

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

ALL EXCELLENCE IS GOD’S EXCELLENCE: EXAMINING THE FRACTAL NATURE OF
BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR DECISION-MAKING IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Thomas Frank McAllister

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2022

ALL EXCELLENCE IS GOD’S EXCELLENCE: EXAMINING THE FRACTAL NATURE OF
BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR DECISION-MAKING IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

by Thomas Frank McAllister

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

April 14, 2022

APPROVED BY:

Gary J. Bredfeldt, PhD, Dissertation Supervisor

Brian Pinzer, PhD, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed decision-making techniques in complex environments to discover and examine fractal patterns within biblical wisdom. Employing a constructivist grounded theory approach, interviews of organizational leaders from various occupational verticals such as business leaders, pastors, missionaries, politicians, coaches, teachers, military, and law enforcement were conducted to discern their decision-making principles and methods.

The significance of this research is its immense application potential. From the broader context of one's worldview, the search for meaning, purpose, and success in one's life journey is fundamental to the human psyche. Within motivated leaders, there is consistently a desire to do well—ultimately, to be excellent in one's personal journey. However, a person's destination is not determined by their desire but by their path and that path is greatly determined by the choices they make. The greatest influence one can have in impacting their destiny and achieving future success is through sound decision-making.

The term and act that describes sound perspective, assessment, and decision-making is wisdom. God is the Source of wisdom. Wisdom executed consistently over time is excellence. Therefore, it could be declared that all excellence must be God's excellence.

This study explored the components of wisdom and how they correlate and attain superlative results in the decision-making process within challenging environments. The desired fruit of the study ascertained that these components can be constructed and extrapolated through the grounded theory process to produce concepts and principles for executing wise judgment in one's life journey all to the glory of God.

Key Words: wisdom, excellence, truth, love, fractals, optimization, decision-making

Copyright © 2022. Thomas Frank McAllister. All rights reserved. Liberty University has full permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the University, including and without limitation, preservation, or instruction.

Dedication

First, foremost, and above all, this research effort and paper is dedicated to the glory of God from Whom all blessings (and wisdom) flow. Following Christ offers the greatest blessing and highest return on investment one can experience in this journey called life. It is never a solo expedition.

Acknowledgements

First, I'd like to thank my parents for their great example of selfless love for their children and for each other that was so Christlike to me and for their teaching this child in the way to go. Though I have strayed into many undesirable areas and stumbled often, that way has never left me. Second, is to my wife and family. My wife's ever-encouraging support was a constant ray of sunshine even when other areas seemed dark and bleak. Her children have become my children and they are such a blessing to me.

Next, is to my extended family of siblings and their families and the general love and care we show for each other. We are truly blessed. Finally, my gratefulness and thanks is for all the support and encouragement from others—Liberty professors throughout this curriculum have been outstanding as well as my circle of friends and associates. This academic journey has been a team effort.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
Copyright	4
Dedication	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
List of Tables	11
List of Figures	12
List of Abbreviations	13
CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN	14
Introduction.....	14
Background to the Problem	14
Statement of the Research Problem	21
Research Purpose Statement	22
Research Questions.....	22
Assumptions and Delimitations	22
Research Assumptions	22
Delimitations of the Research Design.....	23
Definition of Key Terms.....	25
Significance of the Study	26
Summary of the Design	27
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	31
Overview.....	31
Theological Framework	32

The Journey.....	33
Jesus the True Vine.....	41
Summary.....	50
Theoretical Framework.....	51
Pursuing Excellence.....	52
Incorporating a Worldview	59
Related Literature.....	63
Critical Metrics and Leadership Overview	63
Fractal Life Cycle	66
The Environmental Model	69
Wisdom and Decision Theory	73
Gaming Theory	78
Synergizing Theories	81
Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature	91
Rationale for Study	91
Gap in the Literature	92
Profile of the Current Study.....	95
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	96
Research Design Synopsis	96
The Problem.....	97
Purpose Statement.....	99
Research Questions.....	99
Research Design and Methodology	99

Setting	102
Participants.....	103
Role of the Researcher	104
Ethical Considerations	105
Data Collection Methods and Instruments.....	106
Grounded Theory	106
Qualitative Interview	110
Data Analysis	111
Data Coding	112
Constant Comparison.....	114
Memoing	114
Theoretical Saturation.....	115
Trustworthiness.....	115
Chapter Summary	117
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	119
Introduction.....	119
Compilation Protocol and Measures	119
Demographic and Sample Data	123
Data Analysis and Findings	126
Research Question 1	138
Research Question 2	140
Research Question 3	143
Research Question 4	144

Evaluation of the Research Design	146
Methodology and Approach	147
Critique	149
Summary	150
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	151
Introduction	151
Research Purpose	151
Research Questions	153
Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications	154
Implications	163
Applications	164
Conclusion Summary	168
Research Limitations	172
Further Research	173
REFERENCES	177
APPENDIX A	191
APPENDIX B	192
APPENDIX C	196
APPENDIX D	197
APPENDIX E	198

List of Tables

Table 1. Constructs underlying the Deming Management Method.....	54
Table 2. Environmental Characteristics within the Cynefin model.....	71
Table 3. Six Scriptural Qualities of High Performance Teams	84
Table 4. The 9 P's of Life Journey Travel.....	87
Table 5. The Greatest Commandment in 3H.....	88
Table 6. Coding Distinctions among Grounded Theory methods.....	112
Table 7. Qualifying Categories of Interviewees	124
Table 8. Careers of Interviewees	125
Table 9. Interview Question Responses - LEADERSHIP.....	127
Table 10. Interview Question Responses – DECISION-MAKING	132
Table 11. Interview Question Responses – VALUE SYSTEMS (PART I)	133
Table 12. Interview Question Responses – VALUE SYSTEMS (PART II)	134

List of Figures

Figure 1. Research Study's Deductive-Inductive Logical Thought Flow.....	20
Figure 2. The Integrated Discipleship Ecology.....	45
Figure 3. Five Stages of Spiritual Development.....	49
Figure 4. All Excellence is God's Excellence	50
Figure 5. Educational Worldview and Goals	60
Figure 6. The Leadership Challenge.....	65
Figure 7. The 8D Lifecycle.....	67
Figure 8. The Cynefin Model.....	69
Figure 9. Mapping Issues in the Cynefin model.....	72
Figure 10. Five Components of Wisdom.....	75
Figure 11. Path for Pursuing God's Will.....	77
Figure 12. The Fractal Method Lifecycle model.....	82
Figure 13. The Nine Habits within the Greatest Commandment.....	90
Figure 14. The Tytler Cycle	94
Figure 15. Grounded Theory Methodological Process Flow.....	108
Figure 16. OODA Decision Loop	137
Figure 17. Data Mining Funnel	148
Figure 18. Summary Research Design	148
Figure 19. Environmental Area of Study	152
Figure 20. MPC Wisdom Model	155
Figure 21. Truth and Love in Leadership	157
Figure 22. The Wise Benevolent Ruler (WBR) Perspective	161

List of Abbreviations

Head, Heart, Hands (3H) *include* Habitat (4H)

3-Dimensional Wisdom Structure (3D-WS)

Manpower, Machine, Material, Method, Measurement, Mother Nature, Money, Mission (8M)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Complex Adaptive System (CAS)

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT)

Continuous Improvement (CI) *or* Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)

Define-Measure-Analyze-Implement-Control (DMAIC)

Grounded Theory (GT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Interpretive Grounded Theory (IGT)

Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT)

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Lean Six Sigma (LSS)

Observe, Orient, Decide, Act (OODA)

Path-Goal Theory (PGT)

Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal (PESTEL)

Return on Investment (ROI)

Self-Organizing Map (SOM)

Supplier, Input, Process, Output, Customer (SIPOC)

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Wise Benevolent Ruler (WBR)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Every human desires success however they may define it. Blaise Pascal made a generalized statement that without exception and through different means—all men seek happiness (Bloom, 2019). In the journey toward happiness and success, there are decisions to make as one migrates through linear time from a current state (present) through a transition state to a desired future or end state (Brightlight, 2010). Author and pastor Andy Stanley (2008) wrote a book about this process called *The Principle of the Path*. In the text he noted that it is not one's desires but one's decisions that determine one's destination. In pragmatic terms:

You are where you are today based on the decisions that you made along the way: what car to drive, what house to buy, what food to eat, what job to take, what person to marry, and what precepts and principles to follow. (Brightlight, 2013, p. 20).

These decisions translate into actions. Author and educator Stephen Covey highlighted a quote from Aristotle that, “We are what we repeatedly do” and then emphasized the succinct point that “Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit” (Covey, 1990, p. 46).

Therefore, within one's realm of control, a key instrument or critical metric toward achieving a future state of success, happiness, and living in excellence is decision-making. It is the fundamental transaction in one's life journey. How does one develop the habit of making decisions that optimize the probability for achieving success and the desired result?

Background to the Problem

The Bible addresses this question and describes optimal decision-making as wisdom and throughout its text describes wisdom as a gift and skill to be highly prized. A multitude of

Proverbs describe the value of wisdom, the apostle Paul advises to “walk as the wise” (The Holy Bible, New International Version, 1973/1995, Eph 5:15)¹ and the Lord Jesus made an interesting comment to be “wise as serpents” (Matt 10:16) in our travels and encounters with others. In a given set of circumstances with multiple options available from which to choose, what is the wise decision to make that will optimally advance an individual or lead a team toward achieving a defined and desired objective? Exploring further, what are the critical aspects and components of wisdom?

Though there are many facets to wisdom, two components appear to be essential. The first is truth. Truth is the accurate description of reality. To have all knowledge of a situation and circumstance is to know truth. All knowledge (omniscience) is to know truth with a capital “T” (Brightlight, 2010). God possesses this truth as Augustine proclaimed, “All truth is God’s truth” (Anthony, 2018, p. 107). Yet truth and/or knowledge is a scalar value having only magnitude. To possess wisdom, one must have a value system to interpret, prioritize, and respond to truth. This is the second component. The axiology or value system is love. The apostle Paul notes that having all knowledge without the component of love means or accomplishes nothing (1 Cor 13:2) for we are to do everything in love (1 Cor 16:14). Love, however, requires an object. One cannot just “love.”

It is here that the most critical crossroad and decision point in human life exists. Human value systems are based on perception and are relational or ordinal by nature. Within the basic acts of commerce, people buy, sell, barter and/or trade based on perceived comparative value.

¹ All scripture verses are referenced from the New International Version Bible (1995) unless otherwise denoted.

In an ordinal system there must be a first position. Every human heart has a value system and within it exists a cornerstone—something that takes first place from which all other entities are measured (Brightlight, 2013). A child’s crude crayon drawing may be more valuable than a Rembrandt to a mother or the final words of love and advice from a dying parent may be more impactful and treasured than a college degree to another. Individual value systems may vary significantly from logically coherent to irrational or whimsical, but they always exist. Every individual must ask themselves, “What is my greatest love? What is my cornerstone—that which is most important to me?” (Brightlight, 2013, p. 94). An appropriate follow on question is what should it be? If happiness, success, and living with excellence are relatively defined by the individual, then any person or thing can become a cornerstone. However, if there exists a reason and a purpose for an individual, then success would be measured by how one aligned with their purpose. If God is the Source of defining one’s purpose (Warren, 2002), then there can be only one proper cornerstone. Coming from the Source as God’s Word, the biblical definition of wisdom states that our cornerstone is Christ (Eph 2:20) and the object of one’s love comes from the greatest commandment (Matt 22:37-39, Deut 6:4—5/Lev 19:18) which is to love God (Father, Son, and Spirit) with one’s total being and love others equal to one’s love for self. Jesus later refined the second part and set the high bar to love others as He loves us (John 13:34, 15:12). Wisdom, therefore, involves the seeking, promoting, and declaring the truth and responding to it in a collaborative and synergistic love of God, love for others, and love of self. Man’s desire is success and happiness and wisdom with its key components of truth and love is the biblically-recommended decision tool to get there.

There is a path. As previously mentioned, that path can be described and framed by three states: a current state (where one is), a future or end state (where one wants to be), and a

transition state (how to get there). A useful mathematical model for describing the nature of these three states is fractals. Fractals are geometric constructs in which smaller parts are similar to the whole or in a system where subsystems operate under the same rules (Leute, 2017). They are also a curious phenomenon within nature appearing in snowflakes, ocean waves, plant leaf stem patterns, profile commonality of spiral galaxies to the rotation of hurricanes, and Roman broccoli to name a few (Valova, 2010). Valova noted that Mandelbrot's study of fractals revealed that the deterministic equations that model these patterns found in nature combine into dynamic systems that account for the stochastic complexity of the world. This dynamical insert precludes precise determinism of the entire system which makes calculating an optimized path an incredibly challenging endeavor. However, when considered within the larger framework of a life journey, there is an ongoing string of mini current-transition-future states that exist and theoretically can be as granular as each individual decision made along the complex path. Analogous to mathematical calculus that divides a continuous function into infinitesimal discrete slices, the continuous journey of life can be divided into individual decisions, examined, and evaluated. If biblical wisdom possesses fractal symmetry, then small tactical decisions will consistently align with the greater strategic purpose and a generalized optimal path can be discerned.

The final component that requires consideration in man's life journey toward success is the environment or continuing with the life journey metaphor—the road conditions. Dr. David Snowden (2010) has proposed the Cynefin Framework which recognizes three environmental systems of ordered, complex, and chaotic. He then divides ordered environments into two of simple and complicated, and adds the environmental condition of disorder, which as implied by its name, is completely unstable (Snowden, 2020). He further noted that the challenge to leaders is being able to recognize the current environment as the decision tools necessary to properly

navigate through the given circumstances are different. Snowden (2010) observed that when immersed in an ordered environment, the first step is to sense it, then if it is a simple system (one that has been encountered before), categorize it and use best practice techniques to manage through it. If it is something new or complicated, then analyze it and use good practices to modulate through the environment. For complex or chaotic environments which often involve significant human interaction (Stacey, 2012), one must probe and/or act to first ensure stability, then utilize emerging or novel practices to guide oneself forward.

The goals of any journey or endeavor are to be successful and satisfying—to accomplish the end goal through excellence. The fractal concept provides a superb framework to monitor and measure the position and effectiveness of the journey. Wisdom is the decision tool for the journey and the Cynefin Framework offers a systematic description of the possible environments one may encounter.

As Christians, our mission is to follow Christ and make fellow disciples. This is not accomplished by forming a single column behind our Lord. Each disciple has their own unique journey but the creation of a toolset for all disciples to aid them in their travels through the various environmental systems would be of considerable benefit. The elegance of the Christian discipleship model is the universal recognition of a common future or end state. The apostle Paul tells us, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). As described, this appears as an award ceremony. Paul provides further insight through an analogy of a builder from his previous letter to the church in Corinth. Stating that upon the foundation of Christ one builds with materials of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw. The works are tested with fire and those that remain are rewards and those that burn up are

loss (1 Cor 3:10—15). The definition of success is to have works that remain and receive a “Well done!” from the Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ. Though appearing at this judgment is infinitely better than having to appear before the Great White Throne judgment, one should note that receiving accolades from Christ is not for arriving at the proper destination, but for the successes achieved during the journey. Thus, success is measured by how one travels. The human mission is to travel well—to travel with excellence. That can only be accomplished by following Jesus Christ which is following Truth (John 14:6) and doing so in love. For how well one loved in this earthly life is the metric for which one will be evaluated (1 Cor 13:1—3). The discipleship journey is developmental: “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining ever brighter until full daylight” (ESV, Prov 4:18).

Under the umbrella of “all truth is God’s truth” (Anthony, 2018) one notes that we are what we repeatedly do (Covey, 1990) and our path is determined by our decisions and actions (Stanley, 2008). Therefore, we should be wise in our decision-making and wisdom comes from God. In its purest form, wisdom is speaking, thinking, doing, and believing truth in love. Humans do not know all truth as the apostle Paul commented that we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12). In the Christian walk of faith, followers of Christ ask, seek, and knock for truth, wisdom, and understanding (Matt 7:7, James 1:5). If we act with wisdom consistently over time, that is excellence. There is the subsequent execution function that must be performed, but the process begins with sound decision-making. The deductive-inductive logical thought flow that inspired this author to research and conduct this study is the illustration of the nozzle-diffuser configuration shown in Figure 1. The research target and focus of examining wise decision-making is the inflection point located in the center.

