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THE RELEVANCE OF GOD IN YOUR SUCCESS

Indisputably, God has an indispensable role to play in the life and success of every individual on earth. Those who acknowledge and submit to His will are like efficient surfers who ride the waves. Their experiences are similar to that of King Uzziah of whom it is recorded that "... as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper (2 Chronicles 26:5). But those who refuse God's plan discover like Saul that "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5).

God's perfect control over the universe is demonstrated in His dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, who eventually learnt in the hard way that "... that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to

whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17).

While still in the wilderness, God wanted the Israelites to understand and apply this principles to their lives. He made it clear to them that their success and prosperity were not the outcome of their efforts and skills alone. Therefore, they were to "... remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is **t h i s d a y**" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Psalms 75:6-7 clearly declares that "... promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another".



Remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18)

In the light of the above it is obvious that what Solomon philosophically described as time and chance in Ecclesiastes 9:11 (reproduced below) are actually divine overruling in the affairs of man - "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all".

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"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee" (Proverbs 4:9).



“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding”
(Proverbs 9:10).

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)



“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore” (1 Kings 4:29).

A few Biblical examples given below confirms not only the truthfulness of this statement but also of the fact that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: his praise endureth for ever” (Psalms 111:10):

- **1 Kings 4:29** - And **God gave Solomon wisdom** and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.
- **Daniel 1:17** As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.
- **Ecclesiastes 2:26** For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

The secret to Daniel’s success is traceable to the godly decision he made as recorded in Daniel 1:8 “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs

that he might not defile himself”.

After Jerusalem has been besieged (Daniel 1:1-7) the book of Daniel gives us an account of the beginning of his life and education. Daniel began with the study of human learning and was afterwards honoured with divine visions and revelations and became famous in the courts of Babylon (Daniel 2:1-45). This followed great honour which Nebuchadnezzar put on Daniel, in recompense for his service.

“Give instructions to a wise man and he will increase in learning and wisdom. Those that would do good in the world when they grow up must learn when they are young, because that is the learning age, if that time is lost, it will hardly be redeemed”

The success of Daniel, who was taken to serve under king Nebuchadnezzar as a teenager challenges every reader, both young and old that no matter the barriers or difficulties that may look formidable, God promises us in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that when we are unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...our labour is not in vain.

It is only when we limit ourselves to what we see physically with our eyes that our progress slows down. (Exodus 4:10), Moses did not recognise the potential he possessed until he accepted God’s commission. All he knew about himself was, “Oh my God, I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue”. Little did he know that he would be the one to

command Pharaoh to “let my people go”. Until and unless you rise up and know who you are and recognise what God has invested in you, will you face every situation in your life with boldness and confidence.

Despite being a Jew amongst the Chaldeans in a foreign land, he rose up above those challenges and was and is still an inspiration to many generations. His decision not to defile himself was based on the fear of God. The manner in which he communicated it illustrates good self esteem – the conviction that one is competent to live and is worthy of living in pursuit of the fulfilment of the purpose for his life.

But, his success called for:

- Hard work
- Determination
- Steadfastness
- Boldness
- Conviction
- Prayer
- Commitment
- Study
- Discipline
- Diligence in detail

Being amongst idol worshippers (Daniel 3:1-12) did not change Daniel's conviction, besides the threats that were associated with refusal to bow to the king's golden image. In return God honoured Daniel by increasing knowledge and understanding of dreams and visions.

The life of Daniel also demonstrate determination. He had a purpose for his life, it might have been time of great distress for others following Jerusalem being besieged, but for Daniel, it was time to maximise his potentials. He had to learn to cope with the new environment, new language, new life-style, new food, etc.

Another quality in Daniel is focus (Hebrews 12:2). This is a challenge to every one of us. Are we focused enough on our priorities? Do we have a purpose for our lives? Have we set goals for our lives and pursue them till they are accomplished? Are we studying for a purpose? What about our conviction? What do we want to be after we complete our studies? Is God central in our lives just as He was in Daniel's life? Is the environment we are living in having adverse effect on our lives or are we overcomers over those circumstances?

Daniel sought God with all his heart (Mathew 6:33) and God responded by blessing Daniel abundantly as He has promised us in (Deuteronomy 28:13; 31:6)

Success does not come easy; God honours hard work and hates laziness. Let us be determined like Daniel and reject to be influenced



“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich”
(Proverbs 10:4).

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs”
(Daniel 1:9)



“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).



There is no crown
without a cross

“And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:12-14).



**“Study to Shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”
(2 Timothy 2:15)**

by sin.

Daniel made God his number one priority in life and God gave him number one success. What God did for Daniel, He can do for you—He is the same yesterday, today and forever more!

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

For every believer, no matter what the challenge is prayer is the weapon - stating and specifying to God what your needs are.

Be specific about your goals and objectives. Mathew 7:7 stipulates “Ask and it shall be given you....”. So be prayerful and occasionally combine your prayers with fasting. During prayers ask or tell God of your plans and He will fulfil them.

Stand firm and put on the full armour of God. Ephesians 6:10 requires that you know who you are. Cover yourself with the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Jesus taught that “...it is more blessed to give than to receive...” (Acts 20:35) - therefore, be a channel of blessing to others. God also commands “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

It is important to Give God His time and participate in church activities as giving God His rightful place is one of the secrets to success as outlined in Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”.

Keep God’s Word. Never let it depart from your mouth. Obedience to this eradicates destructive ignorance as pointed out in Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge....” God told Joshua “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Never forget God’s promise “And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them (Deuteronomy 28:13). By faith appropriate this promise and work towards it realisation in your life and studies.

