



# **IT ALL BEGAN WITH GOD**

## **School Year Theme**

Satan is targeting Christ's lambs with lies and misconceptions about the origin of life. Surveys show that a major reason young people are leaving churches today is their feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty when approached with the lies of evolution. We must begin training our children at an early age so they will *"always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks them to give the reason for the hope that they have."* (1 Peter 3:15.)

### **PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM**

Dr. Norman Geisler writes in his book *The Apologetics of Jesus*, "That Jesus is one of the greatest teachers who ever lived is not in dispute, even by most non-Christians who are aware of his teachings. Certainly he is the ultimate model for Christian teaching. Given this fact, we can only conclude that Jesus was also the greatest apologist for Christianity who ever lived." And for the next 200 pages Geisler lays down his insights regarding Jesus' constant use of apologetics.

Apologetics comes from the Greek word "apologia" which means a defense. It is a word we find circulating more and more among Christian churches that have felt the steady onslaught of the world into the personal lives and beliefs of their members. Adults are being hammered with questions from a hostile world that they are ill prepared to answer. Our young people are also faced with a very difficult argumentative battle against their faith beginning in their early teens. (In a recent study by Answers in Genesis it was discovered that 56% of Christian young people said they began doubting the Bible when approached with questions for which they had no answer. The study also pointed out that the church is losing kids in elementary, middle school, and high school, rather than college.) Consequently, many within the church are seeing the need to teach even the very young not only what we believe, but why we believe it.

The idea of giving a ready answer to those questioning our religion is not new. Scripture is filled with examples of apologetics being used, not only by the Master Teacher and others. 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. But do this with gentleness and respect."* 2 Corinthians 10:5 states, *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* Colossians 4:6 teaches us to, *"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."* And Titus 1:9 states, *"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."*

Stephen was a master at apologetics. Faced with a wave of questions and accusations, Stephen proceeded to methodically explain the reason for his belief. It took fifty-four verses to teach the leaders of the church why he was a follower of Jesus. All through his discourse he stood firm and steadfast. He truly was "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asked him to give the reason for the hope that he had." Jesus himself told many of his listeners to look at the proof and see for themselves why he was true God. In John 10:25 we read, *"Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me.'" In John 10:38 Jesus says, "Even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.'" And in Mark 2:5-12 Jesus used reasoned logic to put down the questions of the teachers of the law, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'*

*“Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’*

*“Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ So he said to the man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”*

Some feel uneasy when we use the words “defend”, “argue”, and “logic” when speaking about God’s Word. Is that really necessary they ask? Doesn’t that detract from or lessen the “one thing needful”? Not at all. First and foremost faith in the Jesus’ life, death and resurrection is the cornerstone of eternal salvation. It is what makes us Christians. We know that whoever believes will be saved. Yet that is not the end all of our Christian lives. When Christ ascended into heaven his final words were not to believe in him. He was already speaking to his flock. Rather, he commissioned each of his followers to now **go** and **teach** this Good News to others. Just as a flashlight hidden under a box is ineffective, so a Christian who refuses to share his or her treasure with others is lacking in his or her calling. We should always be ready to speak to others about our loving Savior. (Note: the term “apologetics” is never used within this program.)

Any elementary school teacher will tell you they need to be prepared to answer a myriad of questions every day. “Why did we fight the Civil War?” “What causes an eclipse?” “Why do libraries use the Dewey Decimal System?” “Why are there seasons?” “Why do we use quotation marks?” “Why do we have to learn about fractions?” Supposedly, the teacher could answer each of the questions with the simple retort, “Because the book says so!” But they know there needs to be more evidence to satisfy their curiosity. The students need factual answers from their knowledgeable teacher that support the textbook.

The same can be said about Christianity. “How do you know the earth was created by God?” “Why can’t I believe only the parts of the Bible I want to believe in?” “Why can’t I say that God created the universe – but it took millions of years?” “How do you know Jesus rose from the dead?” As in the classroom, one could answer these questions by simply saying, “Because the Bible says so!” Even though that answer is absolutely true, we should also be prepared to give scriptural reasoning as well. “I know the earth was created by God because God said so, and because everything in nature points me to an intelligent Creator.” “I can’t believe in just some parts of the Bible because that destroys the plan of salvation that runs from beginning to end.” “I can’t believe in God and evolution because then I would have to admit there was death before Eden. And if that’s the case, there is no need for a Savior from death.” “I know Jesus rose from the dead because he said so, plus he showed himself to over five hundred people afterwards.”

