



MIDWEST THEOLOGICAL FORUM

TEACHER'S MANUAL

FAITH AND REVELATION
KNOWING GOD THROUGH SACRED SCRIPTURE

REVISED EDITION

Author: Rev. Peter V. Armenio

The Didache Semester Series

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CHAPTER 1

Knowing God Through Natural Revelation, Reason, and Faith

Downloadable resources, including student copies of Classroom Activities, available at www.mtfresources.org



LESSONS AND CONCEPTS

Lesson 1: Knowing God Through Reason

- Natural religion
- The fundamental ways of knowing God

Lesson 2: Knowing God Through Natural Revelation

- The natural knowledge of God
- “The Five Ways”

Lesson 3: Science and Reason

- Science as a restriction of reason
- Scientism
- Modern science and God
- Principal errors regarding the existence of God

Lesson 4: God Makes Himself Known to Man

- Why supernatural religion is necessary
- What faith does for reason

Lesson 5: The Necessity of Faith in Knowing God

- Man’s response to Revelation
- Reason leads to the assent of faith
- Contemplation and theology
- Natural morality and religion

Chapter Quiz

Test Preparation

Chapter Test

LESSON 1

Knowing God Through Reason

(pp. 2–6 in the textbook)

Concepts in This Lesson

- Every human being is born with a natural desire for God, which is answered in his or her natural capacity to know God through reason.
- The fundamental ways to know God are through reason and Revelation.

Opening Prayer

Begin the Lesson with the Sign of the Cross and a prayer as described in the Opening Activity.

Homework Review

Lead a class discussion to select one prayer to the patron of the school, parish, or diocese. Have each student write it — and write it yourself — under *Prayer to Our Patron* (p. 155 in the Student Workbook; p. 501 in this Teacher’s Manual).

If the students do not have Student Workbooks, have each student write the prayer on the first page of his or her notebook.

Opening Activity

Present this Opening Activity (download from www.mtfresources.org) or create your own.

Class Discussion

Incorporate the passage on the foolishness of idolatry (Wis 13:1–9; p. 5 in the textbook) into the Opening Prayer, and then lead a class discussion using the following question:

- What does this passage reveal about natural knowledge of God, that is, knowledge that anyone can obtain through reason and experience?

A discussion might include these points:

- *People ought to be able to see God through the things that he made rather than see created things as gods.*
- *Idolatry is perhaps understandable because people are distracted by the power and beauty of creation, but idolatry is foolish and inexcusable.*
- *If people can perceive the power and beauty of created things, they should also be able to perceive the much greater power and beauty of the God who created them.*

Introduction

(pp. 2–3 in the textbook)

Lecture Points

- Every person has a natural desire for God, yearning for God in his or her heart. (p. 2)
- Human beings possess an inborn capacity that no other creature in material creation has: an inborn capacity to know God and to be in communion with him. (p. 2)
- The natural desire for God was evident to Plato. He wrote that beauty causes a certain kind of suffering — a nostalgia and longing — in every person, and this suffering keeps him or her from being satisfied with ordinary life. (p. 2)
- St. Augustine wrote about the natural human desire for God: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” (p. 2)
- A person can perceive that he or she possesses a spiritual soul by his or her openness to truth and beauty, a sense of moral goodness, his or her freedom, the voice of conscience, and a longing for the infinite and for happiness (cf. CCC 33). (p. 2)
- The supernatural counterpart to a person’s natural desire for God is God’s desire for us. (p. 2)
- God’s has a supernatural desire for every person; he wants people to live in communion with him. He reaches out and enables everyone to find him. (p. 2)
- There are two ways that a person can come to know God: through Revelation and through human reason. (p. 3)
- The overarching subject of this textbook is that faith and reason work together to help people understand God’s Revelation. (p. 3)

Classroom Activity **Free Writing**

Present this and/or one of the other Classroom Activities (download from www.mtfresources.org) or create your own.

Have each student review the six themes of this chapter, “In This Chapter, We . . .” (p. 3 in the textbook), and have him or her free write for a few minutes on the one that he or she thinks is the most important and why.

Knowing God Through Reason

(pp. 4, 6 in the textbook)

Classroom Activity **Think / Pair / Share**

Present this and/or one of the other Classroom Activities (download from www.mtfresources.org) or create your own.

Have each student read silently “The Power of the Gospel” (Rom 1:14–25; Supplementary Reading 1, p. 27 in the textbook), and then conduct a think / pair / share using the following question:

- What did St. Paul reveal about a person’s ability to know God through reason?

Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible nature — his eternal power and deity — can be clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

- What are the consequences of a person’s refusal to see God?

The people who did not acknowledge God became futile in their thinking, worshiped idols, and lived lives of sexual impurity.

Lecture Points

- Even without the help of Divine Revelation, human reason can lead a person to realize that God exists. It can even tell us something about his divine nature. (p. 4) **Extension:** You might have a student read aloud the *Catechism*, no. 36 (p. 32 in the textbook), about how a person can know that God exists with certainty.
- The proofs of God’s existence from reason are proofs of the existence of God not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences but in the sense of “converging and convincing arguments” (CCC 31). (p. 4)
- The pre-Christian philosophers Plato and Aristotle, using reason alone, concluded that there must be one god. (p. 4)
- Despite his polytheistic culture, Aristotle reached the philosophical conclusion there is one single First Cause of everything. The First Cause must be perfect and eternal; therefore, the First Cause must be God because God is perfect and eternal. (p. 4)
- St. Thomas Aquinas clarified and extended Aristotle’s arguments about God. (p. 4) **Extension:** St. Thomas’s clarification of Aristotle’s First Cause argument will be presented in Lesson 2 (p. 8 in the textbook).

- Every person is —by nature and by vocation— a religious being. People come from God and seek and desire God. (p. 4)
- Mediate knowledge of God is received through created things or other persons. (p. 6)
- Natural knowledge of God is reached through the light of human intellect. (p. 6)
- Universal knowledge of God is accessible to all people. (p. 6)
- Knowledge of God is certain. God’s creation leads people to the Creator, requiring only their exercise of reason. (p. 6)

Classroom Activity **Graphic Organizer**

Present this and/or one of the other Classroom Activities (download from www.mtfresources.org) or create your own. Have each student work with a partner to complete the following table on the four characteristics of a person’s knowledge of God.

Four Characteristics of Our Knowledge of God	
Characteristic	Explanation
Mediate	Knowledge is received by virtue of created things or through other people.
Natural	Knowledge is reached through the light of human intellect.
Universal	Knowledge is accessible to all people.
Certain and Easy to Attain	God’s creation leads people clearly to the Creator.

Closing Activity

Present one of these Closing Activities (download from www.mtfresources.org) or create your own.

Option 1 **Paragraph Writing**

Have each student write a paragraph explaining how God gives people both a natural desire for him and a natural means of reaching him.

A complete answer should include these points:

- Every human being has a natural desire for God.
- This desire is written in the human heart because every person is created by God and for God.
- Only in God will a person find the truth and happiness for which he or she never stops searching.
- Human reason, even without God’s Revelation, can lead a person to realize that God exists.
- Reason can know something about God’s divine nature.

Option 2 **Class Discussion**

Based on Wisdom 13:1–9 (p. 5 in the textbook) and Romans 2:14–16 (p. 24 in the textbook), lead a class discussion using the following question:

- What do these passages reveal about a person’s natural ability to know the existence and nature of God and how this knowledge relates to idolatry and other sins?

A discussion might include these points:

- A person can arrive at the knowledge of the existence of God in two ways:
 - By the light of reason.
 - By the grace of faith.
- By using reason, by listening to the message of creation, and by heeding the promptings of conscience, a person can be certain that there is a God.
- A person can know what we ought to do from both reason and faith — that murder is wrong, that stealing is wrong, that adultery is wrong, etc.
- A person can build a good moral knowledge by reason and by faith.

Homework Assignment

Assign some or all of these for homework or create your own homework assignment.

- Lesson Review: Answer the Study Questions, complete the Practical Exercise, and define the Vocabulary terms (*p. 6 in the textbook*)
- Student Workbook: Answer the questions (*pp. 1–2 in the Student Workbook*)
- Read Lesson 2 (*pp. 7–10 in the textbook*)

LESSON 1 Homework Review

Study Questions

1. Why do we have a desire to know God?

God has written our desire for him in the human heart. Human beings are created by God and for God, and only in God can a person find the truth and happiness for which he or she never stops searching. (p. 2)

2. Distinguish our desire for God from God's desire for us. How are these desires different?

The human desire for God is natural; his desire for every person is supernatural. (p. 2)

3. Name the two means by which a person can arrive at the knowledge of God.

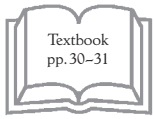
Knowledge of God comes by human reason and by supernatural Revelation. (p. 3)

4. Is it possible to know that there is a God without the Bible? Why or why not?

Yes, human reason can lead us to realize that God exists and can even understand something about his divine nature. Creation itself shows that there is a God and that he is all-powerful. (p. 4)

5. Name the four characteristics of the knowledge of God as described in the Bible. What does each of these characteristics mean?

