



# Study Techniques

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# STUDY TECHNIQUES

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## INTRODUCTION

A special blessing awaits those who reverently and prayerfully study the Word of God, in order that they may know His will. The Bereans were said to be, "of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, in that they... searched the scripture daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Paul said, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV).

## ADJUSTMENT TO STUDY

### **1. Past Failures**

There are many "beginnings" to bad attitudes toward study. These may have been through inattention to basics in classes which caused increasing problems as the work got harder; or bad classroom experiences where the student may have been intimidated or embarrassed before a class, causing him/her to feel incompetent. These and many others experiences tend to eat away at healthy attitudes to work. There can be many circumstances which cause negative habits and attitudes.

### **2. Adjustment from School Study**

Your time studying a Bible College or Leadership College course will probably be very different from your time at school. Study ability is not primarily about intellectual capacity but mainly involves techniques and application. It can transform poor students into good students, and good students into excellent students, as there is constant application of appropriate tools of learning.

### **3. Adjustment from University**

Even if you have had tertiary education, then you will also find Leadership Bible College different. University is a place to become proficient in a particular field of chosen study, usually secular in orientation.

A Christian College is not just a place to gain head knowledge either. The study of God's Word is different from other study in many ways. The greatest being that the Lord has not only provided us with His written Word, but also His living Word, Jesus, whose life exemplified everything taught in God's Word. He has also provided for us the Holy Spirit - our greatest "study aid". As you open your heart and mind to Him, His job is to lead you into all truth. He will take that Word and reveal Jesus to you through it. Under the tuition of the Holy Spirit you will not only gain an intellectual understanding but He will make the teaching and your study a part of you.

It is not only a matter of how practised you are at study; it is the Holy Spirit who makes the final important transition - the 45-cm from your mind to your heart.

*“AND WHEN HE THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH IS COME  
HE WILL LEAD YOU INTO ALL TRUTH” Jn 16:13a*

#### **4. Balance your Academic Life with other Commitments**

You may find Leadership College a little like living in a “pressure cooker” at times. Very early in your time studying at College, you must learn to adjust to the many different, and sometimes competing, demands that will be made on your time. You may have college, work, family, financial, study commitments and ministry to attend to, as well as having to find time to relax and have your own prayer time and Church commitments.

It is not always easy to find the right balance between all these demands, but with a little careful planning and using time wisely, you will find you have more than enough time.

#### **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

A reason for studying courses here at Rhema is so that God can, like a weaver, work the principles learned of His Word and His Person into our lives.

It can be said that the objectives of any course of study are the bringing about of development in five basic areas:

1. Knowledge
2. Thinking Procedures
3. Skills
4. Attitudes, Feeling and Sensitivities
5. Spiritual Development

The lectures, notes, assignments, audio and visual aids, etc, convey to you thoughts, knowledge and ideas. They are the tools used to communicate the truth wished to be received.

It is your responsibility, as the student, to receive (or take) the lectures, notes and illustrations and to discover what is in them. Just like discovering what is in a parcel, you need to do the unwrapping to find the gift.

It is not sufficient to memorise facts so that they can be reproduced, quoted, recited or written. They must be worked upon, understood in all their facets and implications; fitted into the mind's framework of concepts and ideas and evaluated individually.

There is a story that tells of a traveller walking through the forest and who came upon an axeman furiously chopping at a tree. He stood and watched this man for quite some time and saw that he wasn't getting very far. So he said, "Don't you realise that

your axe is blunt. Why don't you stop and sharpen it?" The axeman angrily replied, "Don't be stupid! Can't you see I haven't got time".

Sometimes students are so busy with study and other commitments that they think they don't have time to stop and reassess their study methods.

This course is designed to present different study methods that may be applied to your own personal study.

#### **Four Sound Rules to consider:**

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|--------------------------|--|
| Study <b>REGULARLY</b>   | - A “shovel” every day is better than a “truckload” once a week  |
| Study <b>PRAYERFULLY</b> | - The author of the mind (Jesus) can enlighten the mind  |
| Study <b>THOROUGHLY</b>  | - There is no easy road to learning. It requires effort  |
| Study <b>HONESTLY</b>    | - Truth alone should be followed unfalteringly, with an open mind. All of us approach study with a tremendous amount of baggage, past experiences, attitudes, biases, etc. |

#### **GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

Although a positive attitude to mistakes is necessary, it is even more important to have a positive attitude TO WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE. What are your goals, purposes and interests? Once you begin to make conscious goals about what you want to achieve in study and in life, your ability will greatly improve.