## **ARE WE PREPARED?**

Are today’s Christian children prepared to face the world? (Unfortunately our schools are already beyond that question. By the time a child takes the first step into our schools, he or she has already faced the onslaughts of the world in a very big way. Just take a look at kids’ cartoons and “educational” programs they watch for hours on end. Just listen to the language they are subjected to. Just look at the family lives surrounding so many of them.) It would be interesting to see the answers to that question today compared with fifty years ago. Although God’s Word is constant, there is no doubt some eras in history provide a much easier path for God’s people than others. Many of us were fortunate to enjoy the blessings of the **Leave It to Beaver** days of the 1950’s. Entertainment was neutral (Ward and June even prayed before meals), morals were held in check (good always triumphed over evil in every episode), families were still an important part of society (divorce, homosexuality, and sex before marriage was never mentioned), and neighborhoods were still safe day and night (Wally and The Beav were always on a neighborhood escapade). Other items like terrorism, global warming, government handouts, hatred toward Christians, separation of church and state, dislike for authority, etc. were never even considered. But our children are no longer living in a **Leave It to Beaver** world. They are living in a different world, a post Christian world growing ever more hostile to God and his Word. We have

evolved into a society that presents great challenges for the Christian. It is a society steeped in lies and temptations that have not been seen in our country's history. The very foundational institutions that held our society together are crumbling quickly. Truth, honesty, marriage, family values, morality, patriotism, science, justice, education, politics, entertainment, etc., have all taken a swift and certain turn for the worse, and our church's parents and children are caught in the middle of the firestorm.

For many years our Lutheran churches have produced tremendous educational programs that teach the truths of Scripture. Much planning and effort has gone into the courses that instruct teachers to share with our children God's ways. Our presentation of Bible History class has served us well in past decades. However, the time has come to further reinforce our approach in teaching Christ's lambs. Our objective must be not only to make them knowledgeable of God's Word, but to also provide them reasons to stand firm and steadfast in their faith, prepared to answer the many questions Christians are faced with today—questions that were never asked of previous generations. Our children must be taught how to deal with the doubts, seductions, and lies Satan is aiming at them in the private and public square. They must be certain in their own hearts of the basis for real truth. They must be taught to not only recognize, but to be critical of anything that would attempt to shake their faith. Far too many of our young people are falling away from their basic beliefs after they leave our elementary schools and confirmation classes. They are unprepared to face the so-called "facts" by the so-called "experts". More than ever, we must teach them to put on the full armor of God for their fight against Satan's assaults. Our children need to be trained how to swim upstream. They need to know where to find the strength and wisdom for their faith to survive. Are they ready to meet these assaults? Are we prepared to "arm these young soldiers"?

Pastor John Moldenhauer and Reynold Kremer have teamed up to approach this problem. John served as a parish pastor for five years, a teacher at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minnesota and at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wisconsin for 32 years. He has seen firsthand the plots of Satan to snatch our young people from the fold and realizes that their faith foundations in God's absolutes are wanting. Reynold Kremer served 15 years as a WELS teacher and principal and has since become a writer of vacation Bible school curricula, children's Christmas services, and church Bible studies. (Reynold's programs are available at [www.kremerresources.com](http://www.kremerresources.com).) Over a million people have enjoyed Reynold's Christmas services as well as hundreds of thousands of children participating in his vacation Bible school programs.

These men share a great burden for our children. With our culture closing in on secular education, entertainment, politics, and daily lifestyles, our children's world has become much smaller than it was years ago. Moldenhauer and Kremer considered various approaches to incorporate simple apologetics into the elementary school classrooms. The main obstacle they found was introducing another curriculum into schools that already have overloaded schedules. So it was decided to produce a series of three themed programs for our schools that can be simply used as classroom devotions or all-school gathering service meditations.