EFFECTIVE REVISION TECHNIQUES AND EXAMINATION PREPARATIONS

In today’s world, we often find ourselves in situations of having to

compete with others for jobs, position and other amenities in life. The selection process used in society today involves some form of sifting by means of examination, which may not always be in written format, but the results can make the difference between success and failure.

A common mistake some Christians make is to adopt the tendency of thinking that prayer is the only preparation needed for success. In as much as prayer is the right thing to do, the Lord expects us to put in our best efforts as well.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary, “**revision is the process of learning work for an exam**”. Again it defines preparation as “**the act or process of getting ready for something or making something ready**”. Effective is also defined as “**producing the result that is wanted or intended**”. Lastly technique is defined as “**a particular way of doing something, especially one in which you have to learn special skills**”. Hence our topic involves looking at ways of learning or getting ready for an exam that will produce the results that we want – i.e. pass with excellent grades. Ecclesiastes 9:10a stipulates “**Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might**”.

Tips on Revision and Preparation:

The following suggest a few techniques on how best to approach the process of revision and preparation for examinations, as well as sitting the examinations themselves. These are only guidelines and not all will necessarily suit you as individual learning styles differ, however if you experiment with the following ideas you will probably find some that will help you.

Ensure you are familiar with the format of the examination and that you have revised all the required topics. Revising an extra topic or two will also give you a ‘safety margin’ in most examinations.

Obtain copies of past examination papers and use them as part of the revision materials. The more you become acquainted with the sort of questions you will face, the more familiar and less daunting it will appear when you turn over the actual paper in the examination hall.

Begin your revision by going over all of your notes and handouts for the subject, course, module or unit. This will refresh your knowledge and give you an overview of the subject area.

Make sure that you seek out any handouts or other such-like materials that you may have missed. Find out from where in your School / Department these can be collected and don’t be afraid to go and ask for those copies you need.



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The Bible is not an opened book, it must be opened otherwise it becomes a piece of decoration



“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in Spirit”
(Ecclesiastes 7:8)

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”.
(James 1:5)



Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

Start your revision early!

This is advice that everyone is familiar with, but it is absolutely true that shorter, regular, periods of good quality revision are both more effective and less stressful than trying to cover all your revision at the last minute.

Build in time to relax and to allow for contingencies in your revision schedule.

Alternate between revising particular subjects and topics, this way each revision session will seem comparatively fresh. Repeat your revision sessions at intervals until you are confident you have absorbed the material.

Do not neglect revising your weakest topics out of dislike or fear, but also do not neglect your stronger ones out of overconfidence or complacency.

Experiment with different revision techniques. You could try condensing your notes, or distilling them onto ‘flashcards’ against which you can test yourself. Try mapping the information onto a spider-diagram or ‘mind map’, or you could try revising with a group of friends. You could record information onto tape and play it back to yourself. If you are particularly nervous about examinations, try testing yourself against the clock using old examination papers. Again, this is all about increasing your confidence by putting yourself through adequate preparation so that when the ‘real thing’ comes along you feel as relaxed as possible.

Above all, as a Christian, you will find it beneficial to start each of your studies with prayer, so that God can guide you as to which areas to spend more time studying and preparing for the examination as well as give you the wisdom and understanding that you need and keep you in good health. – **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”.**
(James 1:5)

Tips on Lifestyle while Revising and Preparing for Examinations:

As the saying goes “all work and no play makes jack a dull boy”. The lifestyle that you adopt while revising and preparing for examinations is very important as it plays a crucial role in getting your mind and body fresh, tuned and relaxed when you sit down to study. The following are some useful tips on what lifestyle to adopt.

Relax between revision sessions. Get some exercise; this helps greatly to reduce stress and allows your brain to ‘recover’ and ‘digest’ what you have learned. 1 Timothy 4:8a points out that – **“... bodily exercise profiteth little..”**. Therefore, make sure that you get that little profit the Bible speaks of from bodily exercise.

Do something specific with your rest periods. Simply stopping work will probably only lead to you thinking about work anyway, so reduce exam anxiety by taking your mind off work for a while.

If you have planned your revision

adequately, you will not have to work for too many hours in a day, or until too early in the morning. Late-night revision is usually counter-productive, as often little real learning is done, and it can disturb your sleep patterns, thus increasing anxiety.

Try not to revise right up to the examination, or even the night before. You need to go into the exam feeling relaxed and fresh. Last-minute panic revision is more likely to result in confusion than enlightenment. Avoid if at all possible.

Readiness For Examinations:

Finally having done all the hard work revising and preparing for examinations, you will want to get the best results when you actually write the exams. The following are some useful tips to help you during the writing of the examination itself.

Be positive. The exam is your chance to show how much you know.

Be adequately equipped for the exam when you enter the hall. You might also want to take in an energy drink (if allowed) to help keep up your energy levels. When you turn the exam paper over, read through it once. This will assist you in deciding which questions to answer and will allow initial nerves to dissipate.

Do not panic. Even if some of the questions appear difficult, if you have revised adequately you will usually have enough relevant materials that you can use. Carefully re-read the questions you are going to answer, and take a few minutes to plan and structure your answer before you begin.

You may gain confidence by beginning with your strongest answer.

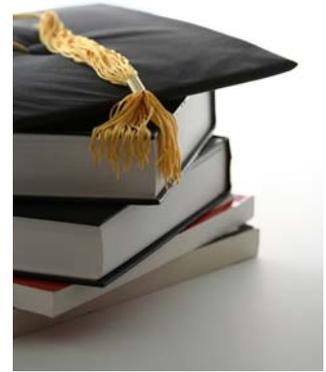
Spend equal time on each of your answers unless the examination rubric specifies otherwise. **Check this carefully at the outset.**

EXAMINATION TIPS

Although it may be responsibility of children to write examinations, their parents also have key roles to play in preparing them for success. This article explores the roles of both parents and their children in examination preparations and success. For some mature students, the parental role may be minimal or non-existent altogether.

