

# Lesson 1

## The Source of Generosity

### Good Questions Have Small Groups Talking

[www.joshhunt.com](http://www.joshhunt.com)

Notes to the teacher:

- I have provided more material than you will likely be able to use. This is intentional. Feel free to pick and choose and adapt as needed.
- These lessons are written in a question and answer format. If you teach a large class, you may want to use many of them as a rhetorical question.
- I provide quotes from world-class authors such as Beth Moore, John Piper and John MacArthur.
- There are hundreds of lessons online in this format. They follow Lifeway's outlines and can be used supplementally or stand-alone.

You might email your group and ask them to watch these two videos on the theme, "Who is Jesus?"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johNLhZ5y48>

<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/34979/who-is-jesus> (There is a fee to purchase this; you can preview it for free.)

### **Luke 9:18-27**

#### **DIG**

#### **1. Luke 9.18. Why do you think Jesus asked this question? Do you think he knew?**

Why did Jesus ask this? Did he not know? That could be. When he became human, he set aside some of his god-ness. In another context, he said he did not know the day or the hour when he would return. I think it is more likely, however, that it was a teaching moment for the disciples.

This is what I call a warm up question. It is a get-em talking question. I write small group curriculum for a living. I start nearly every lesson with this kind of question. It is a question to get the group started talking.

People have said to me, "I have tried using discussion questions and my group doesn't want to talk." Do what Jesus did. Get them talking about somebody else. People love to talk about someone else. I think this is why Jesus asked them about what other people thought. It is always easier to talk about

what other people think than to share our own convictions or feelings. — Josh Hunt. Teach Like Jesus.

**2. If you were to ask a dozen people on the street who Jesus is, what do you think you would hear?**

If you are set up to do so, you might show this video. It is 2:38 minutes long.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johNLhZ5y48>

There are actually quite a number of these. Here is another one:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKbeqGxHLrw> 6 minutes.

**3. Suppose a friend said Jesus was a great moral teacher. Is that a good answer? Why or why not?**

Perhaps the most prevalent view is that Jesus was a good man, even the best of men, and a great moral teacher. Millions hold this view despite the brilliant debunking given it by Thomas Aquinas, and more recently by C. S. Lewis, who wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Hughes, R. K. (1998). Luke: That you may know the truth. Preaching the Word (338–339). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

**4. How would you answer the question: Who is Jesus?**

If Jesus came to certain theological schools today and asked the professors, "And you, who do you think I am?" what do you think they might reply?

Some might answer, "You are the eschatological manifestation of the kerygma in which we recognize the ultimate significance of our interpersonal relations."

And Jesus would probably say, "What?!" — Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 sermon illustrations arranged by topic and indexed exhaustively. 1989 (M. P. Green, Ed.) (Revised edition of: The expositor's illustration file). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

**5. Luke 9.20. "Messiah" is a stained-glass word. What exactly does it mean?**

Christ is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew title Messiah and means "Anointed One." Peter's confession showed that the disciples had come to believe that Jesus was the Anointed One Israel

had been waiting for from the time of David—a superhuman being who would overthrow Israel’s enemies, regather God’s earthly people from the four corners of the world, and make Jerusalem the center of the world, establishing the perfect reign of God on earth. Peter and the disciples did not understand all the ramifications of the Messiah’s coming, but they had the big picture. Peter was the only who said it, but they all nodded and murmured their assent. Jesus was their long-awaited, God-given hope of salvation, their deliverer. — Hughes, R. K. (1998). *Luke: That you may know the truth. Preaching the Word* (339). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

## **6. Why is this question important?**

What we think about Jesus is everything. Acceptance or rejection of him makes all the difference. We must understand that he is Messiah, God’s Son who came to us in human flesh and was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead, thus paying the full penalty for our sins. Now he reigns in Heaven, and one day he will judge every human who has ever lived. To be there with him, we must believe this—we must rest our lives on it.

