

British Bible School



Distance Learning Programme
Student Handbook

Welcome

We are delighted that you have enrolled in our Distance Learning Programme and trust that our journey together will be both pleasant and productive.

We have put together a few notes in this handbook to help you along the way. We have tried to cover as many areas as we could think of that might be useful, but if you have any questions that are not answered in these pages, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Personal and module tutors

Upon acceptance as a student you will be assigned a **Personal Tutor** who will:

- be your main point of contact in matters relating to your studies
- work with you to determine provisional deadlines according to your anticipated work commitment
- be there to answer questions as they arise and to provide encouragement as you progress with your studies
- arrange with you the frequency and best means of conducting tutorial sessions - these might be by telephone, online or face to face if feasible.

Each module has its own **Module Tutor**. This will often be the one who wrote all or most of the Module and will be available to assist with more specific matters relating to the module you are studying if necessary.

Modules and units

The curriculum of the British Bible School is divided into **Modules** which fall under five main sections:

- Introductory
- General & Theological
- Practical Service
- Old Testament
- New Testament

Modules are assigned a point value according to the minimum number of hours of study required to complete them successfully. The majority of modules are worth 5 module-points which require at least 50 hours of study; and there are 10-point modules which will take you at least 100 hours. The modular system not only ensures consistency within the curriculum but it also offers considerable flexibility in our provision of study options. If you decide to also undertake modules via our Extension or Residential Programmes, you will find the same modular system in place.

There are three introductory modules that are essential to progression and some core modules required for certain exit awards. Students should be aware that modules will only be offered on a Distance Learning basis as they become available.

Modules are themselves divided into **Units**, usually equating to one unit per module-point. It should be understood that though this might be taken as a rough guide to the amount of time that ought to be allocated to each unit, some units will take longer than others to complete.

There are two main types of student assignments: **Module Assignments** and **Unit Assignments**. Unless you are specifically instructed otherwise, Unit Assignments are to be submitted as you complete each unit, and Module Assignments are to be submitted upon completion of the module (generally along with any Unit Assignments for the final unit of the module).

In addition to these assignments there is one whole **Course Assignment** which all students are to undertake alongside their modular studies. This assignment is simply to read the entire text of the Bible during your time as a student enrolled with the school. Students will need to have completed this before being awarded the final course diploma. You will find reference to some useful reading plans in Unit One of Module INT01, *Introduction to Bible Study*.

Deadlines and time limits

We have designed the Distance Learning Programme to be as flexible as possible. We want as many as are able to take advantage of this course of study and we do not want unattainable deadlines or unworkable schedules to get in the way. For this reason we have adopted a policy whereby time allocations for assignments are arranged by mutual consent.

When you completed your Application Form, you indicated how many hours you thought you would be able to devote to your studies on a weekly or monthly basis. From this figure you will be assigned a **Personal Agreed Study Time Allocation** (PASTA) and based upon this figure, your Personal Tutor will set deadlines by which your Module and Unit Assignments ought to be completed. It should be clearly understood that deadlines are primarily for your benefit and that as a part-time student you will not be penalised for late submission.

However, if the deadlines set are proving to be unrealistic, your Personal Tutor will discuss with you the possibility of revising your PASTA to reflect a more realistic personal commitment. There is no limit to the number of times you may revise your time allocation, though for the arrangement to work effectively it makes sense to maintain as regular a commitment as you are able.

Getting started

Once you have read through these few pages you will want to get started with your studies. When your Module material arrives, take a few moments to glance through the *Table of Contents* and read the *Introduction to Module*. Each Unit should have its own instructions to clearly guide you along your way. If at any time you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Personal Tutor.

Submission of work

Students should ensure that all work submitted is presentable and legible. We know that you will have put considerable effort into your work and we would expect that to be reflected in its general appearance. Unfortunately it is simply just not possible for tutors to read work that is illegible.

Submitted text should be typed and not hand-written. The only exception to this is where Answer Sheets have been supplied as part of the Module material, in which case you may write clearly in the spaces provided (though you may, of course, type the questions and your answers separately).

