

**Lesson 1: The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ****Purpose Statement:**

To consider the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, who makes biblical Christianity the unique and true religion.

**Learning Objectives:**

This lesson provides the Christian leader with the following:

1. A basic understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.
2. Corresponding biblical evidences of this uniqueness.

**Introduction:**

Jesus is the center -- the very foundation -- of the Christian religion. Let us now examine five ways in which Jesus is unique.

**I. Jesus is Unique in That He is an Historical Person Who May be Studied in History.**

Jesus is truly an historical person who lived on this earth for 33 years. Most other religions talk about a god or gods that have no historical record to enable a student to study them.

The following facts exhibit the historical reality of Jesus:

- A. The genealogy of Jesus Christ demonstrates that He is an historical person (*Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38*). Why would the writers of the New Testament give such detailed genealogies unless they were writing about a true historical person whose life and ministry are recorded in history?
- B. Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning an historical person who was to come (*Genesis 3:15; Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15; Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 7:14, 52:13-53:12; Daniel 9:24-27; Zechariah 9:9,12:10*).
- C. Jesus greatly affected this world by living in it:
  1. The Christian Church meets on Sunday. Many historians recognize that Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday.
  2. Our calendar system is based on the life of Jesus (AD = Year of our Lord).
  3. Countless lives throughout history have been affected by Jesus Christ. (You probably could share many examples showing how Jesus has affected your own life).

## II. Jesus is Unique in That He is Equal with God.

- A. The incarnation portrays that He is equal with God.  
*Matthew 1:23* -- Emmanuel means "God with us."
- B. *John 1:1* clearly identifies Jesus as equal with God.  
*John 1:14* makes it clear that Jesus was God in the flesh.
- C. Notice the "I AM" sayings in John's gospel (*John 6:35; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7,9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5*). In *Exodus 3:14* God identifies Himself to Moses as "I AM."
- D. *Philippians 2:6-11* -- notice especially the following:

*... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord . . . (Philippians 2:10-11).*

This confession represents that the early Church understood that Jesus Christ is one with the Father.

Note: Anyone who teaches that Jesus is not equal with God is in error and is denying what the Bible clearly states.

## III. Jesus is Unique in His Love for Humanity.

It could be said that Jesus was the most loving human being who ever lived. Let us briefly examine five examples of Jesus' love.

- A. Jesus cared for the little children (*Matthew 19:13-15; Matthew 18:1-9*).
- B. Jesus taught His followers that they were to love humanity (*Matthew 5:43- 48; Mark 12:28-33; Galatians 5:14; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:14-19; I John 3:14-23*).
- C. Jesus cared for the sick, even though society viewed them with disgust (*Matthew 8 and 9; Matthew 15:21-28; Matthew 21:14-15*).
- D. Jesus showed His love for humanity by His greatest act of healing: dying on the cross and rising from the dead for the sin of mankind (*John 3:16; Romans 5:8*).

The love of Jesus Christ, who is one with God the Father, and who died for our sins that we might have fellowship with God, led Paul to say so beautifully,

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).*

- E. Jesus Christ offers an eternal love relationship to everyone who has faith in Him (*John 3:16*).

#### **IV. Jesus is Unique in His Ability to Forgive Sin.**

- A. Although many religions do not teach that humans have the need for forgiveness of sin, deep within, everyone has a great need to be forgiven of wrongdoing. Paul states:

*For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*

- B. Jesus is the only One able to forgive sins and restore fellowship with God. Paul states:

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

- C. Jesus is able to forgive sin because He is God and has proven His power to forgive sins through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

Notice what Jesus says following His resurrection as recorded in Matthew:

*All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me (Matthew 28:18).*

- D. Since all this is true about Jesus Christ, only He, and He alone, can forgive the sins of humanity (notice Hebrews 10:1-18). That is why He says,

*I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).*

#### **V. Jesus is Unique in That He Changes Lives.**

Throughout all of church history, the lives of millions of men and women have been changed because of Jesus Christ.

- A. Jesus has changed your life.
- B. Jesus has changed the lives of many others.

#### **Conclusion:**

An agnostic professor at a Hindu University once asked a famous Indian Christian mystic by the name of Sadhu Sundar Singh what he found in Christianity that was unique. Singh answered, "I have found Christ." The professor, a little impatient, agreed that he knew that Singh had found Christ, but he wanted to know what particular idea, principle or doctrine that Singh had found that he had not found before. Singh answered, "The particular thing I have found is Christ."