Figure 1*Research Study's Deductive-Inductive Logical Thought*

It should be noted that from a Christian worldview perspective, truth and love are not abstract theoretical concepts. Truth and love is a Person; truth and love is Christ (John 14:6, 1 John 4:8). Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). Christians are commanded to follow Him. To follow Christ is to follow Wisdom and to do so consistently is excellence. Therefore, all excellence is God's excellence.

Though a multitude of texts allude to this concept in various forms, the gap in the research or existing literature is that this proclamation that "all excellence is God's excellence" has not been specifically made or verified with empirical research. It's subjective nature is ill-suited for quantitative analysis and its universal application and scope is enormously intimidating and broad. However, the self-similar nature of fractals opens the possibility that wisdom executed at the granular decision level can be extrapolated into larger themes and possibly into a universal concept or theory. Theoretically, behavior patterns, concepts, and methodologies that exist at the decision level will replicate themselves at the broader strategic levels even to a defined theory or principle. The optimum research tool for discerning a concept or principle is grounded theory as grounded theory (GT) is the development of a concept (Glaser, 2010).

If one sufficiently examines the fractal nature of biblical wisdom, then a theory can be constructed from the gathered data regarding its attributes and effects on decision-making. If the field of focus is narrowed to complex and complicated environments (Snowden, 2010), it has the most promising impact for optimizing return on investment (ROI) potential (Barker, 2015). For success in a complicated environment can be streamlined to fit the more routine simple environment and success in a complex environment can provide some valuable projections of decision-making into a chaotic environment.

As to grounded theory methods, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as promoted by Charmaz (2006) recognizes the existence of preconceived ideas of the researcher and enables the researcher to co-develop or construct the theory from the data in synergistic coordination with the participants in the study. It's flexible nature also allows for multiple interpretations from the data, coding, and results (Sebastian, 2019). These specific attributes for this method of grounded theory offers the optimal techniques for a fruitful study.

Statement of the Research Problem

This statement, “all excellence is God’s excellence” is this researcher’s logical extension of the precepts stated previously. It is a conceptual hypothesis that requires testing. The research challenge is simply this: Is “all excellence is God’s excellence” true in all circumstances? The first objective of our problem is to discern if the above logic is flawed. The next consideration is scope and applicability. Is this (all excellence is God’s excellence) true in all environments or is it limited to certain circumstances? Is biblical wisdom applicable only in the spiritual realm or is it practical for earthly experience? The research problem ultimately is to validate or refute the statement and associated theory that “All excellence is God’s excellence” by using grounded theory in developing and evaluating the utility and effectiveness of a decision-making technique,

method, system, tool, concept and/or principle that prioritizes the wisdom components of truth and love.

Research Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to utilize grounded theory to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom within the context of leading a discipleship journey centered on the Greatest Commandment and the wisdom components of truth and love as a viable decision-making method, tool, or template within complicated/complex environments. The approach was to discover a set of principles related to a discipleship decision-making model, tool, or theory and then analyze its viability within complicated and complex environment types. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Questions

RQ1. What critical principles in loving God influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ2. What critical principles in loving others influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ3. What critical principles in loving oneself influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ4. Is the tandem truth-love component of wisdom viable in guiding decision-making within complex environments?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

The challenge of attempting to create a generalized and unifying theory of excellence is the massive breadth of scope. However, "principles are fundamental, akin to natural laws and universal in scope. They serve as guidelines for human conduct that are proven to have enduring, permanent value" (Covey, 1990, pp. 32-35). Thus, demonstrating success in select key areas can reasonably be projected and forecasted into similar areas or environments of life. Additionally,

when seeking a generalized or near universal theory, delimitations technically should be almost nonexistent. Here, assumptions and delimitations are not expressed as a boundary (except the fourth and ninth delimitations listed below), but as a guiding focus or a type of pre- or initial categorization within the grounded theory template. These could be described more appropriately as assumptions, but the combination of assumptions/delimitations are numerated in the following section. Select research and theory in the areas of leadership and decision theory that has been evaluated, scrutinized, and vetted was accepted without much debate and are thus presented here as assumptions. This study did not expend extensive effort defending the statement that the Bible is the true Word of God. It also did not expend energy validating or defending the Cynefin model, Deming's TQM model, the soundness of Sun Tzu's art of war principles, or the successful performance of Stephen Covey's 8 Habits. Critique of these models and/or theories may be valid and future research could investigate if these critiques extend into this research. Other research has vetted these theories and models to be viable systems and this study builds upon the shoulders of that research.

Delimitations of the Research Design

As noted, the enormity of scope that a unifying theory on excellence projects cannot be accomplished in a single study but the research can advance the thinking in that direction. The integration of the consistent structure and attributes of fractals and principles provide a sturdy foundation for projecting (inductive reasoning) the results of this study to more expansive levels of truth. Future studies can add to the validity of these results or pursue methods to precisely measure them. To frame this research, the following delimitations were developed:

1. This study recognizes the Bible as the true Word of God. As such, the major biblical themes of God's absolute sovereignty, the Personhoods within the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, and God's desire for a loving relationship with humankind are considered foundational truths and principles upon which this research rests.

2. This study does not validate the Cynefin model, Deming's TQM model and associated lean-sigma techniques, the soundness of Sun Tzu's art of war principles, or the successful performance of Stephen Covey's 8 Habits. These and others are utilized within the related literature as benchmarks (theory and industry) to represent leadership behavior within each environmental system. Each of these representative benchmarks already possess historical evidence of success within a given environment. They stand on their own merits with both appropriate critique and praise. Other research as well as the more impactful practical application of these theories/principles have proven them to be viable systems and this study builds upon their historical record of success.
3. This study utilized a specific paradigm or theory that describes the environment in which we live. For this study, this researcher utilized the Cynefin model developed and trademarked by David Snowden. The model addresses the commonly accepted three basic environmental systems of Ordered, Complex, and Chaotic. It also includes the condition of Disorder. The Cynefin model further divides Ordered systems into two subcategories of Simple or Obvious and Complicated. It is within this framework and environmental worldview description and model that the research was evaluated.
4. A specific delimitation of this study was to exclude Chaotic systems from specific evaluation. Chaotic systems are disruptive environments where typical cause and effect evaluation techniques are not valid. They are also an environment in which one would not want to remain and as such are temporary in nature. Despite the known existence of fractals in chaotic environments and chaos theory including the famous butterfly effect (Mandelbrot, 1982), evaluating the theory in this environment was not directly pursued.
5. Though other project management tools and methods were briefly addressed, this study introduced "The Fractal Method" project lifecycle model developed by this author for illustrative purposes throughout this dissertation.
6. The delimiting factor for selection as a qualified interviewee were those persons who have or had leadership responsibility and experience in complex environments. This was further restricted to pastors/missionaries, business leaders, coaches, military leaders and law enforcement personnel, politicians, and thought leaders within academia. As expected, some interviewees had leadership qualifications in more than one category.
7. The inclusion of the concept of fractals was for the purpose of identifying repetitive patterns within a decision-making matrix and organizational system behavior.
8. The area of concentrated focus for this study was on the boundary area between Complicated and Complex environments as described in the Cynefin model. The logic of this delimitation will be explained in the Methodological Design section.
9. An exclusion of the study was not to analyze in depth the physiological influences in decision-making. Though this study conducted interviews to obtain real life experiences and insight, the scope of the results of this study is theoretical in nature. The physiological aspects (brain chemistry and executive function) involved or its contribution to decision-making was not regarded as a variable to be measured.

Definition of Key Terms

1. *Chaotic Environment*: An environmental system or condition containing events that have unpredictable or nonlinear behavior (Snowden, 2010).
2. *Complex Environment*: An environmental system displaying a mixture of causal and unpredictable (nonlinear) behavior (Snowden, 2010).
3. *Complicated Environment*: An ordered environmental system consisting of causal (linear cause-effect) events that require specific expertise to discern and understand (Snowden, 2010).
4. *Continuous Improvement*: The systematic practice of ongoing improvement gained through either incremental or breakthrough actions and events (Hoem, 2016).
5. *Cynefin Model*: A systematic model developed and trademarked by David Snowden that describes the three types of environmental systems of Ordered, Complex, and Chaotic and their associated behavior (Snowden, 2010).
6. *Disordered Environment*: An aporetic environmental state of perplexity, uncertainty, and confusion (Snowden, 2020).
7. *Excellence*: The consistent achievement of superlative performance within a defined moral framework. The continuous practice of wisdom over time.
8. *Fractals*: A mathematical expression that describes a natural or geometric construct in which the subcomponents appear similar to the whole. Qualitatively, it is recognizing self-similar patterns of behavior, structure, and self-organization (Bider, Leute, 2017).
9. *Gaming Theory*: A theoretical framework with associated mathematical models analyzing the study of choice among competing agents (Gass, 2003).
10. *Kaizen*: A management philosophy and system that promotes incremental system improvements over time (Sandford, nd).
11. *Lean-Six Sigma*: A combination of two business systems and philosophies of lean (emphasizing maximized efficiency) and six sigma which is a quality standard of having less than four errors or rejects within a million transactions (George, 2005).
12. *Life Cycle model*: A management model that describes a project, path, and methodology from beginning to end (Meredith, 1989).
13. *Love*: Unless otherwise stated, love refers to the Greek word, agape. It is a selfless and unconditional attitude and action (not feeling) of having another's best interest (object of one's love) at heart. It also reflects the very nature of the Godhead (1 John 4:8).
14. *Return on Investment*: A financial measurement determined by the ratio of net income to total cost or qualitatively, the benefit one receives from the effort one expended.

15. *Simple Environment*: An environmental system of relatively few unknowns and a strong causal (linear) correlational relationship (Snowden, 2010).
16. *Total Quality Management*: A management system and philosophy that every member within an organization contributes and is responsible for exacting standards of performance (Douglas, 2004).
17. *Truth*: When presented with a capital “T” is the universal set of knowledge—all knowledge—omniscience. It also reflects the Godhead, particularly referenced within this study as the Personhood of Christ (John 14:6).
18. *Wisdom*: The concept of thinking, believing, judging, and doing in a holistically optimized manner where “holistically optimized” is defined as providing maximum glory to God. The influence of components truth (knowledge/epistemology) and love (value system/axiology) on the act of decision-making are emphasized.

Significance of the Study

With a few rare exceptions, it is a universal goal and desire of an individual to be successful—to cast visions, dream dreams, and redefine the possible (Alford, 2021). Stating the converse, no rational person looks into the mirror and thinks, “I want to screw up everything I do today. My desire is to make terrible decisions and I want to continue that practice for the rest of my life.” It is recognized by the majority of people (some after the fact) that decisions have consequences, and some decisions have immense consequences. Thus, it is highly desirable to make good decisions. The ability to understand a situation thoroughly, to consider all relevant factors involved, and to discern the proper decision and course of action to take is the execution of wisdom (Stanley, 2005).

This study was to evaluate the biblical principles and components of wisdom with regard to decision-making in complicated and complex environments. If a technique, methodology, or decision-making tool can be successfully developed that optimizes sound decision-making, it would be of significant benefit to everyone who employs it. The study utilized a unique approach by analyzing the concept of wisdom in decision-making from its components of truth and love. Truth as defined as all knowledge (omniscience), and an infinite

love (agape) are the character and nature of Christ. He is truth and love. The hypothesis includes the concept that if Christians are called to follow Christ and imitate Christ, then the components of truth and love will be central in one's life journey.

Additionally, the hypothesized extension of this study is that wisdom executed consistently over time leads to excellence. If wisdom comes from God and is of God, then wisdom practiced consistently is of God and is therefore excellence. The impact of this could lead to a unifying theory of excellence. Cloud (2006) in his text, *"Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality"* casually observed that there exists "universal values" of morality regarding love, justice, integrity, and the like. This concept is reflected in the laws of nature and self-evident truths presented in America's Declaration of Independence (Thomas, 2016). This becomes a starting point and initial concept just as the Golden Rule (Matt 7:12) is near universally accepted as a relationship standard. The opportunity exists to demonstrate the superior decision-making performance of biblical wisdom with regard to love, justice, freedom, honesty, and optimizing relationships. As such, it would become the standard for excellence.

Finally, the study promotes a Kingdom of God and/or Kingdom of heaven perspective and worldview. Due to the somewhat apologetic nature of the study—to analyze biblical wisdom in decision-making, it wholeheartedly promotes God's Kingdom. This also aligns with the Christ follower's request commonly known as the Lord's prayer of "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

Summary of the Design

The qualitative method for this research was a particular method of grounded theory called Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). Typically, grounded theory does not rely upon or heavily emphasize related research or literature as it attempts to begin from scratch and

collect data, catalogue it, and then piece it together to form a theory or concept (Glaser, 2010). CGT is somewhat ambivalent regarding the use of related literature (Sebastian, 2019) and thus is open to its inclusion in a funneling role, providing context to the study, and establishing boundaries for the theoretical sampling (McGregor, 2018). Due to the extensive scope and breadth that a theory of excellence entails, the theological and theoretical frameworks and related literature of Chapter 2 served as the initial guide for the theoretical sampling. Major topics for the related research included leadership theorists and models, environment analysis (Cynefin Model), decision theory and project lifecycles, an introduction to fractal behavior, and wisdom trait analysis and development. The research employed a grounded theory approach (CGT) utilizing primarily qualitative interviews of leaders who had or have operated in a complex environment. Since ground theory is an iterative process requiring theoretical saturation where no new codes or concepts are being detected or generated (Flick, 2018), other research methods such as surveys/questionnaires or focus groups could have been utilized.

The population and sampling for this research was limited to professed Christian leaders and subject matter experts in business, ministry, academia, military/law enforcement, politics, and coaches. The majority of candidates were from the United States although this was not a specific limitation. The desire was to obtain input from decision-makers in various industries and vocational categories that operate in complex environments. The approach was nonprobabilistic in that qualified individuals within the prescribed population were sought for interview through purposive sampling (Leedy, 2016).

Researcher bias is a common complaint of grounded theory (Thomas, 2006). The Constructivist Grounded Theory model recognizes this critique but instead of attempting to minimize it, embraces it by allowing the role of the researcher to be a proactive one (O'Connor,

2017) and co-construct the theory with the participants from the data (Charmaz, 2006). It further mitigates the bias risk by proclaiming the results as interpretive in nature (Charmaz, 2014). This is an attractive aspect within the CGT model as this study involves fractal patterns of behavior within complex environments where nonlinear outcomes are common. Thus, competing theories of data interpretation should be expected.

The approach for this research was conducted in two phases. The objective of the first phase can be viewed as a prerequisite phase as its goal was to review existing leadership and decision theory along with biblical wisdom principles to discern and define the decision-making variables and metrics. Proven leadership application methods such as Deming, Covey, Sun Tzu, and others were included and utilized as benchmarks within the context of their respective environments. The critical principles and logical thought flow are displayed in the nozzle-diffuser diagram of Figure 1 and these, along with their corollary concepts, are presented in Chapter 2 to provide the framework for the grounded theory research. Thus, the first objective was to gather sufficient information in order to state the principles and metrics of biblical wisdom and to describe its key components. This information was catalogued and evaluated according to decision logic and the architecture of fractals. This “fractal” decision-logic means that a wisdom principle is universally true in all situations and environments and is independent of size of scope i.e., if it works for one, it works for all.

