**Should Christians study philosophy?**

**By R.C. Sproul**https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/should-christians-study-philosophy

When I was a philosophy major myself as an undergraduate in college, I received all kinds of flak from my Christian friends who thought it was a leap into godlessness to busy my mind with “godless philosophy.” There was no end to the citations from the sacred Scripture saying, “Beware of godless philosophy” (Col. 2:8). But I came to the conclusion that you can’t beware of something if you’re not first aware of it.

I talk about having been converted to Christ in my freshman year of college. That was the most significant event in my life. I was talking to my wife, Vesta, the other day, and I said, “Isn’t it something that sometimes you can have a day or a moment in your life that changes its entire course forever?” I had such a day when I was a college student.

I was a brand-new Christian. I had to take Introduction to Philosophy as a requirement to satisfy social studies, and I was completely disinterested in it. I sat in the back of the room and, instead of listening to the lectures, I read Billy Graham’s sermons because that is what interested me. I wanted to know the Bible and nothing else but the Bible.

One day, my professor, who was the head of the philosophy department where I went to school and was actually a Christian, gave a lecture on Augustine and Augustine’s doctrine of the creation of the universe. Augustine talked about God creating ex nihilo, through divine fiat, or the divine imperative. God simply said, “Let there be,” and reality came into being. I was so moved by that lecture that, maybe impulsively, I went from that lecture room downstairs to the registrar’s office and changed my major to philosophy.

Changing my major changed the whole course of my life and of my ministry. The study of philosophy helped me understand critical analysis, how to be alert to logical fallacies, and problems of that sort. It also helped me learn the history of theoretical thought, much of which has been used to help convey the truth of Christianity to the whole world.

In the medieval university it was said that theology was the queen of the sciences and philosophy was her handmaiden. That has been true in my experience and in my teaching. I’ve been very blessed to have that background in philosophy to help me understand so much of what is involved in theological reflection. At the same time, much of philosophy, particularly contemporary philosophy, is a barren wasteland. However, it is a good thing to understand it and not be intimidated by it.

The one book that I don’t read critically in that sense is the Bible because, when I read the Bible, the Bible criticizes me. I don’t criticize it. But when I run into things like liberal theology, I immediately see the philosophical assumptions and presuppositions that undergird and have prompted these deviations from historic, orthodox Christianity.

It’s been a very great blessing for me to have that background in philosophy, so I commend you for it.