



Study Guides

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Study Guide 1

Some Notes On Note-Taking

1. Use the handout – key points and headings are already there. Fill in the gaps and listen for the main points.
2. Listen and focus. Take cues from the speaker. If they repeat something or emphasise a point, or say things slower or louder, make sure you write it down.
3. Don't write down whole sentences, unless it is a vital quote.
4. Write down what you don't know, rather than what you already know.
5. Start new topics on new pages. Underline headings.
6. Use subheadings for clarity. For example if a speaker says there are three reasons for this, write down (1) (2) (3).
7. Ask for something to be repeated, and ask questions if you need to for clarification.
8. Use your own shorthand. For example, JC for Jesus Christ ; shorten the names of Bible books, such as Lev, Rev, Mk ; capital letter for main character, such as P for Paul.
9. Use symbols, such as → lead to ; = ; > more important ; * something important
10. Read over your notes at home, while they are still fresh in your mind, and as soon as possible after the lecture. Fill in any gaps or anything that was unclear. If necessary, check with someone else, or the lecturer, to do this.
11. There are different styles, such as logical flow, mind maps. Work out what is best for you.

Study Guide 2

Preparing An Essay

Most of us have written something during our lives – even if it is just a letter or a postcard. Some of us have written more complicated things. We use these skills when we come to write an essay. So, you probably have a lot of the skills you already need to write a good, solid essay.

What is an essay?

An essay is an opportunity to argue your case. You present a summary of your case, then go through each part of it and show the evidence that led you to your position. Then you restate your case.

Where do I start? Which question?

- Look at each question and let yourself run with the question for a couple of minutes.
- What attracts you about the question? If nothing attracts you, chances are you'll be bored by it and won't learn as much.
- Try not to choose a question because it is easiest UNLESS doing the essay is going to be difficult for you.

What is the question saying?

- Read the question as a helpful guide for you to put a case forward rather than a threat.
- Don't worry about knowing the 'answer' yet. But think about what sorts of things you will need to include in your answer.

Where do I find information that can help me think through the question?

- Reference books: Dictionaries, Atlases, Handbooks
- Commentaries on any Scripture passage you might examine: Tyndale or Bible Speaks Today series.
- Books or journal articles specifically on your topic.

Dictionaries are a great place to start. They will give you a broad overview of the topic. You can get dictionaries of history, theology and ethics. Some are more detailed than others, but most will give you an idea of what the issues are.

- Look up as many subjects as you think might be relevant to your question. Don't worry too much about taking notes at this stage.
- Check out the bibliographies of any article that you have found helpful.
It might pay to look up some of these references.

Use these sources to give you the basic ideas that you'll need to develop and put into your essay. Don't try and read all the books that are recommended.

What do I write down?

- The title of the book, its author/s, who published it and the place published, date of publication and which edition it is - for each book you will refer to. You don't need to do this for your Bible.
- Things you disagree with.
- Things which relate to the question that you are doing.

How do I write things down?

- Think of how you learn and try and work that into a system so that you can easily refer back to what you have written when you come to start writing.
 - Card system
 - Mind maps
 - Codes

- You will almost certainly take down more notes than you will actually use, but that is OK. Doing an essay is about learning and thinking, so don't feel that you have 'wasted' notes because you haven't been able to use them.
- Any ideas that you use from the books or articles you have read, will need to be acknowledged in footnotes, so remember to note down where you read it.

What do I do next?

- Think, think, think as you read over all your research.
- Work out your argument: what do you think about the issue?

Sometimes it is easier to work out your argument by discussing it with someone or by writing a sermon, a report, a table, a bible study, a kids' talk or a mind map. This might help your thinking become solid, so that you know what you want to argue. Don't worry about how you do this part but make sure you do it.

How do I start writing?

Once you've worked out your overall argument, you need to break it down into smaller steps and match these with your evidence. Each point needs evidence. Once you've worked these out you are all ready to go!

What happens if I write too much?

- Leave it for a while and read it through.
- Re-write from scratch without referring to your previous draft.
- Ask someone else to read it through and tell you where they think you can cut words out.

What happens if I can't write enough?

- Leave it for a while and read it through. Are there any pieces of evidence that you have presented which you need to link to your argument more clearly? Have you told the reader what you are doing throughout the essay?
- Ask someone to read it through for you; then quiz them on what they've read. The 'gaps' they have in their understanding of what you have said are the parts of your essay that you need to expand so that it is clearer.

Study Guide 3

Writing An Essay

Plan	Content
Introduction	Give main points and the argument. The essay will follow.
Body	<p>A. Paragraph Topic sentence 1. Support point 2. Support point 3. Support point Concluding sentence</p> <hr/> <p>B. Paragraph Topic sentence 1. Support point 2. Support point 3. Support point Concluding sentence</p> <hr/> <p>C. Paragraph Topic sentence 1. Support point 2. Support point 3. Support point Concluding point</p>
Conclusion	Sum up your main points and relate them to the introduction. Round off the essay to give it unity. Do not introduce any new material.

