



# Facing Faith's Challenges

Defending the Faith and  
Answering Life's  
Important Questions



Andrew A. Cammenga



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Rev. Andrew A. Cammenga

## **Facing Faith's Challenges: Defending The Faith and Answering Life's Important Questions**

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*Rev. Ronald Scheuers*  
*January 2011*

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*Rev. Andrew A. Cammenga*



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## LESSON 1

# Preparing for Faith's Challenges

### THE CHALLENGE

We've prayed it a thousand times: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (or the evil one)." But how often do we really mean it? When you pray that prayer, do you really ever think about the devil as a roaring lion seeking to devour you (1 Peter 5:8)? Are you aware that more Christians were martyred during the 1900s than at any other time in history? Yes, that's true, even more than in the first century during the brutal reign of Nero the Roman Emperor (A.D. 54–68)!



### TOWARD AN ANSWER

1. The *Heidelberg Catechism* (Q. and A. 127) speaks about our sworn enemies as, "The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh." What do you think that means?

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2. Name three things you think are our greatest threats or enemies today. Explain why you think so.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You will face different kinds of challenges because you are a *Reformed* Christian. You've probably encountered some of those challenges already. I'm sure you have been told, "The Bible doesn't tell us to baptize babies," or "I don't have to belong to a church to be a Christian!" or "If God chooses some and not others to eternal life, then He's unfair."



Well, these are just some of the challenges and questions that you will have to deal with as responsible adults and members of Christ's church. The lessons which follow are intended to help prepare you for some of these challenges, so this should be an interesting and profitable study for you.

## THE WAY TO SUCCESS

Obviously these lessons alone are not enough to prepare us for the challenges that face us. Our enemies are too strong, and our own resources are too limited. Only God is able to keep us in the faith and give us special resources for this battle.



## TOWARD AN ANSWER

3. What are the main weapons God gives us to defeat our enemies?

Matthew 26:41 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 6:10–18 (especially verses 17 and 18) \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 119:97–112 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 4:1–13 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Summarize 2 Timothy 3:14–17.

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5. What promises are given to us regarding prayer in the following verses?

1 John 1:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 11:13 \_\_\_\_\_

James 4:2–3 \_\_\_\_\_

John 14:13–14 \_\_\_\_\_

List some other promises in the Bible regarding prayer.

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If the Bible is the way God has ordained to guide and instruct us, and if prayer is how we communicate with Him, is it any wonder that the devil does his best to keep us from both Bible reading and prayer? Ultimately it is through prayer and Scripture that blessings, spiritual success, and a real relationship with God will come. So at the very beginning of our lessons, I would like to challenge each of you to commit yourself to *daily* devotions, that is, to daily Bible reading and prayer.



## TOWARD AN ANSWER

**6. Are you willing to make this commitment, if you haven't already?** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Are you willing to be held accountable for that commitment? (That means you will be asked from time to time how you are doing.)**

**8. At what time each day will you have your daily devotions?** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. In which book of the Bible do you plan to begin reading?** \_\_\_\_\_

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVOTIONS

There are many different Bible study methods (see *12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods* by Richard Warren and William A. Shell). It is good to change methods from time to time so that our personal devotions don't get stale. If you need some suggestions to get started (or re-started), here are some that could help.

- It is helpful to set a specific time each day for your personal devotions. For most of us, first thing in the morning is best. (Maybe this will mean getting up fifteen minutes earlier.) For some it might be better just before bedtime. Try to be consistent with the time you choose to be alone with God. (Having a set time doesn't mean that you shouldn't pray at other times, such as before an exam—that is, if you remember that prayer is not a substitute for studying!)
- Begin by asking God to teach you with His Word.
- Use your own Bible so you can underline and make notes.
- Have a reading schedule. For example, start by reading through the gospel of Luke, reading fifteen or twenty verses each day. Or read through the book of Psalms, one each day.

- Ask yourself questions like these:  
What is God telling me in this passage?  
Is there a command for me to obey?  
Is there a sin that needs to be confessed?  
Is there a promise to remember?  
Is there someone who needs my prayers or help?
- Have a notebook in which you can keep a journal of these insights and items for prayer. (One person went through the Psalms and wrote down how God describes Himself and the promises He gives. He ended up with a list of almost 250 items!)
- End with a prayer which especially responds to what you have just read. Generally construct your prayers using the acronym **ACTS** so that you will not get into a prayer “rut” or only pray for what you want and need.

### KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

**Adoration** – praising God for who He is and what He has done.

**Confession** – telling God about our sin. Remember Psalm 66:18.

**Thanksgiving** – giving thanks for God’s wonderful blessings.

**Supplication** – asking God for your needs and the needs of others.

Here is where the notebook or journal comes in handy. For each area of prayer, **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication**, you can jot down things to include (e.g. names from the church and school bulletins) and also God’s answers to your prayers.



### TOWARD AN ANSWER

10. Describe something that you do or should do in your devotions that has been or could be helpful to you.

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### FOR MEMORY

2 Timothy 3:16 and 17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## LESSON 2

# The Existence of God

### THE CHALLENGE

The first man in space, the famous Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, is said to have commented after his 108 minute space flight in 1961, "I didn't see God out there."



