

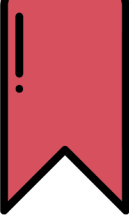
RED LETTER

ADVENT



ZACH AND ALLISON ZEHNDER

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



RED LETTER ADVENT

SMALL GROUP LEADERS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing to lead a small group. This guide corresponds with a book called *Red Letter Advent*, which also includes a series of videos that are designed to enhance your Advent season. The book, videos and guide can be used in a variety of settings: small groups, midweek classes, or even at-home family devotions. We are thrilled to partner with you and hope that you have the most Jesus-centered Advent season of your life!

WHAT IS RED LETTER ADVENT?

Red Letter Advent is a 25-day experience of unboxing the four gifts Jesus wants you to receive and give away: hope, peace, joy, and love. Through this journey, you'll discover the true meaning of Christmas. So, if you want to slow down during the holiday season, savor every precious moment, and finally open the presents you have always longed for, then let's do this!

If you are doing this series together with a group, please spend some time in the first week going over the Group Promise together.

GROUP PROMISE

I commit to these basic *Red Letter Advent* Group promises:

- *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 explore serving like Jesus together!*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

LET'S DO THIS!

**1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER (4 MINUTES)**

Welcome everyone and open with a short prayer, inviting God to guide the conversation.

2. GROUP PROMISE. (3 MINUTES)

Read and commit to the Group Promise on the introductory page.

3. ICEBREAKER QUESTION (7 MINUTES)

Question: "What is one Christmas tradition you've done your whole life, and what does it mean to you?"

4. WATCH THE RED LETTER ADVENT HOPE VIDEO (12 MINUTES)

Play the video that outlines the Christmas message of hope, focusing on missed opportunities and how familiarity can cause us to miss out on deeper truths.

5. BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 2:1-12 (4 MINUTES)

Read Matthew 2:1-12, the story of the Magi visiting Jesus, contrasting their pursuit of Jesus with the religious leaders who were only five miles away but failed to respond.



**6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40 MINUTES)**

1. What stood out to you most from the video?
2. Why do you think the Magi were so willing to pursue Jesus, while the religious leaders, who were so close, didn't even check it out?
3. Can you think of a time in your life when you were so familiar with something that you missed out on its true meaning or beauty?
4. How do the "shadows" of Christmas (like traditions, decorations, movies) impact your experience of the holiday? Are they helpful or distracting?
5. Agree or disagree that many people, even Christians, are not living out and experiencing hope today? Explain.
6. In what ways do you see people settling for 'shadows' instead of chasing after the 'shining star' in life?
7. How can we keep the hope of Jesus at the center of our Christmas season, despite all the distractions?
8. What is one area of your life where you need to experience more hope? How can Jesus bring hope into that situation?
9. Are there parts of this life that feel hopeless to you? If so, explain.
10. What does it mean to you that hope is not just an idea but a person—Jesus? How can this understanding change the way you live?
11. What practical step can you take this week to "unbox the hope of Jesus" and live with real hope every day?
12. Of the four gifts we are unboxing this Advent season, hope, peace, joy, and love, which is the one you are needing most this season, and why?

7. CLOSING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

Invite the group to share any personal prayer requests. Then, close in prayer, asking God to help everyone live in the true hope of Jesus this Christmas season.

*For a deeper, daily experience to go alongside of the video series, purchase *Red Letter Advent: 25 Days of Unboxing Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love* at www.redletteradvent.com and read the Introduction, as well as Days 1-7.

**1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER (4 MINUTES)**

Welcome everyone and open with a short prayer, inviting God to guide the conversation.

2. ICEBREAKER QUESTION (7 MINUTES)

Question: "What's a personal strategy you use when life feels overwhelming, especially during busy seasons like the holidays?"

3. WATCH THE RED LETTER PEACE VIDEO (12 MINUTES)

Play the video that outlines the Christmas message of peace, focusing on how Jesus brings peace into not only our practical, daily lives, but spiritually as well.

4. BIBLE READINGS (5 MINUTES)

Read Matthew 11:28-30: Focus on Jesus' invitation to exchange burdens and experience His peace.

Read Luke 2:1-21: Focus on how the invitation for the peace of God was extended even to those who were considered "unclean" in that day.





5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40 MINUTES)

1. In the video, life is compared to the game of Tetris. How does this analogy resonate with your experience of life's pressures, especially during the Christmas season?
2. The idea of being "yoked" with Jesus is central to experiencing peace. What do you think it means to be yoked with Christ, and how does this apply to your life?
3. Jesus doesn't promise to remove stress entirely but offers peace amidst it. How have you seen God bring peace into stressful situations in your life?
4. Reflecting on Matthew 11:28-30, what is one burden you feel God is calling you to give to Him? In what part of your life do you most need the peace of God?
5. The shepherds were the first to hear the message of peace. Why do you think God chose them to receive such important news, and what can we learn from that?
6. How does the peace that Jesus offers differ from the peace we typically seek in our day-to-day activities or relationships?
7. In the video, it's mentioned that life can feel chaotic, yet Jesus brings us peace in the middle of it. What practical steps can you take this week to prioritize experiencing Jesus' peace in your life?
8. How does the spiritual peace that Jesus offers change the way you view your relationship with God and others during the Advent season?
9. Christmas is often busy and overwhelming. What are some areas in your life right now where you need to experience God's peace more fully?
10. The video talks about being yoked with Jesus and walking alongside Him. How can you allow yourself to "walk with Him" more in the next few weeks to experience deeper peace?

