

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 working to bear 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 is to pursue solid research. Our second podcast covered an essential: fearing God and keeping His commandments. Our third podcast exhorted us to make sure we study the entire Bible for all its worth, both now and ongoing. If you haven't done so, be sure to listen to those podcasts—the themes covered are simply foundational to your success. Now, for our fourth installment of research-wisdom-action—essential pursuits that you've likely never heard in quite this way. And those pursuits are “nestings for greatness.”

The fact is, we really need to continuously, *consciously* execute *critical* miniature versions of research-wisdom-action—that is, “nesting” a critical bit of this three-step process within our decision-making constantly. So, what does that word “nesting” mean?

Well, something that is nested is completely contained within something else of the same kind, like that Russian doll you've seen that's nesting and hiding several other Russian dolls, each smaller and smaller inside the biggest one. Here's the deal. In basic math, the calculation that's nested in the innermost parentheses of an equation must be correct in order for the whole equation to work. You've run into this when you are using spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel, where, if you're missing a parenthesis in a nested equation, Excel tells you you're in error and won't even let you move on until you've repaired the nested equation. In other words, you have to get the nesting right or the whole thing craters, so you get to see that error message in all those cells spread throughout that complex spreadsheet. You've been there!

If only life were always like that notice of a spreadsheet error...warning that a single assumption in a single cell is going to cause the whole shebang to go wrong. You see, each of us always “nests” some conclusions we've already reached into our larger process of decision-making. Perhaps it's our biases about technology and how it works, perhaps it's how we think human nature always plays out, perhaps it's how we think ethics are supposed to be applied in our workplaces. Unfortunately, sometimes we just take our assumptions for granted because we inherited them from somewhere else—perhaps it's from the church we grew up in, or perhaps it's something now fatally outdated that we agreed to years ago.

So, here's the point. If you have critical nestings that are deficient—a shaky foundation, an outdated process, bad cultural thinking, or, *most important*, pride that you don't have any nesting issues—then you need to take action to adopt the best nestings that will serve your holistic situation to winning completion.

So, here's our first task after pursuing the Bible as our key resource. We should start weeding out all the average or downright wrongheaded approaches, mentors, websites, and -isms that don't deserve to be nested in our big-picture spreadsheet on our path to world-class effectiveness. And we need to replace

any bad nestings with excellent nestings. If we do not do these things, our results are doomed to be only as good as that weakest link we're relying on. Or like an Excel spreadsheet with a bad formula in a key cell, that weak link may cause the overall endeavor to fall well short of a fruitful answer, the right path.

Let's break this down into three types of assumptions that need to be addressed. First, for *established nestings* that we have embedded in our key decision-making, we need to freshly apply our structure of research-wisdom-action specifically to each of those nested sets of assumptions. Which nestings need to be discarded in light of recent developments? Which ones just tweaked or adjusted a bit? And, yes, which nestings that we're using truly deserve to be affirmed, at least for now?

Second, how about *missing nestings* we need to consider. So, what's that mean...missing nestings? How about Amazon getting a huge head start in online retail while so many of the dominant bricks-and-mortar retailers missed that online train that left the station years before. Some retailers *still* have yet to recover, even in their assumptions! Yes, the missed nesting for some retailers is right there in plain sight, online.

Third, for *emerging nesting* we need to consider pursuing in our key decision-making, we still need to apply an astute analysis of research-wisdom-action. For example, do we have the best technology adopted for the future in our workplace's competitive landscape? Are you sure you're truly OK here? Here's a hint: if you are completely sure you're OK, you can be assured that you're really not! Even Bill Gates publicly admitted in the early '90s he came late to the internet party and needed to pivot Microsoft. So he did!

Of course, all this is nothing new to the Kingdom of God, including in the early days of the Church! The Pharisees were so committed to their *established nestings* that gave them status and power, they allowed themselves to be spiritually blinded to the need to discard established nestings they lorded over others.

And how about a key *missing nesting*, for example, that Jesus's Kingdom was and is not of this world? That's found in John 18:36. You see, many of Jesus's contemporaries, like the group of the time called Zealots, desired a messiah who was a political messiah who would come to throw off the political yoke of Rome. Some disciples even expected that after Jesus was resurrected! The *missing nesting* here was that Jesus was doing an entirely new Kingdom work, for then...for now...and for eternity. And missing that nesting—that key understanding—made all the difference then. And it makes all the difference now, too!

Then, there's the *emerging nesting* by Jesus of believers' making disciples of every nation. Peter was given the revelation of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles (that's in Acts 10), but then some believers had difficulty fully embracing that truth. And that was aggravated by Peter himself. Paul relates in Galatians 2:11-13 that Peter—the very recipient of God's revelation of embracing Gentiles—later wouldn't eat with uncircumcised Gentiles, leading other believers and even the steadfast Barnabas astray with his hypocrisy.

Sadly, to this very day, many Christians struggle with faulty nestings about, say, for example, the insufficiency of God's grace—instead looking to an everyday unbiblical mix of Moses' Law and grace to be justified. And how about the totally persistent obsession with things of this world, while the laborers are few for the harvest? After all, the finished work of the Cross is straightforward. Jesus's commandments to love God and our neighbors couldn't be clearer. But pesky, unfruitful, and even destructive nestings often hold sway, at least in the short-term. Yes, but, praise God, only in the short-term! God wins the long game!

The same with our businesses, our nonprofits, our families. Are we operating without challenging our *established nestings* that need challenging? Do we diligently seek the awareness to identify *missing nestings*? Are we vigilantly adopting appropriate *emerging nestings*? Those are key, each and every one.

What's at stake? Well, the whole spreadsheet! Just one wrong handling of nesting in your leadership assumptions can ultimately cause the whole answer to be compromised. It's spiritual *and* practical. Wow.

A&A: Application & Action

1. What processes do you have or need in place to challenge your *established nestings* in your spiritual life? Your workplace leadership? Your personal relationships? Be specific, listing your own real-life examples.

2. How do you diligently seek the awareness to identify *missing nestings* in your spiritual life? Your workplace leadership? Your personal relationships? Be specific, listing your own real-life examples.

3. Are you vigilantly adopting appropriate *emerging nestings* in your spiritual life that God has brought to you in your Bible study? Your workplace leadership? Your personal relationships? Be specific, listing your own real-life examples.