

Effective Bible Study: Lesson 7

Secondary Literature

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When we kicked off this study, one of the things I mentioned was not going to a commentary. I told you that before we were done, you'd be able to write your own. Well, that still holds. If you have come this far with Jude, you have likely learned a thing or two more about the book than you did before any critical analysis. And certainly, God is with us and imparting his wisdom as we pour through His words. Well, this is the part of the study where the commentaries you were initially told to stay away from come into play. This part of the study allows us to take a gander at what some others are saying about the text. One thing that can help us understand more fully the historical and contextual settings of a text is "Secondary Literature."

Secondary literature would be things like commentaries, Bible dictionaries, various types of Bible and Biblical history encyclopedias, encyclopedias of Old and New Testaments, etc. I did a search on Amazon for commentaries on Jude and there were 279 search results. Now hear me on this and please don't be so quick to dismiss me. I would venture to say that 85% of those probably aren't worth the paper they're written on, and that might be too generous. Most of your common Bible Encyclopedias and dictionaries from Eerdmans, Zondervan, Holman contain pretty general historical knowledge, so those can typically be good. ACU press has a great Bible commentary written by men in our brotherhood. The Transforming Word: A One-Volume Commentary on the Bible by Mark Hamilton. It contains some rather general knowledge. Here's what you want to look for in each source (*some sources may not necessarily specifically address each of the items mentioned below, but most will).

1. Author
2. Date
3. Recipients
4. Occasion
5. Purpose
6. Destination
7. Style
8. Unusual Features

Use three sources: 1 Commentary, 1 Bible Dictionary, 1 Bible Encyclopedia. Read what each one says about the book of Jude concerning the items listed above and summarize in your

own words what each one says. Take all of that and draw your own conclusions. Some of what you read may prompt further investigating. If you wish to dig further, knock yourself out. The resources are endless but be warned: Lots of what's out there is absolute garbage. "Garbage" can be defined as "nonsense, unreadable, heretical, anti-Christian, secular/atheist propaganda." There are Bible "scholars" all over the world who don't even believe in God yet write commentaries. So be wise. If something sounds sensational, wacky, or far different from other observations, AND/OR contradicts other clear Bible teachings, it is a big clue that you're in weird territory. So it is good to be guarded before entering. That's why studies into the word of God really do need to be saturated in prayer and careful meditation. There needs to be sincerity in understanding God's commands and what He is communicating to us, rather than trying to use the Bible to prove one's point, or just believing everything someone else writes/says. God's word is intended to speak with us and speak into our hearts.