

ABOUT YOUR READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS ...

Dear Student:

By now you are doing your reading assignment, and getting ready to write a “summary.” Sounds easy, right? Just copy the book, right?

Not quite. In fact, for some of you this “copying” process is extremely difficult.

Let me explain how to read a book.

First, before you read in detail, flip through all the pages (whether soft copy or hard copy). Notice ALL the headings. Notice how the book is divided into chapters (read the table of contents!!). Then read the heading of each chapter, quickly. Don’t expect yourself to understand or remember what each heading means. Just glance at all the headings.

Now, after you have scanned the book (or the section of the book which you will read), it is time to actually read the book.

Read with a highlighter, and mark up your readings. (For soft-copy readers, you know how to do this on the computer, too, I am sure.)

When you finish reading, you may want to re-read the book, this time notice all the highlighting (or underlining), etc.

In fact, I suggest that, as you are reading and re-reading, notice the key words (not too many words, just a few!) and write them on the margin of the book. You will notice that: this is exactly why I, the translator of the book, have given you Chinese and English headings (if you are using the Chinese version).

These little bits of key words will help you, when you re-read the book the 3rd time, 4th time, 5th time, etc., to go through the book quickly.

Now comes the most difficult, and the most important part.

YOU MUST DECIDE FOR YOURSELF, how many pages to summarize. Put it another way: you must decide WHICH section(s) to summarize. Let me suggest that you glance at the book (flip through the pages). Then take a walk, go do something else. Exercise, do housework, or some “no-brainer.” Ask yourself: Imagine that I am asked to teach a Sunday School class on this subject, and the organizers allow me to decide how many hours to teach (1 hour, 10 hours, 26 hours). How many hours do I want to devote to teach this course? And what do I want to cover during each hour?

Do you get my point? Imagine that you have a listener (a class), or a reader for what you write. What do YOU want to tell them?

Once you have decided which section(s) or which pages to summarize, go to work and summarize. Don't worry whether you are "copying" the exact wording of the author, or using your own words. That is an irrelevant question. Many students say: "Oh, it's just copying! Chea (Cantonese), so easy!"

Not quite. There is a reason, a purpose, behind this assignment. The purpose is not to make your fingers tired from copying. The purpose is: you need to DIGEST, INTERNALIZE what you read; then DECIDE for yourself the SIGNIFICANCE of what you have read; then DECIDE for yourself, which sections to summarize, and WHY you choose these sections/pages.

That is the purpose of the assignment. For some people, it is very painful to make that decision. I will not make that decision for you. You may find that you need more pages to write than the number of pages suggested. That is NOT the issue. The issue is: have you thought through, and decided, which sections/pages to summarize? And why?

Have fun!