

- a. Why you should read other books
 - i. Introductory issues
 1. Establishing the Need: Some say, “I only read the Bible, nothing else,” with the attitude that a Christian should only read the Bible. But is this really biblical?
 2. Clarification: Christians should read books beyond the Bible, but that does not mean Christians should read every kind of non-Christian books at all times. There needs to be discernment.

Reasons:

- ii. Reading non-canonical books is not wrong: those who write the Bible also read non-Canonical books
 1. Old Testament authors read non-Canonical books
 - a. Moses read the Book of the War of the Lords (**Numbers 21:14-15**)
 - i. The Book of the War of the Lords is not in the Bible.
 - ii. Moses describes Israel’s journey in **Numbers 21:10-13**.
 - iii. Moses then quotes from the Book of the War of the Lords in **Numbers 21:14-15**.
 - iv. Implication: **If God is interested in history books enough to reference it, what does that mean to us as people of the Book?**
 - b. Joshua read the Book of Jashar (**Joshua 10:12-13**)
 - i. The Book of Jashar is not in the Bible.
 - ii. In the context of this passage, five king are waging war against Gibeonites (**Joshua 10:5**) and Joshua leads Israel against the kings while the Lord cause son to stand still (**v.12**).
 - iii. There is then a reference that this event was documented in the book of Jashar (**v.13**).
 - c. Author of **1 Samuel** read the Book of Jashar (**1 Samuel 1:18**)
 - i. Again, the Book of Jashar is not in the Bible.
 - ii. In the context of this passage, King David laments the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan by chanting a lament (**v.17**).
 - iii. There is then a reference that this song can be found in the book of Jashar (**v.18**).
 - d. Author of **1 Kings** read the Acts of Solomon (**1 Kings 11:41**)
 - i. The Acts of Solomon is not in the Bible.

- ii. In the context of this passage, the account of God bringing up adversaries against Solomon (v.14-40).
- iii. Since too many historical events have occurred reference to more historical account is given, pointing to the Acts of Solomon (v.41).
- e. Ezra know of, read and quotes secular letters and decrees (Ezra 4-5)
 - i. Letters of oppositions
 1. In the context of this passage, there were non-Jews who were actively plotting against the Jews rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 4:1-5).
 2. Part of their plan is to write a letter to King Artaxerxes (v.6-10).
 3. This letter is originally not the Word of God.
 4. The letter is quoted from vv.11-16.
 5. Consequence: End of temple work (v.17-24).
 6. Implication: If God felt it was important enough to record a secular letter to a king, what does that means to us as people of the Book when it comes to being knowledgeable of those who write and plot against the cause of Christ?
 - ii. Decree of King Cyrus
 1. In the context of this passage, the Jews continued to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 5).
 2. When challenged, the Jews knew about the decree of King Cyrus from the first year of his reign (v.13)
 3. They even know the content of what was written in it (v.14-17)
 4. This decree was important enough that Ezra 1:1-4 recorded it.
 5. Implication: If God felt it was important enough to record a secular political decree made by a king, what does that means to us as people of the Book when it comes to understanding political documents Biblically?

- f. Other possible non-canonical sources the Bible reference: **1 Chronicles 27:24, 29:29, 2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 13:22.**
- 2. New Testament authors read non-Canonical books
 - a. Paul use of Meander's writing in **1 Corinthians 15:33**
 - i. Meander was a non-Christian Greek popular play writer who lived around 300 B.C.
 - ii. One of his line was "*Bad company corrupts good morals*"
 - iii. Paul's used this to make a point: "*Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."*"
 - iv. Implication:
 - 1. Paul's quotation of this Greek literature suggests that he was at least familiar with what must have been a saying that is common knowledge if not even having read the work himself.
 - 2. It shows familiarity of written play is not in of itself something that is wrong.
 - 3. This is more astounding considering this is a Jewish man familiar with Greek literature: **How much are we aware of our own and other cultural writings?**
 - b. Paul read Epimendies in light of **Acts 17:28a**
 - i. Context: Paul was preaching the Gospel to Athenian philosophers and explaining his presuppositions to them in order to make sense what he was saying.
 - ii. In the **first half of Acts 17:28** Paul said, "*for in Him we live and move and lexist,*"
 - iii. This is a quotation from a non-Christian Cretan seer and philosophical poet Epimendies who lived in the seventh or sixth century B.C.
 - iv. Implication:
 - 1. Paul's quotation here indicates his knowledge of Greek poetry and philosophical discourse. Therefore, it is not a sin in of itself to be familiar with poetry or philosophical discourse written by the world.

