

# THE MORNING STAR

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## *Advice for Combining Study with Employment*

BY EPHRAIM RADNER

I often tell my doctoral students that if they have an outside job of more than 10 to 15 hours per week, the chances are that their dissertation will be the worse for it, or that it might not get done at all. Experience seems to confirm this advice. But not always. Besides which, students have to live, provide for their families, pay back loans. That is, having a job is sometimes inevitable for a student, any student. Such is reality, and reality trumps withered faculty advice!

That being the case, how can one make the most of their studies, if they are working a job at the same time? Here are four things, which if done, can help. The first two have to do with the use of one's time. The second two have to do with the character of that time's use.

**Rule 1: Allocate your time.** This is a basic preparatory demand. Figure out how much time you have for study, realistically, each week. Add up the hours. Weekends? Evenings after dinner? All day Friday? Make a list, and then determine when during the week you will study. Do this with your spouse or family, so that there is agreement. A written covenant, to be honest, can be useful here: it holds you and others accountable for the work you need to do. And no more! Then block those hours off with merciless discipline,

*(continued...)*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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*Nov 23, Sat*  
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*Nov 27, Wed*  
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*Dec 4, 11, 18, Wed*  
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and stick to it. “Catch as catch can” as a way to study is a recipe for disaster.

**Rule 2: Organize your time.** Having, say, 15 or 20 hours carved out of your week for study is not truly helpful unless you use these hours properly. Everyone is different, but each of us has times of the day or week when we think more creatively than at others, or assimilate information more easily than at others. Study involves reading, reflection, memorizing, discussion (see below), and writing. For every course you take, figure out how much you need to do of each of these activities. Then assign these activities to the times and days when you are most able to be productive in pursuing them. For most people (not all), for instance, nights are not the best time for writing. So don’t leave writing to such periods. In all of this, make a chart for yourself as to when you will do what for each course: early Tuesday mornings for reading Plato (!); Wednesday evenings for reviewing notes for Bible quizzes; Saturday morning for writing an essay on mission. It will be different for each person and each term. But once you have a plan, stick to it ruthlessly.

“Ruthless”, by the way, is a good attitude when it comes to study in these circumstances! “Just do it” is a fine motto, and it is hardly wooden when it comes to creative study. Many – perhaps most – professional writers, including poets, will tell you that they do their work in a measurable or quantitative fashion: so many lines or pages written every morning or day. No matter what, even if they feel they have little of quality to offer. Yes, they will then have to go back and edit, even throw things out. Nonetheless, the discipline of simple production, through regular means and at regular times, is a key to “things happening.” That goes for study of all kinds: read so many pages; write so many words; review so many notes, on this day, at this time, week after week.

True, this *does* seem a bit like an assembly line. So now we come to some rules concerning the character or nature of how you spend your study time.

**Rule 3: Let your studies breathe personally.** Reading, note taking, remembering, writing – these are all part of study. But they are basically inert activities without being leavened by some kind of enlivening “breath” of meaning, joy, hope, even dissatisfaction or unease, and questing. These are what put flesh on ideas and thoughts, and finally allow them to take a shape that has purpose, power, and coherence. There is no magical formula for this, but a key context in which it happens is simple: reflective solitude.

This is not an “add on,” but an essential for study. For a Christian, it begins with prayer. All study should start in the quiet, alone with God. That is where it should end as well. And in between, there needs to be time to be alone, with God, with oneself, and with the undetermined sounds of the world. Far from distracting from concentration and learning, these “alone and empty” times are essential. The most creative scholars – and there are studies

of this kind of thing – take regular walks by themselves, or play music in a quiet corner of the house each evening, or simply sit for an hour in the morning alone. Yes, even an hour!

It is absolutely essential that every student, even one (and particularly one) pressed for time, has regular (not haphazard) times of reflection, away from books and papers, where ideas come and go, and thoughts press in and out, and finally a form to the imagination emerges. *This* kind of time needs to be carefully woven into rules (1.) and (2.) above, otherwise their promise will go nowhere. As an arbitrary measure, build into your “study time” two hours a week of being alone and doing nothing.

But there is more to the creation of thought than solitude. Thus,

**Rule 4: Let your studies breathe relationally.** Any student needs regular time with other students, whether they are ones sharing a course or not. Time for what? Just plain talking! And talking about anything: family, politics, sports, and yes, matters you are studying (that’s important). This too is a necessary element of all study, since one’s ideas, thoughts, cognitive connections, illuminations and more come directly from an encounter with others. Study groups are good; a regular time at a pub with peers; a weekly lunch or dinner: your brain needs to be fed with the nourishment of other minds engaging your own and you theirs. Students – even full-time students – who disappear into the library, only to re-emerge three years later, are rarely the better for this enforced isolation and focus. Their thinking is often cramped and awkward. It’s other people and their thoughts that give our own thoughts their wings.

