

What is the Meaning of Philosophy?

- 1) What does it say?
 - a) Significant extrabiblical religious usage
 - i) Philo (Jewish philosopher in Egypt, @ 20 BC - @ 50 AD) uses the term 99x.
 - (1) He attempted to merge/harmonize Jewish Scripture with the Greek philosophy. He attempted to combine Plato and Moses.
 - (2) He often attempted to allegorize Scripture
 - (a) For instance, Adam represents the mind, Eve represents the senses.
 - ii) Fourth Maccabees (written 30-70 AD)
 - (1) The Fourth Book of Maccabees is an apocryphal book, included in the Septuagint. It is a philosophical sermon on the theme “pious reason masters passion.” (Jewish Virtual Library)
 - (2) The term is used 5x: 1:1; 5:10, 5:22; 7:9, 7:21
 - iii) Josephus (Roman-Jewish historian, @ 37 - @ 100 AD) uses the term 10x.
 - (1) He defected to the Romans during the siege of Jerusalem (67 AD).
 - b) Biblical usage
 - i) Philosophy [Strong’s # 5385]
 - (1) Col. 2:8
 - (a) Transliterated *philosophia* as *philosophy*.
 - (b) Aligned with “empty deception”
 - ii) Philosophers [Strong’s # 5386]
 - (1) Acts 17:18
 - (a) A person of professional or semi-professional status regarded as having capacity or competence in understanding the meaning or significance of human experience and able to communicate this understanding to others. (Louw-Nida)
- 2) What does it mean?
 - a) Etymology: derived from *philo* (friend/lover) and *sophia* (wisdom)
 - b) Actual usage: a system of thinking
- 3) How does it apply?
 - a) Cultural meaning of the word (sometimes referred to as worldview)
 - i) Philosophy is normally concerned with at least four main areas of life:
 - Summary of an article by Stanley Obitts in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*
 - (1) *Logic*: focus on reasoning
 - (a) How should we reason? How do we reason?
 - (2) *Knowledge*: focus on knowing
 - (a) Can we know? What do we know? How do we learn?
 - (3) *Metaphysics/Ontology*: focus on being
 - (a) Do we exist? Who or what are we?
 - (4) *Values*: focus on behavior (ethics) and beauty (aesthetics)

- (a) How do we determine right and wrong? How do we determine what is attractive and unattractive?
- ii) Philosophy originated with Greek thinkers who wanted to divorce their thoughts from the polytheistic religions of ancient Greece. They wanted a system of thought focus on man rather than the gods/goddesses.
- b) Biblical meaning of the word
 - i) Refers to man-centered system of thinking whose presuppositions are generally in conflict with the teaching of God's Word.
- c) Can there ever be a legitimate Christian philosophy?
 - i) The danger lies with the man-, earth-, and this life-centered presuppositions usually found in philosophy.
 - ii) If someone were to begin with Biblical presuppositions (life under God), one should be able to address the (at least) four main areas of life commonly addressed by human philosophy (life apart from God or gods).
 - iii) Some who have attempted to develop a Christian philosophy include:
 - (1) More confusion and error: Augustine (354-430), Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Karl Barth (1886-1968)
 - (2) More clarity and truth: John Calvin (1509-1564), Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984), Norman Geisler (1932-2019), David Noebel (1936-present), John Frame (1939-present), Vern Poythress (1946-present), Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995)