4 GIVING

Jesus talked a lot about giving. In fact, Jesus talked more about money than He talked about love, heaven, or hell. He talked about money more than any other topic except the Kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

Why? Because people desperately need wisdom when it comes to their finances. Many of us are living paycheck to paycheck and drowning under debt. Money is the one thing people argue about most in their marriages. No matter who you are, saving, giving, and managing money is probably a challenge.

So let's start with this statement. You are rich.

*Andy Stanley says, "It's funny, rich people are in denial. And normally we are not in denial about things we know. For instance, tall people admit they're tall. Short people admit they are short. Athletic people admit they're athletic. Artsy people admit they're artsy. And they don't mind telling you that...their car is a mess, their room is a mess, their life is a mess, and they are as happy as can be. Introverts don't even mind telling you they are introverts, and extroverts can't wait to tell you they are extroverts. Like they really need to tell you. But when it comes to rich people, they won't admit it, they live in denial." <sup>9</sup>*

According to statistics, if you make \$40,000 a year you are in the top 4% in the world, and if you make over \$48,000 a year, you are in the top 1% of earners in the world. We enjoy a quality of life that very few in the history of the world have ever experienced. Our biggest concern is not starvation, but obesity!

However, the more Americans make, the less they give away.

When Allison and I first got married, our apartment was inside a home built around 1900. This apartment only had one very small closet. At this time in history a man probably had one suit and one or two nice shirts. He had some jeans and a couple casual shirts, maybe two pairs of shoes, and that was about it. Ladies, I have no idea what you wore but evidently it would fit in the closet next to those few things. One little closet.

Today it's very different. Our homes have closets in almost every room.

Some have walk-in closets. Some have walk-around closets! And some of us still say we have nothing to wear! Not only that, many of us have so much in our closets that it spills into the garage...and then to clear out our garage we have to store our extra stuff someplace else. I've heard that the storage industry, which barely existed 25 years ago, is now larger than the music industry in our country. There are 52,000 storage facilities worldwide, and 46,000 of those are in the USA. We love our stuff! We are rich. And yet we experience financial problems and stress like never before.

Our priorities have gotten out of whack. When we care more about the stuff we've accumulated than helping out those in need, when we care more about the money we're making than spending time with our family, and when we look to the money in our bank accounts instead of looking to God for our security, we need to totally change our relationship to money.

In the fourth full week of this Challenge, we will see that Jesus challenges His followers to be generous. The more I read the words of Jesus, the more **I'm convinced it's impossible to be a stingy Christian.** We cannot follow Jesus well and at the same time ignore his teaching on money. **If you are truly following Jesus, you are generous.**

And just as we serve out of a response to God, we give because God gave to us. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God showed His love for us by giving His Son. Jesus showed His love for us by giving up His life. When we give, we reflect the heart and character of our God. The week of giving will definitely challenge you because our "normal" approach to finances is not working. Let's try doing what Jesus asks of us!

4/40

I'M CONVINCED  
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE  
TO BE A STINGY  
CHRISTIAN.



#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

# DAY 5 GOING

When Jesus began His ministry, He moved with an incredible sense of urgency. In the Gospel of Mark, the words "straight away" or "immediately" are used more than forty times. **If Jesus moved with a sense of urgency, then I want to move with a sense of urgency.**

But it's hard to go full-speed for God. We are naturally wired to want to be in control of everything and to go at a comfortable pace. When we decide to follow Jesus, we surrender our need to be in control. It can certainly be scary, but it can also be rewarding, exciting, and adventurous.

Gary Haugen, founder and leader of International Justice Mission, wrote a book called *Just Courage*. In this book, he described something that happened when he was 10 years old that still haunts him today. He describes a day when he was climbing Mount Rainier with his dad and his brothers. He was the littlest, so the climb was difficult for him.

On this particular day, Gary's family wanted to reach Camp Muir, but Gary looked at the huge sign full of warnings for the trail ahead and asked to stay at the visitor's center while they climbed.

His dad agreed, so Gary stayed at the center and explored every corner. But as the day went on, this huge area started to feel rather small. And watching the informational video for the sixth or seventh time wasn't as interesting.

He began to feel rather bored, and sleepy, and stuck.

After the longest afternoon of his life, his dad and brothers finally came back. They were wet from the snow, famished, dehydrated, and nursing scrapes from the rock and ice, but on the long drive home they had stories about an unforgettable day with their dad on a great mountain. Gary says he realized "I went on the trip and missed the adventure."

Gary chose what was easy. It seemed like a fine decision at the time, but in the end it was rather boring. His dad and brothers chose what was hard and had stories, memories, and scrapes they'll always remember!<sup>10</sup>

**Don't go on the trip and miss the adventure.** Many of us want to follow Jesus only when it's easy and safe. The moment it gets hard, we tend to lose faith and question God. But safe and easy makes for a boring story. In his book *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*, Donald Miller wrote, "If you watched a movie about a guy who wanted a Volvo and worked for years to get it, you wouldn't cry at the end when he drove off the lot, testing the windshield wipers. You wouldn't tell your friends you saw a beautiful movie or go home and put a record on to think about the story you'd seen. The truth is, you wouldn't remember that movie a week later, except that you'd feel robbed and want your money back. Nobody cries at the end of a movie about a guy who wants a Volvo."

*But we spend years actually living those stories, and expect our lives to feel meaningful. The truth is, if what we choose to do with our lives won't make*

*a story meaningful, it won't make a life meaningful either."*<sup>11</sup>

If you recognized your life was telling a bad story, would you change it? As we start this Challenge, remember you are telling a story. You have the opportunity to tell the story of Jesus by what you do and say during this Challenge. And even though it's not always going to be easy, I guarantee that if you do this Challenge and live by Christ's words, you will be living a story worth telling.

This final week of the Challenge will be tough. God will call you to stretch outside of your comfort zone. On those days, the easy and safe thing would be leaving the Challenge without finishing. But don't go on the trip and miss the adventure!

When God says, "Go," He will always go with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. **When God calls you to go somewhere, you never go alone.** Jesus offers us a way of life filled with adventure, mission, and purpose. Are you ready? Buckle up, the Challenge starts now!

5/40