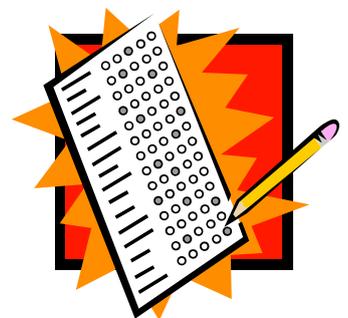
Advice To Parents:

Encourage children to believe in themselves. Explain to the child that success at exams opens doors of opportunities but do not reflect a true and balanced description of their strengths and weaknesses.



“And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh”
(Ecclesiastes 12:12).

Last-minute panic revision is more likely to result in confusion than enlightenment. Avoid if at all possible.



The quality of the Examination result is a reflection of the degree of preparation that has gone into it.



Aim to do your best but recognise that none of us can be perfect all of the time.

Listen to the invigilator carefully and read the instructions on the paper. If you are unsure about anything don't hesitate to ask the invigilator – that's why they're there.



If you find you don't understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing your course teacher

Avoid comparing your child with other children as this lowers their self-esteem.

Be stern with your child but do not exert too much pressure if you feel that the child is not adequately prepared for the exams.

Before The Examination:

Have a light breakfast (do not eat or drink unfamiliar things that morning). Don't drink too much liquid, to avoid unnecessary visits to the toilet. Even if you don't have the urgent need to, try and go to the toilet before the exam.

Before you leave home ensure you have all necessary stationery – pencils, erasers, sharpener etc. It is advisable to pack such essentials the night before so that you don't forget them due to last minute rushing in the morning.

Get to the place of the exam a few minutes before it begins. This gives you enough time to relax yourself and settle into your seat. Listen to the invigilator carefully and read the instructions on the paper. If you are unsure about anything don't hesitate to ask the invigilator – that's why they're there.

REMEMBER that examinations are not the be-all-and-end-all of your life; they are just one aspect of your life as a student.

Exam Stress-Busting Tips:

Believe in yourself. You wouldn't have been given a place on the course if you didn't have the ability to do it. Therefore, if you prepare for the exams properly

you should do fine - meaning that there is no need to worry excessively. Aim high and try to cover all grounds but do not worry if you do not have enough time to complete all the topics for revision to the full depth that you planned to do. It's great to succeed and reach for the stars. But keep things in balance. If you think that "anything less than A* means I've failed" then this is creating mountains of unnecessary stress for yourself. Aim to do your best but recognise that none of us can be perfect all of the time.

Take steps to overcome problems. If you find you don't understand some of your course material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing your course teacher or getting help from your class mates.

Keep things in perspective. The exams might seem like the most crucial thing right now, but in the grander scheme of your whole life they are only a small part.

Tips for the exam itself:

In an exam, make sure you read the question completely and fully understand what the examiner wants before you allocate your time and begin answering the questions.

Avoid panic. It's natural to feel some exam nerves prior to starting the exam, but getting excessively nervous is counterproductive as you will not be able to think clearly. Even if your mind goes blank fretting will just make it harder to recall information. If you are faced with a mental block breathe deeply, relax and ask yourself "If I did know the

answer to this question, what would it be?"

Don't waste time. If you get stuck on a question because it seems difficult or confusing, move on to the next and return to the tough questions later. Use extra time to review your exam paper and answers.

Don't worry, if you feel yourself sweating or hyperventilating. Pray and consciously relax then go back to work. If you feel uncontrollably ill during the exam notify the invigilator. Most importantly, remain positive, pray, stay calm and remain focused.

After the exam:

Do not be obsessed about comparing the answers you wrote for particular questions with those of your colleagues after leaving the exam room, as you cannot be 100% sure whose opinion is right or what the correct answer is. This can result in confusion and unnecessary arguments. Rather, learn whatever lesson you can from the just finished examination and then go on to prepare for the next one. Even when you discover that you have made mistake in a particular question, do not become obsessed about it. Pray over it, commit the marking of the examination paper to God and commence preparing for the next exam or study programme.

After the exam don't spend endless time criticising yourself for where you think you went wrong. Often our own self assessment is far too harsh. Congratulate yourself for the things you did right, learn from the bits where you know you could have done better, and then move on.

Parents also have a role in preparing their children for insensitive questions or uncaring remarks that may come from adults when the results are out. Let your child know that s/he is under no obligation to give information s/he is not comfortable with. Negative statements at this time coming from either teachers or parents could destroy glimmers of hope that the child may have for success in future examinations and can also cause emotional damage and scar to young minds that adversely affect future potentials.

Parents should continue to support and believe in their children even when they are disappointed with the results. Parents must be realistic about their expectations, which must be based on the child's past and present performances. It is extremely important to continue building your child's self-esteem after the exam.

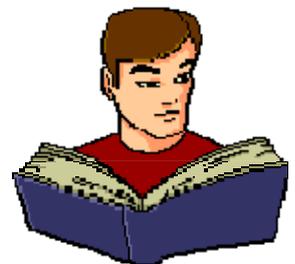
MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR LEARNING STYLE

Study techniques (or learning styles) are different ways or methods of



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Different people learn best under different styles. The key is to understand your own learning style and create appropriate learning opportunities to make the most of it.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 states that there is time for everything and a season for everything under the heaven.