2. While not adopting everything of the worldview of the authors whom he read, nevertheless there is a place for Christians engaged in apologetics to know the literary output of the World with Christian discernment (the subject of Christian discernment will be eventually discussed) and employing it to defend the faith.
- c. Paul read Aratus in light of **Acts 17:28b**
- i. Context: Paul was preaching the Gospel to Athenian philosophers and explaining his presuppositions to them in order to make sense what he was saying.
 - ii. In the **second half of Acts 17:28** Paul said, *“as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’”*
 - iii. This is a quotation from a non-Christian Greek poet name Aratus who lived in the third and second century B.C.
 - iv. Specifically, it’s a quote from the fifth line of Artaus’ Phaenomena, a poetic work on the constellation and the stars.
 - v. Implication:
 1. Paul’s quotation here indicates his knowledge of Greek poetry and literature on the constellation. Therefore, it is not a sin in of itself to be familiar with poetry or astronomical sources written by the world.
 2. While not adopting everything of the worldview of the authors whom he read, nevertheless there is a place for Christians engaged in apologetics to know the literary output of the World with Christian discernment (the subject of Christian discernment will be eventually discussed) and employing it to defend the faith.
- d. Paul read and used Epimendies in light of **Titus 1:12-13**.
- i. Context: Paul is writing to Titus concerning how he ought to shepherd God’s people.

- ii. In **Titus 1:12** Paul said, “*One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”*”
 - iii. This is a quotation from a non-Christian Cretan seer and philosophical poet Epimendies who lived in the seventh or sixth century B.C.
 - iv. Paul affirm the truth of what Epimendies said in **verse 13a** and an application in light of this truth in **verse 13b**.
 - v. Implication:
 - 1. Paul’s quotation here indicates his knowledge of Greek poetry and philosophical discourse. Therefore, it is not a sin in of itself to be familiar with poetry or philosophical discourse written by the world.
 - 2. Paul use of Epimenidies indicate that sometimes non-Christian can diagnose society properly. There is a place for Christians to read sources on social science, cultural studies, etc.
- iii. Spiritual benefits in reading some non-canonical works
- 1. If a book is based upon the foundation of God’s Word, then all the reasons why we ought to read the Bible that’s covered earlier also apply to why one read Christian spiritual non-canonical books.
 - 2. God gave us teachers and teachers also teach through books.
 - a. God gave us teachers: “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*” (**Ephesians 4:26**)
 - b. Some teachers teach by the medium of books.
 - 3. “We read book after book, which helps us understand and apply the Word of God.”¹
 - a. It helps us answer our questions (see Philip in **Acts 8** with the Etophian Eunuch).
 - Note that this is now recorded for those who want to know what is Isaiah 53 about.
 - b. It helps us deal with a matter right away: For instance, one is dealing with anger and the guy just began reading Matthew. You don’t want him to

¹ David L. McKenna, *How to Read a Christian Book* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 12.

wait until he finishes all the Gospel and half-way through the Epistle before one apply **Ephesians 4:26**.

- c. Topical books can focus on the entirety of God's counsel on a subject.
- iv. Sometimes, "non-Christian Literature Can Describe the World, How it Functions, and How to subdue it."²
- v. Apologetics Value
 - 1. Works that help understand our times and society.
 - 2. Works that equip us to defend our faith.

² Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 67