I am perhaps too gruff in my general advice, with which I opened these remarks. Plenty of great scholars and creative minds have done their greatest work while holding down full-time jobs doing something else – in the last century, the poets Wallace Stevens and Charles Reznikoff, the composer Charles Ives, and of course, the physicist Albert Einstein, whose breakthrough papers were produced while working as a bureaucrat in a Swiss patent office. Geniuses, to be sure. But their way of going about their work was the same way pursued by any good student: discipline with their time, regular solitude, and the energies of encounter and conversation with others. These are tried and true ways to learn for everyone.

## ABOUT

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# From the Registrar



It's not too late to register for courses during the **Winter 2020 semester**. Wycliffe has some exciting new offerings beginning in January, including:

**[Introduction to Christian Apologetics](#)** : **The Art and Science of Christian Persuasion**. This online course, taught by [Andy Bannister](#) aims to equip students with the analytical tools to engage contemporary cultural issues as they relate to matters of faith.

**[John Wesley: Catholic Evangelical](#)**. This course, which will take place on Tuesdays, is available for remote access. (Come to Wycliffe or participate from where you are!) Taught by [Victor Shepherd](#), the course examines major aspects of Wesley's theology.

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**Key Academic Dates for Fall/Winter 2019-20** are posted at <https://www.tst.edu/academic/key-academic-dates>. A few up-coming dates to take note of:

**Now to Jan 20:** Opt-out portal open on ACORN for Winter non-compulsory incidental fees (conjoint degree students only). See [UofT Non-Academic Incidental Fees](#).

**Nov 29:** Last day to submit doctoral theses for examination for Spring Convocation

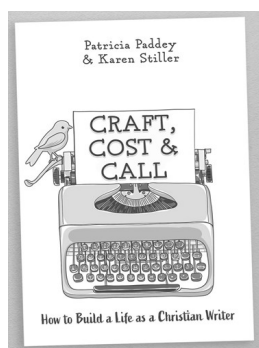
**Dec 6:** Last day to submit theses to TST for examination to avoid tuition fees for Winter 2020 (ThD, non-conjoint PhD, DMin, ThM and non-conjoint MA only)

**Dec 6:** Registration deadline for Winter 2020 (minimum payment must be received by this date; please consult your College Registrar for details)

**Questions? Ask Student Services**



# Coming up



## **BOOK LAUNCH: CRAFT, COST & CALL: HOW TO BUILD A LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN WRITER**

**Saturday, November 23, 7:00—9:00 p.m. at Wycliffe College in Leonard Hall**

Co-authored by Patricia Paddey, Director of Communications at Wycliffe, and Karen Stiller, Senior Editor of Faith Today Magazine, this inspiring and immensely readable book offers help to people of faith who want to write well and be published. (*Learn more at: <https://www.craftcostcall.com>*)



## **VOICES OF ADVENT: DEVOTION, REPENTANCE, AND PROPHETIC ZEAL**

**Wednesday, December 4, 11, 18, starting at 6:00 p.m. at St. James Cathedral**

Especially for the Advent season: Wycliffe Professor of Old Testament, **Marion Taylor** will be speaking at Toronto's Cathedral Church of St. James for a three-week series looking at nineteenth-century Christians whose writings focus on themes of devotion, repentance, and social justice. For more information: <http://stjamescathedral.ca/voices-of-advent/>

# Events & Announcements

## Library Drop-in Sessions This Month

**Tues. Nov. 19, 26** : 2:00—2:30 p.m.—Finding the books you need / 2:30—3:00 p.m.—Finding articles in theology

**Wed. Nov. 20, 27**: 10:00—10:30 a.m.—Finding the books you need / 11:30 a.m.—12 noon—Finding articles in theology

**Thurs. Nov. 21, 28**: 12 noon—12:30 p.m.—Resources for Biblical Studies / 12:30—1:00 p.m.—Compiling bibliographies

**Location: Graham Library Classroom**—No sign-up necessary. Just drop-in. Can't make it? No problem—just email Tom Power, Theology Librarian: [Thomas.power@utoronto.ca](mailto:Thomas.power@utoronto.ca) or drop by the Graham Library.



### Inaugural Lecture

**Wednesday, Nov 27, starting at 2:00 p.m.:** Reception, followed by lecture in Leonard Hall.

Dr Stephen Chester, Lord and Lady Coggan Professor of New Testament will deliver his inaugural lecture, titled: **Reading James: Luther's Epistle of Straw and Contemporary Canonical Interpretation of the Catholic Epistles.**

For more information, contact Karen Baker-Bigauskas at 416-946-3521.



### Theology Pub Night at Wycliffe College

Join Bruxy Cavey and Ephraim Radner at this month's Theology Pub as they explore Open Theism and issues like whether God knows the future, the nature of free will, and more. To help get the conversation started, we will show the movie **The Adjustment Bureau**. Everyone is invited. Popcorn will be provided.

- When: **Friday, November 29 at 5:15 PM**

- Where: **Wycliffe College, Sheraton Hall**

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on Social:



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## "Ask me anything ..."



*... about library research!"*

Tom Power will be available in the Reading Room during the coffee hour—from 10:30—11:30 a.m. every Wednesday — to answer your questions.