My friends, Jesus is unique. There has never been, nor will there ever be, another person like Jesus Christ. Because of this, Christianity, which is founded upon Jesus Christ, is the unique and true religion of the world.

- \* Jesus is unique in that he is an historical person.
- \* Jesus is unique in that He is God.

- \* Jesus is unique in His love for humanity.
- \* Jesus is unique in His ability to forgive sin.
- \* Jesus is unique in that He changes lives.

Preach and teach the uniqueness of Jesus Christ because people need the forgiveness of sins that He offers and a relationship with Him. As Jesus says in Matthew :

*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:27-30).*



**Lesson 2: The Cross of Christ****Purpose Statement:**

To acquaint the Christian leader with the place of the crucifixion in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and its significance in history.

**Learning Objectives:**

This lesson provides the Christian leader with the following:

1. An understanding of the historical effect of the crucifixion.
2. An understanding of the character of God as revealed in the crucifixion.

**Introduction:**

1. The cross is recognized as the universal symbol of the Christian Church. People wear the crucifix around their necks, churches put crosses on buildings, etc.
2. Paul preached the cross, having experienced the risen Christ (*1 Corinthians 2:2*).
3. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are intimately connected with the death and resurrection of Christ.
4. It is important to recognize that the cross and resurrection interpret each other (one does not completely make sense without the other). Therefore, this lesson will focus primarily on the cross, but will also include some information surrounding the resurrection.

**Textual Analysis**

*Consider: 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; Romans 3:21-31, 5:8, 6:23*

**I. Historical Effect of the Cross****A. First Century Effects**

1. In the first century, death on a cross was viewed as one of the cruelest, most degrading types of punishment.
2. What was the purpose of Christ's death? (Read *Romans 3:21-31, 6:23; Isaiah 53*)
  - a. Christ died to reconcile sinful humanity with a holy, loving, sinless God.
  - b. Substitutionary atonement means that Christ suffered as a substitute for us; He bore our sins. He died in our place as He took upon Himself the wrath of God.

- i. Some say the notion of substitutionary atonement is immoral since God would be seen as punishing an innocent person. However, it must not be forgotten that Christ took the cross upon Himself voluntarily.
- ii. Furthermore, the concept of substitutionary atonement only has meaning if Christ IS God.

#### B. Present Effects

1. What does the cross teach us about God's love? (Look at *Romans 5:8; John 3:16*).  
The New Testament considers the cross one of the clearest examples of God's love.
2. What is the extent of the effect of the cross? (*Colossians 1:20*)

#### C. Future Effects

1. The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing because...

*Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).*

2. If you were to create a picture of how God would reveal Himself to humanity, what would you paint? What is needed to redeem humanity? (Discuss)
3. Why did God choose for His Son to die in this way?

## II. Character of God Revealed in the Cross

We should take time to consider how the character of God is revealed because the Scriptures were written primarily to teach us about God and how we must respond to Him. (Many of these ideas have been introduced in the previous section.)

#### A. Humanity of Christ

1. Jesus is certainly the clearest revelation of God; for He is "God in the flesh."
2. If you read the Gospels from a literary perspective, you will notice that the climax lies at the cross/resurrection. To what is the ministry of Jesus pointing? To the cross/resurrection.
3. McGrath, in *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (page 161), states, "Any attempt to seek God elsewhere than in the cross of Christ is to be rejected out of hand as idle

speculation: the theologian is forced, perhaps against his will, to come to terms with the riddle of the crucified and hidden God."

#### B. Justice of Christ

In the cross, God's justice is revealed. Look again at *Romans 3:21-26*.

1. John Stott, in *The Cross of Christ* (p. 211) states:

“By the way he justified us, he also justified Himself.”

2. Since God is holy and just, He MUST punish sin, and He demonstrated justice by executing it upon Himself.

#### C. Love of Christ

In the cross, God's love is revealed -- look again at *John 3:16*, *Romans 6:23*, etc. In our society, we often try to look for God's love in our personal experiences and/or feelings. These certainly can be valid, but God is still a loving God in suffering, pain and death. To find God's love we must focus on the cross.

#### D. Compassion of Christ

In the cross, God's suffering with humanity is revealed. God understands our sufferings.