You could revise a subject and once you feel confident that you have the correct knowledge in your head you could attempt to test / see how much you really know or understand

learning something. Different people learn best under different styles, some of which are:

1. Visual Learners (looking at work and doing school work on the computer and on paper). They require visual aid such as images and diagrams to retain important things in their memory.
2. Audio Learners (listening to someone or something teaching you)
3. Physical Learners (i.e. those who like to do practicals. Such people like to be more actively involved in their learning)

Some people may enjoy physical learning better than visual or audio learning. An example of a good way for such people to enjoy studying is putting what they like into what they need to study. For instance, if they like Religious Studies, they can memorize things by putting it to a tune or a poem. Alternatively, if they have to study something like a play in English but find it hard to study maybe they can turn it into a drama and still learn as much as they should.

Like people knew it would be hard to remember all the Bible verses so they put it to a tune which makes it definitely easier to remember. Similarly, if you need to remember things a good way off for exams or class then another good way is to get family and friends to test you on things by asking you questions or making you read back things to them to see if it is correct.

You could revise a subject and once you feel confident that you have the correct knowledge in your head you could attempt to test / see how much you really know or understand the subject by attempting to teach the topic to someone like a family member or friend.

Others learn best by experiencing it for themselves like on school trips or going places with family or on their own to understand how things happen; or by searching different websites and asking questions - lots and lots of questions!

The key is to understand your own learning style and create appropriate learning opportunities to make the most of it.

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

You have probably come across the adage that “**Time waits for no one**”. Every individual on earth is allocated exactly the same amount of time (i.e. 24 hours) every day. It is how we manage (or mismanage) our time that distinguishes us one from the other. Indeed, it has rightly been pointed out that time management is life management. To achieve much in this fast tempo world requires effective management of time because even though we can re-schedule or repeat tasks yet any time lost can never be recovered.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 states that there is time for everything and a season

for everything under the heaven. If you read further, it talks about a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot or harvest and so on and so forth. Amos 5:18 tells us about the day of the Lord; and 2 Corinthians 6:2 indicates that there is time of God's favour, and pointed again to the facts about time, when it added that there is the day of God's salvation.

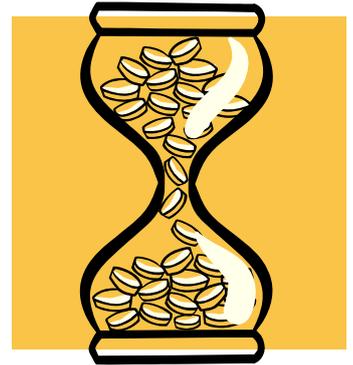
We should not then be surprised why the people of God are punished for not acting promptly according to the time of God. God attaches so much importance to timing that He does not hesitate to meet out appropriate punishments when people fail to meet deadlines or carry out his instruction as and when necessary. Remember that Saul lost his kingship by failing to abide by God's timing. The five foolish virgins (Matthew 25) missed the marriage supper for coming late - a succinct reminder that many 'Christians' will miss the rapture by being late. In Luke 21:34, Jesus warned all to "... take heed to **yourselves, lest** at any time **your** hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so **that day come upon you unawares**".

Two further examples confirm this. The first is when God asked the children of Israel to move in Numbers 14 and they grumbled. God brought His wrath on them, they later repented and moved when God was not with them, they therefore fell into the hands of their enemies and some were killed in the process. The second example relates to Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). The angels that God sent to destroy the two cities were working to time, they urged Lot and his family to depart quickly, but Lot's wife became a pillar of salt, because she looked back.

Genesis 1 established the details of creation on earth and puts into perspective the day-to-day programme plan of God in term of creation. In Genesis 2:1 God rested on the 7th day after the completion of the process. Before God started the whole exercise He divided the job by the day He did each one in turn and this means He had a start time, finish time; after which He rested.

What is the main reason that so many enthusiastic; healthy, capable men and women never succeed? They never start anything or having prepared the first step of a plan, they piddle away time until the "long run" arrives and in "long run" they are all undone. We need to manage our time very well to succeed in life and even in the things of God. You have to organise yourself. Develop good habits and keep at it. Have you ever known exactly what you had to do, but just couldn't bring yourself to do it? You did something else to waste time, like cleaning up the house, going to a movie, fixing a snack or sleeping. You just didn't feel like working because you weren't properly inspired. So you procrastinated!

Then, first thing you know, other things come up- busywork, social



"Time waits for no one"

Every individual on earth is allocated exactly the same amount of time (i.e. 24 hours) every day. It is how we manage (or mismanage) our time that distinguishes us one from the other.



Time management is life management.



Every Christian should cultivate good habits that can help us to effectively manage our time so that we can succeed in life.



Things may not always work out well at the first time or second attempt. The start of every pursuit is always tough and rough. If you give up and go out your case is closed, but if you push on you will push through.

obligation, a T.V programme you couldn't miss. The vicious cycle syndrome has hit you. Without something to snap you out of it, it could be terminal. You suddenly realized that there are so many other things to do that you dread even starting the main project.

So you waste time with the trivial and begin to feel "too tired" to do the priority things; then you wake up later feeling guilty. You finally decided that you have to get organised, but first you must buy some vitamin pills and have a few drinks. Finally after piddling away the day getting in the mood; you belatedly start your project. But within a few hours you find yourself back in the old vicious cycle.

Well you are not alone. Many have had similar experiences one stage or the other. It is a mental and physical paralysis that can set in and get worse until we apply the secret plans of God.

If you find yourself in this situation of delay, low achievement, stress, feeling of guilt, problems with deadlines, problems of poor personal organisation, poor planning that will always lead to failure, you must turn to God for help. Foremost you need to pray to God for wisdom of heaven, for the Bible says it is nothing with God to help and the bible also says we are wonderfully and fearfully made in God's image and with God all solutions reside (Daniel 2: 20).