# IT ALL BEGAN WITH GOD

## List of meditation topics and texts for IT ALL BEGAN WITH GOD

### **IS THAT TRUE?**

**(What is the only source of truth?)**

*John 18:37 The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*

### **WHO DO YOU TRUST?**

**(Can we trust God?)**

*Psalms 9:10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

### **PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT**

**(Can we trust God's promises?)**

*Joshua 23:14 You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.*

### **THAT'S HARMONY?**

**(Why is the Bible so special?)**

*2 Peter 1:20,21 You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

### **IT'S ALL OR NOTHING**

**(Can we choose the Bible parts we want to believe?)**

*Revelation 22:19 If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.*

### **WE NEED EYEWITNESSES**

**(How do we know what really happened at creation?)**

*Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.*

### **I WON'T, I WON'T, I WON'T**

**(Why do many people refuse to believe in creation?)**

*2 Peter 3:5 They deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.*

### **GOD WAS HERE FIRST**

**(Who made God?)**

*Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God*

### **WAS GOD TIRED?**

**(Why did God have to rest on the seventh day?)**

*Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.*

### **SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW**

**(Why did God create the earth to look old?)**

*Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

### **SHHHHH!**

**(What is the Big Bang?)**

*Isaiah 45:12 It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.*

## **AN AWESOME UNIVERSE**

**(How big is the universe?)**

*Psalm 147:4 He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.*

## **ALL BY ITSELF**

**(What is intelligent design?)**

*Isaiah 55:8,9 "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

## **STAY AWAY FROM THE DEVIL**

**(Did God create the devil?)**

*Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

## **WHO CARES HOW OLD YOU ARE?**

**(How long did it take to make the earth?)**

*Exodus 20:8 In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth.*

## **BEHOLD, THE SCIENTIST**

**(But is it really science?)**

*2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

## **GONE TO FAIRBANKS**

**(How many paths lead to heaven?)**

*Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*

## **IT'S OKAY TO ASK**

**(Should we question the "facts"?)**

*Acts 17:11 The Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

## **GONE MISSING**

**(What are missing links?)**

*Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

## **MEET TYRANNOSAURUS REX**

**(Can a Christian believe in dinosaurs?)**

*Job 40:15-19 Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength it has in its loins, what power in the muscles of its belly! Its tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are close-knit. Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like rods of iron. It ranks first among the works of God, yet its Maker can approach it with his sword.*

## **A BREATH OF FRESH AIR**

**(How are people different from monkeys?)**

*Genesis 2:7 The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life.*

## **PEEK-A-BOO I SEE YOU!**

**(Why are our eyes so special?)**

*Matthew 6:22 The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.*

## **THE TWO SHALL BE ONE**

**(What did God have to do with marriage?)**

*Matthew 19:5,6 [Jesus said] A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

## **SPELL DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC**

**(What's so amazing about DNA?)**

*Psalm 139:13,16 You knit me together in my mother's womb . . . your eyes saw my unformed body.*

## **A STRANGE MOMMY**

**(Can we believe in Mother Earth or Mother Nature?)**

*Jeremiah 10:12,13: God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.*

## **THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE**

**(Are there false "holy books"?)**

*2 Timothy 4:3,4 The time will come when people will . . . turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

## **BLUE OR PINK? BOTH ARE PERFECT!**

**(Who decides if we are boys or girls?)**

*Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

## **I HAD A FEELING ABOUT THAT**

**(Does God experience emotions?)**

*Nehemiah 8:10 The joy of the LORD is your strength.*

## **WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE**

**(How do we know the flood really happened?)**

*Genesis 7:23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.*

## **ANIMALS EVERYWHERE**

**(How could Noah fit all those animals on the ark?)**

*Genesis 6:19,20 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. <sup>20</sup> Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.*

## **I HAVE AN OWIE?**

**(Why do bad things happen?)**

*Romans 8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning.*

## **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE**

**(Do Christians practice environmentalism?)**

*Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*

## **MEET THE BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW**

**(How do the birds teach us about creation?)**

*Jeremiah 8:7 The stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration.*

## **THE RACES ARE CANCELLED**

**(What about different races?)**

*Acts 17:26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth.*

## **WHOSE GLASSES ARE YOU WEARING?**

**(How do Christians view the world?)**

*Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.*