“Who do you say I am?” We each need to be ready with an answer to this most important question. One man going through customs, when asked for the hundredth time that day, “Do you have anything to declare?” answered, “Yes, I do. I declare that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” The official, taken aback, responded, “Well, I declare!”

“Who do you say I am?” is a question every person must personally answer and believe for himself or herself. — Hughes, R. K. (1998). *Luke: That you may know the truth. Preaching the Word* (339–340). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

## **7. Verse 21. Why do you think Jesus warned them not to tell?**

Jesus’ response to Peter’s words is a very firm injunction to silence. He charged and commanded them, or ‘gave them strict orders’ (NEB). The reason is surely the near certainty of misunderstanding if it were spread abroad. The Jews detested their state of subjection to the Romans and longed for deliverance. They were ready to follow almost anyone who claimed to be Messiah and in fact there were many petty revolts. Had Jesus been widely hailed as Messiah, people would have understood it as a political and military claim. They would have completely missed what he was teaching them. — Morris, L. (1988). Vol. 3: *Luke: An introduction and commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (188). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

## **8. What four things did Jesus predict in verse 22?**

Matthew and Mark speak of Peter’s rebuke of Jesus, but Luke concentrates on his Lord’s suffering. He reports that Jesus said that he must suffer. That is what being Messiah meant. Suffering, for him, was no accident, but a compelling divine necessity. And of the many things he would suffer Jesus speaks only of the final rejection. The word rejected seems to be a technical term for rejection after a careful legal scrutiny to see whether a candidate for office was qualified (see LSJ). It implies here that the hierarchy would consider Jesus’ claims but decide against him. The one article in the

expression the elders and chief priests and scribes points to the fact that the three formed a single group in the Sanhedrin. There was, of course, only one high priest; the plural signifies all the members of the high-priestly families. It was the nation's leaders who would be foremost in rejecting him. Nor would this be only a matter of words. He would be killed. Jesus left them in no doubt but that being Messiah meant a cross. But the cross is not the whole story. On the third day the Son of man will be raised. The resurrection was as certain as the crucifixion. — Morris, L. (1988). Vol. 3: Luke: An introduction and commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (188). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

#### **9. Verse 23 is a classic. What exactly does it mean to take up our cross?**

The follower of Jesus must deny himself (not just his sins, himself; he cannot be self-centred). There is nothing self-indulgent about being a Christian. The disciples had probably seen a man take up his cross, and they knew what it meant. When a man from one of their villages took up a cross and went off with a little band of Roman soldiers, he was on a one-way journey. He would not be back. Taking up the cross meant the utmost in self-denial. This is Luke's first use of the word cross and it comes with striking effect. Christ's follower has died to a whole way of life (cf. 14:27). Luke tells us that this is not something that can be finished and got out of the way: it must be done daily (cf. 1 Cor. 15:31). So, says Jesus, will he follow me. — Morris, L. (1988). Vol. 3: Luke: An introduction and commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (188–189). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

#### **10. What are some common misconceptions about taking up our cross?**

Let's look at these misconceptions. Some people say that taking up the cross is only an inner, spiritual experience, something that takes place in our hearts – an inner cross where we die to our selfish desires.

Well, there is some truth in this, for there is something called an inner cross. For instance Jesus had to struggle within at Gethsemane in prayer, when he prayed, "not my will, but yours be done." He had to deny himself and put God's will first.

But it wasn't just about his inner attitudes. Because after Gethsemane came Golgotha. No, Jesus had to take up his cross with real life actions – his suffering and death on the cross.

Yes, the cross has to do with what goes on within you, but it is also about your outward behavior. For if you die to your desires within this will show up in cruciform behavior and actions without. As Jesus said, a "tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33). What is within your heart, is what will come out in your deeds.

Some people say that taking up the cross is only about suffering persecution, so that it only applies to a particular part of our lives, when we suffer for our faith.