Try to use a clear font at 12-point, line spacing at 1.5, left-hand justified with reasonable margins. Paragraphs should be clearly separated and sub-titles, where needed, in bold. The main titles may be in a larger font. Footnotes should be provided where appropriate according to the guides provided.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that work is handed in as agreed. Work may be submitted by post or electronically via e-mail. If submitting via e-mail, the following file formats are acceptable:

- .pdf - Portable Document Format (Adobe Acrobat)
- .rtf - Rich Text Format
- .pages - Apple Pages
- .doc - MSWord

If font type and/or formatting is particularly important, you might be better to use .pdf which encapsulates this information within the document.

Work other than text (such as a timeline or map) may be submitted also by post or electronically via e-mail. If submitting via e-mail, the following file formats are acceptable:

- .pdf - Portable Document Format (Adobe Acrobat)
- .jpg - JPEG

If sending work by post you should first ensure that you have a copy for your own records. Tutors will submit their assessments to you via e-mail and will generally only return original documents if specific arrangements have been made or a stamped-addressed envelope enclosed.

All work should be clearly marked with your Student Reference Number (SRN) which you will have been given upon your enrolment. It should be submitted to:

By e-mail: dlp@britishbibleschool.com

By post:

British Bible School (DLP)
% 36 Tintern Rise
Eye, Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE6 7YL

Student community

We recognise the benefits for students of being a part of a learning community. We also recognise the challenges faced in developing a student community within a distance learning programme. We are working on ways in which we might bring students together, both in person and online, and will keep you up to date with developments.

Abbreviations

In your reading you will certainly encounter a number of common abbreviations. Some of these will be explained in your Unit Notes. It is generally quite acceptable to use common abbreviations when writing essays, though discretion should be used as to where these ought to be explained. When writing your own notes you will likely make use of your own abbreviations, some of which may be inappropriate to use within writing to be read by

others. This is quite acceptable, though you should ensure that your use is both consistent and memorable.

A number of common abbreviations can be found in both regular dictionaries and Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

Footnotes and bibliographies

It is very important that credit is given where credit is due. When writing essays or submitting other written work, each quote or reference should be credited within a footnote. Footnotes should be included at the bottom of each page where relevant and **all** works cited included within a bibliography at the end of the paper.

Where a work is cited for a second or subsequent time within the same paper, the footnote should be shortened as shown below. If the same work is cited on two or more consecutive occasions, the second and subsequent references should use *ibid.* followed by a comma and the page number(s) if different.

Please note the following examples:

Bibliography

Northouse, Peter G., *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2007)

Footnote

Northouse, *Leadership*, 2007: 188

Short footnote

Northouse, 2007: 346

A more detailed Citation Guide is being prepared and will be available shortly. If you are unsure as to how to provide a reference, please ask us. The most important thing is that you are both clear and consistent.

Copyright

All course material is for the private study of the student to whom it is sent and any unauthorised use (or copying) of it or of any part of it may result in the course being terminated.

Essential purchases

3. A Bible Atlas

The thing to look for here is a gazetteer. If you do not know what a gazetteer is you need a dictionary (see above) but to save you time a gazetteer is the index that lists all locations included in the atlas along with a map reference so you can find them. Some basic Bible atlases will not show every single site named in the Bible. These will be good enough for most purposes (such as showing a Sunday School class the route that Paul took when travelling to Rome) but when you are engaged in a detailed textual study you will need to find some obscure locations. Try to follow David's escapes from King Saul as he and his band of outlaws went from village to cave throughout the Judahite wilderness: you need a comprehensive atlas to do this. However, a good illustrated Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia (see below) will do the job for you. Also,

www.biblemap.org

is fully searchable with both ESV or KJV texts and *Google Earth* can be a useful tool.