The second phase was the research itself which was to conduct qualitative interviews of leaders in complex environments and go through the coding sequences of grounded theory to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom in decision-making. Particular focus was on the boundary area between Complicated and Complex environments. Testing the biblical wisdom application here provides the greatest confidence for extrapolation of the theory. If the fractal

nature of biblical wisdom theoretically works well in Complicated environments, it logically should work well in less sophisticated Simple environments. If the fractal nature of biblical wisdom works in some Complex environments, it has the potential to work in all Complex environments as well as be beneficial in Chaotic environments. The final product resulted in a grounded theory addressing the validity of “All excellence is God’s excellence” recognizing that biblical wisdom is the optimal tool and set of principles for decision-making in every situation and environment.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Life is a journey. It is more than just an appropriate metaphor; it is an analogy. The four components of purpose, meaning, morality, and destiny for a coherent worldview (Zacharias, 2020) are critical constructs within its travels. The joys and sorrows, the successes and failures, the certainties, and uncertainties of life through the various surroundings and complex environments are captured through its imagery. The key to discerning the best way to travel is wisdom. The purpose of this study was to examine specific aspects (fractal nature) of wisdom and how it is best employed for decision-making in challenging environments.

Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD (Prov 9:10). It is upon this perspective that wisdom builds and grows as knowledge of the Holy One brings understanding. Evidence of wisdom is displayed within every decision one makes. Pursuing wisdom is an honorable endeavor for blessed is the man who finds it (Prov 3:13). The spiritual intent of this research is as the apostle Paul's prayer to the church in Ephesus,

I always pray to the great and glorious Father, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that He will give you the Spirit, who will let you know truths about God and help you understand them, so that you will know Him better. I pray that God will open your minds to see His truth. Then you will know the hope that He has chosen us to have. You will know that the blessings God has promised His holy people are rich and glorious. And you will know that God's power is very great for us who believe. (AMP, Eph 1:17-19)

This chapter outlines and establishes the context for this study. It includes both a theological and a theoretical perspective which must be congruent. This provides the framework for the related literature section which incorporates similar established practices and research and develops the background for the study. The main topics addressed are leadership models, environment analysis, decision theory, and wisdom principles. The chapter concludes with the rationale and significance of the study and the specific research gap this study intended to fill.

Theological Framework

The leadoff sentence of the Bible is: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). This simple, matter-of-fact statement begins the Word of God. The first four words establish the proper worldview: “In the beginning, God....” It all starts with God and all creation owes its existence to God. The beginning of John’s Gospel parallels the Genesis intro adding the detail that it was through Christ that “all things were made and without Him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). The prophet Jeremiah utters in awe, “Ah, Sovereign LORD! You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for You!” (Jer 32:17). God is sovereign and holy, deserving all honor and glory. All things were created for His good pleasure (Rev 4:11). This *is* our Father’s world.

For the disciple’s journey, this is the apex of belief. It all starts with God and this is the foundational pillar of truth upon which this universe rests. Our cornerstone is Christ who received all power and authority in heaven and on earth from the Father (Matt 28:18). This profound revelation produces the simplest of strategies for one’s journey—a two-word command from Jesus, “Follow Me.” The journey is complex and unique for every follower despite the common path. Believers do not line up in single file behind Christ but move forward together as a community. It is a community of such synergy and interconnectedness that it functions as a body, each with different talents, tasks, and functions to perform (Lowe, 2018).

This interconnectedness extends throughout the universe which is logical as it has one Designer. In virtually all fields of scientific and philosophic study, it is recognized that

we live in a highly interconnected, spider-like web of interlocking elements at every level of human existence (biological, economic, electronic, digital, political, molecular, sociological, physical, and spiritual). (Lowe, 2018, p. 12)

It is a God-created cybernetic system where things grow, develop, and are sustained through ecological entanglement and interaction. Lowe (2018, p. 12) continues, “All this evidence tells us that God created a world where things grow, develop, and are sustained through ecological connections and interactions.” It is this holistic connectedness within the universe that every human is a part and has a role to play.

The Journey

The journey metaphor for one’s life is an effective one. Morgan (2006) notes that metaphors exert a powerful influence on how we think and are effective in making a comparison as the power is in the picture or illuminating imagery that the metaphor projects. An effective metaphor has two critical components: 1) it must be clearly recognizable and understood by the audience and 2) the transferability of the desired subset of implied attributes must be readily discerned (Laniak, 2018, p. 32-33). Related questions of why and where are you going, what do you need to pack, how will you get there, who is traveling with you, and others that apply to a journey apply to the critical questions and philosophies of life itself (Brightlight, 2010).

For any journey one needs a map or for the seafaring type, a chart. Additionally, one needs guidelines in how to travel often referred to as the “rules of the road.” As disciples traveling through God’s creation, this rulebook is the Bible. Pettit (2016) notes, “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs” (p. 31). The apostle Peter observes that Bible prophecy did not come from human interpretation but men were moved by the Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:20—21). Paul expands this concept stating, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (NASB, 2 Tim 3:16—17). Everything one needs to know about everything

one needs to do while here on planet earth is found within its pages. The goal, the path, and every situation and circumstance is addressed for proper navigation. Pettit additionally observes four spiritually prominent peaks within the Gospels that address the Trinity, humanity in God's image, the God-man Jesus Christ, and salvation (Pettit, 2016, p. 37). These "peaks" provide contextual depth to one's worldview during the pilgrimage and add to the foundation upon which the rules of the road are created. Every journey can be divided into three conditional states. There is the Current state (where one is), the Future state (where one wants to be), and the Transition state (how to get from where one is to where one wants to be) (Brightlight, 2013, p. 89).

Current State

To properly define the Current State, one must describe the foundational worldview which includes who God is and His attributes and traits, who the disciples are and their attributes and traits, and who the enemy is and his attributes and traits. There also must be a depiction of the current condition and provide an adequate description and the attributes of the environment (road conditions) for the journey. As mentioned by Pettit above, the Bible recognizes a triune God presented through three Personhoods of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Pettit (2016) notes,

Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God—not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead. Each Person is equal in essence as each possesses fully the identically same, eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of the one undivided divine nature. (p. 38)

Humans are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26—27). This profound declaration often gets lost or overlooked because of the daily grind of life that's so immersed in "humanness."

Quoting Bruce Ware, Pettit (2016) explains,

"The image of God in man as functional holism means that God made human beings, both male and female, to be created and finite representations (images of God) of God's own nature, that in relationship with Him and each other they might be His representatives (imaging God) in carrying out the responsibilities He has given to them." (p. 39)

Kilner (2015) adds, “humans being created in the image of God is about God’s intentions and humanity’s creation in the image of God means that God intends people to reflect various God-honoring attributes” (p. 207). Quoting Chardin, Covey (1990) pragmatically notes, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience” (p. 317). It is this recognition of the special nature of humanity within God’s Kingdom that should fill every disciple with awe and humility. Recognizing who one is helps define the nature of one’s purpose.

There is an enemy. “As believers, we also must acknowledge the active participation of the Devil and demons” (Pettit, 2016, p. 137). This opposition is Satan, who is “a liar and the father of all lies. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character” (John 8:44). The discipleship journey is to follow Jesus Christ. Satan opposes God and attempts to thwart the will of God which by the transitive property intends to thwart the disciples’ journey of following Christ. Peter notes that the devil “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8). That’s not an encouraging thought. However, if we submit to God and follow His Son, we are traveling the optimal course and will successfully resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7).

When God created the world, it “was good” and upon completion, God declared it was “very good” (Gen 1:31). Unfortunately, that didn’t last long. In thirty-one verses within God’s Word, the incredible creation story is told. An amazing universe of which the part we humans can see contains hundreds of billions of galaxies each with billions of stars (Powell, 2006) and God knows each one by name (Ps 147:4). Thirty-one verses later, humans messed it all up. Through a very, *very* unwise decision, sin came into the world and corrupted God’s pristine

creation. The whole universe, scientifically evident through increasing entropy, now groans under this burdened and depraved condition (Rom 8:22—25). Decisions have consequences—sometimes of a frightfully immense impact.

The environment and the disciple sojourners are now in a fallen state and unable to rectify it. Lowe (2018) observes,

The scope of this disruption is breathtaking. Human sin infected the connective harmony that permeated the pristine ecology God created. The entire web of connections and interactions that made God's original ecology hum along in perfect harmony was suddenly off-key and discordant. (p. 22)

Pettit (2016) provides this perspective,

The wreck known as the fall defaced the image of God in humanity, but mercifully it did not erase it. The wages of death now spread to all men and women. We all have fallen tragically short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Humanity now finds itself in a sinful state. (p. 38)

Recognition of our plight and trusting God for redemptive grace is the path forward. “When we recognize the depth of our sin and place our trust in the finished work of Christ on our behalf, we become a Christian” (Pettit, 2016, p. 44). It requires awareness of both. “If we know God, but don’t recognize our wretchedness, we will have pride. If we know our wretchedness, but don’t know God, we will have despair” (Craig, 2008, p. 66). Paul elaborates on this concept in Romans chapter seven (v. 13—25). He describes his longing to do good, yet he does not do it and his desire to avoid wickedness yet he commits it anyway. With a heartfelt cry of desperation, he declares, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (v. 24). His answer immediately follows, “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:25a). Our current state is one of desperation and despair. The proper transition state is following Christ. This leads to a future state of glorious victory with Him. This is the wise path.

Future State

Stephen Covey developed eight life habits for being effective that led to excellence. His second habit was to “Begin with the end in Mind” (Covey, 1990). That sage advice leads to the discovery that the mission and purpose in the life of a disciple is to glorify God. “So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). In his text, Covey performs a thought exercise for the reader to imagine one’s death and ponder what would one want to be said or thought about them or how one wished to be remembered. Additionally, what goals and objectives does one want to achieve such that when one nears the end of life, they are not filled with disappointment and regret. It is a useful exercise but it fails miserably in terms of identifying the true end to have in mind. Life does not end with physical death. Any follower of Christ who believes this, they are to be most pitied (1 Cor 15:19). The author of Hebrews noted that, “it is appointed for man (people) to die once, then face judgment” (Heb 9:27). Business consultant Clayton Christensen (2012) in a TED talk asks the question, “how does one measure their life” and his answer acknowledges a future divine evaluation and judgment. The apostle Paul elaborates on this concept in his letters to the church in Corinth. Using a “wise builder” metaphor for the discipleship journey, Paul states that disciples build their foundation upon Christ (1 Cor 3:10—11). This corresponds to Christ’s teaching of a wise builder who builds upon rock vice sand (Matt 7:24—27). Paul continues using the analogy of building materials to represent human works—some are gold, silver, precious stones while others are wood, hay, and straw. The works are tested with fire to validate their integrity. Those that remain become a reward, while those that are consumed suffer loss (1 Cor 3:12—15). For those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are His followers and are safe within the Father’s hand such that nothing can snatch them away (John 10:28—30). The loss spoken here is only a loss of

reward. This building upon Christ analogy is the act of becoming like Christ. Humans are created in the image of God and one way we "image the Son" is by bringing glory to the Father." (Pettit, 2016, p. 31). When we fail in that endeavor, we lose rewards not salvation. As previously stated, the apostle Paul describes that we all must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive what is due us for our life's decisions and actions both good and bad (2 Cor 5:10). It is a rewards banquet. How does one gain rewards? That too is disclosed in the Corinthian letters and will be addressed in an upcoming section. Jesus told His disciples that He goes to prepare a place for all believers. As the One who created this amazing universe by merely speaking (Gen 1:3), this "place" will be breathtakingly beyond human description. Our future home is a place where "God will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Transition State

The Current state describes the initial conditions and the Future state describes the goal or end to have in mind. The Transition state is the path to get there. In the life journey metaphor, the Transition state addresses the question, "What's the best way to travel?" The strategic answer has already been given. The proper path is to follow Christ.

Dress for Success.

Before beginning a journey, one must dress appropriately. The apostle Paul frames up the situation and environment for us (Eph 6:10—18). We are at war for we battle not flesh and blood but powers, principalities, and the forces of darkness—the devil and his confederates (v. 12). This describes the spiritual landscape in which disciples are to travel. To sum up his advice: Be Prepared. Put on the full armor of God to protect oneself against the schemes of the devil (v. 11). Lowe (2018) notes that this command is given in the plural (to all

believers). Samra (2008) observes, “Paul’s apostolic work entails building up one another and this is a corporate endeavor—a responsibility of community members” (p. 51). Like a coach addressing his football team, each player must put on their individual equipment but it is with the corporate mindset of team preparation. Paul provides seven articles of “clothing” to wear and one should note the common element contained in all of them—truth. We have the belt of truth (truth of God’s sovereignty), the breastplate of righteousness (truth of God’s holiness), the shoes of the Gospel (truth of the Good News), the shield of faith (truth of God’s promises), the helmet of salvation (truth of God’s eternal security), and the sword of the Spirit (truth of God’s Word). The final piece of armor is arguably the most important as we pray continually in the Spirit (truth of God’s presence) (Eph 6:11—18).

Truth is light and light defeats darkness. Likewise, truth defeats lies, and Satan is the father of them. The devil can roar all he wants (1 Pet 5:8), but he’ll shatter his lying teeth on God’s armor of truth. Thus, disciples all must individually and collectively put on God’s armor and form a phalanx against the devil and his minions. This is holistic armor as it protects mind, body, and spirit or using the 3H model: head, heart, and hands (Belcher, 2017). To complete the model, a fourth “H” is added to represent Habitat that incorporates the environment and the associated ecologies with it. We become one unified body in mind, heart, and deed. We create an environment—a habitat for contagious spiritual growth (Lowe, 2018) at the individual and corporate level. Lowe (2019, para 5) embellishes this interconnected ecology further,

Spiritual formation has to do with whole-person transformation into the fullness of Christ—borrowing that language from Paul in Ephesians 4. It’s a combination of this vertical connection that we have to Christ and the Spirit and the horizontal connection we have to other members of the body of Christ. Those all work together to form us individually and corporately into this image of Christ in all of its fullness and beauty.

Quoting the famous warrior Sun Tzu who recognized organizational synergy and the value of

such motivated soldiers within a unified army, “He whose ranks are united in purpose will be victorious.” (Griffith, 1975, p. 83).

Follow Christ.

For every goal there are often multiple paths. As previously noted, pastor Andy Stanley (2008) observed that one’s destination is determined not by desire but by decision. It’s not what people want but how they choose that defines their path. In essence, we are where we are based on the decisions that we make (Brightlight, 2013, p. 20). When it comes to the strategic aspect of the migration plan or Transition state, it is easy to define as there is only one way to get to the proper destination or Future state. Our Lord stated it very succinctly, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). There is but one successful destination and Christ is the exclusive path to get there. Through Him, one finds eternal life. All others, despite their superficial attractiveness, eventually lead to death. Jesus presented this path selection evaluation succinctly in the form of a Return on Investment (ROI) question, “What profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” (Mark 8:36).

To follow Christ, one needs to be His disciple. Jesus declared, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23). This simple statement contains a wealth of foundational biblical principles. To follow Christ is to trust Christ of which the Proverb advises, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path” or in other translations, “make your path straight” (v. 3:5—6). The “all your heart” means full commitment. There are no part time Christians. Paul describes this commitment as “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). Sacrifices rarely have any leveraged input as to their disposition. Despite the heart’s deceived yearning to “do what thy wilt” in the name of freedom, true freedom is not

wild, unrestrained action; it's the freedom to choose to be one's best. As Stanley so pragmatically phrases it, "Submission is the key to wisdom" (Stanley, 2008, p. 92) and wisdom is the key to sound decision-making. If one consistently makes wise choices in every decision, he or she will be living at optimum performance. Prince (2007) observes, "God's (Christ's) wisdom is not remote but very practical and to the point" (p. 54). There is an incredible, synergistic, interconnectedness—a spiritual and practical ecology where all these attributes and principles come together in Christ (Lowe, 2018).