Well the cross certainly does refer to persecution and followers of Jesus must literally suffer and do at times literally give up their lives.

But Jesus himself connects his call to take up the cross in Mark 8 with self-denial, something we are to practice in everyday life. Also in Luke 14 he connects the cross to something as practical as surrendering our earthly wealth to God. No, the cross has to do with all that we do in this world as followers of Jesus. Suffering for sure, but also helping a neighbor, doing ministry, serving someone a meal, etc.. <https://williamshiggins.wordpress.com/tag/take-up-your-cross/>

### **11. Does living a life of self-denial mean a life of poverty?**

Understand, Jesus was not preaching against wealth, per se. We must not forget that God's promise to Israel included material abundance. However, neither did Jesus preach a "plant-a-seed-of-faith-and-name-your-blessing" gospel of health and wealth. Christianity is not and never has been a greedy get-rich scheme.

A warning is in order. Reject any teaching that even suggests material wealth, physical health, or favorable circumstances have anything to do with the amount of faith you have or how pleased God happens to be with you. And beware those who teach that financial donations will unlock an endless abundance of God's blessings. They are false shepherds who will rob you of your money and destroy your relationship with God. The "faith" they proclaim is a toxic faith.

As far as Jesus was concerned, money and possessions are morally neutral and have no relation whatsoever to the new kingdom, except that they might distract us from what He considers important. — Swindoll, C. R. (2011). *Jesus: The greatest life of all*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **12. Who have you known that really lived this life of taking up their cross daily? Who has been an example to you of the cross-life?**

Bill Bright is a stunning example of one who was totally sold out to Christ. As the founder of Campus Crusade of Christ, he is arguably responsible for seeing more people come to faith in Christ than any human in history. He authored the Four Spiritual Laws which has been printed 2.5 Billion times. He is the producer of the Jesus film which has enjoyed 5.5 billion viewings and as a result 200 million have prayed to receive Christ. James Dobson wrote the Forward to his last book—completed three weeks before his death at age 81. Dobson writes, "Bill's life was exceptional in every regard. He was a giant among men. And, "There is no one I admired and loved more than Dr. Bright, who was perhaps the most influential Christian leader to live since the first century A.D." Yet, Bill Bright said he wanted to remember as nothing more or nothing less than a slave of Jesus Christ. In 1951 he and his wife Vonette actually signed a written contract to be slaves of Christ. And how did he experience slavery to Christ?

Selflessly obeying God is a liberating delight when we decide to see ourselves the way early followers of Jesus Christ saw themselves-as His slaves! The more we recognize that we can trust Him with everything, the more we obey, the more we love and the more joy we experience.

But, dear friend, there is a fountain of joy to be released in our lives. It burst forth with Vonette and me as we decided to become slaves by choice of our magnificent Master, Savior and Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ.

— Josh Hunt. *Obedience*.

**13. Does this sound a little scary to you? How do you feel about denying yourself and taking up your cross?**

Christian living lived all out is deeply rewarding. It is the source of great joy. It is life at its best. However, it is sometimes scary. In fact, it is always a little scary. God only leaves us comfortable for short periods of time between longer periods of exhilaration. This is how the FLOW experience is. It is an exciting, thrilling, take your breath away kind of experience. It is never boring.

John Ortberg said it well, “Here is a deep truth about water-walking: The fear will never go away. Why? Because each time I want to grow, it will involve going into new territory, taking on new challenges. And each time I do that, I will experience fear again. As Susan Jeffers writes, “The fear will never go away, as long as I continue to grow.” As Bruce Wilkinson said it, “Big Dream always lies outside our Comfort Zone.” — Josh Hunt. *Obedience*.