If you want to invest in a paper atlas any of the following will serve you well. We list a selection so you can search for a bargain:

- Aharoni, Yohanan, and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Carta Biblical Atlas* (New York: Macmillan).
This reached its 3rd edition in 1993. Earlier editions were published as *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*.
- Beitzel, Barry, *Biblica: The Bible Atlas - A Social and Historical Journey Through the Lands of the Bible* (Hauppauge, New York: Barron's).
- Bimson, John *et al* [and others], *The New Bible Atlas* (Leicester, InterVarsity Press).
This atlas is also available as part of an excellent CD-ROM, IVP's *Essential Reference Library*.
- Curtis, Adrian, *Oxford Bible Atlas* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
This is now in its fourth edition (earlier editions being edited by Herbert May). If you visit www.amazon.co.uk you can "Look Inside" on-line.
- Pritchard, James B., *The Harper Atlas of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper).
- Rogerson, John, *Atlas of the Bible* (published in various editions, including by Facts on File, Macdonald & Co., and Phaidon).

Any of these will serve you well. You do not need more than one unless you enjoy collecting Bible atlases.

4. A Bible Concordance

We stress that it is a concordance of the Bible under discussion. A concordance lists the occurrences of specific words within a text so there are examples that list all the words that Shakespeare uses and even one for the lyrics of The Beatles so do not go on-line and buy the first concordance that you find.

Of all the basic tools for Bible study it is the concordance that has been rendered obsolete by new technology. There are several websites that allow you to do most, if not all, that an old book-based concordance does at considerably less expense. For example,

www.biblegateway.com

allows exhaustive key word searches.

The three "classic" concordances of yesteryear were all based on the *King James' Version*. That of Alexander Cruden is best avoided as he is neither comprehensive nor does he give access to the original languages. Both the concordances of James Strong and Robert Young are much more complete than Cruden's and both, in their different ways, open up the original languages for us. All three are still in print and very easy to pick up second-hand but you need a *King James' Version* of the Bible to make them work. Those of us who grew up in the King James' tradition (using, for example, the *Revised Standard Version*) can usually manage to "translate" back into "King James' English" but if you cannot do this you are advised to select a more modern concordance based on a more modern text - or to work on-line. Examples to consider:

- Ellison, John W.: *Nelson's Complete Concordance of the Revised Standard Version* (Nelson; New York; 1957).

- Goodrick, Edward W., and John R. Kohlenberger III: *Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 2nd edition 1999).
- Kohlenberger, John R., III: *The NRSV Concordance: Unabridged* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1991).
- Metzger, Bruce M.: *New Revised Standard Version Exhaustive Concordance* (Thomas Nelson; Nashville, Tennessee; 1991).
- Whitaker, Richard E.: *RSV Analytical Concordance* (Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1988).

It would be nice to say “Try before you buy” but it could be difficult to source enough to make a meaningful comparison. Try your local library or contact us for further advice.

5. A Bible Dictionary and / or a Bible Encyclopaedia

In olden days a Bible dictionary confined its range to subjects mentioned in the Bible whereas a Bible encyclopaedia went further around the subject. So, for example, we would expect to find articles on the Caesars Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero because they are named in the New Testament (use a concordance to find them!) whereas a Bible encyclopaedia would go further and have something on other Roman emperors who are not explicitly named in Scripture. However this distinction is no longer rigidly maintained and Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias are increasingly coming to resemble one another. Recommended examples include:

- Bromiley, Geoffrey W., editor: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1979-1988).

The first edition of this classic was published in 1915 and revised in 1929. Be aware that the 1929 edition is so highly regarded by some that it is still in print and available at a considerably lower price than the most recent edition. Some of the older theological articles were first class and still worth reading but much of the other material (archaeology, for one obvious example) is now too outdated to be a first choice. The four volumes are:

Volume One: A - D
 Volume Two: F - J
 Volume Three: K - P
 Volume Four: Q - Z.

- Douglas, J. D., and N. Hillyer, editors: *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (InterVarsity Press; Leicester; 1986).

The first edition was printed on good quality paper and is preferable to subsequent, cheaper editions. To help you look for them second-hand, here are the titles of the three volumes:

Part One: Aaron - Golan
 Part Two: Goliath - Papyri
 Part Three: Parable - Zuzim.

- Marshall, I. Howard, A. R. Millard, and J. I. Packer, editors: *The New Bible Dictionary* (InterVarsity Press; Leicester, 1996).

This is the third “New” Bible Dictionary and probably the best to buy although the earlier editions have merit. If you invest in IVP’s *Essential* CD-ROM the *NBD* is part of the package.

- Tenney, Merrill C.: *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1975).

Now starting to show its age but if you can pick it up second-hand it is a worthwhile purchase.

Volume One: A - C
 Volume Two: D - G
 Volume Three: H - L

According to www.zondervan.com the set is available as a software download at a slightly lower cost than the paper edition and also there is a revised edition in full colour (2009 edition).

6. A One-volume Bible Commentary or Handbook

In all honesty you will soon outgrow a one-volume commentary but when you are getting started it can be useful (and comforting) to have a book with something about every book in the Bible even if, more often than not, it will be too superficial for detailed work.

Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias are arranged in alphabetical order (so Acts to Zephaniah); commentaries and handbooks are in canonical order (so Genesis to Revelation).

Commentaries and handbooks will also have introductory material, some of which can be very good indeed - if you remember to use it.

There are many old favourites available for free use on-line but it is important to remember that these old books may have been the classics of their day but today can be badly behind the times. A writer such as Matthew Henry (1662 - 1714) can be shrewd, witty, and memorable - and well worth quoting in your sermons - but he must never be your first or only source of Biblical comment as the world has moved on since his day. Today's burning questions such as Creation or Evolution and the place of women in church and society were not being asked back then and discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls have moved our understanding of the Bible and the Biblical world forward in ways that Henry cannot be expected to have known. So dip in to the old books - but consider investing in at least one newer title as well. Some to consider are:

- Alexander, Pat and David, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* (Oxford: Lion, Now in its third edition but the earlier ones still contain much useful information.)
- Bruce, F. F., *The International Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1986).
- Carson, D.A., R. T. France, Gordon J. Wenham, J. A. Motyer, editors, *The New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
The NBC has been through many editions and any of them will serve you well. This latest revision is also on IVP's *Essential Reference* CD-ROM.
- Elwell, Walter A., *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1989).
- Guthrie, Donald and J. A. Motyer, editors, *The Eerdmans Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970).
- Manser, Martin (editor), *Collins Bible Companion* (London: Collins, 2009).
- Pfeiffer, C. F. and E. F. Harrison, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1962).

Sources

Most of the above is based on many years of experience as a student, teacher, and preacher and is, of course, rather subjective. It has, though, been scrutinised by other

members of the Distance Learning Programme panel although the final decision as to what has been included is mine.

Books that have helped include:

- Bauer, David R.: *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry* (Hendrickson; Peabody, Massachusetts; 2003).
- Carson, D. A.: *New Testament Commentary Survey Sixth Edition* (Inter-Varsity Press; Nottingham; 2007).
- Goldingay, John: *Old Testament Commentary Survey 1991 Edition* (Religious and Theological Students Fellowship; Leicester; 1991).
- Longman, Tremper III: *Old Testament Commentary Survey Third Edition* (Inter-Varsity Press; Leicester; 2003).

All Internet addresses worked as of April 2009. In addition to the sites used above the Tyndale House website offers some useful links to academic library catalogues and booksellers:

www.tyndalehouse.com

Advice on How to Study by Distance Learning

Introduction

This introduction is meant to help you cope with some of the initial challenges you may experience as you start to follow the British Bible School Distance Learning Programme.

In traditional Western Higher Education, of which some of you may have had experience, four key study activities have been developed to help students learn and develop their understanding. They are:

- Essay writing
- Classes and seminars
- Individual tutorials
- Lectures

These methods have proved to be relatively effective in helping students to learn and to adapt materials for their own use.

Obviously, you have embarked on a distance learning course which alters the balance between these different methods, and which makes it imperative for you to make the most of the materials, opportunities, and literature which are most suitable for this type of learning.

Some of you may have academic qualifications and thus a familiarity with the demands of academic study but for some of you this experience may have been gained many years ago and thus you may find yourself in need of a refresher course to help you to get back up to speed. Other students may come to the British Bible School Distance Learning Programme with a lifetime's spiritual growth behind them. Praise the Lord! If you have academic skills or spiritual experience bring what you have with you and use it to the full.

Whatever your background we assume that your interest in this programme indicates that you have the necessary self-discipline and determination to keep on keeping on.

What are we able to offer?

We offer:

- Study material
- Recorded lectures
- Access to study days / weekends and the Corby residential programme (for students in a position to visit)
- The setting and detailed assessment of essays and other forms of coursework.

Let us look at some of these factors in a little more detail:

The secret ingredient

Before going any further it is good to remind ourselves that we are not on our own. We have a Heavenly Father who wants us to know Him better and is willing to help us achieve this goal. Read and reflect upon James 1: 5 before going any further.

If you don't know what you are doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help, and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought.¹

Study material

Do not treat the study material as "museum pieces". Each page has wide margins to enable you to make your own notes in which you can enter into critical debate (positive as well as negative) with the authors. This is an excellent way of learning. It is also worthwhile preparing a synopsis of each article, together with a summary of your own response. Where you agree, say so and say why. And where you disagree do the same: say why you disagree and how you think this disagreement could be resolved. And always give your reasons.

As you proceed through the Units, it is advisable to build and retain a snap-shot picture of each section, so that when issues re-emerge you are in a position to return to earlier material and consolidate, revise, or develop your position. Indeed, when returning to something that you previously found difficult you will often end up wondering what the problem was. Again, as you go back over earlier material you will become more sensitive to the interconnections between the Units. Indeed, this increasing sensitivity can be taken as a clear indication of progress.

The study material, together with the recorded presentations, should provide you with sufficient data to complete the course, although we hope that you will choose to read more widely.

Recorded lectures

You will be given recordings throughout your studies. Some will be audio-visual and others just audio. Most will be recordings of the regular teachers at the British Bible School but these will be supplemented by visiting teachers well-known to us.

Most of these lectures have been recorded especially for the Distance Learning Programme; others might be taken from other British Bible School classes, such as the Residential Programme at Corby or one of our Extension Classes from around the United Kingdom.

These recordings should be treated as you would any conventional lecture.

In the traditional residential programme at the British Bible School, the main method of teaching is the lecture often followed by a time of discussion. In a context where teacher and students are meeting face-to-face every week it is possible to be more flexible in terms of content so, if a good question is asked, the teacher may decide to cut some of his prepared material and spend extra time addressing the new issue. In a Distance Learning Programme student-teacher interaction cannot occur during the lecture but is entirely appropriate at other points, particularly in your written work and our response to it.

¹ Peterson, *The Message*, James 1:5 [Website]

The recorded lectures provided in this course cannot function in quite the same way as a classroom lecture although they are nevertheless an important part of the course. One of the main problems of the traditional lecture is that it involves the one-way flow of information from teacher to class. Lectures do not permit much interaction between class and teacher apart, perhaps, from the opportunity - if time permits - for a few brief questions and comments at the end.

Another problem with conventional lectures is that it is often difficult to follow the argument presented while at the same time taking useful or worthwhile notes. Unless such notes **are** taken, however, the gain to the student may be very slight. In fact D. A. Bligh, in his book revealingly entitled *What's the Use of Lectures?* while recognising that different empirical studies disagree about the effectiveness of lectures for learning, points out that students only concentrate for about twenty minutes of the normal lecture.²

This is why we believe that our recorded lectures are a great improvement over traditional methods of imparting information.

Students are not only able to take notes from the recordings and to think about and reflect upon what is said just as you would with a traditional class, but they have the advantage of being complete and permanent records which allow you to listen at your own speed, digest arguments and to replay at your convenience any controversial or difficult points.

This play-back facility makes the recorded lectures particularly appropriate for distance learning in that they may be tailored to fit in with the different external demands and varying attention spans likely to characterise our students.

Extra reading

We expect you to have and to use a Bible and there will be many points at which you are asked to read and also take notes from the Bible. We prefer you to use an English Bible but realise that those whose English is less than confident may need to read in their own language as well. Please read what you are asked to read, even if it is a passage with which you are familiar. It may not be as familiar as you think! There will also be opportunities for you to read around your subject but much will depend on your personal circumstances. The vast majority of British students will have a local lending library in their vicinity and perhaps other sources for borrowing or buying books as well but some of our overseas students may not be so well placed. We will be making suggestions about how to find books, particularly on the Internet, later in this module but, for now, try to read as much as you can and please do not neglect your regular and prayerful devotional reading of the Bible.

Essay writing

Your first assignments will not be essays so you have time to settle into a routine and, no doubt, get some marks on your record-sheet before you have to tackle your first essay. However, it will not hurt to start thinking about how essays are constructed well in advance.

Tackling the essay

Your introduction to your essay should state the nature of the problem. If you think that it is necessary, discuss any ambiguities in the question. If the question is a

² Bligh, *What's the Use of Lectures?* 1970

broad one, state the specific way in which you intend to tackle it. Here it is not sufficient merely to list the steps that you intend to take, you also need to demonstrate the rationale for this approach and how it connects up with and illuminates your central problem. If your introduction is systematic and cogent, these qualities are likely to be carried into the main body of your essay.

Always try to present arguments on a level and in terms that you understand. Do not simply lift arguments from the material we have given you or any other sources. (See notes on plagiarism below.)

Always try to put yourself in the place of your reader. This ability acts as a safeguard against taking things for granted. For example, there is a common tendency for students to jump from one point to the next without adequate explanation. This can often be rectified by simply adding a connecting sentence, although this tendency to jump from point to point in an unsignalled way may be indicative of an underlying confusion.

When writing you may take the liberty of assuming your teacher is an “intelligent idiot”. In other words, we can read but everything needs to be explained for us. Remember the acronym “KISS” and “Keep It Simple, Stupid!”

Avoid over-generalization and assertion. Support your arguments with relevant evidence and / or logical reasoning. This is not to say there is no place for speculation. Rather, it is to suggest that when you do speculate you should make it clear that you are aware that you are doing so.

Try to exercise some control over your biases and opinions. Remember your aim should be to try to understand God’s word more adequately, not merely to find evidence that reinforces your predetermined position. If all you want to do is to defend your existing preconceptions you will find that there are cheaper and less time-consuming ways of achieving this end than enrolling in the British Bible School Distance Learning Programme.

Take care over your use of what is sometimes labelled “sexist” language. Try to cultivate a gender-inclusive style which does not involve you in excluding half the population from your discussion unless you mean to. Use “man” when referring to males (as in “the *man* has the responsibility of leading God’s people in worship”) and use human or people or some other appropriate term when referring to both men and women (so, for example, “all *people* who follow Jesus should expect to carry a cross”).

Plagiarism

There is an old saying to the effect that copying from one book is plagiarism but copying from several is research. There is an element of truth in this but, like many such sayings, it is not *strictly* true. Plagiarism occurs when you fail to **acknowledge** sources and is not dependent on the number you use. And of course there is also a moral issue involved here as plagiarism is, to all intents and purposes, the theft of another person’s work. So don’t do it and if you do and you get caught you can expect severe sanctions.

There are a number of practical reasons why you should always give full references when using other people’s work. They include the following:

By acknowledging your sources you are able to distance yourself from the views expressed in them - you are not committed to the point of view expressed by your source - and hence are in a much better position to criticize, amend, or agree with the viewpoints expressed.

By putting the ideas of others into your own words - perhaps by using the conventional "Bloggs argues that . . ." you not only have a better chance of demonstrating that you understand the point made, but are also able to eliminate words and expressions that do not fit with your own style, and which might prevent your essay from "flowing" and reading like your own work. Experienced teachers can usually detect the joins when students have tried to "cut and paste".

Stating your sources also invites readers to consult the sources themselves so as to ascertain whether they agree with the interpretation you have put on the author's argument, perhaps also introducing them to an interesting, previously unknown, source.

Quoting sources also allows one to support one's own argument by reference to an eminent authority. It is always pleasurable to discover how great minds think alike!

You may remember where you found your material at the time but when you return to your essay in years to come you will probably have forgotten where it came from. If your sources are correctly documented you can return to them quickly and easily.

General advice

It is seldom sufficient to use a direct quote and to leave that quote to stand on its own. It is usually necessary to "explain" the quote or at least to point out how it supports or complements a point that you have been making.

Bible references should be checked, particularly if you are taking them from another source. Does the reference really say what the commentators say it says?

Likewise "facts" and "statistics" should be carefully referenced. Other people reading your work may wish to challenge the "fact" or be able to demonstrate that your fact has been so taken out of context that it no longer means anything. Remember what Benjamin Disraeli is reported to have said: "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics."³

So, always endeavour to quote accurately and give the appropriate reference. Anybody who has written a long essay will testify to the annoyance caused and the time wasted searching for references that were not noted down when first encountered.

Finally, at the end of your essay, always give a list of the books and articles you have used. You can then always refer back to them later when needed. Do not, though, list sources that you have not used, simply to give your work a spurious impression of scholarship. You won't fool anybody!

³ Verified in Knowles, Elizabeth, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (5th Edition)*, 1999.

References

A reference should enable your reader to identify exactly where you found your information. There are different ways of displaying this information but all show the same things even if how they are shown differs. References should be listed at the end of your essay as a bibliography in the alphabetical order of the author or editor's surname. If one author has provided more than one book then list them in date order. Other information to include the title of the publication, and year of publication. If you are using an article from a magazine or journal give the exact page numbers and, in the case of books, place of publication and name of publisher. Use quotation marks for the "title" of the article and *italics* for the name of the book or journal (but if you are writing by hand underline where a typist would use *italics*). For a reference to an article from the Internet state the exact web address needed to find the same information along with the date you accessed it (for websites, unlike printed material, can be changed so that they no longer say what they used to say).

Examples (taken from a random selection):

Book

Kitchen, K. A., *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).

Journal article

Moberly, R. B., "New Testament Chronology", *Theology* (May / June 1994), 170-178.

Article in a book

Calvert, N. L., "Abraham" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* ed. Joel B. Green, 3-7, (Leicester, InterVarsity Press, 1992).

Website

"Religion", *BBC Schools* [Website] <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/romans/religion.shtml>> (11 November 2008).

Further examples will be given later in this module and students should consult the Distance Learning Programme Student Handbook.

What use can I make of my own ideas in essays?

It would be a pity if you were not able to make use of the wealth of experience we know you bring to this course. However, you must always be wary of reducing what ought to be a carefully argued and constructed piece of academic writing to a string of personal anecdotes. How then to use your own ideas effectively?

In writing essays for this course we want you to use your own ideas while at the same time not losing touch with what the Bible is saying. You will be introduced to many eminent authorities on the Bible who deserve your respect but who must never be considered infallible. Often you will find yourself in agreement with what has been written in a book, in which case say why. And when you disagree you will need to back up your arguments with logical evidence.

Originality?

Many students may interpret this to mean they have to come up with earth-shatteringly novel “pearls of wisdom”. The reality is much more mundane. As we have pointed out, all you will be expected to do is demonstrate your own thinking about the Word of God with reference to the thoughts of those who have approached these questions before us. Any “originality” will come in the ways in which you compare the views of others, throwing light upon the similarities and contrasts between them. You are not expected to make things up and re-writing the Bible is definitely not encouraged.

But just how legitimate is it to use your own *experience*? Not all such experience is *relevant*, of course. But it can be. The thing to bear in mind is that such experience should only be used to illustrate or exemplify broader points that you wish to make or which have been made by others.

Using your experiences in this way can not only make your essay more vivid for yourself and your readers, but can make all the difference between an ordinary essay and a much more stimulating one. However, care must be taken when anecdotal material is used that the main point is not obscured or lost sight of altogether. Care must also be taken using anecdotes to ensure that you are illustrating a *Biblical* point not buttressing a personal prejudice.

We shall attempt to give guidance here both in our marking and in a more detailed discussion of essay writing later in this module. There are some academic conventions that need to be followed but you should still be able to produce lively, interesting prose which is also informative and disciplined.

Credit

This material is based upon “Advice On How To Study By Distance Learning” from The University of Leicester, 1992.