

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — *Studying and Good Grades*

Why does a future auto mechanic need to study English Lit? Why should a future artist learn Algebra? And, will a future basketball coach ever need to recall the World War II dates he memorized? The Bible has very interesting things to tell you about learning, knowledge, and wisdom. It might surprise you to discover God's view on your high-school years! This *Pathway* study is practical! Look out! It might be just the motivation you need to change those D's into C's ... or those B's into A's!

DAY ONE — Studying and Good Grades

Hiding It in My Heart: The next time schoolwork discourages you, think about Solomon and his words of wisdom. *In fact, why not memorize some of those words?* Proverbs 3:13 speaks of the happiness of a wise person — a good motto to keep in your mind and heart. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding (Prov. 3:13).*

Prayer: Ask the Lord to help you recognize the value and importance of obtaining knowledge and following the path of wisdom.

Why Study?

“Oh, man!” Andy exclaimed as he slammed the front door. “Such a great day, and I have to spend it studying for a test on English poets.”

“You never know,” his sister, Stephanie, teased. “Memorizing the birth date of Byron might come in handy someday.”

“Sure, just what I need for a career in auto mechanics.”

“You could combine poetry and mechanics,” Stephanie said. “In fact, I can see it all now:

Travel near or travel far.

I promise this to you.

I will carefully fix your car.

Make it good as new!”

“That’s not funny, Steph!” Andy retorted. “I don’t even want to hear another poem, much less take a test on one!”

Do you feel like Andy? Do you wonder why a future auto mechanic needs to study English Lit? Do you wonder why a future artist needs to learn Algebra? Do you wonder why a future basketball coach needs to memorize the battle dates of World War II?

In your opinion, what is the purpose of education?

In order to discuss the subject of studying, we need to define a few words.

1. Study means diligence in accumulating facts in order to gain knowledge.
2. Knowledge is information learned about a particular subject.
3. Wisdom activates that knowledge and puts it to practical use.

A look in the Book: Read Proverbs 1:1-8. *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.* These eight verses stress the importance of learning. In fact, Solomon lists several benefits acquired from studying and adding knowledge to your life:

Wisdom

Understand (learning through experiences of others)

Righteousness (right behavior)

Judgment (making just or fair decisions)

Discretion (thoughtfulness)

Solomon continues by telling the primary source of knowledge (verse 7). ***What is it?***

Notice that Solomon says the beginning of knowledge comes from the Lord. Without a relationship with Him, all the brains in the world can’t bring you more than temporary success.

That part about your parents in verses 7 and 8 is important, too. A wise teen listens to his parents; a foolish teen doesn’t.

Solomon recognized the value of learning. Actually, these eight verses introduce several chapters he wrote about the subject. Do you agree with Solomon’s emphasis on wisdom? Think about it during the next few days as you look at lessons centering around different aspects of studying. They include the “how-to” of studying, the effects of a super-student, and the importance of grades.

Can a course in English Lit help you in your auto mechanic career? Well ... quoting Keats probably won’t help you repair a transmission or fix a broken windshield wiper. But, English Lit can help you develop into a knowledgeable and well-rounded person. Remember, the Lord gave you a mind! Use it!

DAY TWO — Studying and Good Grades

Prayer: Ask the Lord for help in becoming a serious student. Ask Him to help you approach classes with a desire to learn.

Today's Verse: *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning (Prov. 9:9).*

The Big “How-to” of Study

Mr. Conrad’s grading system for American History terrorizes the entire sophomore class — except Jamie. She consistently aces her tests.

“How do you do it?” Eric asked. “I studied hard for that last exam, but only got a ‘C.’”

His friend, Kevin, interrupted, “Yeah, I saw the way you studied, Eric. You crammed for 10 minutes at lunch.” Kevin laughed. “You see, Jamie takes her studying seriously. You, however, activate your brain just enough to qualify for a place on the basketball team.”

“Yeah,” Jamie agreed. “I do take my studying seriously. I don’t want to sound conceited, but I think it’s important to do the best I can.”

Eric and Jamie have different motivations for studying.

What are YOUR motives? **Check the answers that apply.**

- To keep my parents happy
- So I don’t embarrass myself
- To stay on the team (basketball, baseball, etc.)
- To get into a good college
- To do my best

A Look in the Book: Yesterday you discovered some of Solomon’s “benefits of studying.” **Look at another verse about studying in the Bible - 2 Timothy 2:15.** *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Even though you might know this verse by memory, read it a couple times. It begins with an admonishment to study.