**14. Is it possible to live the Christian life without this radical, all-out commitment?**

Christianity is lived all out. It is only lived all out. It is lived in total commitment or it is not lived at all. The problem with many Christians is they attempt obedience half way. They have one foot in the world and one foot in the Faith. It can't be lived that way. Jesus said he would spew us out of his mouth. As the saying goes, “Selected obedience is not obedience at all; it is merely convenience.” Here is another one: “When God puts a period, do not change it to a question mark.” — Josh Hunt. *Obedience*.

**15. This week, we begin a four-part series on stewardship. What does this passage have to say about our stewardship?**

Stewardship begins with Lordship. Stewardship has to do with taking care of the possessions of Someone else. We start by understanding that he is God and he owns everything. Everything we have is on loan from him.

**16. What exactly does stewardship mean?**

A man doesn't decide to become a steward after he has been saved, nor after he begins to make good money. He is a steward—good or bad—when he becomes a Christian. Stewardship in the Christian life demands that a man take good care of his financial affairs because he has been commissioned by Christ to manage those affairs for the Lord. — Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

**17. Some say that they give 10% to the Church. This is their tithe. The rest is to be spent joyfully unto the Lord. Is that the way you see it?**

It all belongs to the Lord. He is God; I am not. He is Lord; I am not. He is master; I am slave. He owns it all. Stewardship begins with Lordship. Lordship living leads to Lordship giving.

**18. How do you feel about giving? Would you like Christian living better if God didn't ask us to give? What do you love about giving?**

People who enjoy God enjoy giving. They are happy givers. They love to give. They are somewhat selfish about their giving—that is, they are protective of the joy that their giving brings them. They know the truth of the verse that says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 9:35 )

Only children enjoy getting Christmas presents more than giving them.

This is not just some sort of investment strategy. This verse is not a left-brained, analytical, chess game where we are trying to get by giving. It is not a pro forma-type strategy to get some future blessing from God. For the person who enjoys God, this is not a futures market. It is overflow. It is now. The person who enjoys God gives for the thrill of giving. He loves it. It really does bring more pleasure than receiving. Only children enjoy getting Christmas presents more than giving them. He dreams of the day when he can give more. He plans for it, and he is making progress.

The person who enjoys God does not need a Greek lexicon to understand that blessed means happy. He is not surprised to learn the background of 2 Corinthians 9:7, “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Greek word translated cheerful is the word from which we get our word hilarious. That sounds right to the person who enjoys God. It feels right to him. It is a happy, hilariously happy thing to give. — Josh Hunt. *Enjoying God Makes All The Difference*.

**19. What keeps people from being more generous than they are?**

The disease cirrhosis of the giver was discovered in A.D. 34 by the husband-wife team of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). It is an acute condition that renders the patient's hands immobile when he is called on to move them in the direction of his wallet or her purse, and from thence to the offering plate. This strange malady is clinically unobservable in such surroundings as the golf club, supermarket, clothing store, or restaurant. Some try to use a fake remedy, pointing out to the patients that income tax deductions can be claimed for giving. The best therapy, and that which leads to a sure and lasting cure, is to get the individual's heart right with God. This affliction is actually a symptom of a more basic need of the soul.

Prescribed Medication: Frequent doses of Romans 12:1 and Luke 9:23, accompanied by a dash of 2 Corinthians 9:7. This dosage will become quite pleasant if swallowed with a heaping tablespoon of Philippians 4:19! — Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 sermon illustrations arranged by topic and indexed exhaustively. 1989 (M. P. Green, Ed.) (Revised edition of: The expositor's illustration file). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

**20. Do you think those who surrender totally to Christ as Lord are happier than those who just go through the motions?**

Jesus called for total commitment. Science teaches us that only the totally committed experience what Martin Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi describe as the highest level of human functioning: FLOW. My research corroborates this finding. Those who strongly agree with the statement that they are totally sold out to Christ are 28 times more likely to describe themselves as really happy when compared with those who disagree with that statement. — Josh Hunt. *Obedience*.

**21. What do you want to recall from today's conversation?**

**22. How can we support one another in prayer this week?**