

How to Learn!

How much does the average high school or college student remember three years after graduation? He could probably fill five sheets of paper with what he remembers from his many years of study, and that is tragic.

Even though the average brain is equivalent to a thousand super computers, the typical person remembers very little. His memory storage in his stream of consciousness is nearly empty. If he were confined to a room for a week without a computer, cellular phone, television, or books he would probably go mad since he has no valuable or interesting information in his memory storage to entertain himself in such a situation.

What is the reason for poor memories? Many people study history in school for many years, yet they cannot discuss history for even five minutes without exhausting all of their historical knowledge. Is there something wrong with their super computers? No, there is nothing wrong with the average mental computer, the problem is in the program. The program is giving wrong commands to the computer and consequently the student is unable to develop a system of knowledge.

The proper steps for developing a system of knowledge in ones memory are as follows:

1. Concentration for the purpose of understanding
2. Understanding (short term memory)
3. Much repetition (needed to establish long term memory)
4. Correlation (new knowledge is related to old knowledge)
5. Systematization (the result of all the pertinent knowledge of a subject having been put into long term memory and correlated)

In contrast to systematized learning, the average person learns and forgets and then learns something else which he also forgets. He may remember a few fragments of knowledge here and there, but he never develops a systematic framework of knowledge. His understanding which is short term memory disintegrates as he continues to learn new things. There is never enough repetition to develop any long term-memory and thus he cannot build a system of knowledge. This type of person is impressed with how many things he has studied and how many degrees he has, yet he hardly knows anything.

Several years ago, I taught a basic Greek course to a group of students. On the first day of class I presented the text-book we would be using to the students. One student immediately remarked that she had completed that book before in a seminary class and had gotten a good grade. It turned out that this student knew none of the information in that Greek text. She was quite skillful in memorizing information long enough to take a test, but as soon as the test was finished, she forgot everything. She emphasized short term memory and good grades. She was an 'A' student who knew nothing.

What a person learns and forgets will not help that person in life. A soldier may learn everything about his rifle. He may learn well how to correct a malfunctioning rifle. He may even get the best grade in a class dealing with that subject. However, if he should forget how to correct a malfunctioning rifle in battle, he will die. Let's imagine the following battlefield situation: the enemy is charging toward a soldier's position; he begins to shoot at the charging soldiers but suddenly

his rifle jams. He is becoming more and more terrified as the enemy gets closer and closer. Under this pressure he cannot remember how to correct this malfunction. Although he had done well on this subject at military school, he had subsequently forgotten it. Because his training program failed to teach through repetition, he will die in combat. What one learns and forgets does one no good.

All good teachers incorporate repetition in their teaching. If a teacher does not repeat, he is not a good teacher. What is the purpose of teaching a lot of material if the students don't remember it? The same is true of a good pastor. If the minister does not teach and repeat many times, his teaching will not be effective. The members of his congregation may boast about how interesting his messages are, but if they cannot remember the content it will not be beneficial to their spiritual lives.

All good Christian students must find academically and spiritually prepared pastors who are willing to study hard daily and teach the Word of God on a consistent and systematic basis with plenty of repetition so that Bible doctrine becomes inculcated into the soul. A good student must learn from a good pastor-teacher.