

This is our next episode of a series about the cycle of research-wisdom-action as key decision-makers.

And hey, we've all been in this kind of spot, in some way or another—say, a medical emergency involving a loved one, maybe even a young child afflicted with a seemingly mysterious set of troubling symptoms. So what do we do? Well, we quickly go to our local children's hospital and find a super-competent medical team that diagnoses and effectively treats the kiddo! There's nothing quite like the gratitude that bubbles up in us in a situation like that! And you know what, nowadays there are so many facets of life where effective, knowledgeable experts are readily accessible. What a privilege it is to live in this incredible era!

So, if you're like me, you're pretty much in a constant state of gratitude for modern technology, innovation, and those very key people who providentially crop up in our lives...yeah, those pros who have invested the time and effort to become real experts in their respective fields. Truth be told, compared to just a few decades ago, they help make our lives much fuller, easier, healthier—just simply better overall!

All that results in all of us quite happily relying on experts in our lives—experts both seen and unseen. You know, unseen folks like IT specialists we will never meet who keep us protected from evil hackers. Like the engineers who build enduring, safe bridges that don't fall down. Like the inventors and innovators who build on the knowledge of those before them to bring us the latest advancements.

So, let's give a cheer honoring all those experts. Woo-hoo!

But now...let's get real. Many folks labeled experts simply aren't real, top-end experts. And while our world gets more and more complex, there are more and more pretenders to the full competence level that people need or even that these "experts" represent themselves to be. Let's visit a couple of stories.

Hey, does the name Dr. Anthony Fauci ring a bell to you? Well, if you're an American adult who lived through the Covid pandemic, Dr. Fauci suddenly became *the* expert zookeeper of the Covid zoo in America. And, boy oh boy, what a tough job a pandemic presents to a large, very mobile populace. You see, "no decision"—a decision to do nothing—is in and of itself a decision! But, still, restricting many daily actions of hundreds of millions of people for months on end is a decision with unimaginable impact.

As the situation unfolded over many months, to some folks Dr. Fauci became a calming influence, a hero! But to others, it seemed that Dr. Fauci was a sort of a "know-it-all guy" representing a behavior-forcing bureaucracy of government folks who didn't *really* know what was going on—and they seemed to be constantly overreaching as to what the "science told them." Nevertheless, Dr. Fauci kept a confident demeanor regarding a powerful government's decisions about how millions of citizens needed to behave.

But that wasn't the full picture: the reality was that medical experts didn't all agree with one another at all...and still don't! Sure, public policy and health on major issues will always be problematic. But, in this case, was Dr. Fauci overreaching? Just where do you stand on whether Dr. Fauci was generally correct?

Another story. My late mother had a bout with cancer that was caught early and was treated successfully at a cutting-edge internationally-renowned facility. Let's call that facility "ABC." The doctor at ABC then directed her to do her follow-up visits with the leading regional cancer facility in the city where she lived. In that first meeting, the regional doctor totally shifted her regimen. She declined, saying that his proposal was completely at odds with her doctor at ABC—and she gave him the supporting rationale from ABC.

Surprised, the regional doctor asked her to put him in touch with her doctor at ABC. To the new doctor's everlasting credit, when he met the next time with my mother he candidly acknowledged that his diagnosis had been behind the knowledge curve that the international facility was pioneering and practicing—and that he had changed his expertise level to embrace that new knowledge.

So, was this second doctor at the regional facility a true expert? Yes! That's because, in every technical field, there's an unavoidable lag of testing and trials and communications of breakthroughs. Now, if he had been years behind what was common knowledge among top-end cancer doctors, then he would have

been deficient. But that was not so! ABC is widely acknowledged as a top international pioneer in cancer treatments. But the regional doctor took the action that marks a true expert. When confronted with a credible alternative opinion, he immediately worked to determine its validity—and, in this case, improved his expertise level and changed his treatment plans. That’s a lesson for us all. Research-wisdom-action!

But wait. Remember the idea of bell curves, graphs depicting a normal distribution of data collected? The bell’s “bulge” is roughly where all the “average” is. Yes, even in a population of smart cancer doctors in America, there are average doctors and then there are the few doctors who are truly the best. Yeah, even though we tend to admire everyone who’s capable of being a cancer doctor, only a few are at the top.

And when we start grappling with issues with important but squishy words like “public” and “health” being thrown around, merely human opinions can often tend to start being represented as “expertise.” So now this point is very, very important: many areas of life have become more deeply politicized than ever with political correctness, virtue-signaling, and wokeness...with many experts being pressured to acquiesce to deeply-compromised social constructs. Beware, my friend, of politics and power supplanting truth.

And another long-standing issue is this: in *every* field of endeavor, sincerely striving folks seeking objective conclusions who seem to be highly qualified disagree strongly with one another...especially at the bleeding edge of discovery of what is not yet truly fully understood. And that is most especially true where the endeavor requires a mix of “art” and “science,” like investing and governing and, yes, crafting public health responses where faulty solutions can easily be adopted and inflicted upon an unsuspecting populace.

So, what about our decision-making? Here are six key points to consider.

1. Foundationally, as decision-makers, we all must rely on certain experts at key points in life.
2. But experts in any particular field can and do disagree with one another on vital issues.
3. All experts differ in their true capabilities, training, experience, wisdom, and judgment.
4. Sadly, honorable fields of endeavor can and do deteriorate due to politics and social agendas.
5. So, when that can or does happen, key advisors you consult with can have wrong opinions.
6. Bearing these points in mind, developing solid discernment strategies in using experts is crucial.

Now, how great it would be if this *weren’t* true in the most important area of all: the real world of Christian theology and practices...from seminaries to the street level. *But, hey, that has always been true*, as the Apostle Paul tellingly reveals in his epistles working to correct his contemporaries—you know, his conflicts with those “experts” in the law, in Judaism, in that era’s culture fights, and, really, just plain church politics.

From then until now, the church has had a pretty checkered track record. Frankly, even in modern times, we would be hard-pressed to find more foolishness and off-base agendas than what we commonly see in passionately-held opinions in what’s loosely called “Christianity” ...yeah, so many opinions that contradict so strongly with one another. Of course, so much of it’s just plain folly! But much supposedly legitimate, high-end theology is afforded credence in the name of ecumenicalism. As one highly-respected Christian theologian who was the editor of a highly-regarded evangelical commentary series intimated, Christian scholars don’t call their peers *wrong*, they might go so far as to say their peer’s conclusions are *misleading*.

So, believer, what to do with that? Well, review the six steps we just covered, then add these approaches.

- First and foremost, study and absorb the Bible...the Word of God that will always reign supreme.
- Trust the Holy Spirit Who—as promised by Jesus—“teaches us all things.” That’s in John 14:26.
- Relentlessly sift the teachings that are put forth by seminarians, pastors, teachers, and laypeople, and firmly reject false opinions, many of which are easily defeated by just a few Scripture verses.
- Cheerfully proceed with all confidence, living expectantly in the fullness of Christ.

Listen. You have direct connection to the True Expertise that is Christ and the Holy Spirit—always ready, willing, and able to direct your every step! Jesus says His sheep hear His voice! So...what does God say?

A&A: Application & Action

1. Is the current CEO of your enterprise the truly full expert you need him or her to be? How do you know that, especially with an unknown future full of possible perils? Discuss fully (if you are in a group where this is appropriate). If necessary, discuss a past CEO.

2. First, identify an expert you have happily, successfully relied upon for a major life event. Next, identify an expert who you've relied upon in the past in a key life-event who really wasn't operating at the level you needed. Third, identify an expert you are currently relying upon that you are concerned about continuing to rely upon. Discuss one, two, or all of these, as appropriate.

3. From your studies in the Word of God, can you easily identify key, well-known theologians, pastors, churches or denominations that are off-target in their alleged practice of Christianity? Can you point to the Scriptures that support your position? Cite the appropriate Bible verses and the specifics of your research and critique. Or are you unduly relying on "secondary experts" for your opinions? Discuss.