The body is the longest part of your essay.

The body may contain as many paragraphs as necessary for you to present your argument. Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence, supporting points and a concluding sentence. Each paragraph may contain as many support points as necessary.

In writing the body, consider the following:

- Define and limit your topic. Give a definition of any important words and state any parameters that will operate in your essay.
- Order your points so that the argument flows logically.
- To support your main points give examples, reasons or scripture references.

Study Guide 4

Mind Maps

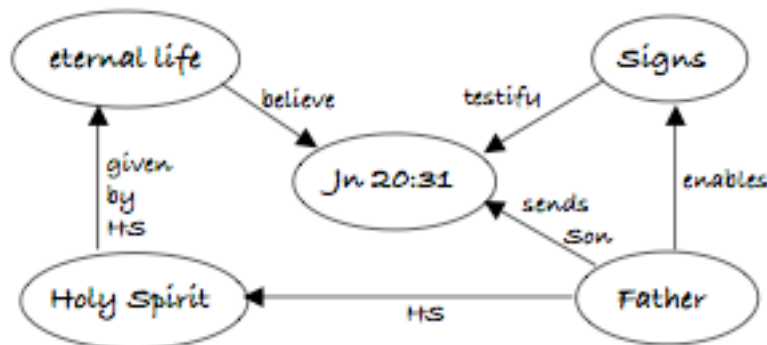
What is a mind map?

A mind map is a diagram used to represent words and ideas linked together and arranged around a key idea or concept. It is used to visualise, structure and group ideas. It can be a useful aid in study, preparing essays and assignments and in preparing for exams.

How do I do a mind map?

1. Write the title of the subject in the centre of the page and draw a circle around it. This centre is the general theme of the mind map.
2. Create sub-centres for sub-themes by drawing lines out from the centre. Write the key sub-themes or key words on these lines.
3. Use printing, it makes the words more readable and memorable. Key words could be written in upper case to make them stand out.
4. Use colours, arrows, branches as a way of connecting relationships between sub-themes and to make things stand out.
5. Write ideas down just as they occur to you. Don't worry about where they fit. Be creative. If you run out of ideas in one area, go to another branch of the map.
6. A mind map can be added to over time, and as you come across more information.

For example:



Study Guide 5

Preparing An Exegesis

Pray that the Lord will help you to understand his word, and grow in knowledge and love of him through this exercise.

Below are some points to think about as you study a passage in preparation for writing an exegesis.

1. Make sure you have the correct passage clarified. Be careful to use the correct verses for your exegesis.
2. Become thoroughly acquainted with your passage.
Read, re-read and read your passage again. Read slowly, dwelling over specific words and phrases. Mark the passage in colour if this helps. Circle repetition of words or ideas, significant words and phrases, linking words. Note any questions you have about the passage on a first reading.
3. Identify the genre of your passage.
Is your passage prose, poetry, wisdom literature, historical narrative? How does this impact your interpretation of the passage? For example, if it is wisdom literature, does it have features or themes that are characteristic of this genre?
4. Clarify the context of the passage.
Where does your passage fall in the flow of argument of the book as a whole? How does its position in the argument affect the meaning and significance of your passage?
5. How is it written?
Does the writer use questions or direct speech or commands? Does the writer use poetry or images to convey the message? Does the writer use short, sharp sentences to convey fast moving action?
6. Analyse significant words.
Notice any repeated words, and consider why this repetition has been used. Take note of words that are significant, such as place names, personal names, and words with important theological content, such as covenant, servant, election. Note the use of words such as therefore which highlight reasons for commands, or an exhortation to do something, based on what has gone before.
7. Key concepts
Are there any concepts in your passage that are important theological concepts for the book as a whole? Or perhaps, it is an important theological concept taken up elsewhere in the Bible, such as the new covenant in Jeremiah and then in 1 Corinthians
8. Consult two or three commentaries, noting when they agree and disagree in their interpretations of your passage. When there is disagreement among the commentators, it is important for you to make it clear in your exegetical which interpretation you favour. When you do this, you will need to indicate why you have chosen this interpretation. Remember to make a note of the citation of any point you use from a commentary.

Bibliography

Duvall, J. S., *Grasping God's Word: a Hands-on Approach to Reading* (Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 2005)

Fee, G. D., *New Testament Exegesis: a Handbook for Students and Pastors* 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY : Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

Hays, J. D., *Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 2001)

Study Guide 6

Writing An Exegesis

Write in Prose

Your exegetical paper must be written in prose form, rather than in point form. This means that as you work through the exegesis you will need to comment in writing that flows logically from one idea to the next.

