

Discernment Grid This grid is an attempt to help you discern the truthfulness or trustworthiness of a “Christian” resource (book, magazine article, speaker etc). Spend some time in prayer and then begin!

Part 1: Basic Identification

This section aims to simply to gather basic information about the resource.

Resource:

Note the name of the article, book or sermon

Date:

When was it published or presented?

Author / Speaker:

Who wrote or presented resource?

Endorsements:

Who has endorsed the resource? (check who recommends resource in front & back of book, who has shared it on-line etc.)

Info on Author / Speaker:

Do a quick internet search on presenter and note any church affiliations (church name, denomination), non-profit affiliations, and any interesting biographical information.

Info on Resource: Do a quick internet search on reputable websites to see if there are any reviews on this resource. Suggested sites are Gospel Coalition, Tim Challies Book Reviews, Books and Culture, Christianity Today, Plugged In, Discerning Reader.org.

Part 2: First Impressions

This section aims to help you identify the emphasis and underlying worldview of the resource

Prominence of Scripture in Resource:

Does the resource seem to consist primarily of the author’s / speaker’s ideas, with bible verses or passages being used to support their ideas? OR is the author / speaker’s discussion centered in scripture, explaining how the Bible addresses an issue or situation? This question is more directly applicable to a non-fiction or teaching resources and may not be directly applicable to a fiction book which may discuss ideas without directly quoting scripture.

Translations of Scripture in Resource:

Note which translation(s) the resource quotes. The ESV, NIV, NASB, NLT, and New King James are highly respected translations. The Message is a paraphrase (not translation) and therefore is more useful as a devotional than a teaching tool.

General “tone” of the book

What is the general tone of the book: Encouraging, harsh, rebellious, informative, divisive? Does the author / speaker present ideas with an air of humility and conviction or superiority and criticism?

Attitude towards God in Resource:

Does the author talk about God in words which communicate respect and awe for God’s holiness, and a desire to have his/her mind transformed by God and conformed to His will? OR does the author have a casual or flippant attitude towards God.

Centrality of the Gospel

Is the story of Jesus’s life, death and resurrection central to the book’s content - informing people’s motivations and actions?

Attitude towards the Church in Resource:

Jesus Christ died for the church, and His people are considered “His bride” (Ephesians 5:25-27). Does the resource demonstrate love for / concern for / respect for the church?

Gut check

Is there anything that feels a bit “off” but you aren’t really sure why?!

Answering these basic questions may be enough to help you discern that a resource may not be particularly helpful. If you are still not sure and want to investigate more, dig deeper!

Part 3: Digging Deeper (continued)

This section aims to help you identify how accurately the author / speaker is engaging with scripture and theology

B. Does the author seem to agree with or understand the core beliefs of the Christian Church?

Core Beliefs	Yes	No
<p>God is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit <i>Gen. 1; Deut. 6:4-6; Matthew 28:19</i></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God the Father is the Creator and Sustainer of this universe. <i>Isaiah 40; Deut. 6:4-6</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus Christ, was fully God and fully man, lived a perfect life, was crucified for our sins, rose from the dead and was exalted to the right hand of God. <i>John 1:1-18, Eph 3:15-23</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Holy Spirit convicts, guides, teaches, rebukes, indwells, empowers, comforts, intercedes, unites believers into one body, and glorifies Christ. <i>1 Cor 2:6-16, Gal 5:16-26</i> 		
<p>All Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God as men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit <i>2 Tim 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:16-21, Hebrews 1:1-2, Psalm 19, Psalm 1</i></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible is God's revelation of himself to mankind. It is true in all that it affirms. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible is clear and can be understood by all who put their faith in God. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible is necessary for us to accurately know God, his plans, and his will. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bible is sufficient and contains everything we need for life and godliness. 		
<p>People were created in God's image, but rebelled against Him and are therefore sinful in nature, guilty before God and in need of forgiveness and restoration. <i>Gen 1-3, Rom 3:23, 5:12</i></p>		
<p>People's minds are so clouded by sin that we cannot understand God's offer of salvation without His intervention. He initiates towards us so that we can understand and seek Him. <i>2 Cor 4:1-6, Ephesians 2:1-10 Acts 16:14</i></p>		
<p>Jesus Christ has redeemed humanity from the power of sin, death and eternal punishment by his substitutionary death. We are saved by God's grace alone, through faith in Christ. <i>Gal 4:4-7, Romans 3:21-26, Hebrews 7:23-28, Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 John 2:1-6</i></p>		
<p>Christians are to treat people of other faiths with respect, but urgently proclaim Christ as the only way of salvation. <i>Romans 10:1-17, John 14:1-14</i></p>		
<p>Christ will return at the end of time, and judge the living and the dead. The ungodly will suffer eternal punishment, his followers will enjoy eternity in the presence of God. <i>Revelation 19-21</i></p>		
<p>True Christians will both profess faith in Jesus Christ and seek to live in a manner which represents the character and commands of God clearly explained in scripture. <i>1 Thess 4:1-12, 1 John 1:5-10, Ephesians 5:1-20, Colossians 3:1-17</i></p>		
<p>Since God is the creator of people, human identity (eg. gender identity) and human worth (eg. sanctity of life) are defined by God. <i>Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 2:18-25, Psalm 139,</i></p>		

Part 4: Responding

This section aims to help you determine how you should respond to the resource you are evaluating

Response Options - Rate each potential response with a "yes" or "no"	Yes	No
<p>1. Full Endorsement - 4 yes's to answers below</p> <p>If you determine that a resource is sound, you can fully endorse it - recommending it to all friends, family members, and to others who may be influenced by you.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were raised in the identification section (Part 1). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the First Impressions section (Part 2). 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Scripture section (Part 3A) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Doctrine section (Part 3B) 		
<p>2. Partial Endorsement - 2 or 3 yes's to answers below</p> <p>If you determine that a resource is a "mixed bag" with some sound points, and some questionable points, you may recommend it to discerning friends and family members, but perhaps not to those who are newer or less mature in the faith. You may say, "this resource is helpful in this regard, but may be questionable in this regard."</p>		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Scripture section (Part 3A) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Doctrine section (Part 3B) 		
<p>3. Rejection - 0 to 2 yes's to answers below</p> <p>If you determine that a resource is more problematic than helpful, you would not recommend it and, if appropriate, publicly identify it as unhelpful among friends, family members and those who may be influenced by you. If you determine it is appropriate to warn people about the resource, it is beneficial to identify the specific points of concern you have with it (eg. it contradicts this point of doctrine, OR the scripture verses within it are taken out of context OR it mocks the church etc.). Efforts should be made to direct critiques towards the ideas contained within the resource rather than to disparage the individual responsible for the resource because all of us are in process! We pray that God will continue to guide us all into truth as we study His word and dialogue with other Christians.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were raised in the identification section (Part 1). 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Scripture section (Part 3A) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No red flags were identified in the Digging Deeper - Doctrine section (Part 3B) 		

Questions on this Discernment Grid? Listen in to our podcast explaining it:

<http://northview.org/discerning-the-trustworthiness-of-christian-resources/>

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