#### E. Wisdom of Christ

In the cross, God's wisdom is revealed (*I Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5*).

#### F. Integrity of Christ

The cross teaches that God takes sin very seriously.

#### G. Power of Christ

In the cross, God's power is revealed (*I Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5*).

## Conclusion:

The cross indicates that God's revelation may be confusing to the human mind (refer to letter E. above). What does the human mind expect to see in God's revelation? (Read again *I Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5*).

McGrath, in *The Mystery of the Cross* (page 105), claims that:

God is revealed in the cross -- but he doesn't seem to be there.... Although it is indeed none other than God Himself who is revealed in the 'sufferings and cross of Christ,' He is not recognizable as God on account of our presuppositions of what God ought to be like, and what form His revelation ought to take.

- I. Read *Luke 9:23*. Christ believes Christians will experience the cross in this world.
- II. Consider the tension between our faith and experience; between the "now, but not yet."
  - A. The Kingdom is here, but not yet in its fullness (see *Matthew 13:31-32*).
  - B. For the Christian, the devil is defeated, but not yet eliminated.
  - C. We experience some of the blessings of Christ's resurrection, but fullness, consummation is in the future.
  - D. McGrath, in the *Mystery of the Cross*, (page 108) states,

Life under the cross involves living Good Friday in the light of Easter Day, knowing that God is neither absent from nor uninvolved in the former, but is present and working in a strange and hidden way -- a way which can only be fully disclosed when time gives way to eternity, but which is illuminated by the resurrection. There is a dialectic, a tension, between the cross and the resurrection in the Christian experience.
  - E. For the Christian, does that mean this world will at times be confusing?
  - F. How can we know that God IS active in this world and IS in control? This is where the theology of the resurrection comes into play.
  - G. Which element will the Christian experience more - the "cross experience" or the "resurrection experience?" For many Christians, the primary experience has been that of the cross, with the hope of the resurrection. McGrath (*Mystery of the Cross*, p. 35) states:

... the cross, the culmination of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, which remains the key to our earthly Christian experience... is, to be sure, interpreted in the light of the resurrection, so that we now have the key to this crucial enigma -- but it is the cross, interpreted in the light of the resurrection, which must remain the key to our



**Lesson 3: The Resurrection of Christ****Purpose Statement:**

To equip the Christian leader with a fundamental understanding of the place and importance of the resurrection in the Christian faith.

**Learning Objectives:**

This lesson provides the Christian leader with the following:

1. A knowledge of biblical reasons for the resurrection.
2. A knowledge of ten historical arguments for the resurrection.
3. An understanding of the character of God as revealed in the resurrection.

**Introduction:**

Remember that the resurrection cannot be completely understood without a study of the cross, and vice-versa. The resurrection is where the Christian faith stands or falls. It is vital to understand this and apply that understanding to life:

**I. Reasons for the Resurrection****A. *I Corinthians 15:3-4:***

*That He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (I Corinthians 15:4).*

1. To what "Scriptures" is Paul referring? Since the New Testament canon was not yet formed, he must be referring to the Old Testament.
2. Some Old Testament texts potentially point to the notion of the resurrection: *Psalms 16:8-11; Psalm 110:1; Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 53.*

**B. During His earthly ministry, Jesus clearly predicted His resurrection (*Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; John 2:19-22*).****C. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was historical and physical (*I Corinthians 15:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:27*). Appropriately, Professor Norman Anderson questions, "What Asiatic Jew of the first century could possibly have written that 'Christ died for our sins (physically of course), that 'He was buried' (physically of course) and that 'He was raised again on the third day' if he had not believed that something had happened to the body which had been crucified and buried?"**

D. The resurrection of Jesus Christ:

1. Confirms His deity; He was/is the Son of God (*Romans 1:4*).
2. Confirms His power; it was impossible for death to hold Him by its power (*Acts 2:24*).
3. Authenticates His words as a prophet (*Matthew 20:18-19*).
4. Provides hope by assuring His followers of eternal life with Him (*John 10:10- 11, 14:1-6; I Corinthians 15:20-23; Romans 6:5*).
5. Provides justification (notice *Romans 4:25*).
6. Assures a future judgment for humanity (*Acts 17:31*).
7. Validates our faith; gives value to our faith (*I Corinthians 15:17*).
8. Is the basis for the hope of a new creation (*Romans 8:18-23*).
9. Promises ultimate triumph; teaches us that history has a goal. We know the final verdict (evil is defeated; God is in control).