##### **1. Have Clear Objectives**

What is your purpose for studying Bible College courses? What do you want, or expect, to gain from your time studying. Evaluate your reasons and lay out your goals clearly in order to attain those reasons.

##### **2. Set your Goals**

Goals supply a purpose and a stimulus to work hard. You don't have to be “a great brain” to study well. We all have God-given great brains. Thomas Edison, according to some, was “a very brainy person” because he invented hundreds of things from the electric globe to the gramophone. Yet, he became impatient whenever people tried to call him a “genius.” He considered that his inventions were the result of solid, well-organised work, guided by an eager imagination. “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration, not great brains,” he is reported to have replied.

### **3. Long-term, Middle term and Short-term Goals**

\* **Short-term Goals** - are things you want to achieve today, tomorrow, next week or next month. Eg, complete an assignment by Friday, or to spend 8 hours in study this week.

\* **Middle-term Goals** - are the ones you want to achieve this year, or in this course of study. Eg, to read the Bible through at least 2 times while at College, or to get a Distinction in every subject.

\* **Long-term Goals** - concern your future, and the realisation of your ideals and ambitions. Eg, to become a worship leader, counselor, lay leader, or a pastor involved in youth work.

**When you make goals for yourself it is important to note a few things:**

- Don't under-estimate your own abilities. Don't strive to get 80% if you know that you are capable of getting 85% if you work a bit harder.
- Don't make your goals too difficult to reach. "Over-reach" can be just as negative as "under-reach." Goals should be encouraging you to try harder, but they should not be too difficult, unrealistic or unattainable to reach, as this will cause you to become frustrated, disillusioned or disappointed with yourself.
- Although goals are important, it may be necessary to change them. Flexibility is very essential in a globalized world. When you begin College studies, you might think that you are going to be an overseas missionary. But throughout the course of your studies, the Lord might get you to focus more clearly on something closer to home, at least in the short term. Above all, be flexible and stay tuned to God!

### **RESULTS OF STUDYING**

Many students of Bible College and Leadership College courses in the past have commented that their time and experience was one of the most vital, valuable and fulfilling times in their lives. Make the most of it and be determined to get the most out of it. Time passes quickly, and you may not always get opportunities in life to put time aside for study like this. When you have completed your course and obtained your Certificate or Diploma, it does put you in good stead everywhere you go. Whether or not others appreciate it, the Lord will still have added a wonderful dimension to your life. Study is worth doing the job properly. Get the maximum out of it! Do not feel afraid to contact the college or lecturer for further help, discussion, and mentoring.

### **LIFESTYLE CHANGES**

### **PRACTISING GOOD STUDY HABITS**

Interest governs the memory. When our interest is aroused, impressions are formed in our minds. The keener the interest, the deeper the impression and, therefore, the

better the memory is. Knowledge, understanding and personal growth is only limited by your degree of interest. “The sky is the limit” – at least as far as your interest is concerned.

Interest is instinctive and intentional. It is deliberate, designed and planned. It is an effort of the mind and the will. It all starts with YOU. Determine to be interested in the subjects being taught.

Appreciate Balance – you will like some subjects more than others depending on your skills, calling and personal interests. Yet a balanced “meal” is essential, meat as well as vegetables, and that is why any credible College course must balance their curriculums with Bible (eg, Romans), Theology (eg, Christology) and Applied/Practical (eg, Ethics) subjects.

Good study habits need to be learned. You must learn how to budget your time, improve your concentration, find a conducive place to study, take useful notes and do a number of other things to make life easier.

### **1. Setting**

To work a hobby, you need a special place with enough space to work and appropriate equipment needed for the task (eg, restoring a car, sewing). So, also, you need these things in order to study effectively.

You could have your own desk or table with a good light. Poor light will cause tiredness and can eventually affect your eyesight. Avoid using areas where you have to pack up and re-setup everything every time you want to study. Much time is lost in repetitious preparation.

Make sure that you have all your equipment close at hand, e.g. plenty of paper, pens, ruler, highlighters, computer, printer, internet connection, Bible, notes, etc. You may also need space for dictionaries, textbooks, reference books, etc.

Your chair should be comfortable, well supported, and adjusted to your body. Your study setting needs to be free of distractions, excess noise and other robbers of time.

You should train yourself to associate studying with your setting so that when you sit down at your table or desk, you will be ready to work.

