



Early Christian Letters for Everyone

Tom Wright , N.T. Wright

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N. T. Wright has undertaken a tremendous task: to provide guides to all the books of the New Testament, and to include in them his own translation of the entire text. Each short passage is followed by a highly readable discussion, with background information, useful explanations and suggestions, and thoughts as to how the text can be relevant to our lives today. A glossary is included at the back of the book. The series is suitable for group study, personal study, or daily devotions.

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Early Christian Letters for Everyone Details

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Erin says

QUOTES:

1 John:

"Life itself had come to life, had taken the form of a human being, coming into the present from God's future, coming to display God's coming age. And the name of that life-in-person is Jesus....We have seen the future, and it is full of light and life and joy and hope." (pp. 130-131, re. 1 Jn 1.1-4)

Christopher says

Mr. Wright continues to impress with this series as he moves into the largest collection of epistles in his commentaries. Covering the short epistles of James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1,2, & 3 John, and Jude (or Judah as he calls it), Mr. Wright is, in some ways, at his best in this commentary. Whereas the larger commentaries, like Romans or Hebrews, could go off track due to the length of the letters themselves, here Mr. Wright is forced to be more concise and straight-to-the-point than in his previous commentaries. Thus, like the epistles themselves, Mr. Wright's commentaries have a great deal of thought-provoking punch to them in such a short span. It is definitely an enjoyable read and I highly recommend this book to those wishing to gain a great insight on this collection of epistles.

Neil R. Coulter says

There aren't many people in the world whom I look up to and want to be more like (I wish there were more . . .). N. T. Wright is one of those people. I've never met him, probably won't meet him in this life, but I consider him a guide and a friend. I am so grateful for his *For Everyone* commentary series through the whole New Testament. Our home Bible study group previously worked through Matthew's gospel, using Wright's book as our guide, and yesterday we finished our look at 1, 2, and 3 John, also following along with Wright. In these commentaries he is clear, helpful, encouraging, and informative. It's not heavy-duty scholarly writing; it's truly a "general audience appropriate" tone. I've been familiar with the Bible basically for my whole life, but yet I always learn something from reading Wright. I highly recommend any book in the *For Everyone* series to anyone who would like to understand the Bible more deeply.

Josh Gaudreau says

James only.

Very brief, but he often suggests a great way of thinking about things or looking at things, and his applications/illustrations are very grounded in the every day. Great for a lay reader wanting to know James a bit better, but should only be supplemental for a pastor preaching through James.

Liz says

It's hard to go wrong with NT Wright's exegetical writing. Clear, insightful, and helpful resource for anyone studying the letters of James, Peter, John, or Jude.

Becky B says

As usual, a nice, easy to read commentary but still deep in thought and rich in historical background grounding the thoughts and applications. (And no, that isn't a typo up there. Wright explains that the Greek word usually translated as Jude is the same as Judah, but most translate it Jude to draw distinction between the writer of this book, the tribe and those named Judas (also the same word). He likes the original name.) Lived up to my expectations of the New Testament For Everyone series based on several others I've read.

Adam Shields says

I only read James for now. My small group used it as a discussion book and we plan on returning to it later I do some of the other letters.

It was helpful to have read Wright widely prior to this so that I could explain more fully what wright meant sometimes. He barely hinted at some of his ideas that he developed more fully in other places. Of course this is not one of his full books of theology so he does not have the freedom to fully develop some of the ideas.

But overall it was a good jumping off point for discussion.

Daniel Wright says

Wright, not really on top form here away from his usual haunts of Paul's epistles and the synoptic gospels, nevertheless provides a clear and insightful commentary on the letters of John, Peter, James and Jude (or as he calls it, Judah).

Matt Maples says

This commentary series is a nice and helpful series to give a basic overview of the early Christian letters in the Bible. I focused on the writing on 1 John and Wright makes a lot of good and thoughtful points on the text. While it's not a technical commentary it is a nice and helpful supporting commentary.

Tim Baumgartner says

These early letters (James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Judah (Jude)) are some very interesting texts. All are very practical. James is about wisdom. 1 Peter is living among persecution. 2 Peter focuses on Christian character in the now, while carrying the mentality of 'Maranatha' (Come and get us, LORD!)! 1 John applies to various churches, 2 John focuses on one, while 3 John is addressed primarily to the Elder Gaius. Finally, Judah, as it is called by Wright, includes exhortations, warnings and praises. Now I'll address some more specifics from each book.