**II. Ten Historical Arguments Supporting the Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

- A. The New Testament writings are accurate, reliable sources of information.
- B. Paul claims 500 people witnessed the resurrected Jesus (*1 Corinthians 15:5-6*).
- C. No evidence has been discovered to negate the truth of Jesus' resurrection.
- D. The launching pad for the early church was the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- E. Jesus Christ changes lives.

- F. The disciples did not have the personal qualities to pull off the lie.
  
- G. The disciples did not make up the resurrection for power.
  
- H. The disciples did not make up the resurrection for money.
  
- I. If the resurrection were a hoax, the disciples would have made the resurrection narratives more persuasive than they are.
  
- J. People are not willing to suffer, let alone die, for a lie.

### **III. Character of God Revealed in the Resurrection**

As we have emphasized in the first two lessons, the cross and resurrection provide humanity the clearest revelation of God. We have studied what the cross reveals about God's character, but we must also study the character of God as revealed by Christ's resurrection.

- A. Jesus is Truthful. Jesus is who He said He was, the Son of God, "God in the flesh," and, therefore, the clearest revelation of God.
- B. Jesus is Sovereign. He is in control. Because Jesus conquered death and sin, future events are assured.
- C. Jesus is Faithful. Though events in history (and in our lives!) may be confusing, the resurrection affirms that there is a purpose to history.



**Lesson 4: False Teachers and Cult Groups****Purpose Statement:**

To acquaint the Christian leader with the characteristics of false teachers and cult groups.

**Learning Objectives:**

This lesson provides the Christian leader with the following:

1. The ability to define a cult group.
2. A knowledge of the characteristics of a cult group.
3. An understanding of the biblical perspective on cult groups.
4. An understanding of how to witness to a cult group member.

**Introduction:**

1. In every country, Christians have to deal with the problem of false teachers and cult groups.
2. This lesson deals with false teachers and cult groups, not with false religions. Cult groups are false branches of Christianity, not an entirely different religion (such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism).
3. Many times cult groups are developed by Christian leaders who, despite good intentions, develop false teachings and doctrine; it is, therefore, important to recognize some of the early characteristics of potential false leaders and cult groups.
4. False teachers and cult groups are extremely dangerous for local churches. May we remember the words of the apostle Paul:

*And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14).*

5. At the end of this lesson is a brief questionnaire for Christian leaders to fill out.

**I. Definition:**

A cult group is a religious movement that teaches doctrine and practice which contradicts Scripture as interpreted by traditional Christianity.

**II. Five Characteristics of False Teachers and Cult Groups:**

- A. In a cult group there is an acceptance of so-called "new truth."
  1. This "new truth" consists of new revelation and/or new interpretations of the Bible.
  2. This means that the traditional, historical teachings of Christianity are changed and at times even denied, or no longer viewed as true.
- B. False teachers and cult groups generally stress subjective, emotional experiences.

1. Instead of emphasizing the Bible, they emphasize feelings and emotions.
  2. At times feelings will determine the interpretation of biblical passages.
- C. Almost always, a cult group is begun by a strong leader.
1. It is generally the strong leader who has received the so-called “new truth.”
  2. Often the strong leader’s biblical interpretations are never questioned by the group.
  3. The group will follow the teacher himself, even to extremes.
- D. False teachers and cult groups tend to isolate themselves from other churches.
1. This separated group believes it has the “true” teachings of the Bible and that Christians outside their group are wrong. At times, such a group will have its own writings and give them greater importance than the Bible.
  2. Again, there is almost always one dominating leader who is identified as the leader of the group.
  3. False teachers and cult groups treat their members as if they are very important and make them feel accepted, loved and needed.
  4. A cult group provides for its members clear but dogmatic answers concerning the questions of life.
- E. Most cult groups, in time, will deny elements of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

### **III. Biblical Perspective On False Teachers and Cult Groups:**

- A. The Bible is the final written revelation of God.
1. All the Church needs today for doctrine and belief is in the Bible.
  2. The canon of Scripture is closed; no person’s teachings or writings should be added to the Bible.
  3. John writes in the book of Revelation a serious warning about adding to this book. This warning, however, could be given about all Scripture:
- I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Revelation 22:18-19).*
- B. Although feelings and emotions are important, God does not primarily reveal Himself in this way. Rather, God has revealed Himself primarily in the Bible.
1. The Bible contains the historical record of Jesus Christ, who is the clearest revelation of God.
  2. In our lesson concerning the theology of the cross, we learned that God’s love is not primarily a feeling, but an historical fact.
  3. Human feelings and emotions constantly change, whereas God’s character never changes.