6. CLOSING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Pray for each person to experience the peace of Christ in both the chaotic and quiet moments of life. Invite God to help everyone walk with Him daily, especially through the upcoming holiday season, to bring peace into their relationships and situations.

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1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER (4 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone and open with a short prayer, inviting God to guide the conversation.

2. ICEBREAKER QUESTION (7 MINUTES)

"What is the most extreme or out-of-the-ordinary thing you've ever done for fun?"

3. WATCH THE RED LETTER ADVENT JOY VIDEO (12 MINUTES)

Play the video that outlines the Christmas message of joy, focusing on the fact that true, lasting joy can only come from Jesus.

4. BIBLE READINGS (5 MINUTES)

Read Philippians 2:5-11: Focus on the extreme, daring rescue mission that Jesus would embark on to save all people from their sins.

Read Philippians 4:4-7: Focus on how even though the apostle Paul was writing these words from a prison cell, we can still have joy, which will lead to peace.



5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40 MINUTES)

1. Who is the most joyful person you know? And what is it about that person that makes them joyful?
2. Why do you think people today seek joy in extremes, as mentioned in the video (extreme sports, extreme experiences)?
3. What are some of the common ways people look for joy during the Christmas season, and why might they often come up short?
4. The video contrasts temporary joy with lasting joy found in Jesus. How have you experienced this difference in your life?
5. How does the simplicity of Jesus' birth contrast with our expectations of joy in extravagant or extreme things?
6. Jesus is described as the most joyful person who ever lived. How can His life and mission teach us about experiencing joy in our everyday lives?
7. What does the phrase "obedience to God brings joy" mean to you? How can we apply this to our lives, especially during challenging seasons?
8. The video suggests that joy isn't always easy, and it often comes through fulfilling God's mission for us. What mission or purpose has God given you that could lead to joy?
9. Earlier you read Philippians 4:4-7 where the Apostle Paul urges us to rejoice. He wrote these words while he was imprisoned. What does this teach us about joy? Have you ever experienced joy even though your outer circumstances pushed against this? Explain.
10. As we prepare for Christmas, how can we intentionally focus on the lasting joy that only Jesus can bring rather than getting caught up in temporary pleasures?

6. CLOSING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

Invite the group to share any personal prayer requests. Then, close in prayer, asking God to help everyone live in the true joy of Jesus this Christmas season.

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**1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER (4 MINUTES)**

Welcome everyone and open with a short prayer, inviting God to guide the conversation.

2. ICEBREAKER QUESTION (10 MINUTES)

"What's the funniest or most memorable Christmas card or gift you've ever received?"

3. WATCH THE RED LETTER ADVENT LOVE VIDEO (12 MINUTES)

Play the video that outlines the Christmas message of love, focusing on how the Christmas story and rescue mission has love for all people at the very center of it all.

4. BIBLE READING (5 MINUTES)

Read Daniel 2:1-49

Earlier in the series we read Matthew 2:1-12. Now, let's read the context found in Daniel 2, where the Magi are unable to interpret the dream and Daniel, through God's power, steps in and saves their lives. Focus on how the Magi, though often misunderstood, are part of the Christmas story showing that God's love extends beyond just the powerful or wise.



**5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40 MINUTES)**

1. What stood out to you most from the video?
2. The nativity story, especially the inclusion of the Magi, often portrays them as wealthy kings. How does the idea that they were more like "servants of the king" change your perception of their role in the Christmas story?
3. We learned that the Magi followed the star but weren't necessarily the wisest in the story. How does this remind you of how God calls imperfect people to follow Him?
4. The Magi weren't present at the birth of Jesus but arrived much later. Why do you think their journey is still an important part of the Christmas story?
5. In what ways do you see God's love being extended to those who are typically overlooked or counted out, like the shepherds or Magi?
6. How does the concept that God's love is for "the least, the lost, and the overlooked" challenge the way we view others, especially during the Christmas season?
7. The video emphasizes the idea that God's love not only saves us but also gives us purpose. How does knowing you are a part of God's "rescue mission" impact the way you live?
8. What can we learn from the fact that the Magi, who were outsiders, were some of the first to recognize the significance of Jesus' birth?
9. The video encourages us not to miss out on the true meaning of Christmas. What steps can we take to ensure we focus on Christ's love and not just the external celebrations?
10. How can we unbox and share the love of Jesus in practical ways during the Christmas season, especially with those who feel overlooked?
11. Of the four gifts we unboxed this Advent season, hope, peace, joy, and love, which is the one you experienced the most this season. Why?

6. CLOSING PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

Invite the group to share any personal prayer requests. Then, close in prayer, asking God to help everyone experience the true love of Jesus this Christmas season.

*For a deeper, daily experience to go alongside of the video series, purchase *Red Letter Advent: 25 Days of Unboxing Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love* at www.redletteradvent.com and read Days 20-25.