Every Christian should cultivate good habits that can help us to effectively manage our time so that we can succeed in life. Some of these good habits include:

1. Draw up a programme for yourself in life and make them into action plan.
2. Commit yourself to a start time of your programme, as well as deadlines.
3. Develop a "Do it now" attitude, this can help to overcome shelving projects (PROCRASTINATION)
4. Always do high priority work first, avoid silly interruptions, like unnecessary socializing, watching TV and reading unproductive books, literatures or other materials and daydreaming.
5. Choose the right quality level for a task at the start and accept the need for compromise and expediencies.
6. Give yourself a reward when you successfully accomplish a task.
7. Give yourself a rest at the end of a successful action plan.

Things may not always work out well at the first time or second attempt. The start of every pursuit is always tough and rough. If you give up and go out your case is closed, but if you push on you will push through. Genesis 1 and 2 is our Godly and goodly example.

EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING AND OUTLINING

You have probably heard the adage that **“The faintest ink is better than the sharpest memory”**. This is nowhere truer than in preparation for examinations. Research results have demonstrated beyond doubt that the amount of information retained after a lesson or lecture rapidly diminishes with time. Therefore someone may have felt absolutely sure that the facts and information conferred in a lesson are relatively so simple and straightforward that s/he would remember them all through life; but the harsh realities of life is that a few days after, s/he would struggle to remember a tiny fraction of them.

The most effective remedy to this problem is effectiveness in notes-taking during lessons, lectures, public lectures, sermons, etc. In contemporary times there are various means of recording information that compete for attention, including:

1. Audio recording,
2. Video recording
3. Photographs
4. Voice recognition
5. Typing into hand-held electronic devices such as mobile phones, notebooks (i.e. mini laptops) and laptops, etc.
6. Taking notes on paper.

These different methods have their relative advantages and disadvantages and can all be used to various degrees in preparation for examination. For example audio recording, video recording and photographs have the potential of capturing every thing in great details and can be very useful in detailed analysis and re-living the situation however, in quick final stages of the revision there may not be sufficient time to review (listen to / watch) all of the recordings or even to immediately scan through to identify the relevant key points that one may be looking for. If the files were recorded a long time back and are many, it may be difficult to even identify the correct audio or video file that contain the materials needed - especially if the filenames are confusing or duplicates.

Voice recognition allows for spoken words to be directly transcribed into electronic notes. This can be very useful in capturing large amounts of the spoken words in a manner that can be faster than traditional long hand note taking. However, the technology is still under development and the software requires voice training for accurate capture of the information. Therefore, if the voice of the speaker has not been trained for that software then, what is captured may turn out to be meaningless, misleading and useless. Apart from that, in a classroom or public setting, background noises from other participants can also be captured and transcribed thereby corrupting the notes.



Don't be over fascinated with gadgets and the latest technology in town. When it comes to exam success, effectiveness of the tool for preparation is more important than the type of technology!

The traditional long hand note taking still have a significant place and distinct advantage over other methods in examination preparation and should be used along with other methods.



“The faintest ink is better than the sharpest memory”



Notes are a good help and aid towards remembrance. The Berean Christians made notes. They were only able to search the scriptures to see if those things Paul was teaching them were true because they took notes.

We would never have had the Bible today without effective note taking or the Bible would have been full of errors if those who were used of the Lord to receive it for us were careless note-takers.



“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

Direct typing into electronic devices may be useful in producing neat and legible notes and having them electronically but there are also disadvantages:- the speed of typing for most people are relatively slower than that of long hand writing on paper and therefore only key points may be captured and most of the lesson / lecture materials would be lost. Besides the electronic files can be corrupted or the device lost, etc.

Of all the methods, the traditional long hand note taking still have a significant place and distinct advantage over other methods in examination preparation and should be used along with other methods, for the following reasons:

1. More materials can be captured over relatively short period of time.
2. Different colours of pen, highlighters, underscore, etc can be used to draw attention to key points in the notes.
3. During revision, it is easy to flip through the pages quickly and easily to points of interest.
4. If required, the hand written notes can be scanned into the computer to generate electronic notes.

All of the above points to the need for sharpening our skills for the traditional method of long hand note-taking, if good success is our goal. The arts of effective note taking and outlining are largely lost arts in our generation, which contribute to poor academic perform-

ances. A naive neglect of these arts has great consequences. Efficient notes are vital to excellence in academics. Also, notes taken when revising / studying show how well we understand the material we have studied.

We would never have had the Bible today without effective note taking or the Bible would have been full of errors if those who were used of the Lord to receive it for us were careless note-takers. The prophets and the apostles were efficient in noting down for us the revelations of the Lord through His Holy Spirit. **“Write down the vision”**, was a common practice in their lives.

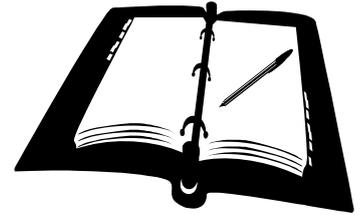
Good notes are cues and reminders, which can help us to organize, deepen and refine our knowledge of subject matter. Efficient note taking requires careful reading, attentive listening, clear thinking, a sense of discrimination and the ability to digest and condense ideas.

THE CASE FOR MAKING NOTES

Revelations 1:11, 19; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; Habakkuk 2:2,3; Jeremiah 36:1,2; 51:60; Isaiah 8:1; 30:8; Job 19:23,24; Psalm 102:18; Deut. 31:19; Romans 4:23-25; 15:4.

Note taking is essential. It helps us to give attention to details like Moses did in the building of the tabernacle. If Moses never took notes, how would he have been able to build (exactly to God’s specification) the tabernacle of which the reading of its description still confuses many today? It is still true today that ‘the faintest ink is better than the sharpest memory’.