You Can Use Headings

It is fine to use headings for the major sections of your exegetical paper, such as 'Context, Significant Words' and 'Overall Meaning of Passage'.

Be Concise

Try to be as concise as possible in your comments on the passage. Always ask yourself why you are including a particular sentence or paragraph in your paper. What is the relevance of the point that you are making for an understanding of the passage?

Be Specific

Try to make sure your comments relate directly to a particular word, sentence or verse of your passage, rather than using the passage as a springboard for related ideas that may be found in the rest of the book.

Format

There are three main areas to write about:

1. Context
Put the passage in a brief context. Include what has come before and what comes after. Does the passage belong in any significant part of the entire book's structure? Do not outline the whole message of the book. Focus on the immediate context that surrounds the passage.
2. Meaning of significant words and phrases
The writer will have chosen specific words and phrases to convey his message and theology. Sometimes words and phrases characterise the author's writing style, or a particular genre such as wisdom literature or prophetic literature.
3. Interpretation and meaning of the passage as a whole
What does the writer say in this passage? How does it contribute to his argument? Commentaries will help you at this point. Occasionally, there will be different interpretations on some points by commentators. This can be noted also.

You do not necessarily have to comment on each verse. You are discussing the major ideas and concepts of the passage.

Study Guide 7

Studying For The Exams

Studying for the exams will be a time when many of the things you have been learning will come together for you. Thank God for the opportunity and pray about what you may find fearful about doing an exam.

1. Past exam papers

Have a look at past exam papers for the last four years or so. If you don't have copies of these, ask your lecturer. Past exam papers will help you to understand:

- what type of questions will be asked.
- what are the important issues in each topic of the course.

2. Format of the exam

Make sure you are aware of the format of the exam. How many questions will you have to do? Are there any sections? How long will the exam be? How much time will you have for each question?

3. Keep focused

Refer to the exam papers during your study as this will help to keep you focused.

4. Topics

Do your maths. How many topics do you need to cover to comfortably prepare for the exam? Then work out what topics you want to prepare.

5. Covering the topics

For each topic, work out a plan of attack. What issues are hazy that you want to clear up? What do you really need to know if you do an exam on this topic? Do you want to do extra reading on this topic?

6. Past exam questions

Gather together the questions for each topic from the past exam papers. As you cover the topics think about how you could answer those questions. What points could you use? Make a list of these points. Do they really answer the question?

7. Work from general to specific with each topic

Start with general information and find out what is central to each topic. Then hone in on the various areas or issues.

8. How do you best study?

Writing essays? Summarising notes? Mind maps? Talking through issues with people?

You probably need to give yourself a couple of months to prepare for the exams. Start planning now.

Study Guide 8

Writing a Primary Document Study

A Primary Document Study paper should analyse the key historical issue dealt with in the document, the historical background of the issue, and the historical development which followed. The following elements are involved in such a formal analysis (of one document or a group of documents).

One aim of studying church history is to become competent in the use and analysis of primary historical documents. A Document Study is an analysis of a specific historical document with a view to interpreting it for its historical significance.

1. Place the document in its historical context

Discuss the historical forces that led to the writing of the document. This requires knowledge of the general historical background and the main issues involved at the time. Such knowledge will be derived from secondary sources (i.e. history books), which should be acknowledged in the essay in the same way as in other formal essays. As document studies tend to be relatively short, the number of secondary sources should be relatively few (about five to six). The document itself is the main focus of the study.

2. A brief summary of the major issue(s) in the document

Briefly identify the main point at issue in the document, and the particular perspective of the writer as expressed in it, especially in light of your discussion of the context.

3. A statement of the immediate response to the main issue of the document

This part also requires a consideration of secondary material. You will need to identify the main responses in support of or opposed to the main issue of the document, and should highlight any changes immediately following the writing of the document that may be attributed to the issue or the document itself.

4. A statement of the long-term historical impact of the main issue of the document

Again, secondary material is required. The ongoing effect caused by the issue addressed in the document may be negligible, strong but relatively short-lived, or dramatic and permanent in its importance. The student needs to identify the major consequences of the issue, or the document itself, for the history of the church.

5. Relevance for the church today

Is there any evidence of this situation/issue in your church or denomination? How did it come about? How might you deal with it? What do you see as the future of this situation? What can be drawn from this study that is of importance to your personal ministry?

Note: Students should note that this Document Study is a formal essay, and all the normal conventions of essay composition apply. However, when referring repeatedly to a particular document, in the second and subsequent references, abbreviated citations by way of page references (either in text or as footnotes) will suffice.

(This is a summary of a guide prepared by Dr Les Ball in his capacity as The Australian College of Theology (ACT) Church History moderator in 2008.)