

Computer coding! Well, it's been decades since I did some of what real computer programmers would call computer programming, so far be it from me to act like an expert on coding. 'Course, like hundreds of millions of others around the world, I *am* a routine Microsoft Excel user, yes, writing formulas that go to work for me in a bunch of situations. Did you know that when Microsoft added a feature called Lambda a couple of years ago, Excel actually kinda became an "official" computer language? When that happened, Microsoft blogged this message: "You can now, in principle, write *any* computation in the Excel formula language." Regardless of Excel's *official* status, here's one clear fact: the Microsoft Excel digital tool that's often called a "spreadsheet" is truly a modern marvel of affordable design, functionality, and usability!

Let's face it, many of today's routinely proficient Microsoft Excel users were close to algebra-illiterate and formula-illiterate in their formal schooling. But Microsoft's development of Excel has millions of ordinary people typing away daily, crafting simple and complex formulas using an easily-navigated tool. Crazy good!

Hey, that baseline of using Excel has permeated the business world. But now let's go to another interesting software story. Being the cofounder of several tech businesses with world-class computer programmers, I am in constant awe of the capabilities of those programmers and the tools they use, like what are called *stored procedures* in the standardized computer language SQL. (That stands for Structured Query Language, commonly pronounced "Sequel"). Here's a tiny but instructive glimpse into stored procedures!

So, what's it about? Stored procedures are coding instructions that aren't just simple formulas, you know, formulas that do tasks with one answer, like addition:  $3+4=7$ . No, stored procedures are sorta nested and ready to go in the overall schematic in order to do *complex functions* that can have many possible answers, if desired. And each answer can be arrived at on a customized basis to serve the greater coding objective!

See, each stored procedure is a saved and stored set of SQL statements with an assigned name so that the code can be used and reused countless times. So, as desired each time, the coder simply has the overall programming code "call" on the stored procedure in order for it to do its magic! Likewise, millions of users "call" on the full software coding in SQL which includes that nested, stored procedure, all designed to give the user uniquely-customized results. Actually, it's even deeper than that—the programmer can tie together all sorts of stored procedures that work in a kind of integrated concert to facilitate any particular user's need...resulting in multi-faceted, customized results! So, get this picture: the coder must integrate all key processes and craft the orderly unfolding and dependency of all those stored procedures!

What's really going on here is that very sophisticated coders can use huge numbers of stored procedures embedded in the overall programming product—and do that for a whole lot of great reasons like performance, efficiency, scalability, and security! The end-game is what we often can take for granted when navigating some of the most easy-to-use interfaces on the planet: in fact, they're *so* easy to use that we mistake the application's tasks as being "simple" to do...when, in fact, all along what seems so simple is supported by an elegantly-designed, solution-driving complexity only dreamed of a few short years ago!

Now, stay with me here, because soon we're going to tie all this together and apply it to our daily lives. You see, there are two types of stored procedures in SQL—*system stored procedures* and *user-designed stored procedures*. Sometimes *system stored procedures* are purely administrative in use. But many times they're designed to be accessed countless times by each coder to streamline coding processes and help drive great coding results. That's because *the coder's own user-designed stored procedures* work in concert with each chosen use of *system stored procedures*. Hey, all that reveals the ingenuity of fabulous design—every system-stored procedure is in inventory, ready for user-designed procedures to call on!

But of course, that's only mimicking the *one* organization that has perfectly established *system stored procedures* and given deep guidance for the best user procedures to access those system stored procedures! Right, I'm talking about the processes and practices of the Kingdom of God! So, let's look at some interesting pairings of several of the Kingdom's key stored procedures with user procedures!

Kingdom System Stored Procedure #1. *Salvation and eternal life.* So, recall John 3:16? Jesus endured the procedure of sacrificing His life on the Cross to pay for the sins of the whole world. Yes, God “stored” salvation and eternal life for whosoever believes.

The Companion User Procedure. *Belief.* God’s stored procedure of salvation may be called upon by every person—every whosoever who *believes through faith!* This is the very first step of a life in Christ!

Kingdom System Stored Procedure #2. *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* ‘Course, that’s a well-known verse, Romans 8:28. Think of it...*all things work together for good!* God has planned and is executing that, even as you ponder it! But the crucial tie-in is that this God’s system stored procedure is conditional on two things that *you* must make into your own procedures as a believer. So, let’s do some linking here...

The Companion User Procedure. Hey, Is your “believer” mode every day to *love God, love your neighbors, make disciples, and be an ambassador for Christ?* Then I personally believe you have surely activated God’s system stored procedure of Romans 8:28 that we just talked about. This stored procedure applies to “those who are called according to His purpose.” And some seem to believe that the word “purpose” in Romans 8:28 means you must be called to a very specific role, like being a pastor or maybe having 11 kids. But what greater Kingdom purpose is there than to love God, make disciples, and be a true, loving ambassador for Christ to your neighbors? Yes, with that *purposeful loving*, you are in the very heart of acting on God’s purpose for believers! So be prepared for all things to work together for good!

Kingdom System Stored Procedure #3. *“The prayer of a righteous person has great power.”* (James 5:16 note b ESV) God will explicitly confer great power to a prayer by a Christian who is righteous through belief in Jesus. This promise from God can be freshly called on anytime—accessing power from God by prayer!

The Companion User Procedure. Well, this is pretty obvious: the ideal procedure for the believer is to “pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 ESV) Since God already has stored great power for the prayer of a righteous person, then our procedure is to actually do it and inherently call on God’s power!

Hey, this type of connection—this type of link—between what God has in store for us and our companion action is amazing. Just look at God’s promises, like this... John’s gospel records Jesus’s teaching (15:7): “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” And how about verse 10 just after that? “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love...”

This extends all the way to spiritual truths themselves. Paul wrote this to the Corinthians: “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12) All this can seem a bit presumptuous...but isn’t this absolutely true?...Yes, God has stored up all sorts of astonishing things for us for a robust life in Christ, as long as we are willing to do our part to access His vast storehouse—yeah, by doing the procedures part and parcel of becoming a sincere Christian in its fullness, like believing, receiving, praying, loving God, and loving others!

Hey, in this digital age, SQL’s stored procedure approach is amazing...but it’s just a pale version of what God’s been manifesting for a very long time! The Kingdom approach was and remains the very pinnacle of perfect *system stored procedures* integrated with free-will, obedient *actions of sincere believers!*

You know what’s so “out-there,” so mind boggling? God’s active interconnectedness with each believer and all believers at the same time over millennia yields incredible fruits! This *very* intricate multi-faceted concert that has been instituted by God is simply awaiting our obedience to His will in all things great and small. Here’s Paul writing to the Corinthians again, in 2 Corinthians 1:20. “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”

Wow. This...*this* is the ultimate, unfolding pageant of God’s people serving their God...with His staggering, stored responses. Hey, there simply will be no sequel to that!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Do you understand how your often-used computer software procedures work and actually prioritize to your specific results, like Google or Amazon postings to your queries? Are they biased...or not? So, what do you need to know? Or not? Be specific.
2. Does your workplace culture have certain stored procedures—written or unwritten, digital or not—that make your workplace a *positive* force to be reckoned with in your industry? Or, similarly, do certain *negative* stored procedures truly hamper your workplace culture? Or perhaps both types are in play? Discuss specifics and suggest any changes that could be helpful.
3. Are you clearly maximizing your life in Christ with the fullest embracing of the perfect Kingdom-system stored procedures via healthy, Biblical user procedures? If so, indicate a key example of your specific mix of both categories of God's stored procedures and your actions. If not, indicate improvements you may have identified. Discuss in detail.