C. Jesus warns of false prophets in Matthew:

*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them (Matthew 7:15-16).*

1. Every leader's teachings should be open to examination by the members of the church.
2. No teacher is without error. The Bible is without error, but the leader's interpretation will at times be mistaken. Every church leader should admit that his interpretation can at times be mistaken.

D. The Church of Jesus Christ includes every single person who has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior. True Christian believers are not restricted to one particular group or a given leader's ideas.

E. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the clearest revelation of God. Jesus alone is the way to eternal life.

*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).*

**IV. How to Witness to a Cult Group Member:**

A. Understand the clear teachings of Christianity, which have remained unchanged throughout the history of the Church, and should not be changed in the future:

1. There is one God, the Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus was born supernaturally to the Virgin Mary and then lived a sinless life. He was 100% God and 100% man.
3. Jesus died on the cross for a fallen humanity and rose again on the third day.
4. Every human is a sinner and cannot save himself. Forgiveness can only be found in Jesus Christ. (No additional act is needed for salvation; all other actions are demonstrations of a person's faith in Christ.)
5. Jesus Christ established His Church, which is made up of those who have trusted in Him for their salvation. The members of this Church continue to share the message of Jesus Christ and meet regularly to worship through prayer, fellowship, and teaching of the Bible.
6. Jesus Christ is coming to this earth again.
7. The Bible is the final source of written revelation, completely without error.

B. Understand the particular cult group's teaching and how it differs from the clear teachings of the Christian faith throughout the history of the Church.

C. Listen attentively to a cult group member's experiences as to why he joined the group. Remember that most cult groups do not call themselves a "cult," the members do not

consider themselves “brainwashed,” and many members feel they have had a “conversion” experience.

D. Point to the authority of Scripture.

E. Consistently discuss at length the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and talk about the teaching of the cross and resurrection and what it means.

F. Pray for individual members of a given cult group.

G. Love them with a Christ-like love. As the Bible teaches, we will only win them by our love.

### **Questionnaire:**

This questionnaire is designed to give you the opportunity as a Christian leader to check yourself to make certain you are not developing characteristics of a false teacher or a cult group leader.

1. Do I preach/teach that there is one God, the Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and existing eternally in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

2. Do I preach/teach that Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

3. Do I teach that Jesus is the only Son of God?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

4. Do I teach that Jesus was 100% God and 100% man?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

5. Do I preach/teach that Jesus died on the cross for a fallen humanity and rose again on the third day?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
6. Do I preach/teach that every human is a sinner and cannot save himself?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
7. Do I preach/teach that forgiveness can be only found in Jesus Christ?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
8. Do I preach/teach that Jesus established the Church, which is made up of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
9. Do I preach/teach that believers must continue to share the message of Jesus Christ, and meet regularly to worship through prayer, fellowship and teaching of the Bible?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
10. In my teaching/preaching, do I teach that Jesus is coming again?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:
11. Do I preach/teach that the Bible is the final source of written revelation and is completely without error?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
If not, why?:



12. Is my preaching/teaching similar to that of other Christian leaders around me?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

Note: It is always possible that many of the Christian groups around you are teaching falsehoods and that you are different than they. If this is the case, please identify which of the major teachings of the Christian faith the group around you are not teaching (as shown above).

13. Do I encourage my congregation to check everything I say by the clear teachings of the Bible?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

14. Is my preaching/teaching filled with the meaning and significance of Jesus' cross?

Yes

No

If not, why?:

15. Is my preaching/teaching filled with the meaning and significance of Jesus' resurrection?

Yes

No

If not, why?

16. Does my church concentrate on what the Bible says more than we talk about our experiences and feelings about God?

Yes

No

If not, why?

\*If you have answered "no" to any of these questions, you need to examine your biblical beliefs. If you have answered "no" to more than one of these questions, you need to realize you are demonstrating characteristics of false teaching.