James: "One of the great themes of the letter comes here at the beginning, in parallel with patience. Wisdom! James is the most obvious representative in the New Testament of what in the ancient Israelite scriptures (the Old Testament) we think of as 'wisdom literature': the sifted, tested and collected wisdom of those who learned to trust God for everything and to discover how that trust would work out in every aspect of daily life" (5)...Translating belief into action, even when it seems impossible or downright dangerous. That is the faith that matters. That is the faith that justifies (2:24). That is the faith that saves (2:14). This is near the heart of the message of James: the challenge to make sure that faith is the real thing" (19).

As far as something that intrigued me for teaching worldview was Wright's declaration of "a central and vital part of what it means to be human": [if we are devoted to the Lord, we need to have been moved to action regarding our speech habits] (21).

Regarding 5:16, Wright challenges the reader [and the Church]: "If everyone who reads these words were to determine to devote half an hour to this task, the effect could be incalculable" (43). He goes on to say on the same page, "Once the lesson has been grasped, that in prayer the Christian stands at the overlap-point of heaven and earth, of the present and the future, there is pastoral work to be done."

1 Peter:

The introduction of this commentary seems to refer to Proverbs' famous passage (24:3-4): "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures" or John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many rooms." From what I've heard, it also is reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' (or Robert Boyd Munger's book "My Heart--Christ's Home") metaphor from "Mere Christianity" about a "house with many rooms." 1 Peter 1:3-9 contains some jewels to ponder and allow one to be transformed by the renewing of one's mind (Romans 12:1-2). Since Wright covers the entire book, he covers the "unpopular" and "difficult" passages such as 2:18 (Let slaves obey their masters with all respect...), 3:19 (made proclamation to the spirits in prison), etc. He also gives some valuable insight people cannot get from a surface-level reading of the text.

2 Peter:

This section includes some material that might be difficult for some readers to come across in our ever-increasing postmodern culture. People don't like to be told they are wrong, people don't want to be told there's one way, etc. Wright carefully, but wisely addresses two themes running throughout the book: "First, be on your guard! This doesn't mean adopting a fault-finding, mean-spirited approach, ready to criticize anybody and everybody in case some of them turn out to be heretics. It means, once, more, the wisdom of the serpent. Don't imagine that there are not lawless people out there, ready to lead you astray with smooth talk. Don't imagine there won't be times when it feels the natural and right thing to go along with them. If that wasn't a real danger, we wouldn't need the warnings. And that real danger is that we might fall away from the solid grounding we have received in the faith. But, second, the message isn't all negative. There is such a thing as sustained and lasting growth in Christian character, faith, and life" (124).

1 John:

This book is full of the darkness vs light battle that the school I'm teaching at addressed at the Christmas party. Lots of us can relate to these issues (and the tests within) of this book. "The true God. The one Jesus. The life of the age to come. Love given, love passed on. This is where we stand. This is the witness of John" (169).

2 John:

This short book emphasizes face-to-face meetings between believers-especially when there is a conflict. In our age of technology that enables our work to be completed faster, it is quite tempting to address people through this means. However, nothing replaces the genuine human behavior of personal encounters.

3 John:

The shortest document in the Bible (219 words as opposed to 2 John's 245) emphasizes 'peace': "not the easy peace that comes from ignoring the problems, but the deeper peace that comes from confronting them in the knowledge that truth and love are the two arms with which God in Jesus now enfolds both church and world in one embrace" (190).

Judah (Jude):

Jude provides the big picture, which enables Christians to be able to see the struggles of "following God's way, and at every turn have someone try and pull you off the track" (196). Oftentimes this can include false teachers. This is especially important because some tell people they are making mountains out of molehills. However, Wright provides a major example of when calling a spade a spade would have been appropriate before it got out of hand: Nazi Germany. We need to be on guard for when the next waves of evil spring up. We can do that by having the heart and mind of the concluding verses of this text, which as Wright states wouldn't be a bad ending to the entire New Testament if Revelation didn't exist: "To the one and only God, our savior through Jesus the Messiah our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority before all the ages, and now, and to all the ages to come. Amen."

Come grow in your understanding of God and His scriptures...

Ethan says

N.T. Wright's "entry-level" commentary for James, 1/2 Peter, 1/2/3 John, and Judah (Jude).

As with the other books in the "for everyone" series, each section of Scripture is translated by Wright with a view to a modern British audience, provides some sort of story or illustration, and then makes sense of what the author is saying in his context.

Wright does an excellent job of transcending all of the scholarly disputes regarding the authors of these letters; he explains them in terms of their original context in the first century and what they would mean to the people to whom they were written. Applications still remain robust and are quite more "conservative" than many would generally believe.

An excellent commentary on these letters and most worthy of consideration.

**--galley received as part of early review program