Here, study means “diligence” or “energetically pursuing something.” Paul encourages Timothy to diligently apply himself to studying the Scriptures.

Solomon also wrote about diligence. **Read these verses. Then explain what they say about the serious (diligent) student.**

1. Proverbs 10:4: *He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*

2. Proverbs 12:24: *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*

3. Proverbs 22:29: *Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*

Sounds worthwhile, doesn’t it? The person who studies diligently succeeds! Think about this on a practical level:

The honor-roll student doesn’t party all night and sleep all day.

The student who wants to become a doctor doesn’t drop out of high school.

The concert pianist doesn’t have to be coaxed to practice for at least half an hour a day.

The successful businessman didn’t flunk his Math classes.

Would your teachers label you as a diligent student? Would they write in your records “one of the best.”

“But I’m not that intelligent!” you say.

Don’t despair!

The “best” doesn’t mean the smartest student, but rather the most responsible and conscientious. (Watch out, though! As a side effect, being responsible and conscientious might also improve your grades!) Tomorrow’s study deals further with the subject of the best students.

Meanwhile, dedicate yourself to diligent study. As one pastor told his teens, “Some of you dream of someday serving the Lord as a recording artist or evangelist. These teen years of preparation seem like wasted time. They aren’t. God has given you a job right now - school. You need to have the same dedication toward achieving in your classes as you later plan to have in your career.”

The big how-to of study? Diligence. Put it to use in your life today!



DAY THREE — Studying and Good Grades

Hiding It in My Heart: *Memorize Colossians 3:23. ... whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.* Think about these words the next time you're faced with a tough class or difficult teacher.

Prayer: What is your attitude toward school? Good? Bad? Indifferent? Ask the Lord to help you become the best student you can be. Ask Him to give you wisdom as you try to be as testimony to your teachers.

Super Student?

It's impossible! You can't handle Physics, and neither can anyone else. Most students have simply stopped turning in assignments.

Sometimes a "who cares" attitude seeps into your brain, too. No one else spends hours figuring problems or studying for the weekly quizzes. So why be an exception?

Well, actually there are two exceptions. Your friend, LeAnne, the only other Christian in the class, is still plodding through the semester with you.

The teacher, Mr. Hedden, notices your interest and offers to help you and LeAnne after school. You accept. He encourages your efforts, even though you stumble.

One day he says, "I don't know why, but you two girls seem different than the other students."

"We're Christians," you tell him.

"Oh," he replies simply as you leave.

Four years later a man speaks at your church. He and his wife are raising support, so they can teach in a school for missionary children.

Unbelievable! The missionary is Mr. Hedden, and he's giving a surprisingly familiar testimony about two girls in his Physics class.

"I watched those girls," he tells the audience. "Their actions convinced me I needed to become a Christian."

Sounds incredible? It actually happened.

Mr. Hedden and his wife have now served on the mission field for 10 years.

Being the best is not necessarily being the smartest. In the opening case history, Physics baffled the two girls. Yet, these girls showed Mr. Hedden a willingness to put forth maximum effort.

A Look in the Book: *Grab your Bible and read Daniel 1:1-9.*

Nebuchadnezzar wanted a super kingdom with only the VERY BEST helping him. So Ashpenaz, one of his key leaders, checked out the Jewish people (held captive in Babylon) in search of some promising children.

Write a "help wanted" ad for a position at Nebuchadnezzar's palace. Base your information on Daniel 1:4.

"That's fine," you say, "but I'm not trying to get a position with royalty. I'm just trying to get through my sophomore year."

Apply the same principles. Be friendly. Use common sense. Acquire a sincere desire to learn.

Here are some practical suggestions for accomplishing your goals.

1. Get to know your teachers on a personal level. Occasionally stay after class and ask questions about the subject. Give him or her a friendly "Hi" when you meet in the halls.
2. Do your assignments neatly and according to directions. Hand them in on time.
3. Take a personal interest in the subject. Think through what your teacher is saying. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

Add to this list by writing two ways you could become a better student. Be specific.