### TOWARD AN ANSWER

1. What do you think of the statement above attributed to Gagarin?

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2. Name at least two factors that may cause people to question the existence of God today more than they did in the past.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you ever struggled with the question of God's existence? \_\_\_\_\_

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What brought on the doubt? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did you work through it? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was there anything specific that helped to bring back your faith? \_\_\_\_\_

## KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

**Atheism** – Belief that there is no God.

**Agnosticism** – Belief that claims God’s existence is unprovable or unknowable.

**Polytheism** – Belief that there are many gods.

**Monotheism** – Belief that there is only one God.

There are actually very few people who deny the existence of any god. Perhaps Psalm 14 gives us the reason, since it reminds us that “only a fool” would do that! Wherever you go, whatever period of history you investigate, there is an acknowledgment of a god or gods. At different times nations<sup>1</sup> have tried to eradicate God-belief but without success. Ecclesiastes 3:11 reminds us that one reason these attempts are futile is because God has put “eternity in the hearts of men.”

This doesn’t mean that we will not have serious God-challengers. The challenge will come; however, not so much from those who deny the existence of some God, but from those who deny the existence of the Triune God of the Scriptures.

There is, in addition, such a thing as practical atheism. A practical atheist is one who *claims* to acknowledge the God of the Bible, but *lives* as if God doesn’t exist or doesn’t matter. That seems to be a description of too many people today—even many in the church!

**4. How does Isaiah 31:1 describe practical atheism?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Read Romans 1:18–25.**

**a. What does the “book of nature” reveal?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**b. What do people do with this knowledge of God?** \_\_\_\_\_

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c. According to verse 20, what does this knowledge of God do to everyone as they stand before God on the day of judgment?

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d. Did those who rejected that revelation of God become atheists?

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It is important to remember that though someone claims to believe in God, it doesn't necessarily mean that he or she is a Christian or a true worshipper, for even demons believe there is a God (James 2:19).

### SOME ANSWERS

Over the centuries there have been many attempts to prove the existence of God through logical argumentation. Some of the more popular proofs for God's existence are:

- a. **Anthropological:** Argument from Universal Morality
- b. **Cosmological:** Argument from Cause
- c. **Teleological:** Argument from Design

- **The Anthropological or Moral Argument** says that the *universal* existence of conscience is proof that God exists. C.S. Lewis<sup>2</sup> and others would ask: Why is honor better than dishonor, bravery better than cowardice, giving better than stealing? Why are some things right and other things wrong, even though we may not do them or they may not please us? Who said so? Where does this *universal* assumption of right and wrong come from, if not from a *universal* Lawgiver?

6. Do you think that Romans 2:15 supports this argument? Why or why not?

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7. Someone has said that if there was no God we would have to invent one. Why would we?

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- **The Cosmological Argument** argues for the existence of God on the basis of what we see all around us. R. C. Sproul<sup>3</sup> argues, "If something exists now, something has always existed from all eternity or there would be nothing. Somehow, somewhere, someone or something must have the power of being within himself, and that one who has the power of being within himself we call God."

**8. What do you think of this argument?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How would you restate this argument in your own words?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- **The Teleological Argument** was put forward by William Paley. This eighteenth century philosopher wrote:

... when we come to inspect the [wrist] watch, we perceive ... that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e.g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it ... the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker—that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction and designed its use.

**9. Does the Bible in any way endorse this argument for the existence of God?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Why does Psalm 14:1 describe an atheist as it does?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Of what benefit, if any, are these proofs to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**12. Will your unbelieving neighbor be convinced by these proofs?**

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**Why or why not? To help answer this question please see: Luke 16:31; Romans 8:7; Heidelberg Catechism Q. 8; Canons of Dort III, IV, 3 and 4; Belgic Confession XIV.**

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### **THE BIBLE'S ANSWER**

The arguments for the existence of God have impressed many of the world's brightest people, and may certainly be of some use in the defense of our faith and witnessing. However, the Bible doesn't argue the existence of God. God's existence doesn't need proof!

**13. Recall how the Bible begins.** \_\_\_\_\_

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**14. Review what God reveals:**

**a. In nature (Psalm 19:1–3 and Romans 1:19, 20).** \_\_\_\_\_

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**b. In man's heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11 and Acts 17:22, 23).** \_\_\_\_\_

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## CONFESSIONAL STATEMENTS

*We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate 'the invisible things of God, namely, his eternal power and divinity,' as the apostle Paul saith (Romans 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Belgic Confession, Article 2.*

**2Q. How doth it appear that there is a God?**

**A. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God. . . . Westminster Larger Catechism.**

Because of this testimony and evidence of God's existence, Paul could warn the philosophers of Athens that God ". . . commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world. . ." (Acts 17:30, 31). This solemn warning reminds us that in the end, **God does not have to prove Himself to us, but we to Him!**

**If you have questions to ask during class discussion, jot them down in the space below.**

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### FOR MEMORY



**Romans 1:20**

**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

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1. Examples of this are the French Revolution and Stalin's regime in the USSR.
  2. Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952. p. 21.
  3. Sproul, R. C. *Now, That's a Good Question!* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996. p. 189.

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