How to Get All A’s
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Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (Matthew 7:24-27 NIV)

One important concern for a student is his or her grade. A topic like "How to get all A's" is sure enough to attract one's attention and curiosity of a student from a beginning to the last word of a speaker. A good teacher should know how to stretch student's learning and ability beyond a limit.

A class in the American education system is run, almost without an exception, by "management by objective" (Peter Drucker). In this way a teacher provides a well-defined document (called a syllabus) of a course in the beginning of the semester. It provides all the objectives and criteria of a course about what to learn and how to be graded. There is no surprise or a hidden clause from the beginning of a course.

As a teacher I also like to remind my students a few important facts. First fact is that each of them is not dumb if one is admitted in a higher educational institution like a college or a university. In fact, I assure each of them is equipped with an exceptional capacity of intelligence. One may walk around in this building to find a classroom first time, drive a car to come here, or communicate to find out the direction how to get here. If a student can do any of these things, I say that this proves that you must be a genius or someone with an enormous capacity of intelligence. A seemingly simple task like these demands an enormous intellectual capability. Based on this I urge my student to know what is expected to get an A, and plan carefully schedule and workload.

Most students (including myself) begin and continue about half way through their semester expecting to get a grade 'A' or 'B'. Then suddenly something unexpected things happen. It could be a break-up in a relationship, a flu or an illness, or even a car accident. A disaster disturbs one's normal life cycle and course in the middle of a semester. And it impacts one's grade almost unrecoverable from this point to the end of the semester. So how can a student overcome possibly some of these difficulties? What would it be a wise thing to do, possibly to avoid or absorb some of these potential disturbance in one's life at minimum level? So a student may resume and continue his or her pace and cycle to the end of the semester.

Here is one lesson that I have learned. It is to master one course during a vacation or a break time between the terms. We know which courses to take ahead of the time as we do plan and register the courses for next semester. Mastering one class will relieve at least 10-20% of the anticipated workload next semester. Especially in a time of unexpected and unrecoverable event, one could get back to the normal cycle easily or without much impact. It sounds so easy and right thing to do. But there is still one more lesson to learn or actually to do. A wisdom like this is a common sense. It is so simple and plain. None of us needs to be a genius to figure this out. When you hear it, you just know that it is true or right. We do not need to bring Moses up from the dead or a fire from the heaven to convict us for this simple thing. A wisdom like this is available everywhere, even though it is waiting to be discovered or learned. This is something knowable and intuitive, available to all of us.

Here is a punch line. I have been telling this story over last twenty years and to many students. In my surprise, only a handful students got it. That is, one out of a hundred or even one of a thousand puts into practice. When I was in college, I heard it but did not put into practice for a long time. But when I did, it is so easy to get all A's. (Yes, there could be some exceptional situations such as a disaster or my teacher determined not to give me an 'A'). Many including myself have done it and it works. It is so easy to get all A’s. But what does it do any good when one just hears a simple wisdom or truth but does not put into a practice? This is the lesson toward the ultimate wisdom as read today Matthew 7:24–27. Let us put into a practice the simple truth and the great wisdom of God. Amen.