Notes are a good help and aid towards remembrance. The Berean Christians made notes. They were only able to search the scriptures to see if those things Paul was teaching them were true because they took notes. If not, how many will they be able to remember in the head talk less of checking and crosschecking to ascertain their validity.



Most Christians do not live according to God's expectation because they are forgetful. They hear great torrent of sermons but never take notes. How then can we be as noble as the Berean Christians?

THE CURE FOR MESSY NOTES

1 Corinthians 14:33,40,7,8,20.

Many that were making notes in the past have neglected such practice because their notes were messy, discouraging and not effective. However these defects can be rectified. Organization and sectioning of ideas; neat and clear handwriting; attention to details when writing the notes and leaving enough space for future additions if it will be necessary (this demands foresight!) or in the case of uncompleted portions. The foregoing are some ways on how to enhance your note taking. The Christian student can learn from the organization of the Bible into books, chapters and verses.

Accuracy, brevity and clarity are three essentials for efficient note taking. Do not employ confusing abbreviations that may make your note look messy at a later stage by not being able to remember what the abbreviations stand for. Common abbreviations include:

1. N.B. = note well
2. e.g. = for example
3. bk. = book
4. \ = therefore
5. p. = page
6. pp. = pages
7. etc. = and so forth
8. vs. = versus or against
9. # = number
10. cf. = compare with
11. c = with
12. c = which
13. b/w or b/2 = between
14. b4 = before
15. cout = without.
16. Fdn = foundation

The above are for purpose of illustration. You can come up with your own scheme of abbreviations. The best scheme of abbreviation is the one you come up with and which you will remember easily what the abbreviations stand for. Without the ability to remember, then the

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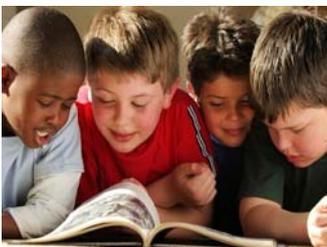


The best scheme of abbreviation is the one you come up with and which you will remember easily what the abbreviations stand for. Without the ability to remember, then the abbreviations are useless / unhelpful, and can even become obstacles to understanding and success.



“Understandest thou what thou readest?”
(Acts 8:30),

The explosion in information implies that there are so much information available that to keep abreast of them require improved reading skills that facilitate faster reading and efficient assimilation and application of the facts acquired



Much reading without the ability to recollect and reproduce the facts when most needed (e.g. in examinations) is wasted time.

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THE FOUNDATION AND FORMULA FOR OUTLINING

Acts 2; 7; Joshua 24:2

Outlining has been an age-long process and is essentially the reduction / compression of a bulk material to essential and major points.

In Acts chapter 7, we have a brilliant outline of the whole of the Old Testament and then further on to Christ. In Acts Chapter 2, we also have an outline of a part of the scriptures. Joshua gave a brief outline of Abraham's life at the other side of Jordan. These passages lay the biblical foundation for outlining.

Outlines form the basis for straight thinking. It gives self-confidence, frees the mind for creative effort and aid logical deliberation.

FASTER READING WITH BETTER UNDERSTANDING

We now live in an information age, where the amount of published information doubles every few years. The explosion in information implies that there are so much information available that to keep abreast of them require improved reading skills that facilitate faster reading and efficient assimilation and application of the facts

acquired.

Faster reading alone is not sufficient, but faster reading with understanding is the secret to success. The Ethiopian Eunuch read a lot but when questioned by Philip **“Understandest thou what thou readest?”** (Acts 8:30), his response was in the negative. Much reading without the ability to recollect and reproduce the facts when most needed (e.g. in examinations) is wasted time.

It is indeed a privilege to be literate. To know how to read is one thing. To know how to read **EFECTIVELY** is quite another. Effective reading is a combination of speed and comprehension. Reading speed is dependent on the difficulty of the material under consideration, the purpose of the reader, the ability and background of the reader. It is possible to increase reading speed without the loss of comprehension. In fact, it is possible to increase comprehension with increased reading speed. This is what has been termed **“Better and Faster Reading”**.

Benefits of Faster Reading

Ecclesiastes 10:10

1. Slow reading can obscure the overall view of the material under consideration. By the time the reader reaches the end of the piece, the beginning has been forgotten or a whole picture is not brought into focus. Fast reading helps comprehension by aiding the smooth flow of ideas.
2. Fast reading helps us achieve more, acquiring more knowledge and living better.
3. The fast reader will have more time left to do other

useful things and hence has an edge over the slow reader, extra time for rereading and reviewing.

4. Fast reading helps us to maximally utilize our God-given abilities and faculties rather than living a largely undiscovered life.

Barriers to Faster Reading

1. Reading without a definite goal or purpose. (1 Corinthians 9:26)
2. Insufficient preparation, disorganization and anxiety. (Matthew 7:26,27)
3. Bad posture, poor lighting, poor ventilation. (Luke 15:8)
4. Limited vocabulary and inadequate background. (John 3:3,4,9)
5. Vocalization, sub-vocalization, hand and neck movements. (Acts 8:28-35)
6. Lack of self-confidence emanating in regression while reading. (Phil. 4:13)
7. Lack of concentration, daydreaming and listlessness. (Proverbs 10:4)
8. Excessive attention to simple words rather than concentration on ideas. (John 2:18-22; Mark 14:58; Matthew 26:61)
9. Isolated readings of different parts of a reading material. (Matthew 15:4-6)
10. Bad eyesight. (Mark 8:24)

Basics of Faster Reading

1. Elimination of all the physical hindrances aforementioned will lead to an increased speed e.g. good lighting, adequate ventilation, good posture, elimination of lip, hand and neck movements will almost double reading speed (Isaiah 57:14).
2. Mental preparation, personal organization, definite purpose, concentration etc. will also lead to increased speed (Luke 14:28-33).
3. Mastering the technique of reading by phrases with eyes and brain alone will also increase speed. Make the most of your God-given eye-span! (1 Corinthians. 15:10)
4. An increased vocabulary (which comes by wide reading) and a broadened background will lead to increased speed and comprehension (Acts 17:17-22).