Knowledge of God is (a) mediate: received through created things, including other people; (b) natural: received through the light of the intellect; (c) universal: accessible to all people; and (d) certain: creation leads to the Creator. (p. 6)


 Name _____
 Period _____

CHAPTER 1

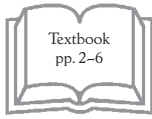
VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Knowing God Through Natural Revelation, Reason, and Faith

Match the word or term with its definition using the vocabulary terms from this chapter.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>10</u> Agnosticism | <u>4</u> Five Ways, the | <u>7</u> Virtue of religion |
| <u>22</u> Polytheism | <u>2</u> Atheism | <u>19</u> Natural religion |
| <u>13</u> Practical materialism | <u>14</u> Atheistic humanism | <u>18</u> Reverence |
| <u>5</u> Intelligent design | <u>1</u> Religious being | <u>9</u> Science |
| <u>3</u> Faith | <u>12</u> Philosophy | <u>25</u> Natural revelation |
| <u>20</u> Dogma | <u>26</u> Fideism | <u>16</u> Principle of causality |
| <u>24</u> Scientism | <u>8</u> Grace | <u>21</u> Reason |
| <u>6</u> Mystery | <u>15</u> Natural law | <u>17</u> Rationalism |
| <u>23</u> Revelation | <u>11</u> Natural theology | <u>28</u> Nature |
| <u>27</u> Vocation | | |

- Being created by God in order to live in communion with him, which includes every human being by nature and vocation
- Denial of the existence of God
- Theological virtue by which a person believes in all that God has said and revealed and that the Church proposes for belief
- St. Thomas Aquinas's proposals for how the existence of God can be known through reason
- Belief that the work and plan of God is observable in nature, confirming his existence and continued role in creation
- Supernatural truth about God that is accepted as true even though reason cannot fully understand or prove it
- Good habit that leads a person to offer God the praise and worship owed to him as the source of all good gifts
- God's divine life present in our souls
- Intellectual, systematic study of the structure and behavior of the natural world through observation and experiment with the goal of better understanding the laws that govern it
- Belief that the existence of God cannot be rationally known or proven
- Knowledge that can be obtained about God and his attributes through human reason, apart from Revelation
- Pursuit of truth and understanding through the application of human reason



Name _____
 Period _____

CHAPTER 1, LESSON 1

Knowing God Through Natural Revelation, Reason, and Faith

INTRODUCTION

1. What characteristic makes human beings unique among creation?

Human beings are created in God's image and likeness, which entails a desire to know and to be in communion with God. (p. 2)

2. Why can a person never truly turn his or her back on God?

A person discovers "signs of his spiritual soul" in "his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness" (CCC 33) as well as in his or her questions about God's existence. Consciousness of these objective realities, which exist outside of the person, is a universal human characteristic shared by peoples of all times and cultures. (p. 2)

3. According to the *Catechism*, no. 33, in what does a person discover "signs of his spiritual soul"?

Though a person may suppress his or her desire to know God, this desire is always in the heart. It is an intrinsic part of human nature. (p. 2)

4. How is the natural human desire for God reciprocated by the Creator?

A person's desire for God is natural — part of human nature — whereas God's desire for human beings is supernatural. He transcends into the natural world, reaching out to enable people to find him. (p. 2)

CHAPTER ONE

KNOWING GOD THROUGH REASON

5. What can human beings know about God through reason alone?

Human beings can, using reason alone, know that God exists, that he is one, that he is eternal, and that he is perfect. This was illustrated notably by Aristotle. (p. 4)

6. What did Aristotle mean by the “First Cause”?

Aristotle argued from reason that everything must originate from a single origin, or First Cause. This First Cause must be perfect and eternal. Significantly, Aristotle argued there could be only one First Cause despite living in a polytheistic society. (p. 4)

7. Your friend argues that the existence of God is merely a matter of having faith and, if you do not make a leap of faith, then there is no evidence that God exists. How would you respond?

Reason enables a person to perceive the mark of his or her Creator in the natural world. As part of creation, people can recognize in themselves a desire for God. Faith is certainly an important way to arrive at an understanding of God, but reason — and listening to the message of God in creation and the prompting of conscience — can also be used to discover the reality of God. (pp. 4, 6)