

- I. Discernment in reading non-canonical books
 - a. Discernment defined

“Faith in Jesus brings with it a critically important benefit to the Christian reader-- discernment. Discernment is the ability to do three things: the ability to “test everything,” to hold fast what is good,” and to “abstain from every form of evil”...”¹
 - b. Why you should be discerning when you read
 - i. Christians are called to be discerning
 1. “*But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;*” (1 **Thessalonians 5:21**)
 2. “*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰ so that you may ^[g]approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless ^[h]until the day of Christ;*” (Philippians 1:9-10)
 - ii. Christian discernment is a way of worshipping God!
 1. It is a way of loving God with your mind (Matthew 22:37)
 2. Seeking knowledge and learning to find Christ
 - a. “To read any book for eternal benefit, we must behold the glory of Christ. His glory lies at the bottom of all sound knowledge and learning.”²
 - b. The relationship between knowledge and Christ (Colossians 2:3)
 - iii. Christian discernment is to watch your life and conduct (1 Timothy 4:16)

This presupposes that there are falsehood that will affect our lives and behavior to watch out and avoid.
 - c. How to practice discernment in reading
 - i. Before and simultaneously with your reading of non-canonical books
 1. Grow in your knowledge of the Bible
 - a. Reason: “*All Scripture is ^[a]inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for ^[b]training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - b. Therefore, we need to really know God’s Word!
 - c. How: Daily read the Bible for your devotions.
 2. Grow in your Christian world view
 - a. Reason: Christian worldview is the systematic application of Scripture concerning what is reality. “And it is impossible to be a discerning reader of

¹ Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 35

² Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 36.

books without first understanding the Christian worldview.”³

b. How:

i. “Developing a biblical worldview is labor-intensive, but the result is a discerning mind that is essential if we will benefit from books. If we fail here, we will be flooded with worldviews of other authors and be quickly overwhelmed, confuse, and frustrated.”⁴

ii. Study what the Bible has to say about:

1. God
2. Creation
3. Man
4. God’s Law
5. Sin
6. Jesus Christ
7. Salvation

ii. While reading the book

1. Pray

a. Reason: “*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,*¹⁰ *so that you may [g]approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless [h]until the day of Christ;*” (Philippians 1:9-10)

b. How:

i. When: Pray before, during and after reading.

ii. What to pray for (v.9)

1. “*that your love may abound still more*”
2. “*and more in real knowledge*”
3. “*and all discernment,*”
4. Result (v.10)
 - a. “*approve the things that are excellent,*”
 - b. “*in order to be sincere*”
 - c. “*and blameless [h]until the day of Christ;*”

2. Be conscious of what the book is about

a. Questions to ask of the book⁵

i. What is the book about?

³ Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 52

⁴ Tony Reinke, *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 53.

⁵ David L. McKenna, *How to Read a Christian Book* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 45.

- ii. What issues does it address?
 - iii. What questions does it raise?
 - iv. What difference does it make in my life?
 - v. What should I as a Christian do with the information it contains?
 - b. If you are not sure of something, read it again carefully.
 - c. If possible, do research on terms and names cited that you are not familiar with so to get further context and heighten understanding and appreciation.
- 3. Testing the book in light of the Bible
 - a. Comparing it's content to the Christian worldview
 - b. Questions to ask
 - i. Does it submit to
 - ii. Is it true to the God-breathed Word?⁶
 - 1. Is it true in text?
 - 2. Is it true in spirit?
 - iii. Is it useful for Christian teaching?
 - 1. Is it useful for teaching right doctrine?
 - 2. Is it useful for rebuking false doctrine?
 - 3. Is it useful for correcting wrong behavior?
 - 4. Is it useful for instruction in right doing?
 - iv. Does it contribute to Christian maturity?
 - 1. Does it inspire us to godly character?
 - 2. Does it equip us to live the Christian life?
 - 3. Does it lead us to good works?
- iii. After reading the book
 - 1. Think about what you read in light of the principles above.
 - 2. Think about what you read in light of further reading of the Bible or other non-canonical books.

⁶ All the questions hereafter is from David L. McKenna, *How to Read a Christian Book* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 54.