4. _____

5. _____

Becoming the "best" student you can be is not necessarily easy. In fact, changing your attitude toward your teachers, homework, and classes might take a lot of hard work! But go for it! Your efforts could produce surprising results: better grades, smoother relationships with teachers, and greater enthusiasm toward school. Someday you might even have the privilege of introducing a teacher to Christ!

DAY FOUR — Studying and Good Grades

Prayer: Is the word “study” similar to the word “boredom” in your life? God wants you to be an enthusiastic and informed student. Talk to Him about what kind of a “learner” you are.

Today’s Verse: *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:12).*

An All-day Study Hall?

“They accepted me!” Julie screamed. “I just received my letter from State.”

“Accepted you for what?” Pete asked. “You’re too young for college!”

“The seminar,” Julie reminded him. “You know, that summer session they’re offering on World Affairs.”

Pete rolled his eyes. “You’ve got to be crazy! How can you get so excited about some guy lecturing on war and peace when you could be at the beach.”

Julie ignored his question. “And guess what else? My parents are letting me work on Mayor Harrison’s reelection campaign!”

“You really ARE crazy!” Pete shook his head.

At age 16, Julie already knows a lot about politics. Yet very little of this knowledge comes from her high-school classrooms. Julie learns by taking advantage of every available source. She talks to politicians, read newspapers, and listens to radio documentaries.

Do you limit study as something that can happen only between the four walls of a classroom? In reality, study is a progressive process that happens 24 hours a day. True, you might not learn anything worthwhile hanging out at the mall, but you do learn. You learn how to waste time and gossip with your friends! (If you do it often enough, you might even become an expert!)

A Look in the Book: *Read Deuteronomy 6:6-7. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Here Moses encourages the Israelites to love the Lord and to teach their children to love the Lord. He tells the parents exactly how to do it, too!

In your own words, describe WHEN parents were to teach their children (verse 7).

Now look at Isaiah 28:10. *For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*

Describe Isaiah’s definition of the learning process.

The best teacher teaches during every available moment. Likewise, the best student learns during every available moment.

Why not take advantage of everything and everyone around you? Study wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

Ask questions. You know that elderly man in your church who’s always talking about his World War II experiences? He can make your History text come alive.

Become alert to your surroundings. Do you know how often a blue moon appears? Do you know the names of the birds that come to the backyard feeder? Do you know the names of your state senators?

Be a participant. Don’t spend your entire life wishing you could climb a mountain, cook a gourmet meal, or write a book. Make sure your “dream” is pleasing to the Lord, and then pursue it!

Enjoy Bible study. You can study your Bible in addition to what you learn at church. Choose a word or character from the Bible and become an expert in that area.

List four things you’d like to do or learn about in your lifetime. Then write the first step toward pursuing each goal.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

The Lord has given you an entire world to study and enjoy. Don’t just pass life by with an attitude of boredom. Look for things to learn whether you’re sitting in a dentist’s waiting room or in Spanish class. Continually use your mind!



DAY FIVE — Studying and Good Grades

Prayer: Is there a specific class which gives you trouble? Talk to God about your attitude toward this subject. With the Lord's help, work to improve your grade!

Today's Verse: *A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised (Prov. 12:8).*

Making the Grades!

"How's school going?" Pastor Donovan asked Kevin one Sunday morning.

Kevin laughed. "It's interesting you should ask. My Biology teacher reviewed my quarter grades with me last Friday. They certainly reflect my life these past couple months. I earned a few A's, then B's, then a C, then a B, and then, finally, all A's."

"What happened in the middle?"

"Well, at the beginning of the quarter, I found out I didn't make the basketball team, and that discouraged me. I got a 'who-cares-about-anything' attitude, and my grades started slipping. Then Christy and I broke up, and my grades took a super plunge! After a couple home reports, Dad decided it was time for a talk."

"Judging by your grades, the talk must have helped."

"It did. I realized I would never achieve anything with my 'who-cares' attitude. I made the decision to get back on track!"

Kevin is not a fictional character created to cleverly introduce this lesson. He's a real high-school sophomore. To the teacher, to Kevin's parents, and to Kevin himself, those final "A's" showed that Kevin was again heading in the right direction.

There are probably moments (especially right before report cards) when you wish whoever invented grades would have focused on mousetraps instead! Can you remember a time when you sincerely did the best job possible on an assignment and still earned a "C"? Can you remember another time when you "sluffed off" studying and still pulled an "A"?