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY SKILLS

While admonishing Timothy, his son in the faith, Paul made reference to people who are “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). Such fits the adage of “people who have gone to school, but the school has not gone through them”. In other words their education and study has no impact on their lives and performance, and could be the outcome of ineffective study skills.



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Mastering the technique of reading by phrases with eyes and brain alone will also increase speed. Make the most of your God-given eye-span!



Successful study depends not only on ability and industry but also on effective methods of study.



A sharp tool cuts better than a blunt one with the same effort applied. Realize your full potential and obtain the greatest benefit from your studies by employing effective study skills.

Ability and intelligence alone are not sufficient for success



“Those that would do good in the world when they grow up must learn when they are young, because that is the learning age, if that time is lost, it will hardly be redeemed”

Effective study skills are necessary for good academic progress. Successful study depends not only on ability and industry but also on effective methods of study. Many intelligent students fail because they could not cope with the volume of work they have to do and this is usually because they never learnt how to study effectively.

Reasons for Effective Study Skills

Why acquire effective study skills? Generally, without stating the reasons for the justification of the pursuit of a project, we do not normally take it serious and pursue it with all our effort. The following are some reasons for acquiring effective study skills.

1. **Most students use ineffective study skills** Luke 5:1-5

The cry of most students is *‘I have burnt the midnight oil, but I’m not better off’*. Research show that most students use ineffective, inefficient, poor study skills. You could be one of them!

2. **Prevention of unnecessary expenditure of effort** Ecclesiastes 10:10

A sharp tool cuts better than a blunt one with the same effort applied. Realize your full potential and obtain the greatest benefit from your studies by employing effective study skills.

3. **Ability and intelligence are not sufficient for success** John 21:3

Peter and others were professional fishermen; they had ability and skill. They were intelligent - they knew that the prime time for fishing was the night when all is calm and dark and fishes will come to the surface. Yet they failed in the fishing venture.

4. **God commands retrospection and reflection on past methods** Haggai 1:6,7

Reason compels us to overhaul inefficient machinery, discard a method that has outlived its usefulness, find out the cause of an unfortunate failure and acquire the best methods to do our present job more effectively.

Route To Effective Study Skills

1. **Have a relationship with Jesus Christ** Haggai 1:6-13; John 15:5; 21:3-7; Matthew 6:33

Many students study but God blows upon it because they have not built His Kingdom in their hearts (Haggai 1:9). In John 21:3-5, they caught no fish all the night until Jesus came in the morning to help them. It is sin that debars God from helping us (Isaiah 59:1,2).

2. **Realize your need of effective study skills** Luke 18:13,14

The Pharisees did not realise their sinfulness. They said they were not blind hence they remained in their sins. The publicans realized their sinfulness and obtained pardon.

3. **Desire for improvement and passion for excellence** Philipians 4:13,14

Excellence is not automatic. Growth is a consequence of

positive input. Desire for improvement is a foundational milepost on the road to effective study skills.

4. **Practice all you learn in this conference** John 2:5; Proverbs 12:27

We grow by what we learn and not by merely what we hear. Learning is real and profitable when we have put to practice all the acquired things and we are spurred to positive living and action (Matthew 7:24-27).

5. **Seek Counseling from seasoned teachers** Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18

A single piece of advice may save you hours of fruitless study. Advice on time management, study skills, report writing, note-taking, how to plan a time table etc. can be given.



“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2).

EFFICIENT RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

In a simplistic definition, research is problem solving through the expansion of the borders of knowledge. Solomon discovered that “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). Most problems are limitations sustained by insufficient knowledge (or ignorance). To every problem there is a solution based on the application of relevant knowledge. Viewed in this perspective, the scope of research extends beyond pure intellectual exercise to the reaches of everyday problems of life. Activities such as performing investigations / experiments; the writing of assignments, term papers, Bachelor / Master level degrees dissertations as well as undertaking a PhD study involve research to various dimensions.

Arguably, it could be stated that the major difference between PhD research and the others mentioned above is that the others mainly focus invariably on extending the borders of the individual knowledge whereas a PhD research, in addition to the above, also focuses on extending the borders of knowledge of others in that discipline. Although the focus of this article is on academic research towards the award of PhD degree, yet the principles outlined are applicable to other areas of life.

Research can be interesting and exciting when efficient techniques are employed, otherwise it easily degenerates into a boring and frustrating venture. Some basics of efficient research techniques may be gleaned from the Biblical story of Nehemiah’s adventure in the building of the walls of Jerusalem.

PREPARATION WITH VIGILANCE

Nehemiah 1:11; 2:7, 8, 11-16

On learning about the devastation of Jerusalem and the plight of the

“Give instructions to a wise man and he will increase in learning and wisdom”



Research can be interesting and exciting when efficient techniques are employed, otherwise it easily degenerates into a boring and frustrating venture.



Nehemiah planned his project with target completion dates in view. He envisaged likely problems and had contingency plans for every eventuality.

Planning is the roadmap to success as a good plan makes for clarity of thoughts and speedy progress. Without plans good purposes and intentions are fuzzy leading to unnecessary waste of time and ultimately ending in frustration.



“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men” (Proverbs 22:29).

remnants, Nehemiah was so burdened about changing the situation that a project was born. Nehemiah’s preparation for the execution of the project started with prayers – a potent tool for gaining relevant insight that is capable of sustaining progress.

