

Thoughts

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'Christian' Books ([View in PDF](#))

[Acts 17:10-11](#) (NASB) *"The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."*

Spiritual cereal

I love standing in aisle eight at a local supermarket called [Meijer](#); a virtual wall of cereal, with everything from Shredded Wheat to Cocoa Puffs. Now Cocoa Puffs could be renamed "Sugar Bombs" since everyone knows they have as much nutrition as a piece of heavy ordnance. On the other hand, Shredded Wheat is pretty healthy, but even it has been processed—after all, it's in a different form than it originally was. It has goodness in it, but still not like the original kernels. A Christian bookstore is like that cereal aisle—everything from Shredded Wheat to Cocoa Puffs are available, and God's Word is like the kernels of wheat that Christian books should contain.

Consider any book from a Christian author as a bowl of processed cereal. It might be easier to eat, but it's not as good for you. Reading God's Word for yourself is like eating the grain right off the stalk. It doesn't get any fresher, and it will never contain bias or anything harmful to your spiritual health.

Instead of digging through Scripture for ourselves and talking about what God revealed to us in His Word, it's admittedly much easier to read what someone else has to say; after all, they've done all the digging for us. I see a trend in people telling me about "this great Christian book you need to read" or "you should see what this author has to say." Are we to believe that what this author has to say has never before been revealed or discovered, and only in his or her book will you discover it for yourself? The question remains: who has the corner on truth? God's Word or Christian books? It seems that Christian books themselves often garner more attention than does God's Word.

In this day and age, we should be very careful what—and how much—we read that doesn't come directly from the Bible. Is God's Word sufficient and appropriate for everyone to read without adding things to it, or are man's opinions and perspectives more important? It is too easy to accept at face value what we read without carefully comparing it to the truth of God's Word.

Let me say emphatically that "Yes!," God has certainly given us pastors and teachers to share His Word with us, and that takes different forms; including books. God can—and does—use many people for His glory and to edify and instruct the church. However, as the Berean believers did, we need to do two things:

1. Be reading God's Word more than any other book or combination of books
2. Always checking the contents and motives of those books against God's Word

Fast food books

I'll be the first person to admit that I don't read God's Word as I should, and I have far more knowledge than I live out. The most important thing is not knowing more; it's living more, and I certainly have a long way to go. Yet more and more Christian books are coming from secular publishing companies who undoubtedly have more interest in promoting topics that sell well, rather than promoting biblical principles and content. Like any secular

company, money is the final criteria. Does *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul* sound familiar? If a book sells well, what else matters? If you question whether Christian books are becoming secularized, ask yourself why there are custom-made Bibles for women, teenagers, etc.; or why Christian authors sell books that mix Scripture with health topics or tout masculinity as though it were a point Jesus made in His sermon on the hill? I believe these things are very subtle and deadly in drawing our attention away from God's Word under the pretext of "godly" authors who can interpret God's Word for you—no need for you to read it for yourself. They'll never say this of course, but by reading *their* book, you've just spent less time reading God's own Word.

Purpose-driven marketing

I seriously question the "The Purpose-Driven..." series of books. Apart from God's Word itself, I'm not aware of any other book that has garnered as much promotion within the church, and if we're really honest about it—hype. Have you ever asked yourself what was so special about the "40 Days" series of books? Why it was so popular? Did the author have a new set of truth to share? Perhaps something never before thought of? No, the truth is that there was an unprecedented marketing force behind it. Marketing is alive and well in the Christian publication business. Is the promotion of book sales, lawn signs advertising small group meetings, and weeks of specially-tailored messages derived from a single author necessary? Moreover, is it biblical? I wonder what Jesus would think if He walked into a church that was busy discussing and promoting a book written by an author other than His Word?

[Galatians 1:6-10](#) (NASB)

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

Am I taking this too far? Ask yourself some questions:

1. Is everything they say backed up and referenced with Scripture, or is there room for refuting what they say based on God's Word?
2. What is their [motive or agenda](#) for writing?
3. Is the author balanced?
4. Are points and conclusions in context, and do they use good illustrations when making a point?
5. When all is said and done, are they pointing people back to Christ, or something else?

Whole wheat diet

Only God's Word is inspired and infallible; neither is there bias or selfish agendas involved. It exists to glorify God, not man, and its promotion leads to righteousness; not financial profit or man's ideologies.

There is ever only **one** book we will answer to God for—His Word—and it contains **all** the truth we will ever need to live a life pleasing to Him. God will never ask you why you didn't eat more Shredded Wheat, but you will have to explain to Him why you neglected His Wheat Kernels.

[Comments?](#)