Jesus the True Vine

To review this concept requires inclusion of another metaphor—this one is the vine analogy from our Lord which is found in John 15:1—11 and it is rich in spiritual ecology. Summarizing, Jesus states that He is the true vine, the Father is the vinedresser or gardener and we are the branches. If we abide in Him, we'll grow, prosper, and bear much fruit. Apart from Him, we can do absolutely nothing. When we bear fruit, we glorify God. What's implied in this metaphor is the role of the Holy Spirit which is the sap (that dwells in us) that flows from the vine (Christ) to we, the branches (Lindsey, 2020). As Lowe (2018) explains,

The vine and vineyard imagery depicts a reciprocal relationship (with phrases such as "Abide in Me, and I in you," "He who abides in Me and I in him," and "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you") indicative of mechanisms of growth in a natural ecology (Jn 15:4-7). (p. 33)

This is the community of Christ—a called fellowship of believers described in 1 John 1:3 (Boice, 1986) that can only thrive and survive while attached to the vine (Christ) that produces fruit for God's Kingdom to the benefit (glory) of the vinedresser (God). Lowe (2018) notes,

This is the central connectivity—the ultimate divine ecology showing both connection and the growth paradigm where "we use ecological to mean that which pertains to the interrelationship and interconnection of all things in nature." (p. 25-27)

It is an intensely loving and interconnected relationship between the three Persons of God and

the Godhead's love with His beloved creatures made in His image (humans). "Jesus is the expression of the triune God in human flesh, in whom God was pleased to allow all the fullness of deity to dwell (Col 1:19; 2:9). Jesus—the perfect and unique God-man—is fully God and fully human." (Pettit, 2016, p. 42). As a branch matures, it looks like the vine. Kilner (2015) observes, "All people are created according to God's image, which the New Testament identifies as Jesus Christ" because "God intended that humanity should conform to the divine image, to Christ" (p. 131). It is through the life of Christ that God gave us the ultimate example—a benchmark and premiere example for us to follow and through a maturation (sanctification) process, become like Him (Cherry, 2016).

Jesus, the Truth of God

Jesus Christ is the Logos, the Word of God (John 1:1). He is truth (John 14:6) and He is love (1 John 4:8, John 10:30). Therefore, as previously noted, truth and love are not abstract constructs but a Person; truth and love *is* Christ. This extends beyond Augustine's declaration that "All truth is God's truth" (Anthony, 2018, p. 108). God is the Source of truth for God is Truth itself. This is Truth with a capital "T" (Brightlight, 2010) and reflects all knowledge and is therefore omniscient. If one knows all things then one knows Truth. Truth is the immovable object for lies cannot defeat it. Lies and falsehoods can only mask or distort truth to those who are vulnerable to deception. It is from His omniscience and His omnipotence that God is Sovereign. As His Son declared, "not a sparrow falls outside His will" (Matt 10:29).

Jesus, the Love of God

The second aspect of the character and Person of Christ is love. This love (agape) is not an emotion but an attitude and action. It is unconditional in that it depends not upon the recipient. It is an action of caring and kindness to another. Truth provides an accurate description of the

real. Love is the value system in how one responds. Following Christ is to follow truth and respond in love. This is the path for all believers. Pettit prescribes the necessity of authenticity and sincerity for acts of love,

If we want to be conduits of God's love in the world, our expressions of love in the world need to be patterned after His expressions. We have not experienced God's love in an ethereal way. It is not just an abstract concept that we are redeemed through Christ. We experience God's love because we have responded to concrete and meaningful expressions of His love toward us—none more significant than the Son's physical atonement for our sins. Our love also must be *a love characterized by action*. Spiritual formation must never be a private experience or an entirely interior experience. It should express itself in an active love for others. (Pettit, 2016, p. 175 *emphasis mine*)

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4—5 and Leviticus 19:18 which basically states to love God with all you have and to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. He then noted that all the laws and the prophets hung on this two-part command (Matt 22:40). That's an incredible statement. Every rule, every principle, every "Thy shall" and "Thy shall not" is contained within this command and there is only one verb—love. This ties into the discipleship command to "pick up your cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Analyzing these two loves geometrically, we love God in the vertical as He is superior to us and we love our neighbors in the horizontal as a peer-to-peer relationship (Lowe, 2019). Put these vertical and horizontal loves together and they form a cross—a cross of love. It is a cross of love that a disciple picks up each day to follow Christ. This does not make it any lighter. It is not easy to love your enemy. It is exceedingly difficult to find love for a ruthless terrorist. It is a challenge to love those who have hurt you or betrayed you. However, this is the command of Christ and this is the cross of love that His followers carry.

The commonly known Greatest Commandment contains three loves: love for God, love for others, and love for self. As Lowe (2018) notes, "The two key words in social ecology are the same key words that surface in any ecology: connections and interactions." (p. 15). These three

loves form an interconnected and highly interactive agape triangle. When we love others, we bless them and thus nurture their growth. An interesting phenomena (and a simple Google search will give you scores of examples) is that when we love others, we bless ourselves. A common tactic or prescription for those suffering from depression, anxiety or other mental distressing states is to have them go and volunteer to help others (Jacobson, 2015). One, this alleviates the patient's stress by taking their mind off their own problems, but it also causes the brain to release "feel good" chemicals (serotonin, dopamine) that improves their own mood and well-being. When you love others, you bless them, you bless yourself and to complete the hat trick, God is glorified. It's a win-win-win scenario. Smith (2013) emphasizes this importance of cultivating desire—to focus less on educating the head but inspiring the heart. Pettit (2016, p. 175) adds,

We are called to experience his love and be a conduit of it in the world so that 'the world may believe' that the Son was sent into the world by the Father. Our experience of divine love is one of our chief evangelistic tools, if not the primary evangelistic tool.

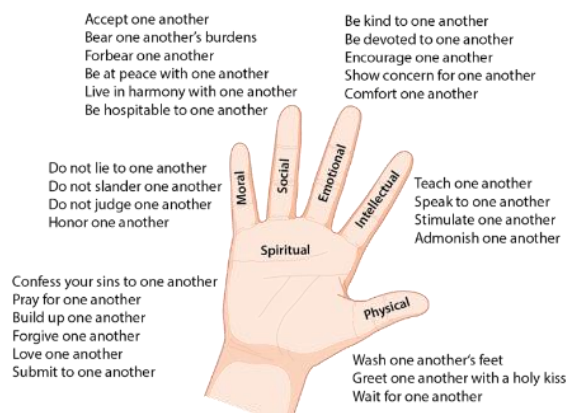
There is an astonishing efficiency and effectiveness in this interaction. A person performs an act of love, the recipient is blessed, the giver is blessed and God is glorified from one single act. The question becomes, "is it sustainable?" If one is constantly giving and pouring out love to others, at what point does the well run dry? How can that ongoing action be sustained without replenishment and from where does that replenishment come? If one recalls the vine analogy taught by Jesus (John 15:1-8), the sap flowing to the branches is the Holy Spirit and it is He who will provide for all our needs. As the apostle Paul describes:

I ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth of His love, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (BSB, Eph 3:16—21)

This model is not only sustainable; it is developmental—it produces growth. The agape cycle of loving others blesses the receiver, blesses the giver, and glorifies God. The incremental addition of encouragement through the feedback loop of positive reinforcement via satisfaction for both giver and receiver stimulates future similar action. These blessings grow and multiply such that it creates an upward spiral of love. Why does this work? Because God designed it this way. When humanity, created in His image, aligns with His design, all participants are blessed. Thus, this love then expands, branching out into all the various reciprocal acts of agape love to “one another” that is supplied and sustained from the infinite wellspring of the Holy Spirit. Lowe (2018) provides an excellent summation through an illustration that correlates these actions with their associated moral, social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual ecologies (shown as a hand and fingers) in Figure 2 below. As the vine analogy given by the apostle John, it is the abiding in Christ (Spiritual relationship) that produces fruit in all other aspects of life.

Figure 2

The Integrated Discipleship Ecology



(Lowe, 2018, p. 185) (used by permission)

The binding or integrating ecology that connects the rest is Spiritual (shown as the hand). From the Spiritual ecology the essential elements of truth and love extend to the other ecologies as well. This integrated ecological system enables the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22—23) to flow.

It's an amazing, holistic, integrated, self-sustaining, growth-oriented, nested ecological system for submitting, forgiving, serving, building, encouraging, burden bearing, accepting, etc....one another which are all specific acts of love guided by truth (Lowe, 2018).

Christ then takes this love one step further. He gives us a new command to love others as He loves us (John 13:34, 15:12). He repeats the command, the first time He qualifies it, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The second time He quantifies it by saying, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Followers of Christ live by the agape triangle described in the Greatest Commandment. This new command describes to what extent that love to God and others is to be given. It's an "all in," total commitment level of love.

The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is often called the "Love Chapter." In it the apostle Paul gives a detailed treatise on love. He describes the attributes of love that love is patient, love is kind, it is not arrogant, envious, or boastful (v. 4). The King James version uses the word charity which gives further insight into this "pay it forward" type of love. At the end of this list of attributes he concludes that love never fails. If truth is the immovable object, love is the unstoppable force. However, it is the hyperbolic statements that begin the chapter that offer profound insight into God's value system. Here, Paul states that if one knew all languages and could speak with angels that without love it's as a noisy gong or clanging symbol (v. 1). He continues noting that if one possessed all knowledge (Truth) or had such faith that could move mountains or made extreme sacrifices for the benefit of others but did not do so in love, it was profitless and meant nothing. This is a stunning declaration. The Greatest Commandment states that full compliance with every rule and principle is grounded in love. Paul is saying that in God's value system, any action no matter how great if not done in love doesn't even count.

Jesus, the Wisdom of God

When we stand before Christ at His Judgment Seat, the key metric evaluated is how well did we love God and others. The obvious goal or definition of success in life is to receive a “Well done” from Christ. No human praise or accolade can compare with a compliment from the Creator of the universe. The crucial life activity is how well did we love. Love gives value to truth and truth gives guidance to love. Together they form wisdom. Christ is Truth. Christ is Love. Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) and the image of God’s goodness (Edersheim, 1993). When we follow Christ, we pursue wisdom. Proverbs interestingly personifies wisdom as a woman, crying out in the streets to be heard (Prov 1:20). However, in this Proverbs text one finds the attributes described are fully applicable to Christ:

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her gain is better than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. All her ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peaceful. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who lay hold of her are blessed. (Prov 3:13—18)

The key to a successful life journey is following and becoming like Christ which is following truth and love. Truth and love are the core components of wisdom and acting with wisdom is demonstrated through sound judgment and decision-making. As Stanley noted, we are in essence the sum of the decisions that we make. Covey (1990), quoting Aristotle, emphasized that excellence is not an act, but ongoing behavior i.e., a habit. Joining these two statements one therefore concludes that consistently making wise decisions is excellence. This is the granular piece that is both discrete and measurable. The best way to travel in one’s life journey is to make wise decisions and do one’s best to properly execute them. That is the part that one can control.

For Christians, the directive is to follow Christ and be His disciple (Luke 9:23). Accepting Christ as one’s Lord and Savior is an individual act, but following Christ is a team

sport. It is why Christ followers are the ecclesia—the called out. They are called out to follow Him. This is the central theme and this calling invokes both unity of purpose and synergy of effort in an integrated spiritual ecology (Lowe, 2018). The apostle Paul refers to the Church as the body of Christ and gives an elaborate metaphor noting,

The body is a unit, though it is composed of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So, it is with Christ. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink. (1 Cor 12:12—13)

Whatever one's unique identity is, it is subservient to the function of the overall organism (body) and therefore subservient to the unity in Christ.

The use of metaphors, analogies, and the concepts of fractal symmetry reveal common patterns and methodologies that suggest best practices and best principles from which to follow. The business world has embraced Continuous Improvement (CI) programs and the mindset and practice of achieving incremental improvements over time (kaizen) (PMI, 2016). Likewise, spiritual growth or the sanctification process follows a similar pattern. Yount (2014) noted three required development tracks (described as pillars) for discipleship of thinking, relationships, and values. Restated, these align with the major themes being developed in this study of truth (thinking), love (values), and purpose (relationships). These are attributes of wisdom and a summary presentation of these converging themes is provided in Appendix E. The apostle John provides a three-stage discipleship/sanctification process analogy in terms of human growth referring to disciples as children, young men, and fathers (1 John) to delineate their level of spiritual maturity. The apostle Paul used similar language often employing the metaphor of food categories such as milk versus solid food to denote the level of spiritual depth within the message content and correlating it to the spiritual maturity within an audience. Jim Putman (2010) embellished on these concepts and noted common traits and attitudes along the disciple

development path. Benchmarking off the stages of human biological growth, he created a descriptive and fully inclusive five-stage discipleship development matrix that begins with the spiritually dead (those individuals who do not know Christ) through the progressive stages of infant, child, and young adult to the final stage of spiritual parent (those individuals who are capable of creating and teaching disciples). Though spiritual growth is not that pristine and uniform with clear demarcation lines of development, the matrix provides an insightful guide, describes key attributes for each stage, and provides assessment metrics to the sanctification process. A brief summary of Putman's Spiritual Stages matrix is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Five Stages of Spiritual Development

Spiritual Stage	General Characteristics	Typical Behaviors/Attitudes
Dead	Unbelieving Rebellious	Disbelief in God or supernatural, or belief in other gods, astrology, universalism, anger toward Christians, confusion about God or Jesus, spiritually blind, belief in being good enough
Infant	Ignorant/Confused/ Dependent	Ignorant about what they need & what Bible says about life/purpose of a Christian, ignorance about church, unrealistic expectations, worldly perspective on most topics
Child	Self-centered/Self-absorbed, Idealistic, Proudful, Low view of self, Interdependent	Excitement over deep relationships, belief that feelings are most important causing highs & lows, lack of wisdom/discernment in witnessing, try to mimic mature Christians for acceptance, enthusiasm about new teachings, little Bible knowledge
Young Adult	Action/service oriented, Zealous, God-centered, Other-centered, Partially Mission-minded, Independent	Desire to serve others, tendency to feel responsible for how others respond to Gospel message, willingness to serve but not strategic about training others, tendency to be black or white on church issues—lack depth of understanding
Parent	Intentional, Strategic, Reproduction-minded, Self-feeding, Mission & Team-minded, Dependable	Ability to think in terms of what a team can do, a coaching mindset, desire to see people mature in the faith, disciple-making oriented

(Putman, 2010, pp. 187—191)

Summary

God is sovereign and this is His world. The mission and purpose of man is to glorify Him. We accomplish that by following His Son and encouraging others to join in the journey. This is the way, the truth, and the life that disciples of Christ are to follow. Lowe (2018) states,

God designed the reciprocal nature of the imperatives to provide opportunities for Christians to interact, engage, and exchange actions and attitudes in a symbiotic give-and-take empowered by the Holy Spirit. We do not engage in these activities so we can simply enjoy one another's fellowship, although this is an obvious outgrowth of the interaction. We do not relate to one another reciprocally so we can simply worship with integrity and enjoy authentic Christian relationships, although this is an important aspect of their use. Everything—fellowship, relationships, and worship—leads to and contributes to our whole-person transformation into the fullness of Christ. The ultimate outcome of reciprocal relationships and interactions between believers is individual and corporate transformation into the image of Christ. (p. 186)

As leaders this is the path we are to promote. Howell (2003) notes,

Biblical leadership is taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world. Biblical leadership, then, is defined in a way that is proactive, purposive, and comprehensive. (p. 3)

It is the path of wisdom. Finally, one can string together a series of statements and utilizing deductive and inductive reasoning produce the path from the truth of God and the love of God through the wisdom of God to the excellence of God.

Figure 4

All Excellence is God's Excellence



This series of logical statements is the premise for this study. The key is exercising wisdom consistently over time. The critical and consequential metric for wisdom is decision-making and the core components of wisdom are truth and love. Therefore, if one can incorporate evaluating truth and love for decision-making within a given situation or environment, one should make good (wise) decisions. If this can be done consistently, this is excellence. This logic is further reinforced by the understanding that Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) and therefore following Him is pursuing wisdom and if performed well and consistently over time that is excellence. This theological “journey” started with the two-word command from Jesus to “Follow Me.” That is the perfect path. To pursue excellence is to follow His Excellency, Jesus Christ for all excellence is God’s excellence.