And finally, you need to be aware of the time aspect. Have a watch or clock handy. This is necessary so as to properly apportion time to a particular subject, not go overboard on it, or fail to get enough sleep. It is necessary when working on a timetable.

If your conditions are not suitable, and if you can't do much about it, your attitude and motivation must make up for the difference. David Livingstone, the great missionary, studied as a youth by propping books against the factory machine that he had to operate for twelve hours a day, six days a week.

## **2. Plan for your Learning Personality**

Are you an “early bird” or a “night owl”?

Do you prefer company or do you prefer solitude?

Do you like peace and quiet or a bit of noise around you?

Hence, you may vary your study environment accordingly. Some people like a bit of music when they are studying, or like a few snacks around, while others do not.

## **3. Diary and/or “To Do” Lists**

Rather than trusting your memory or relying on a stack of loose bits of paper, it is better to use:

- a) Diary and/or
- b) Monthly Planner to record all your homework, assignment due dates, special projects, rosters, exams etc.

If you use a Diary or Monthly Planner, you will save heaps of time because you won’t have to go searching through all your notes and books to find where you’ve written yourself a memo, assignment etc. “To do” lists can help you focus on priorities and strategy.

## **4. Timetable**

To develop new study habits (though it may take a little time, and you get better at it the more you do it) you will need a fairly powerful inducement - let’s call this your study incentive. For example, 2Tim.2.15 and Acts 17.21 can amount to powerful study incentives. What other ones can you think of? What is particularly meaningful to you?

Your study incentive will become your driving force, helping you to overcome any innate laziness and drive you passion. Your desire may otherwise be “at the beach” or on a “television program.” Your incentive will help you to say “no” to some party invitations and to stay in your room and start work when you would much rather be at that party. Without some self-discipline, be sure that plenty of distractions will come your way! They simply arrive without you even asking for them. Remember that study rewards and achievements are often long-term rather than immediate. It can take a long time before you see the “fruit” of your study, and this is where your passion, attitude, self-discipline and determination comes in. So - when your days seem filled with endless assignments, projects, reading and more, glance at the horizon and think about your future. Five years, eg, will go anyway, but WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE AT THE END OF THOSE 5 YEARS? Still in the same place as now?

If you carefully plan the use of your time, you should have enough time for studying, church commitments, prayer and Bible reading (which should be separate from your study), family commitments, work, fun times, sleep, and relaxation. You should also be able to complete assignments reasonably timely without letting weeks and months go by with very little happening.

A study timetable is a means of organising time effectively. A timetable organises your study efforts so you can get a lot done in a concentrated period - and thus giving you more time for other activities and commitments.

It is said that the American journalist, Waite Graebner, expressed his astonishment to Winston Churchill at the way the great British wartime leader seemed to have quite some time for leisure. "He does this," thought Graebner, "because he must be extra brilliant." But Churchill replied, "Not at all. My work is so highly organised that I can have more time for leisure".

## GETTING STARTED

First of all establish when is the best time to study. Do you feel the freshest in the morning or at night or the afternoons? What days suit you better? Setting up an organized schedule can help to keep you focused, only deviating when really necessary.

It is generally better to study a little every day, than a whole lot once a week - so organise your study timetable to allow you to study everyday or a few scheduled days a week. If you are attending lectures, or listening to them, it is best to revise a subject within 24 hours of doing the lesson. Reading through the notes you took during the class can then be very helpful in retaining information.

If you are doing assessments, do the questions you find easiest first. You will then have the confidence and the throughput to spend more time on questions you might find more difficult or needing a more lengthy description. Make sure when it comes to study that you do, in fact, STUDY!

It is suggested that you do 50 minutes or so of study, and then take a 10-minute break. During this break you should do something that will take your mind off what you are studying - make a cup of coffee, do a bit of exercise, read the paper. But don't commit to another project or you may not get back to your study that day.

To help make the best use of your time, take a look at your day and then your entire week. You can best divide your study time into whatever number of study periods works best for you. Again, be flexible. Another person's study technique or program may not work for you. It is OK to try out different methods, and even make mistakes. It's all about self-improvement anyway.

**For example, your timetable could resemble something like the following (assuming a full-time student):**

15 hours	for STUDY
22.5 hours	for Class Lecture Time
17.5 hours	for work (casual, part-time)
12 hours	for Church activities (Field Practicums)
18 hours	for family, home, etc
61 hours	for sleep (more than 8 hours a day)

Total 146 hours out of a weekly 168, with 22 hours left over to do as you please.



