

# READING WITH PURPOSE

*APPLYING THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW  
TO AMERICAN LITERATURE*

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## PREFACE

When I was studying English literature as an undergraduate, I had a spiritual crisis. My professors were teaching a view of man that I could not refute. One professor in particular repeatedly taught us that man was just a beast, beyond hope, with no purpose in life but to reproduce. He accepted this view with a cool despair, but I became more and more troubled. What was my purpose? Did life have any ultimate meaning? If so, how could I find out what it was?

Literature always expresses a view about God, man, nature, and the world because it deals with ultimate questions. Ungodly instructors and writers can press unbelieving ideas upon students and readers with great force and persuasiveness, especially when the class is not grounded on a

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solid foundation. Students who are not *thinking Christians* can be lead to believe many untrue things. Christians who study or teach or just read literature must learn to *think like Christians* and apply it to all they read. Because I did not know what was true about God, about man, and about the universe, I was tossed about and troubled and misled. But, thanks be to God, He used the ungodly view of man to lead me to Himself and set me on a firm foundation.

Because I have seen the destructive nature of literature when not studied from a Christian worldview, it was a great delight to me, years later, to be a high-school literature instructor myself. My goal has been to equip students to love literature while loving Christ more. When we understand how to examine the worldview of the writer and consider it from a Christian perspective, we are then free to stay uncontaminated by ungodly thinking while appreciating all that is good in the work.

It is my hope that this little booklet will be of special help to Christian teachers and parents



## WHY READ ANYWAYS?

**B**efore we can discuss *how* to read Christianly, we must consider a more fundamental question: Why should we read at all? What is the purpose of literacy? Most parents are eager to see their children reading as early as possible, but why? Is it to keep their children busy so they can entertain themselves? What is the goal of literacy?

The non-Christian has only two options here. He can read for pleasure and entertainment, which is hedonism, or he can read for reading's sake, which is aestheticism. Reading for pleasure is just like anything else that is done strictly for the enjoyment of the creature: it turns into worship of the creature. Hedonism is the view that I exist to please myself. Therefore, if reading pleases me, then I will read. Reading is seen as the means