Theoretical Framework

The metaphor that life is a game incorporates the concepts of scoring, measurement, performance, and competition (quantitative metrics) whereas the life is a journey metaphor encapsulates the aspect of a goal or destination, a path to get there, and the environment through which one must travel (qualitative metrics). Additionally, the journey metaphor incorporates the previously described three stages of a Current state (current position), Transition state (path), and Future state (destination). It is here where the roles, responsibilities, and definitions of leadership and management can become blurred. Covey provides a helpful metaphor differentiating the two: “management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.” (Covey 1990, p. 101). Defining the right wall is highly strategic and involves one’s worldview and value system that will be covered in a later section. The ladder-climbing in this metaphor represents navigating the path. From the life journey metaphor this addresses the question, “What’s the best way to travel?” As a general

construct, one useful answer would be to travel with excellence. An online dictionary (Dictionary.com) defines excellence as:

1. the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence:
2. an excellent quality or feature:

Pursuing Excellence

Excellence is a description of stellar performance or quality. Ralph Marston adds an interesting observation that “Excellence is not skill. It is an attitude” (Wise Sayings). General Colin Powell concurred with that sentiment noting, “If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception; it is a prevailing attitude.” In addition to confirming that excellence is a habit, Aristotle observes, “Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.” (Wise Sayings).

Management through Measurement

Several metrics are identified through a cursory review of these few quotes. Excellence involves a particular quality type of choice or decision (wise) that incorporates an intentional attitude and effort that must be consistently performed (habit) and sustained. It is this pursuit of excellence and the desire to be efficient and effective with superior quality results that became the foundational driver of Total Quality Management and its protégé, Lean Six-Sigma where the three baseline variables of quality, cost, and speed are analyzed and optimized to produce the highest return-on-investment (ROI) (George, 2003, pp. 6—7). Utilizing variables that can be numerically analyzed and evaluated is a key objective as Peter Drucker advised that you cannot manage what you cannot measure (Joullié, 2015). One should note that the variables of cost and speed are to be minimized—lowest cost and fastest speed. They are also more precisely defined

and understood. Speed is time and cost is most often presented as money although there can be intangible “costs” involved. The concept of lean addresses these two variables whereas Six Sigma focuses on quality (George, 2005). Quality represents performance or the value received relative to the cost expended. It too, is most often expressed as a numerical or dollar value although that value can vary dependent upon the organizational objective. Gaining market share or a prestigious award may not always reflect in bottom line accounting (Joullié, 2015).

Though analyzing the philosophical aspects of excellence has been a pursuit of man for thousands of years, the modern initial thrust toward efficiency and effectiveness in the business world began in the early part of the last century with the Scientific Method otherwise known as Taylorism (Northouse, 2019). The two titles are synonymous as Taylor, even as early as 1915, was considered the “father of the scientific method” (Aitkin, 2014). Taylor employed a stopwatch to measure work productivity to establish task-oriented time standards. The use of labor standards, particularly within union work forces, is still prevalent today (Darmody, 2007).

As Morgan (2006) describes in his text, *Images of Organizations*, Taylor’s organizational model and leadership style aligned with the concept of viewing organizations as a machine. As a machine, management through measurement could be employed. The machine metaphor in business organization continued to be developed and refined. After World War II, Edward Deming was asked by the US government for his assistance in rebuilding the Japanese industrial sector. Influenced by Taylor, Deming persuaded top Japanese management of the value of statistical methods and the importance of quality as a competitive advantage (Staff, 2012).

Deming began to widen his gaze and take a more holistic approach when it came to identifying the variables necessary to operate an efficient and effective organization. This comprehensive approach is reflected in the use of the word “total” in Total Quality Management (TQM)

(Douglas, 2004). TQM is a leadership philosophy and management model that features an egalitarian cooperative structure with service-oriented, customer-centric values, and attitudes functioning in a continuously improving, management-thru-measurement environment. Table 1 streamlines Deming’s 14-point management model into seven core constructs (Douglas, 2004).

Table 1

Constructs underlying the Deming Management Method

Core Constructs	Description
Visionary Leadership	The ability of management to establish, practice, and lead a long-term vision for the organization, driven by changing customer requirements, as opposed to an internal management control role.
Internal & External Cooperation	The propensity of the organization to engage in noncompetitive activities internally among employees and externally with respect to suppliers.
Learning	The organizational capability to recognize and nurture the development of its skills, abilities, and knowledge base.
Process Management	The set of methodological and behavioral practices emphasizing the management of process, or means of actions, rather than results.
Continuous Improvement	The propensity of the organization to pursue incremental and innovative improvements of its processes, products, and services.
Employee Fulfillment	The degree to which employees of an organization feel that the organization continually satisfies their need.
Customer Satisfaction	The degree to which an organization’s customers continually perceive that their needs are being met by the organization’s products and services.

Analyzing these seven constructs or principles further, they can be consolidated into three fundamental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that emphasize holistic or total system optimization:

1. **Dynamic Leadership** – Leadership vision fixes the gaze upon the ultimate goal (Covey’s “Begin with the end in mind” (1990) and merges the consistency of purpose (Kotter, 2012) and commitment to excellence into a dynamic and flexible model that is attuned and sensitive to ever-changing customer needs, employee needs, and the environment.
2. **Commitment to Excellence** – There is an emphasis on continual learning translating to a continuous improvement approach that embraces the consistency of method as a baseline from which to measure future growth and efficiency (Sandford, nd).

3. Participant Fulfillment – The model views the entire supply chain with an emphasis of ensured benefit to all parties (customers, employees, vendors, and suppliers) are continuously measured and evaluated for effectiveness. This is consistent with Covey's fourth and sixth Habit to "Think Win – Win" and "Synergize" (Covey, 1990).

Deming's effort in Japan was an unqualified success and in appreciation for his leadership and guidance, the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers established the Deming Prize for superior quality improvement in his honor (Staff, 2012). Today, it is Japanese engineers that are contributing to the quality model and that is reflected in many of the terms within lean six-sigma.

One such term is Kaizen. "The philosophy of Kaizen is based on the concept that instead of making big changes at once, the continuous improvement approach focuses on making small improvement over time. Kaizen is often referred to as the 'strategy for 1% gains.'" (Sandford, nd, para 9—10). This concept has grown in recognition and importance to become a specialized department (Continuous Improvement or CI) within major organizations. The definition and concept of Continuous Improvement or CI is as follows: "The planned, ongoing and systematic process of ongoing, incremental and company-wide change of existing practices aimed at improving company performance" (Hoem, 2016, p. 39). The holistic concept inspired by Deming continues to develop as "operational excellence initiatives have always been about the interaction of people, process, and technology and it mostly revolves around people" (Murugesan, 2018, para 8). George provides the following assessment quoting Geoff Turk, Corporate 6 σ Champion at Caterpillar who noted,

"If people have something to do they believe is worthwhile, they have a purpose, they can make a difference in a very defined and measurable way. If they make that difference, and they're rewarded, they get energized and motivated and want to come to work and make a difference. And if you can do that for people, that's the magic."
(George, 2007. p. 179).

Research professor in Organization theory, Dr. Dahlgaard-Park offers this pragmatic summation:

Excellence includes doing common, everyday things and excellence isn't necessary determined by comparing a score or a performance to someone else. The pursuit of

excellence comes from doing our best with a view of growing and improving in terms of realizing one's potential. When we care more, risk more, dream more and expect more while doing everyday things, we are on the way to realize our potentials. It is a never-ending journey. Excellence is not a stage, but a way of doing, way of living, a process of becoming. If our today is better than yesterday, we have realized a small amount of our potentials and we can further dream on and work on for a better day tomorrow. (Dahlgard, 2009, p. 25)

Ethics in Excellence

In a paper written in the mid-1990s, John Milton-Smith looked back upon the business behavior of the 1980s and categorized it as “unsurpassed greed” (Milton-Smith, 1995). He goes on to note that financial deregulation enabled the unethical scandals of BCCI and the junk bond industry. Similar comparisons could be made of WorldCom, Enron, Tyco International, Qwest, and the collapse of the derivatives market in this century (Svensson, 2008). Independently, both Milton-Smith and Svensson proclaimed the urgent need for a business ethics model.

Thus, excellence is not simply an attitude and action of sustained proficiency within a moral vacuum. In the beginning chapter of *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis observed that humans have an innate awareness of an embedded moral code. Though implicit, this moral code was so prevalent and universally recognized throughout various cultures and societies that it was formerly called the Law of Nature (Lewis, 1952, p. 4). Cloud (2006) expresses a similar sentiment where he states that there exists “universal values such as love, compassion, justice, freedom, honesty, faithfulness, responsibility and the like that are no more optional than gravity” (p. 86). Svensson (2008) may not necessarily disagree with Cloud, but he addressed the challenge of global trade among peoples of different ethnic backgrounds and values. Livermore (2015) confirms that difficulty noting that leadership in today’s world is a multicultural challenge and the associated complexities are not just interactions in international business but within one’s own organization. Quoting a senior executive at a global eyewear company, “Diversity is. It’s already here, it’s here to stay, and it’s going to become more of an issue

everywhere” (Livermore, 2016, p. 3). Along with this diversity comes the inherently different value systems and the necessary acumen of cultural intelligence to deal with it.

In qualitative terms, the expressed consensus of this sample set of views is that there is a need for ethics and there are universal values embedded within the human psyche. From a quantitative perspective, the commentary implies that a variance in these values likely exists between cultures and within the context of each individual. Regarding ethics as an attribute of excellence, the logical or philosophical question is whether the standard of excellence merely requires a minimum threshold to be met such as the medical profession’s associated principle to “Do no harm” or the Golden Rule of treating others as one desires to be treated (Matt 7:12), or is there a continuous quest for improvement and higher quality in the ethical realm as well? A. W. Tozer considered it to be the latter when he opined, “As the excellence of steel is strength, and the excellence of art is beauty, so the excellence of mankind is moral character” (Grace quotes).

Collaboration and Competition

In the journey of life there will be opportunities to work together to collaborate and synergize as well as occasions of competition. Both Deming and Covey promoted excellence and effectiveness through collaboration and holistic improvement as a general mindset. The guideline of the Golden rule (Matt 7:12) to treat each other with fairness and respect has universal appeal as a governing premise. This is the preferred path. However, there are specific goals of common pursuit that create a competitive environment. These objective prizes vary greatly from resources, rewards, market share, sales, or the special recognition or favor of a particular individual or group. Within this broad category there exists a subset of discrete scenarios that fall into the category of zero-sum game (Washburn, 2014). Sports, politics, and warfare are typical genres for these types of encounters and they often present themselves in complex and chaotic

environments (Snowden, 2020). Though sporting events typically involve friendly competition and politics with its negative advertising and animosity does so to a lesser extent, the concept of warfare is profoundly serious in which the stakes can be life or death. In this arena, wisdom and sound decision-making are keys to survival (Sweetwater, 2008).

Warfare, ideally performed, achieves victory without conflict (Griffith, 1975). However, there are times when such opportunities are not present, and war becomes inevitable. US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld noted that at those times, “you go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time” (Fancy Quotes). Pastor Jentezen Franklin (2018) sermonized a three-pronged wisdom strategy based on the efforts of Shamgar who defended Israel by slaying 600 Philistines with just an ox goad (Judges 3:31), “You start where you are. You use what you have and you do what you can.”

Though over twenty-five hundred years old, Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* is a seminal text on warfare and battle tactics (Griffith, 1975). It’s concepts and principles are used today and even spill over into the competitive world of business, sports, and politics. Sun Tzu observed five constant factors requiring consideration before battle: The Moral Law, Heaven, Earth, The Commander, and Method and Discipline (Sweetwater, 2008). The Moral Law addresses unity among the people and their ruler. As such, it measures commitment and cohesion of an organization. Heaven and Earth describe environmental factors such as day/night, cold/heat, aspects of terrain, distances, and survivability conditions. The Commander addresses the wisdom, integrity, benevolence, courage, and discipline of the leader and the organization’s leadership. Method and Discipline address the tactics employed and the associated execution precision of those instructions. Though specifically intended for a military in preparation for battle, these attributes and considerations apply to regular organizations as well. Organizational

commitment and unity of purpose are characteristics of a high performing team (MacMillan, 2014). Inspiring leadership is transformational (Northouse, 2019). Training and teaching are key functions of a leader (Bredfeldt, 2013). Knowing one's environmental state is critical (Snowden, 2020) and the use of best practice techniques (methods) produces quality results (George, 2005).

Sun Tzu noted that all warfare is based on deception—when weak appear strong or when near appear far. “Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt” (Sweetwater, 2008, p. 33). These techniques belie the importance of truth in decision-making. The objective is to create confusion (lack of truth) within the enemy's command and control. Acting with speed and a shorter OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) loop or decision cycle mitigates a power advantage while creating disorientation within an enemy's ranks (Coram, 2002). When an opponent struggles to correctly observe and orient (gather and process truth), they often hesitate or act timidly which leads to disastrous results (Freeborn, 2021). Deception is the primary tool of the adversary. Thus, awareness and preparation for it is wise. Another Sun Tzu maxim is to know your enemy (Griffith, 1975).

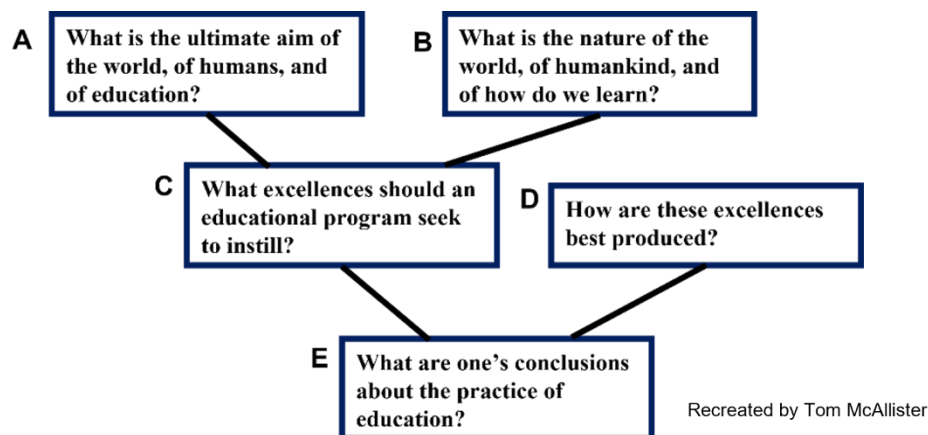
Incorporating a Worldview

One of the critical jobs of a leader is to define the destination or using Covey's previously described illustration, to select the right wall for leaning the ladder of success. Sometimes that leadership rests not on an individual but an executive team, corporate board, or some defined group of stakeholders (Northouse, 2019). However, the responsibility of choosing the destination remains within that individual or group. Choosing the proper destination (Future state) and guiding through the proper path (Transition state) involves many variables to consider which are weighted by a priority or value system. The root source of this value system is embedded in one's worldview. Defining one's worldview and as a team or organization defining one's value

system is incredibly important. In his text, *“Christian Education and the Search for Meaning”* Jim Wilhoit cites Frankena’s work through this helpful funnel matrix shown in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5

Educational Worldview and Goals



(Wilhoit, 2018, p. 125)

Though presented for developing an educational system, the philosophy and approach remains the same for any endeavor. One simply replaces the word “education” with one’s Company name, Continuous Improvement, or discipleship. Determining the answers to Boxes A and B provide the strategic basis for establishing a worldview. Two critical components which serve as measuring sticks in how to view the world need to be determined. The first effort is defining and pursuing truth and discerning the level of accuracy required for what we know.