It is not difficult to work to your planned schedule as you might think - if you are prepared to exercise a bit of self-discipline, are truly determined, focused and passionate, and you aim to fulfill your goals.

## **5. Self Discipline**

"Discipline narrows the flow, but increases the force" - If you want to be serious about study and about College, you will have to learn to discipline yourself.

If you have been truly called to study God's Word, you should endeavour to do the best you can, and to get as much as you can out of the course. Be faithful to what He has called you to do. True, we will have our struggles, and probably regret that we even commenced a study program if going through a tough patch, but this is where you will need to hold on to the INITIAL RESOLVE that the Lord said to You. This is some of the "stuff" of champions. And we are all called to be champions in the faith.

College study should be high on the list of your priorities. If not, you will probably lose your resolve, your passion, and soon dismiss the study with all sorts of "valid" reasons. To do well, you need to spend time in study - and that requires discipline.

**Self-discipline** is required in the following areas:

### **a) Time**

Learn to discipline yourself to stick to your timetable. If you only study 3 nights a week and someone invites you out on one of those nights, say "NO," unless it is really crucial you be there. It is not necessary to become a "slave" to a timetable, but if used correctly it will prove something of a "guide" to you and will help you organize and prioritize your activities more.

### **b) Study**

When it is time to study - STUDY! Don't do it half-heartedly, don't daydream, or read a book/talking/etc. Don't wait until you "feel" like studying. If your timetable says it is time to study, determine to do so. This rigid discipline can really pay dividends in the end. Robbers of time can come against from the right and the left.

### **c) Finance**

Although this does not relate to study methods, it is an area of self-discipline you will need to learn while studying. You have financial commitments – rent, food, tithes, bills, mortgages, fees, etc. Unfortunately, sometimes bad management of finances and the failure to prioritize have caused many an excited student to become weary along the way and drop out. It can be the little foxes that ultimately destroy the vine!

## **6. Common Causes of Failure to Follow a Study Plan or to Study Effectively**

### **1. The first is failure to begin work right at the beginning of the program.**

If the race starts slow, it will probably soon stop for you. Some students are inclined to keep postponing the commencement of really serious study. They procrastinate and keep putting things off. They fiddle about doing all kinds of odd jobs, rewriting notes,

drawing elaborate diagrams, trying to read and understand everything at once, etc, but they do not really settle down to working gradually and in earnest. Knowledge and skills accumulate, so don't get frustrated by not understanding or following everything now. Set a goal now to start working consistently from the beginning of the semester. Slowly chip away at it, and be patient. Failure to work at a constant pace throughout the year results in cramming, which can then interfere with careful and thoughtful learning. Cramming induces anxiety, your study might seem overwhelming, and it may interfere with learning.

## **2. Some students fail to develop the habit of thinking.**

They either read notes or books half-heartedly, or they try to memorise things before they have really thought much about them or understood them. The only way to prevent this is by following up each lecture or class session by some useful thinking. Thinking is not a sin. The Lord has given us the ability to think, just so its outcomes are consistent with His word. Students also sometimes read the notes SOLELY with the view of filling in the assignment answers, and therefore can actually fail to really, really LEARN! In the end, though a student might consider this a "smart" strategy or tactic, it is really the student who cheats him/herself. In educational literature, some articles are devoted to explaining how some students can earn awards and degrees yet fail to really learn.

## **3. Others fail to understand what is given to them in lectures.**

If you understand your material as best you can in the first place, then half the battle is already won. Sort out the facts, unravel the theory, follow the argument, pinpoint the main principles, understand the best you can. Put down the main points under headings, build up a sequence, consolidate by diagrams if necessary and go over the material until you understand it. It is very common to do a second or third reading to really understand new concepts you have not encountered before.

Nobody becomes a good student or passes assignments or examinations by accident. It takes hard work, dedication and above all, personal honesty. You need to know your weaknesses and be willing to make changes to overcome them.

## **METHOD OF ACHIEVEMENT**

Efficient methods of study make successful, studious students. The method may be as important as the time given to study. Time, however, may still ease the process. It has been said that 'there is no easy road to learning'.

Learning is an active process and demands close and undivided attention and observation.

As you study, you will learn by listening to lectures, by studying books and materials, by doing assignments, practicals, quizzes, exams, classroom tutorials, etc.

As stated previously, the learning is an active process on the part of the learner, and it is what he himself does with the material presented that produces understanding and retention.