Available statistics show that many students drop out of University education every year. It is not uncommon to find research students abandoning their PhD researches altogether, scaling down for an M.Phil degree or even changing their topics after months of wasted efforts because of poor definition of the research problem as a result of limited insight. The insight obtained by Nehemiah through prayer enabled him to obtain necessary approvals from the King for the acquisition of relevant materials while at the same time maintaining good relations with him (the King). On arrival at Jerusalem, he thoroughly surveyed the broken walls to gain a full orb ed picture of the extent of the task ahead. This would have given him the much needed deeper insight for effective planning. Solomon captured it well when he noted that a man that is diligent in his business shall stand before kings and not mean men (Proverbs 22:29).

The preparations essential to successful research may include:

1. careful choice of topic in the light of its current and future potentials in relation to human needs;

2. clear definition of the re- search problems to be solved;
3. thorough literature review beyond the immediate peripher- ies of the core problem to be solved;
4. acquisition of relevant materi- als and skills such as touch typing, computing, internet skills etc;
5. developing, and maintaining good relationships with the supervisor and other re- search students.
6. learning from the pitfalls of others (e.g. booklets on how not to get a PhD).
7. willingness to go where oth- ers have not, and do what others do not see the need to, at a time they are largely unaware. Put it shorter this merely means willingness to go it alone.

PLANNING WITH VERSATILITY Nehemiah 2:6; 4:16-20

Planning is the roadmap to suc- cess as a good plan makes for clarity of thoughts and speedy pro- gress. Without plans good pur- poses and intentions are fuzzy leading to unnecessary waste of time and ultimately ending in fru- stration. Nehemiah planned his pro- ject with target completion dates in view. He envisaged likely problems and had contingency plans for every eventuality. The following principles should be borne in mind when planning for research plan- ning.

1. Organise the research into stages characterized by iden-

tifiable tasks, and order their stages.

2. Break down the tasks into a list of activities with target completion dates
3. Group related activities together order / prioritise them and identify their dependencies.
4. take into consideration potential problems that could affect the plan and develop contingency (or alternative) plans for each one, just in case the problem materialize. (Note that a handy second option is a wise strategy for saving time when unforeseen circumstances cause delay in the primary targets).
5. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all those that will be involved in the research and confirm their availability.
6. Make allowances for unforeseen circumstances and ensure that the plan is flexible enough to allow for changes as results begin to come (action planning).
7. Keep the plans focused on the end objectives bearing in mind available resources. Avoid the temptations of diversions and distractions because of interim results but do learn to recognise serendipity.
8. Make a habit of periodically reviewing your plans with the achievement of the end target in view.
9. Build in time for periodic quality reviews (including peer reviews) of your research products and rework. This is essential to eliminate last minute surprises. Remember, a stitch in time saves nine!
10. In planning, bear in mind that **depth rather than length** alone is an important criterion for a successful PhD research.



"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway".
(1 Corinthians 9:26,27).

God created man with innate potentials not only to master but also to solve problems. The onset of problems should generate the resolve to overcome and the creativity to find a viable solution.

PURSUING WITHOUT VACILLATION

Nehemiah 4:21-23; 6:1-4

A plan can be likened to a ladder to a desired fruit on a tree. Having a ladder alone will not pluck the fruit. One must first climb the ladder carefully and persistently to reach the fruit before applying the required effort to pluck it. Similarly, plans must be implemented to achieve the desired result otherwise they become merely tools for decoration. In research, concentration and persistence in the pursuit of a research plan are of greater importance than intelligence in achieving the desired results. Thomas Edison did not discover electric light until after several thousands of failed attempts.

Problems are normal in life, but it is the problems that provide the op-



Prayer is the power that pulls everything together beautifully successfully.

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opportunities (i.e. stepping stones) to success. To abandon a project at the first sign of a problem or to be discouraged by confusing perplexities only lead to one destination – failure. God created man with innate potentials not only to master but also to solve problems. The onset of problems should generate the resolve to overcome and the creativity to find a viable solution. As Nehemiah pursued his ultimate goal without vacillation at the onset of problems and achieved historic breakthroughs, one must persevere beyond all odds if the research problems must give way to astonishing products. Success requires rugged determination and undeterred perseverance. Remember that failure cannot cope with persistence! The proverbial story of the race between the hare and the tortoise is a clear reminder of the value of persistence.

PRAYING WITH VITALITY
Nehemiah 1:6; 4:4, 9; 5:19;
13:15; Phil 4:6

Prayer is the power that pulls everything together beautifully successfully, and this is a great privilege available to every Christian. It may not be fashionable to talk in academic circles about praying on a PhD research problem, but the reality is that prayer produces more fantastic solutions to research problems than brain storming (or brain showering, as is referred to in modern in some circles) sessions does. Besides divine power released, prayer can also eradicate thorny issues that has no 'scientific solution'.

Nehemiah started with prayer, continued and ended with prayer. He turned every problem into a prayer point and obtained results for each. Learn to turn those trivial research problems into prayer points and it will surprise you what God can do. Remember that the God who created the entire universe that we are researching about has the wisdom to guide our research efforts to a successful completion. Do not just pray religiously or in generalities, but specifically bring each research problem to the Lord in prayer. Couple the prayer with fasting, if necessary. Pray with energy (life) and faith. Expect specific answers to your prayers – for God still answers prayers. Tremendous courage, insight, breakthroughs and strength will be your lot through answered prayer. Remember, when you come to the crossroad, just look up! New insights received through prayer will revitalize your life and turn boredom into challenges. Prayer transforms the storms of life into a peaceful calm that provide a suitable

atmosphere for fruitful research. No wonder Jesus taught that "Men ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

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**The Race Is Not
For The Swift, Nor
The Battle For The
Strong**



**Success
Accomplished Is
Sweet To The Soul!**