The second component is defining an objective vice relative value system. Utilizing a building analogy, the cornerstone is the most important stone as every other stone is placed based on the position of the first or cornerstone. Likewise, “when building a set of values or character traits, there is one that each individual considers to be most important—that is one’s cornerstone and everything else is evaluated relative to it” (Brightlight, 2013, p. 93). Quoting Peters and Waterman, Wilhoit (2018) notes,

“Every excellent company . . . is clear on what it stands for and takes the process of value shaping seriously” (Peters and Waterman 1982, p. 280). In the most successful companies, certain values permeate the corporate structure, giving direction to employees and programs. (p. 94)

Commenting upon the vast number of theories and descriptions when it comes to leadership and organizational theory, Yukl (2013) noted that there are nearly as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it. On a smaller scale, this may parallel describing the moral aspects of excellence. Many align with Cloud’s premise that there exist universal values, but the actual dispersion/distribution of attitudes related to those values may be significant. In Nazi Germany, Hitler lieutenants Himmler and Heydrich praised Rudolph Hoss, the Commandant of Auschwitz, for his dedication and efficiency of mass murder (Russell, 2019). Within today’s global society there are some cultures that consider eating pork to be morally repulsive while there are other cultures (thankfully very few) that have no qualms about eating other people. Hiebert (2013) also recognized the importance of worldview congruency in his text, *Transforming Worldviews*, where he observed, “The concept of worldview has emerged during the past two decades as an important concept in philosophy, philosophy of science, history, anthropology, and Christian thought” (p. 13). The apologetic quickly recognizes the interconnected philosophical thought that one’s worldview contains an embedded value system and that value system becomes the baseline moral code for defining excellence. This aligns with Lowe’s concept of a universal ecology where he states, “everything is connected and nothing acts in isolation” (Lowe, 2018, p. 12). What’s the standard of measure and ruler to employ? More importantly, who is the one to determine it? In an attempt to normalize to a common worldview standard of the theoretical and the theological frameworks, the following series of “If-and-then” Boolean logic statements (inspired by an Andy Stanley sermon entitled “*Imagine*”) can be used:

If there is a Creator of the universe (God), and...

If this Creator has established for humanity a life after this earthly one, and

If this new life has far greater potential in terms of duration (i.e., eternity) and fulfillment (i.e., joy/peace/paradise) than this life, and...

If what we say, think, do, and believe in this life somehow affects the outcome or status of our next life, then...

How should we live our life? (Brightlight, 2013, p. 11)

These are indispensable thoughts relative to developing a life journey model as the agreement to the “If statements” and the subsequent answer to how one should live one’s life, dictates what kind of value system and cornerstone one should have. If there is no God, then meaning and purpose become locally defined and relative to the beholder. If there is no afterlife, then any Return on Investment (ROI) calculation becomes limited to this earthly life. Even the apostle Paul noted that if our hope in Christ is for this world only, then we are to be most pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). If there are no consequences for what one does in this earthly life, then it no longer becomes a metric to be evaluated. To summarize, if any of these “If statements” are rejected as false, then morality, ethics, purpose, meaning, wisdom, and excellence all devolve into a relativity of the eye of the beholder. Drafting well-cited papers merely become one shared opinion among others with no absolute moral value system to discern its merit. Though alleged by Cloud, Lewis, Tozer, and others that universal values exist and are embedded within the human psyche, they could only be universally expressed based on a least common denominator. Interpretation and response to truth is relativistic. The life journey model has no real purpose or end in mind thus favoring a life strategy of “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you may die.”

This is an unsatisfactory conclusion. In such a framework, the concepts of ethics, purpose, excellence, and wisdom become restricted to a global groupthink consent. However, if the previous “If statements” are true, then an open system of growth and continuous

improvement exists. In the writing of this study, the theoretical and theological frameworks must be congruent. One additional step remains to zero in on a particular worldview and strategy. To complete this merger of the theoretical and the theological, two more “If-Then statements” need to be added and accepted as true: “If Jesus Christ is the Son of God possessing all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), and if His command is to follow Him,” then...Follow Him.

Related Literature

In the life journey metaphor, there needs to be a leader even if it is a solo expedition. Bredfeldt (2018) provides the most basic of definitions in that leadership is “moving people from here to there.” Beyond this simple definition as Yukl’s comment previously asserted, the sum total of leadership definitions gets quite numerous (Yukl, 2006). Northouse’s text, *“Leadership: Theory and Practice”* provides an extensive summary overview of the major leadership theories and develops them in a chronological order of appearance from the innate or born leader theory (popular among kings and leaders who wished to maintain a dynasty type rule) to the multiple types of skills, attributes, and situational styles (Northouse, 2019). Though they each have their respective strengths and weaknesses through what they emphasize, there are a few universal components that apply to every leader and journey of moving people from here to there.

Critical Metrics and Leadership Overview

Conducting a holistic assessment of the critical metrics, the first component is the leader and all the skills, attributes, and responsibilities and the second is the followers with the same metrics subset. The third component is the goal—the “there” or destination, be it a physical one or some type of achievement, acquisition, or objective. The fourth component is the path which denotes the delta or gap between the “here and the there.” The fifth component is the environment or “road conditions” which may be ordered or unordered (Snowden, 2020). The

sixth component is any adversary/competitor, the seventh includes suppliers, vendors, supporters, and affiliates, and the eighth is the customer(s)/society.

At the overview level, many of the attributes found in a good leader (courage, ethics, communication, inspirational) are common among several leadership theories, but the roles and responsibilities can vary greatly as “leadership is action, not position” (Chiarelli, 2011). Laniak, modeling after Christ, used the shepherd metaphor for leadership, promoting a generalist approach, “Shepherds have a multitude of duties from feeding, tending their sheep, ensuring rest, safeguarding and security, leading them at proper times and seasons to different fields and sources of water, perform animal husbandry and this includes knowing each sheep on an individual basis and creating an emotional bond” (Laniak, 2018, pp. 54-57). Pastor Andy Stanley (2003) argues a more streamlined and specialized approach suggesting that leaders should emphasize what they do well and delegate the duties where they have less aptitude or inferior skills. Adams (2001) agrees, advising leaders to “play to their strengths.”

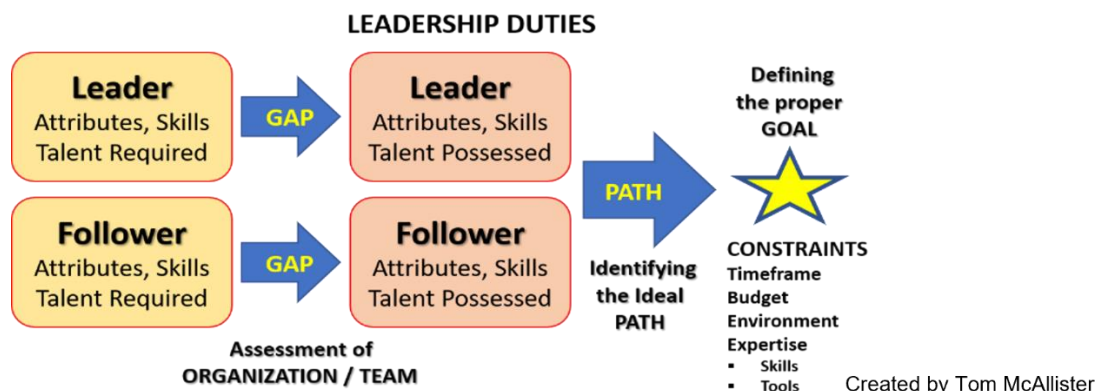
Robert House’s Path-Goal Theory (PGT) notes two of the eight universal components in its title and he also emphasized the importance of employee productivity where he utilized expectancy theory to discern what kinds of rewards would motivate the workforce (House, 1975). He incorporated flexible techniques in leadership style much like Hersey and Blanchard proposed in their Situational Leadership theory where the leader adapts to the environment and the skill level of the worker (Hersey, 1985) with an emphasis on how to motivate employees (Scouller, 2020). McGregor’s (2006) “Theory ‘Y’” promoted empowering the workforce and emphasizing pride of workmanship (Cleary, 2017). Snowden (2010) stresses the importance of recognizing the level of complexity of the environmental conditions before choosing the proper solution path noting that the “best practices” in a simple environment will not work in a complex

or chaotic environment. Contemporary leadership thought leader, Robert Greenleaf introduced the Servant Leader model where he noted that the servant-leader is one who is servant first (Spears, 1998). This nuanced approach was not the motivational “carrot” that House offered as incentive for workers, but a humble, give of self, first, and act as a role model leadership style.

Transformational leadership also embraced the humble, servant-leader aspect while stressing vision casting and guided change through innovation (Northouse, 2019). The key metric is motivation through inspiration—to inspire followers to take ownership and be their best (Bass, 1996). Hartwig (2015) in his *“Five Disciplines of Collaborative Church Leadership”* text also recommended “transformational leadership” reiterating the key dynamic that the leader and followers encourage one another to achieve a higher level of morality and motivation (Burns, 2004). Though the transformational leadership model relies on employee or follower development and recognizing their skills and adjusting to them, it requires a highly skilled and reasonably charismatic leader to provide the inspiration. Some of these major challenges facing a leader are provided in Figure 6.

Figure 6

The Leadership Challenge



As Hersey (1985) summarizes in situational leadership, there is no one method or leadership type that works best in all situations. Leadership is dynamic, relationships are

intricate, and the environment can be stressful and difficult to discern. As the book of Exodus elaborately illustrates, it is an extremely complex challenge in moving people from here to there.

Fractal Life Cycle

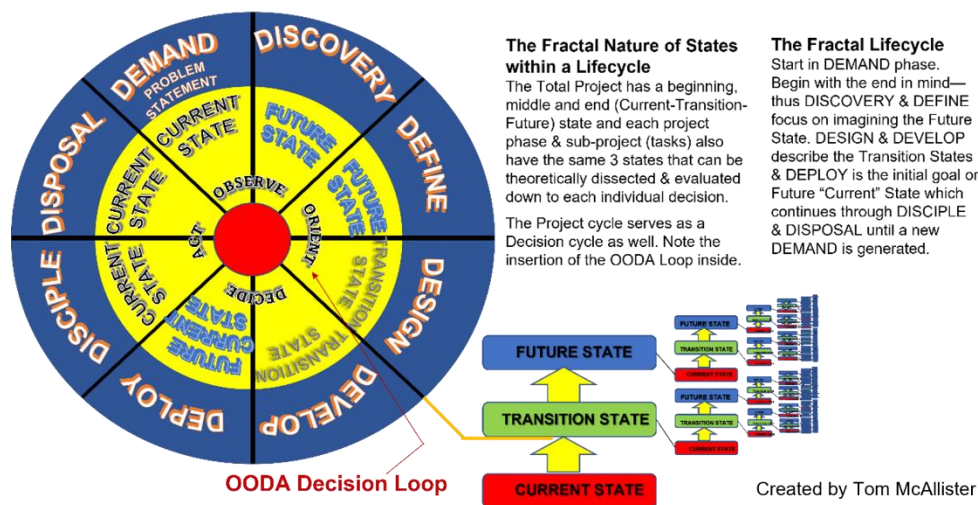
Similar to the three conditional states (Current-Transition-Future) describing the stage one is in, most projects or endeavors can be described in phases (Meredith, 1989). These multi-phased lifecycles are numerous although most differentiate via semantics. Lean-sigma stresses optimizing three metrics of quality, cost, and speed and provides the DMAIC model (Define-Measure-Analyze-Implement-Control) as the tool to manage projects (George, 2007). The methodology typically employs the SIPOC template (Supplier, Input, Process, Output, Customer) for each business process (George, 2005). For software development, the waterfall method provided a very structured approach (initially developed by Henry Ford) but companies desiring something more dynamic and flexible choose the Agile method which promotes the stages of Plan, Design, Develop, Test, Release, Feedback (Sacolick, 2020). Each has their strengths and weaknesses. A generic lifecycle model developed by this author (entitled “8D” for its alliteration effect) is depicted in Figure 7 showing eight phases from initial Demand (need to do something) through solution delivery (Deploy) to the final destination of the lifecycle, Disposal (obsolescence or end of life). Additionally, the three states (Current-Transition-Future) are presented in a fractal pattern representing the states and substates that denote the status of one’s location within a phase that discretely diminish down theoretically to each individual decision. Additional information on the attributes of this lifecycle is found in Appendix D.

Though not shown, the 8D lifecycle also follows a fractal pattern. For every discrete decision there is a beginning-middle-end state (noted above) and the decision process itself follows a Discovery (gather information)-Define (identify key metrics)-Design (formulate the

solution), detail, develop, and implement the solution/decision (Develop & Deploy) and so on, analytical thought process. The previously discussed OODA decision loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) aligns with this 8D model where “Observe” corresponds to the input/data gathering of Demand and Discovery, “Orient” relates to information processing in Define and Design, “Decide” initiates the solution of Develop and Deploy and then one “Acts.” At the granular level of a typical routine decision, one cycles through these phases of thought in a matter of seconds and to document the process at this level would take longer than the decision itself. However, in terms of analysis of the critical thinking process, this template serves as a useful tool.

Figure 7

The 8D Lifecycle



When viewed at the strategic and managerial level, these tandem project tools enable a team or organization to track where they are in a large project or process (Wheeler, 2000). Each phase has specific milestones, goals, and objectives which enables leaders to track progress and reallocate resources if a particular subsection is falling behind (Meredith, 1989). It gives a sense of order and provides stability in planning and executing. As Sacolick (2020) promotes the Agile model to better leverage collaboration tools, enhance quality, and shorten the development cycle

time, this describes the requirements necessary to meet the faster-paced and more complex environment of the business world today.

New thought that is emerging is the concept of fractal management (Bider, 2017). As previously noted, fractals are geometric or behavioral patterns in which smaller parts are similar to the whole. This distinguishing self-similar characteristic recognizes that in the overall mosaic pattern, the pieces replicate the whole and within business organizational structures, it denotes a subsystem that behaves and is architected similar to the larger system (Leute, 2017). This attribute is useful for analysis when linear cause-effect relationships are not present. Fractals appear in complex environments. For ordered systems, correlation of cause and effect is strong. Interactions are predictable. Complexity theory refers to people interacting with each other as a “complex adaptive system” (CAS) (Leute, 2017). Human relationships are often treated as nonlinear (Stacey, 2012) and extensive human interaction weakens cause-effect predictability. Thus, complexity science is meaningful for evaluating large organizations (van Uden, 2005).

The appealing aspect of fractals within business processes is subset similarity to the larger whole which gives some measure of scope of the unpredictability (Bider, 2017), as well as take advantage of inherent autonomous, self-organizing capabilities (Karaulova, 2013, Raye, 2014) within sub-groups. Reviewing the life cycle illustration, there is a Current state of Demand and the deliverable Future State of Deploy where the solution is implemented. This is followed by a CI program (Disciple) until termination (Disposal). As previously noted, within each phase there are multitudes of tasks and subtasks that each have their own Current-Transition-Future state which reflects the fractal aspect of progression through the life cycle. Additionally, within each of these subtasks, there exists a fractal decision cycle of assessing, defining, designing, and developing before deciding a course of action. As the previous comparison to calculus or the

summation of a series function, the continuous journey of life with a defined goal, destination, or end in mind (Covey, 1990) can be successfully segmented into discrete individual decisions and evaluated for their efficiency and effectiveness individually as well as within the overall path progression toward achieving the goal.

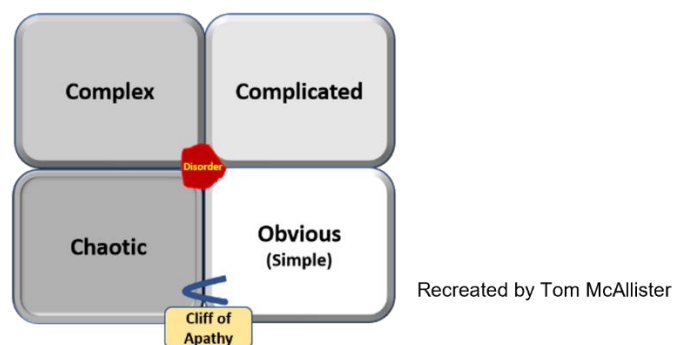
The Environmental Model

Any activity involving detailed human interaction is challenging and involves complexity (McLaren, 2006). This is troubling for those who view organizational structures solely as machines (Morgan, 2006). “For many projects related to business processes, it is important to find all, or at least a major part, of the business processes that exist in a given organization or enterprise” (Bider, 2017, p. 1). Creating models, structures, and methodologies provide comfort for forecasting the future as the power of an accurate paradigm rests in its ability to explain and predict (Covey, 2006). The difficulty is that some events are not predictable (Karaulova, 2013).

The Cynefin model developed by Snowden (2010) addresses this issue as it depicts the various systemic states of ordered, unordered, and disordered. His model is a 2x2 matrix with ordered systems on the right and unordered systems on the left and disordered in the center. Disorder represents an organization’s inability to classify or recognize its current environment.

Figure 8

The Cynefin Model



(Snowden, 2020) (Brougham, 2015)

The model reflects greater uncertainty and less constraint as one moves counterclockwise through the four systems. The more developed model has a 3-dimensional aspect not clearly depicted in Figure 8. There is a cliff or drop-off (shown as the cliff of apathy) between the Obvious (Simple) zone and the Chaotic illustrating that one can go from highly ordered to a chaos state quickly (Snowden, 2010). As an example, in a highly constrained manufacturing environment where knowns are commonplace and unknowns few, shoddy performance of routine activities can cause a process to drift until the accumulation of such substandard behavior creates massive failure with an out-of-spec finished product coming off the assembly lines. A more personal example would be driving one's car and due to inattentiveness, drifting off the road into a gulley. What was once a routine (simple) process (driving a car) is now a chaotic situation of being stranded in a ditch (Brougham, 2015).

As a general process, Snowden (2010) emphasizes that a leader or leadership team needs to assess the environment or state of their organization in order to discern the best method forward. One such evaluation method is the PESTEL framework which serves as an acronym to consider the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal aspects and attributes involved (Stacey, 2012). This high-level, ecosystem approach may assist in initially identifying the troubled area but detailed analysis must be done at the transaction level to fully discern the environmental conditions.

It should be noted that for large organizations, different departments or subgroups may be in different environments. As examples are a project or research team intensely immersed in complexity trying to discover a root cause of a major problem while the company's marketing group is partying away at a trade show or an army division where certain units are engaged in combat and thus are in a complex and perhaps chaotic environment while reserve units not in

battle may be resting in a simple state. An embellished summary of the environmental attributes and characteristics noted by Snowden (2020) for each system state is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Environmental Characteristics within the Cynefin model

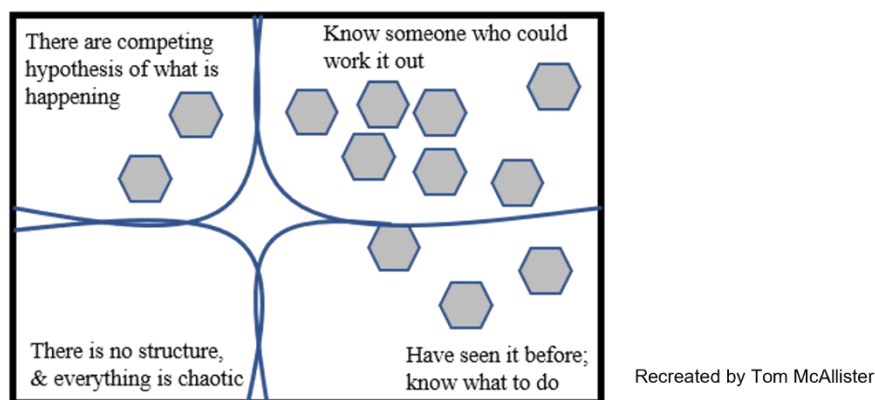
COMPLEX	COMPLICATED
SQL – Sensing Quality Leadership Variance – [Outcome Distribution] - Moderate Truth Revelation Level – Moderate [Knowns \leq (Known Unknowns + Unknown Unknowns)] Cause-Effect paradigm: Moderate Methodology: Probe – Sense (Emergent Practice) Common Environment: Warfare, Sports, Politics	TQL – Total Quality Leadership Variance – [Outcome Distribution] – Moderately Low Truth Revelation Level – Moderately High [Knowns $>$ (Known Unknowns + Unknown Unknowns)] Cause-Effect paradigm: High Methodology: Sense – Analyze [Good Practice] Common Environment: New Development
CHAOTIC	OBVIOUS (Simple)
AQL – Acting Quality Leadership Variance – [Outcome Distribution] - High Truth Revelation Level – Low [Knowns \ll (Known Unknowns + Unknown Unknowns)] Cause-Effect paradigm: Low or Unknown Methodology: Act – Sense [Novel Practice] Common Environment: Disaster (9/11), Mass Disruption	TQM – Total Quality Management Variance – [Outcome Distribution] – Low Truth Revelation Level – High [Knowns \gg (Known Unknowns + Unknown Unknowns)] Cause-Effect paradigm: Very High Methodology: Sense – Categorize [Best Practice] Common Environment: Repetitive Routine Activities

Discovering the environment in which one's organization is located may not be easy. By establishing thought boundaries, Brougham offers a useful exercise of contextualization for the organizational leadership team that is navigating through terrain where the type of environment is unclear. Using the 2x2 matrix as a control volume, he considers the outer extreme aspect of each state and contextualizes it (Brougham, 2015). For the Obvious the context is “seen it, know

how to do it” and for Chaotic it is that “everything is chaos and nothing can be discerned.” For the Complicated quadrant, the context is “knowing someone who could help solve the issue (i.e., experts)” and in the Complex the context is stating “there are competing hypotheses of what is happening” (pp. 22-25). The executive team then identifies the key issues and problems, writes them on notecards or sticky notes then geographically places them on the developed matrix. An illustration in Figure 9 demonstrates this concept:

Figure 9

Mapping Issues in the Cynefin model



(Brougham, 2015)

This enables leaders to build a pictograph or map through problem contextualization to discern their environment. Leaders and team members of an organization are subjected to continual streams of data but no data has meaning without context (Wheeler, 2000). Discovering where one is (Current state) is crucial to determining how and where to go next (Transition state). Karaulova (2013) observes that a complex system can consist of a large number of elements which could be simple. Identifying those items and issues enables the initiation of action of the “have seen it before; know what to do” resolution type and thus, “unclutters the board” leaving the remaining more complicated issues to resolve.

Particularly in complex environments, the attitude is preparing for the unpredictable.

Karaulova (2013, para 9) notes that “complex systems are never completely predictable, even if the working principles are known, therefore managers should plan to deal with unexpected events.” This is not a new concept. Both the Boy and Girl Scout organizations were built on the motto of “Be Prepared” and famed basketball coach John Wooden was quite fond of a Ben Franklin quip, “Failing to prepare is preparing to fail” (Wooden, 2009, p. 55).

Wisdom and Decision Theory

There is nothing more impactful to one’s life than the decisions that one makes (Stanley, 2008). Poet Edwin Markham said, “Choices are the hinges of destiny” and the process that follows is first, we make our decisions...then our decisions make us (Rodenhizer, 2018). A hinge is an apt metaphor and many a course in one’s life as well as the fate of nations have swung on that fulcrum device. Decision Theory is a key component in any business enterprise (Meredith, 1989) and decision-making is a key component for everyone. Decision Tree analysis is where the probabilities and payoffs for each outcome are carefully measured for ROI. Wheeler (2000) emphasizes the importance of interpreting data in the flow of Data → Analysis → Interpretation as a macro business process strategy but the flow process (fractal nature) is that this logical process applies to an individual decision as well.

The necessary trait is wisdom. The universe started with wisdom, “The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding” (Prov 3:19) and “blessed is the man who it” (Prov 3:13). Casteel (1990) notes that the identification of Christ with Divine Wisdom can be traced to the earliest traditions of Christianity. In developing a character trait hierarchy, Covey (2006) states that “wisdom is the child of integrity and integrity is the child of humility and courage” (p. 297). Cloud (2006) notes, “To live and flourish we must bow to the things larger than us.” He goes on to say that his purpose is not to choose what bigger things we

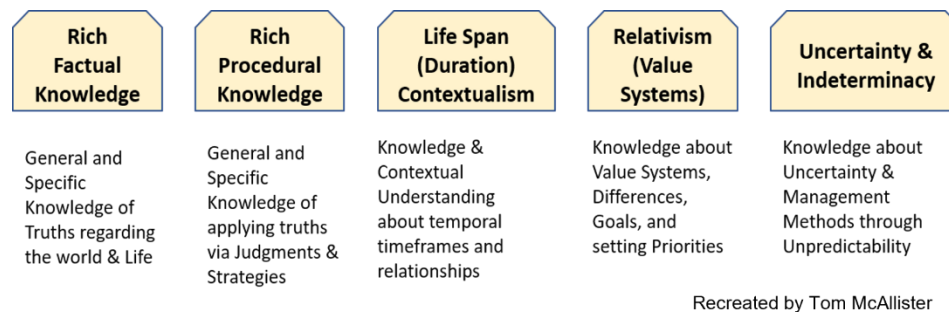
are to value to bow to, but to recognize the character trait of being able and willing to bow “more than defining what those things are.” Though “defining what those things are” is extremely important, his point reinforces Covey’s emphasis on humility and recognizing that we don’t know everything. The apostle Paul emphasized humility by exhorting others to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1) and to have the mind of Christ who emptied Himself to become a human servant (Phil 2:5—8). Humility also removes the mentality of entitlement. Rick Warren (2002) emphasized this point in the lead-off sentence of his bestseller, *The Purpose Driven Life*: “It’s not about you.” Humility is a key attitude in stressful, complex environments and its “spouse,” courage, is the heart to get through it with their grandchild of wisdom guiding the way. Meyer (2007, p. 358) notes, “Wisdom of the individual sage is the ability and desire to make the best use of available but incomplete knowledge so as to make choices that can gain approval in a long-term examination by a wide variety of people.”

The quest for wisdom is as old as humankind and though researchers and scholars have pondered the concept of wisdom from Aristotle and Plato, the discipline is still in its infancy (Staudinger, 2013). Bower (1990) answers the question of “What is wisdom?” by stating the distinct answers: 1) cognitive process 2) virtue 3) a good desirable trait. The three are intertwined. To have wisdom to make good decisions requires a cognitive process built on a foundation of virtue and that is a desirable trait. Virtue relates to a proper value system and axiology that guides and prioritizes one’s decision-making (Yount, 2014). The workings of wisdom is complicated. Intezari and Pauleen (2018, p. 336) note that “wisdom is a multifaceted quality engaging human cognition, conation (Birren & Fisher, 1990), and affect (Ardelt, 2004), unifying subjectivity and objectivity (McKenna, Rooney, & Kenworthy, 2013), and interweaving individuality and communality (Kupers, 2007).” Baltes, Staudinger, and others

developed the *Berlin Wisdom Paradigm* which described five core, interrelated components of wisdom. The key attribute could be summarized as expertise in life fundamentals or in navigating the journey of life to use this researcher's preferred metaphor. Figure 10 depicts these five components with a corresponding brief description (Baltes, 2000).

Figure 10

Five Components of Wisdom



The first two components mostly correlate to the core aspects of *sophia* (pure or theoretical wisdom) and *phronesis* (prudence, or practical wisdom) (Intezari, 2018) or the owning of general knowledge (facts) and the understanding in how to apply/utilize that knowledge (process). The remaining three components relate to meta criteria or context (Baltes, 2000). The third component addresses the timeframe aspect (short and long term) and its influence in relationships. The fourth component recognizes the importance of a value system and a methodology for prioritization and the final component recognizes the indeterminacy and unpredictability within life (ordered/unordered environments) (Snowden, 2010) and the need for methods and skills to manage through them (of which preparation, as previously discussed, is critical). Collectively, the paradigm promotes wisdom as possessing expert knowledge and judgment in the fundamental execution of life (Banicki, 2009).

At a simpler and more pragmatic level, a viable prototype for wise decision-making is the 4-way test developed by Herbert J. Taylor in 1932 and later adopted by the Rotary organization

(Rotary 5630, 2021). The test asks four questions:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build good will and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

The first question seeks truth and is followed by verifying whether it is just. The latter two questions align with Covey's 4th habit of thinking win-win (Covey, 1990) or the numerous beneficial interactions that the apostle Paul exhorts followers to serve and encourage one another. Pastor Andy Stanley in his *Best Question Ever* text embellishes and personalizes the scope when he advises a person to consider one's past experiences, assess their present circumstances, and then forecast one's future hopes and dreams. After those prerequisite steps of context contemplation, then ask what is the wise thing to do? (Stanley, 2005).

Hartwig and Bird (2015) address these boundaries for the more specific application of ministry team decision-making as shown in Figure 11. However, the methodology is useful in more general applications. It incorporates the blending of proven best practice techniques with a dedicated and committed effort of proactively seeking the LORD for guidance. The outer edges are described as ditches with the left ditch being completely void of spiritual awareness while the right ditch depicts the paralysis of inaction caused by an unfortunate lethargic interpretation of being still and waiting upon the LORD.

It is noted that there are particular milestones and inflection points where a specific answer is needed from the LORD. However, there is a considerable amount of instruction already given through God's Word. If an organization or team is proactively seeking God's Kingdom first (Matt 6:33), abiding by the Golden rule (Matt 7:12), fulfilling the Greatest commandment (Matt 22:37—39), and producing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22—23), against these things there is no law.

Figure 11*Path for Pursuing God's Will*

(Hartwig, 2015, p. 177)

The core construct of a wisdom template for decision-making is to ensure that all precepts and principles are first grounded in God's Word. Whatever leadership model, project implementation model, and/or team-building model that a ministry team or any organization utilizes, first discern the underlying biblical principles that support it. This provides a Kingdom of God perspective on every goal and action. This enables a team to take the highly researched and valuable secular best practice templates and convert them into tools suitable for Kingdom use. It also provides the guide for continuing work while waiting for specific instructions from the LORD.

Being familiar with biblical principles is crucial. When David was hiding in a cave while being pursued by King Saul, there was an opportunity in which Saul was quite vulnerable (1 Sam 24) such that David could have easily killed his oppressor. His men encouraged him to do so. Yet, David said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD" (1 Sam. 24:6). The logic of removing one's tormentor was sound. It was David's value system and embedded axiology of honoring God first and above all that directed the wise decision.

In his book *The Mindfulness Edge*, Tenney gives a detailed account of an Army Lieutenant in World War II whose platoon came under attack by a much larger German force.

Through his training and preparation, he guided his men, making quick, judicious decisions that saved the lives of most of his platoon. When their position got flanked, this Lieutenant left his position of cover and single-handedly engaged the enemy halting their flanking movement. In the process he was mortally wounded. For his actions, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor (Tenney, 2016). Tenney notes that this Lieutenant did not win the nation's highest honor for his sage and astute decisions while in combat though they mattered greatly. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his act of selflessness. He sacrificed all he had for others.

There is another act of ultimate sacrifice that is an inspiration to a sizable portion of the world. The King of kings and Lord of lords and the One in which one day every knee will bow and tongue will confess as Lord (Rom 14:11) came down from heaven, and “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7—8). “There is no greater love than for one to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). There is no greater virtue—this is the Wisdom of God.

Gaming Theory

Game or Gaming Theory is a popular analytical or decision modeling tool for business leaders and professionals working in the fields of operations research, economics, finance, retail, politics, government, military, insurance, marketing, conflict analysis, and energy, to name a few (Gass, 2003). The tools can be used for studying a wide range of subjects from the more granular risk tolerance in decision-making to multi-cooperatives in dealing with climate change to global prevention of nuclear war (Newkirk, 2016). The concept and benefit that the models provide is the ability to analyze complex topics involving human interaction efficiently by isolating and constraining decisions to an extremely limited number of variables. In doing so, it helps to

illuminate specific problems and provides different methods of viewing the problem and interpreting the competitive interactions and possible outcomes (Gass, 2003). The rules of the game (weight factors, rewards, punishments, win-lose-draw, etc.) can be adjusted to evaluate decision responses under various stressors or specific conditions.

The models serve as a social science laboratory where the nominal plethora of human choices in a given complex situation are restricted and controlled. Like any experiment, by holding several variables as fixed, correlational analysis between the variables under study can be scrutinized more closely. The gaming models and theory aren't without their detractors. Some consider that the strict limitations oversimplify the system being evaluated or even skew the environment to such an extent that it alters the results. As Guth and Kliemt note, "Game and decision theory start from rather strong premises. Preferences, represented by utilities, beliefs represented by probabilities, common knowledge and symmetric rationality as background assumptions are treated as 'given'" (Guth, 2010, p. 53).

