

One of the most practical distinctions for real success in everyday life—whether our spiritual lives, our family lives, our workplace lives, yeah, *whatever* facets of our lives—well, that’s the distinction between people being smart versus people being savvy. And here’s the thing: you really, truly need to be savvy to thrive. But many of the people we learn from merely seem smart and are not truly savvy.

So, you may be asking, what’s the key difference between *smart* and *savvy*? Well, here’s one difference that often is the crucial difference in the real world: smart people often like to leave very vital factors out of their narratives that seemingly show them to be smart. But savvy people want to be winners in the actual, proven application of whatever lies ahead—and they won’t hesitate to work on blanks that need to be filled in to get things right or to make adjustments and admit they weren’t as smart before as they needed to be—in fact, a truly savvy person is often delighted to leave behind a cherished belief that’s inferior to the real deal!

Now one of the main things students learn in a college economics class is a Latin phrase that’s the idea of “holding other things constant.” That’s right, you isolate one focused hypothesis that you want to prove, like, say, “minimum wage increases unemployment.” But the problem is, you leave all other variables out of your thinking, your testing, and your modeling of that hypothesis. So, from the get-go, the results you observe are inherently compromised by the factors you improperly held constant!

But, guess what! Reality always sets in—many other variables exist and come into play in real life! And that’s where savviness comes into the picture. You see, the isolation of a hypothesis can be fruitful and reach a preliminary finding—but that’s not close to being the end-all of full, practical research.

Still, many smart people become wedded to their pet hypothesis and actually make it part of their identity. And others want to join them in that hypothesis, sometimes to be considered part of the “smart club,” sometimes to simply not look dumb in others’ eyes, sometimes to gain stature, sometimes to gain favor, sometimes just to try to fit in with the perceived upper crust of the culture they’re a part of.

And, not least, sometimes it can and does lead a whole lot of people astray, remarkably far from the truth. In 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus detailed his radical theory of the universe in which the earth, along with the other planets, rotated around the sun. His theory took more than a century to become widely accepted. Copernicus was savvy. But the Roman Catholic Church was convinced otherwise, that they were the smart ones. They opposed Copernicus for a long time, working to refute what he had concluded.

Nowadays, frankly a whole of lot of non-scientists and scientists alike often say “follow the science” when referring to climate issues or vaccine issues or whatever else is in the news or the subject of virtue-signaling culture wars. The problem is, what some so-called “science-people” often claim is not fully settled. In the case of Copernicus and Earth revolving around the sun, well now, that’s now settled, but, *notably, it always was...by God Himself*. But some of the hottest topics today settled? Not so much.

Hey, remember the six feet distancing in public places of a few years ago, you know, where you stood on the circle in the grocery store, dutifully keeping your six feet of distance from the next shopper? Well, Dr. Fauci, the smart guy, was the face of the efforts of government control in the COVID epidemic in the U.S.

And Dr. Fauci admitted to Congress months later in 2024 that the six-foot rule was a “decision that wasn’t based on data.” *The Washington Post*, itself a politically-liberal newspaper, reported this headline in June 2024, months after the pandemic: “In the pandemic, we were told to keep 6 feet apart. There’s no science to support that.” And that same report quoted a paper published by the nonpartisan Brookings Institution. Brookings said all that six-feet distancing “came at enormous cost with inflexible strategies that weren’t driven by evidence.” As so often is the case, the smart leaders in charge weren’t savvy.

Back to economics. U.S. President Harry S. Truman became very famous for at least two quotes. Here’s the back story: Truman started out as a young farmer, then he famously failed at running a fancy men’s store in Kansas City. Hmmm. So Truman was a farmer subject to the realities of changing weather

patterns and was a failed businessman before his fortunes turned to the U.S. Senate, the Vice Presidency, then the Presidency of the United States. But Truman had his share of failures along the way, and failures have a way of increasing savviness in wise people.

But Truman had to make a decision on dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. And he did so. The science was clear enough. His action would obliterate people and property and perhaps break the will of the Japanese for war. But Truman did it. And here's what he said: that dropping the atomic bomb was necessary to "end the war as quickly as possible and to save American lives." However you might ponder those events, Truman couldn't be just a "smart" guy, he was trying to be savvy, weighing the tradeoffs.

The second quote detailed Truman's frustration in working on economic policy. That's when Truman said: "Give me a one-handed economist. All my economists say 'on one hand...,' then 'but on the other...'" Now that's funny! Truman's economist wanted to be the smart guy on two different sides of an economic dilemma—but the economist still wouldn't commit to a savvy conclusion! But wait: here's what's really pretty cool—at least the economist had the humility to present another option! In contrast, socialist economists who promote that supposedly smart idea never let go of their ever-failing option. As Winston Churchill said: "Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery!" Churchill is a clear example of filling in the blanks well!

Hey, believers are to be savvy, first and foremost in our understanding of and faith in Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). And the one source that's truly savvy is the Word of God, the Bible. So, our overarching task is clear: to saturate ourselves in the savvy wisdom, the savvy lessons, the savvy directions of the King Himself—and stop relying on insufficient mediators with vain theologies and philosophies. Colossians 2:8 says, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

Hey, errors can and do come from many different sources—from family members to pastors to theologians to churches to denominations that have vain philosophies masquerading as overarching truth. And these approaches do conflict with each other in key areas; therefore, they can't all be correct!

But take heart, that reality has been happening from the very beginnings of the church. So God knows it's going on—and it will continue until He brings it to a close. Still, this is important: God is only holding you personally accountable for your life and your sphere of influence. So, this is your real responsibility: fill in the blanks you need to on key truths important for those you are a primary steward for. That's right, focus like a laser on your God-appointed stewardships in your family, your church, your workplace and your neighborhood. Find out what's needed so that you fill in the blanks that move you from smart to savvy!

So, here's a question: do you know the clear differences between the truly full counsel of the Word of God (Acts 20:27) and the various highly-thought-of-but-flawed theologies floating around? What we're talking about are the differences that matter as to people's eternal destiny and, for believers, differences that matter as to whether they are truly building on the foundation of Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)

The keys to filling in the crucial blanks with God's truths are these: to have an uncompromised view of the Bible above all the mediators who deliberately and selectively put their unorthodox interpretations between you and the Word...to recognize that faulty religion and bad interpretations are an evergreen issue dating back to Paul writing epistles for serious correction and instruction...to study to show yourself approved (2 Timothy 2:15)...to follow the Holy Spirit who teaches all things to every believer (John 14:26).

These foundational levels of pursuit comprise how to address *blanks that need to be filled in* by every believer in order to move from merely smart-sounding opinions to savvy truth for the ages. Look at the rich and famous and the "smart folks" who clearly are off-base. Then humble yourself. Seek first after the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). Yeah, fill in the key blanks with clear Spirit-taught knowledge narrowing it down to the truth, and then be the great steward God made you to be! Yeah, fill in the blanks. Yeah, go beyond where you keep inconvenient truths out of your approaches. Yeah, *become savvy!*

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. All of the people needing correction and direction by the Apostle Paul writing his epistles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit surely viewed their viewpoints and practices as the “smart” ones. Turns out they were wrong...and God gave us those crucial contrasts to study and learn from. Discuss the role of “contrast” in moving from *smart* to *savvy*.
2. Dr. Fauci is sometimes pointed to as someone who flaunted the power and prestige afforded his office as the smart go-to guy, one blithely dismissed his critics and their opinions. Yet, many folks thought plain old common sense defeated the supposedly precise truth of the six-foot distancing rule. Discuss.
3. What practical practices do you habitually do in order to move from *smart* to *savvy* in your workplace life? In your Christian life? Discuss.