Grades are not the perfect solution, but they are the yardstick that measures your attitude and academic success.

A Look in the Book: No matter how intensely you search, you will not find any Bible verses about grades. There aren't any. **But grab your Bible and look at Matthew 25:14-29.** Here you read the parable of three servants. Each was given a certain amount of talents (money). The first two servants invested their talents wisely. Their grade? *Well done, thou good and faithful servant.* But the third man didn't even try to invest his talent. Instead, he buried it in the ground. He, too, received a grade: *Thou wicked and slothful servant.*

Imagine this parable centering on you and your performance in school. How would the master "grade" you?

On Day 2 of this study, you read that "school is your job." That means you should be putting forth your best effort.

Maybe you're a "C" student. That's fine. If your report card is constantly sprinkled with "D's" and "F's," however, something is wrong. Most teachers give at least some credit for turning in assignments and making an honest attempt to grasp the subject.

Grades aren't just designed to decorate your report card, either. **High grade averages can help in the following situations.**

1. Acceptance at the college of your choice
2. Employment
3. Lower car insurance
4. Acceptance at a technical school (Even if good grades come consistently for you in only a couple subjects, they may still make a difference. Consistent high grades in Shop class and Auto Mechanics might earn you an acceptance at a technical school.)
5. Your testimony for the Lord (Earning good grades is certainly a reflection of your inner life.)

Honestly analyze your own grades. Do you put forth your best effort? If not, why not? What can you do to change the situation?

DAY SIX — Studying and Good Grades

Hiding It in My Heart: School does create pressure for you at times. But no matter how tough the pressure gets, the Lord still cares. To keep that thought in your mind, **memorize Psalm 121:2:** *My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.*

Prayer: Talk to the Lord right now about your schoolwork. Thank Him for giving you the ability to think. Ask him to help you in the areas in which you experience difficulty.

Today's verse: *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding (Prov. 4:7).*

Facing the Pressure

“What do high-school students fear the most?” a group of teens was asked.

A girl answered, “Not many would admit this, but most of my friends agonize over grades. They’re afraid of their parents’ anger, of having to repeat a class, or of not getting accepted by the right college. Most teens are pressured by the push to do well in school.”

“That’s true,” one guy agreed. “My sister goes crazy the night before a final. She can’t eat or sleep. By the time she gets to class, she’s tired and sick to her stomach.”

“A lot of kids feel so uptight over grades that they just party before exams and wipe everything out of their minds,” a junior added.

“It reminds me of a bumper sticker I saw,” said another junior. “It read, ‘As long as there are final exams, there’ll be prayer in school.’”

How do you react the night before an exam?

If you do feel pressured before a test, analyze why. Is it because you’ve goofed off all semester, and this is your last chance to redeem yourself? Or, have you made a sincere effort to do well in a difficult subject, but still fear the test will be “over your head”?

The first problem can obviously be solved by regularly completing assignments, listening in class, and daily reviewing the material. The second problem takes more work.

A Look in the Book: *Grab your Bible and read Exodus 4:10-18.*

Moses panicked at the thought of speaking to a group of people.

The Lord reminded Moses that He was the Creator — and therefore, He knew Moses’ abilities. Moses was capable of leading the Israelites.

Moses, however, continued to be concerned about his lack of eloquence. The Lord had a solution. Moses’ brother, Aaron, was a talented speaker. He could help Moses! Working together, the two brothers could get the job done.

You, too, have certain strengths. Some subjects come easier to you than others. You also have weaknesses. The Lord’s advice to Moses can also apply to you. Get help!

If you are sincerely struggling in a class, ask your teacher if you can discuss the problem. Or, if you are weeks and weeks behind, perhaps you need a special tutor. Sometimes a parent or friend knows the subject well. Be persistent in getting help!

Here are some additional tips for the night before an exam.

1. Ask the Lord to give you calmness and the ability to concentrate.
2. Eat a nutritious supper (and breakfast the next morning).
3. Get a good night’s sleep.
4. If you feel yourself panicking, take a walk or listen to soothing music.
5. Keep in mind that even though a grade is important, it is still just that - a grade. Life will go on even if you blow a History test.

Is there a subject you find difficult to understand? Have you asked for help? If you haven’t, to whom could you go for help? Honestly answer these questions here:
