

Just Ask time management

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Help! I have so much to learn and the exams and deadlines just keep coming; how do I keep my cool and keep up my Christian faith?

I love this question - it's not just about effective time management (and who doesn't struggle with this?), but also about walking with the Lord when time is short.

It's so important to create boundaries around our spiritual lives: there will always be multiple demands on our time. Right now that might be studying and exams - in the future there will be paid work, family pressures, concern for friends, responsibilities at church, the list goes on. Let's not allow these pressures (in Jesus's words, *'the worries of this life'* [Mark 4:19]) to erode our relationship with him.

Make daily Bible reading and prayer a priority. Pray about your studies. Pray for discernment to cover the most helpful material, for energy, for God's help in working hard and focusing. *'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'* (1 Peter 5:7).

Pray also for spiritual growth and for opportunities to serve him during this busy season. James says that *'...the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.'* (James 1:3-4). Hold onto this broader perspective - yes, there may be tons of medical facts and procedures to learn, but don't miss out on the opportunity to become spiritually *'mature and complete'*. Nurture your walk with the Lord through busy times.

Think about how you use Sundays. Consider keeping one day a week clear of studying. Use it for refreshment and a chance to focus on God who has created and designed rest for our good. Be wise about CU and church midweek activities. Decide

what you are committed to and follow through.

In terms of studying, prioritise. List the areas you need to cover. Convert this into a realistic schedule based on the time you have available and try to stick to it. Don't get bogged down - if you have spent four weeks trying to get your head round ECGs, it might be worth moving onto something else for a while. Vary your approach, be it with online questions, looking at a textbook, rehearsing OSCE routines, group chats, and so on.

Keep good habits: go to bed on time, eat well, take breaks, do exercise.

Focus on the important stuff, not small print. There are key conditions - learn about these. If you're having trouble seeing the wood for the trees, talk to someone else (perhaps an older student or graduate) and make a list together of the most valuable things to spend your time on.

Step back and wonder. Drink in the beauty of what you're learning! Thank God for the way he has made the human body, created science, and for the many amazing medical discoveries.

The student years are a key opportunity to get into good habits for the rest of your life. The workload will change, but is unlikely to lessen as life moves on - if you're able to keep Jesus central now, this will stand you in good stead for the future. ■

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