

So, we're in the early stages of talking about a highly effective, summary model for leaders' decision-making—what we called “research-wisdom-action.” Let's start today by capturing a bit of the groundwork we laid in the first episode of this series.

By definition, each of us takes important actions as a leader, actions with real ramifications—in our roles with our family...with our church...with our workplace. The question is, are those ultimately wise actions that bear good fruit? Well, not necessarily *every* time bearing good fruit, but consistently so?

So, what's a proven path to great decisions by leaders? Well, many would say that's not easily ascertained. But I would say *this* in response to *that*: if we really don't know *how* or *why* we're making good decisions, that's a really big problem. Why? First, we don't have readily-identified processes for gaining wisdom, and, second, when we do happen to be successful, we're not likely to easily replicate our success.

I do think there is a broad cycle of decision-making that is universal and foundational. The reality is, you must have wisdom to make good decisions...wisdom is simply the main, core requirement for fruitful decision-making. But then, just where do you actually get wisdom? Well, wisdom comes from strong research. So, the cycle is this, broadly speaking, couched in Old Testament language: great research begets wisdom which in turn begets effective action. Again, that's...research begets wisdom begets action.

In our first podcast about this vital skill set, the key point was to pursue solid research! That's because the only way we are going to get to the full wisdom leading to correct actions, we have to pursue solid research. If you haven't done so, be sure to listen to that podcast.

And pursuing solid research means you have to have great foundations. So, let's look at the Word of God for our foundations and quote directly from Solomon, the wisest guy short of Jesus Himself, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Now this is really pretty interesting! King Solomon...yes, the writer of three books of the Bible, including this verse from Ecclesiastes 12...tells us what he definitively calls out as “the end of the matter.” Wow, nothing *before* “the end” for Solomon seemed out of his reach—this was a man who had lived life fully and exuberantly...yet sometimes quite unwisely. Yet, here he is, using one short sentence to summarize it all—essentially to crowd out everything else. Let's unpack his prescription for us to consider.

King Solomon was a very powerful man leading a life full of issues and challenges. Let's name a few. There were his ever-present challenges and foreign enemies as King of Israel. And there were his domestic issues, from being selected king over his older brothers to living with countless women in his entourage. There was his building God's temple on an unprecedented scale. And don't forget the need for faithfulness to Yahweh in light of failures like King Saul and the somewhat spotty record of his own father King David.

And, amidst all of those complicated parts of life, here is Solomon saying, “The end of the matter; all has been heard.” Now's that the voice of both experience and the deep reflection that followed after the battles of life and their scars. So, what does Solomon say next? Well, he says, “fear God.” You know what that means: deep respect and awe. And, for the serious Christian, what's called “fear” can manifest as a childlike, resounding desire not to disappoint He who not only created us, but faithfully redeemed us too!

Wait just one minute, you say, where is the modern-day application for me, here in Kansas or Cameroon or Korea? How does this speak to my everyday leadership challenges? Oh, you mean like Solomon's? You think Solomon was simply referring to a cloistered spiritual life? Of course not! And is your covenant with God—a “better covenant,” says the writer to the Hebrews—a lesser position than Solomon's? I think not.

And right after Solomon says to “fear God,” he instructs the reader to “keep his commandments.” And what a foundation that is! Of course, that directive is going far deeper than the Ten Commandments—it's

far broader, far richer! Let's pick up a couple of spot-on instructions from Jesus on this instruction, first from the gospel of John, chapter 14: "Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.'"

Wow, those are exactly the words of the Father who sent Jesus! Again, the words of the Father, transmitted by Jesus! But that's not all—Jesus goes on to say, "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Amazing...our pursuit is the keeping of Jesus' words brought from our Father, and He gives us His Holy Spirit to help us and teach us. And, by the way, in those four short verses lie a robust glimpse of the Trinity working in perfect concert! Think of it: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit perfectly working on our behalf!

Now, Jesus came to fulfill the Law, He assures us, and He certainly did so on our behalf. But, true to God's loving handling of His children, we ourselves are *not* left with an impossible task of *fulfilling* the Law. We alone are not able to fulfill the righteousness...the *perfection*...God requires of us—Jesus does that for us! No, we are simply to pursue "keeping" God's commands, His words, His exhortations. We do, and will, fall short of fully keeping God's commands. But then comes His grace when the serious Christian falls short.

And now we have come to the fullness of Solomon's words. Yes, by the quickening of the Holy Spirit, we come to understand that all of Jesus' words are there for our reading, our reflection, our application, our saturation. Indeed, this saturation is the very aim of God, placed in the mind and pen of King Solomon. And Jesus gives us His Spirit and His grace to fulfill "the end of the matter!" So, here are the words again: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments..."

And we now finish with the end of Solomon's word: "...for this is the whole duty of man." Here's the amazing thing about serving God with your whole heart: the spillover benefits to every part of life are unavoidable! Our whole duty is to fear God and keep His commandments, and in so doing, we find that this phrase of Solomon's applies to each area of our lives! The takeaway? Our huge, foundational opportunity as leaders in our businesses and nonprofits is to fear God and keep His commandments.

This pervasive principle is stated another way in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." These words pretty much seem to be Jesus' New Testament version of Solomon's claim about the "whole duty of man." Likewise, when you put Solomon's words into practice, the spillover benefits to all spheres of your life will be awesome!

Now, we started this podcast by recapping the podcast series theme we have set forth for decision-making: research-wisdom-action. And, of course, Solomon's word for us is about wisdom, that's for certain! But we have a bit of a paradox that creeps into so many of God's prescriptions for us—what can look somewhat simple at first blush is in fact very deep and comprehensive!

Here's what I mean. Solomon said, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." But is that research...or wisdom...or action? Of course, it's all three! We are to research His Word, embed His Word, and act upon His Word. And note that the Holy Spirit is given to help us with all three: He helps us research, He gives us wisdom, and He helps us step out in action in our following Him. That's in the Bible, in order: John 14:26, Ephesians 1:17, Acts 1:8.

Fearing God and keeping His commandments—that's research, that's wisdom, that's action...all three! That infiltrates all areas of life, including work! It is just this way that we will have the most foundational of layers for wisdom in our decision-making in all our organizations! The words of both Solomon and Jesus, for the here-and-now! Magnificent! *Come now, is there anything...anything!...like the Word of God?*

A&A: Application & Action

1. How are you growing in letting the Holy Spirit guide your research? ...your wisdom? ...your action?
After pondering this question, perhaps pray through Luke 11:9-13.

2. Provide three specific examples from God's Word that actually have anchored your decision-making in concrete ways.

3. Here's what Solomon wrote: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." When you disciple other believers, do you teach this commandment as merely a duty or a high privilege with identifiable fruits?