One of the more famous games within gaming theory is known as the prisoner's dilemma. Embrey notes that "it is one of the most extensively studied games in the social sciences. The reason is that the tension at the center of the game—the conflict between what is socially efficient and individually optimal—underlies many interesting interactions, economic and otherwise" (Embrey, 2018, p. 510). Though the values of the variables may vary, the structure is such that a person must choose between individual benefit or collective benefit. A sample scenario is provided in the ensuing text.

The prisoner's dilemma is a game that concerns two players -- both suspects in a crime. They're arrested and brought to a police station. If both suspects protect each other by staying quiet (called **cooperation** in game theory terms), the police have only enough evidence to put each in jail for five years.

However, each suspect is offered a deal. If either one confesses (**defection** from a cooperative relationship), and the other suspect doesn't, the defector will be rewarded

with freedom, while the tight-lipped suspect will get 20 years in jail. If both confess, both get 10 years in jail. In totality, both players benefit most by cooperating with each other. [Ten years total time served (5 each) vice twenty years (20+0 or 10+10) for at least one defector]. Receiving a 20-year jail term is an unacceptable outcome. Since there's an opportunity for one of them to go scot-free by defecting, both players know the other is thinking along these same lines, both must defect out of self-interest. In doing so, the suspects receive 10-year sentences. This isn't the best outcome, but it is the best strategy for the situation the players find themselves in.

Any agreement or heartfelt promise between the two players to cooperate only guarantees that both will, in fact, secretly defect. A mutual promise not to confess actually encourages confession, which leads to freedom (the best individual outcome) for the self-interested. This is the prisoner's dilemma. Game theorists have determined that confessing is always the answer for both parties in this case. The reason for this is that each party must assume that the other will act with only self-interest in mind. (Scheve, 2008, p. 2)

This game has been run using all types of strategies such as when to cooperate or defect but the strategy that wins is to always defect (confess). Mathematically, this has been proven by John Nash, termed the Nash equilibrium (Scheve, 2008). The benefit of self-interest in this model is easily shown by comparing outcomes based upon the other player's decision. If player 1 always defects then player 1 goes free (best outcome) if player 2 cooperates. If player 1 defects and player 2 defects, player 1 gets 10 years but that is still the best outcome as had he/she chosen to cooperate in that situation, player 1 would have gotten 20 years (Scheve, 2008). This is true for any gaming session with a *finite* series of trials. If one stops here, these results are interesting but not overly exciting. However, the mathematical model predicts a different winner for an *infinite* number of trials. When viewed from an eternal perspective, cooperation is the better strategy and ultimately wins the game. There is an intriguing parallel of this mathematical result to one's worldview and life journey strategy. If living for this life only (finite series), then the best strategy is to be self-focused. If living with an eternal perspective, then the best strategy is to be cooperative-focused (love others).

Synergizing Theories

As Augustine opined that all truth is God's truth and a sovereign God can choose whomever He desires to reveal this truth. God can choose to make kings wise (1 Kings 3:3—11) or reveal wisdom through the lowly (1 Cor 1:27—28). Even a highly arrogant pagan king can be brought low and humbled (a seven-year diet of grass seemed to help facilitate the transition) such that he becomes an instrument to speak God's Word as found in the book of Daniel chapter four with King Nebuchadnezzar. Truth is truth; it plays no favorites nor has any rivals.

The Journey Model

Gathering and assessing truth is a central function to decision-making and the quality of management decisions plays a significant role in organizational performance (Intezari, 2018). The rapid pace of change, the expanding scope through globalization and the associated diversity that comes with it, combined with the technology to capture massive amounts of data presents a voluminous stream of information requiring immediate attention. The increasing deployment of data mining techniques demonstrates that the problem is not a lack of information but finding the necessary information (Han, 2012) and then distributing that information in a timely manner to those that need to know.

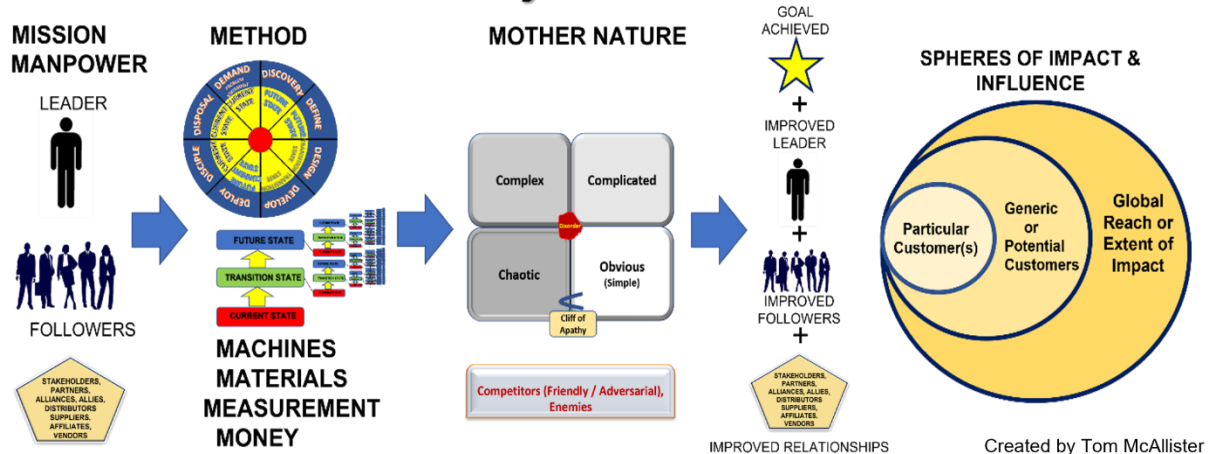
The preemptive approach is to define the critical metrics and establish the proper questions to ask and measurements to make. The incorporation of 8M includes the original 6M categories (Manpower, Machine, Method, Material, Measurement, & Mother Nature) of lean-sigma (George, 2007) plus the "M's" for Money (transactional ROI) and Mission (overall effectiveness through holistic alignment of organization on their purpose). Initially used as a troubleshooting tool for cause-effect analysis, the analysis tool is now commonly employed proactively as part of a Continuous Improvement (CI) program (McAllister, 2019). The

following model (Figure 12) is a composite of the developed pieces of this 8M fractal lifecycle process and illustrates the key elements and metrics to track and manage.

Figure 12

The Fractal Method Lifecycle model

The Fractal Method Lifecycle



FM: Leading People by Measuring, Monitoring, & Motivating them through an Environment toward Achieving a GOAL.
Ideal Outcome: GOAL Achieved, Improved Leader/Followers/Relationships, Enhanced (Environmental) Knowledge.

(McAllister, 2019) (Snowden, 2020, 2010)

Displayed is the path, goal, and environment (with lurking enemies) along with the relational entities to monitor and evaluate which are the leader, the followers (together as the Team), the supporting cast of stakeholders, partners, allies, suppliers, etc., and the diverse types of customers and the community/society at large. The three major objectives that align with the fractal states are:

The Leader & followers (Team) along with their supporting cast of stakeholders, partners, allies, and associates have accomplished the defined Goal [arrived at the designated **Future State**] to the benefit of a varied set of customers and society.

The Team has successfully used the project tools to navigate through the various environments [**Transition State**] that possibly contained adversaries in a highly efficient and effective manner in terms of quality, cost, speed, and maximizing project (or “journey” to maintain the metaphor analogy) ROI [both internal and external].

Through a synergistic process, all parties benefit through improved quality and capability in the new **Current State**.

There are lots of interrelated variables in this journey process and it's rare that one can be addressed in isolation due to the entanglement and interconnectedness of things (Lowe, 2018). Thus, cooperation and collaboration amongst all parties should be the formula to optimize overall quality and the system must be highly iterative with a strong feedback loop to track the effects of progress and change.

Best Principles

One useful thought exercise is to consider the entire enterprise as one entity. Imagine being in control and fully responsible for all the parties from the vendors/suppliers through the Team to the customers and the general society. How should one lead and manage it as a unified operation? This paradigm is that of the wise, benevolent ruler (WBR). The WBR optimizes the enterprise as it streamlines bureaucracy (single ruler) who makes sound decisions (wise) and it expands Covey's transactional win – win 4th Habit into a modus operandi among all participants. This promotes an open system where all parties can continually improve without being in conflict or competition with others. The WBR paradigm offers total visibility to the journey's scope, context, and perspective.

With the boundaries established and a wise, benevolent ruler mindset taken, a miniature worldview is created. Within this domain best principles can be applied at both the tactical and strategic level. Best principles conform to biblical principles which promote relational synergy, harmony, personal development, and effectiveness.

Although by no means exhaustive, here is a sampling of taking secular texts that promote best practice techniques and converting them to a Kingdom of God context. MacMillan's book, *The Performance Factor* provides detailed lists and descriptions of high-performing team

characteristics, team development principles and the like. In it, he lists six qualities for building solid team relationships via trust, understanding, acceptance, respect, courtesy, and mutual accountability (MacMillan, 2014). They are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Six Scriptural Qualities of High Performance Teams

Quality	Attribute	Scripture
Trust	The components of trust are truth and a cooperative value system of mutual benefit	Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. (Eph. 4:15).
Understanding	Being in agreement or of one accord while acknowledging another's strengths and weaknesses	Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Col. 3:13).
Acceptance	A realistic appraisal of the facts	Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Rom 15:7).
Respect	A threshold level of esteem toward one another	Treat others how you wish to be treated. (Matt. 7:12)
Courtesy	Consideration and deference to one another	God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Pet. 4:10).
Mutual Accountability	Joint recognition of responsibility to one another	Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph. 5:21).

By correlating MacMillan's qualities for team building with scripture, one confirms their validity and presents them with a Kingdom of God perspective. By conducting this exercise, a ministry team (or any organization) strengthens their skills in understanding secular terminology and practices in the context of biblical principles. It is as Polkinghorne (2005) describes as "putting God's spectacles behind one's eyes" to gain a Kingdom perspective and see the world as God sees the world.

Another team-building text is Lencioni's *The Ideal Team Player*. Here, the author describes three virtues for the ideal team player as being humble, hungry, and smart (Lencioni, 2016). Humble, in that he/she puts the team first over self, hungry describes a strong motivation and desire for team success, and smart is being competent, skillful, and a good decision-maker in their job or position. Translating these virtues into scripture produces respectively, "do nothing out of pride but consider others better than yourself" (Phil 2:3), "whatever you do, work as if unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23), and walk not as the unwise, but as wise (Eph. 5:15). Other verses would apply, but this demonstrates the concept of discovering biblical principles that undergird secular best practices.

As a business leader, this researcher as well as many others have found that one of the most comprehensive leadership models and personal life skills plan was developed by Stephen Covey. His 8 Habits presented through two texts thoroughly addresses all eight of the major components (Leader, Follower, Associates, Goal, Path, Environment, Adversary, Customer) for a successful life journey. In an interview Covey remarked upon his two major works that "the 7 habits deal primarily with personal and inner personal relations. The 8th habit deals with organizational and leadership issues in finding your voice." (Patel, 2008, para 3). Deming, George, and other influencers in the TQM and lean-sigma school of thought emphasize quality and maximizing ROI. Anderson (1995) notes,

Quality management has increasingly become the focus of organizations competing in both domestic and global economies. Quality has often been cited as the highest competitive priority, an issue of strategic importance and survival, and a means of competitive performance. (p. 638)

Deming possessed a strong Christian faith that infiltrated his business principles correlating discipleship growth with the pursuit of excellence (Austenfeld, 2001). In a multi-step manufacturing process, doing one's best in the assigned task and considering the next

workstation in the process as “your customer” fully aligns with the biblical concept of using your talents and spiritual gifts to serve one another (1 Pet 4:10). Also, connecting this intensive pursuit of quality and excellence with its root source, Covey (1990) made the following personal remark strangely placed at the end of his *7 Habits* book:

I believe that correct principles are natural laws, and that God, the Creator and Father of us all is the source of them, and also the source of our conscience. I believe that to the degree that people live by this inspired conscience, they will grow to fulfill their natures; to the degree they do not, they will not rise above the animal plane. (p. 319)

It is at this convergence point where the theological and the theoretical meet. It is the melding and decision point of quality, wisdom, and excellence. If Covey’s statement is true, then it should not appear as a footnote in the back of the text but be front and center driving the entire motivation and purpose of every habit. As C. S. Lewis (1952) persuaded in building his argument for the Christian faith, “The law of gravity tells stones what to do if you drop them; but the Law of Human Nature tells you what human beings ought to do and do not” (p. 17). He continued his stressing of our internal senses, “we know that men find themselves under a moral law, which they did not make, and cannot forget even when they try, and which they know they ought to obey” (p. 23). There must be a Source of it all—an Entity that created this incredibly complex, entangled, and interconnected universe. That Source is God. To many, especially in the science community, it is surprising as Robert Jastrow famously noted:

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance, he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. (Jastrow, 1978)

The laws, rules, and precepts that guide best practices and best principles find their source in “God, the Father of us all” for God is the Creator, the Perfect Scientist, and the Inventor of all things. It works this way because He designed it this way and when humanity lives by the precepts of God, they flourish and God is glorified in an interconnected ecology

(Lowe, 2018). Merging the critical questions for the life journey metaphor, Covey's 8 Habits, and select corresponding principles within Bible scripture one derives the following chart denoting a set of one-word topical themes described as *The 9 P's of Life Journey Travel*. They are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The 9 P's of Life Journey Travel

Travel P	Question	Habit	Biblical Principle
Preparation	What to pack?	1: Be Proactive	Eph 6:10-18 Put on God's armor
Purpose	Why are you travelling?	2: Begin with the end in Mind	1 Cor 10:31 Bring glory to God
Priority	Where are you going?	3: First things first	Matt 6:33 Seek His Kingdom first
Process	How are you travelling?	4: Think Win-win	1 Cor 16:14 Do everything in love
Proclamation	Who shall you tell?	5: Seek 1 st to understand, then to be understood	Mark 16:15 Share the Good News
Perspective	What attitude should you have on your journey?	6: Synergize	Prov 3:5-6 Trust God
Potential	How to maximize or make the most of the journey?	7: Sharpen the saw	Matt 5:8/Rom 12:1 Submit to God
Passion	How do you find the way and help others find it as well?	8: Find your voice: help others find theirs	John 14:6, Matt 5:16, 28:19-20 Be a Light
Partner	With Whom are you travelling?	N/A	Lk 9:23/Matt 28:20 Walk with God

The journey metaphor continues in the concept of a disciple. A disciple is one who learns (Cherry, 2016) and a learner is often called a journeyman. Bredfeldt (2013) considered teaching to be the highest role of a leader as the skill of the teacher is transferred to his/her followers. Belcher (2017) acknowledges this observing that "Educating, from a Christian perspective, is concerned with human formation. It exists to assist in the mental, physical, emotional, and

spiritual formation of students so that they can become a specific kind of person” (p. 24). Though she agrees with the integrated and holistic approach of the familiar (3H) head/heart/hands, she laments the attempts of the current educational system to separate and secularize education by removing the spiritual aspect. As Zacharias observes, “In order for a life philosophy to be coherent, there must be a rational explanation describing purpose, meaning, morality, and destiny. Complete secularization removes all four” (Zacharias, 2020). Continuing with the journey/disciple model, the 3H concept can be viewed this way as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

The Greatest Commandment in 3H

Best Practices	Love Yourself	Love Others	Love God
Tactical-Management HANDS	Be Proactive <i>Put on armor of God</i>	Think Win-Win <i>Do Everything in Love</i>	Sharpen the Saw <i>Submit to God</i>
Strategic-Leadership HEAD	Begin with End in Mind <i>Glorify God</i>	Seek 1 st to Understand Then to be Understood <i>Share the Gospel</i>	Find your Voice-Help Others find Theirs <i>Be a Light</i>
Value Sys-Priorities HEART	First Things First <i>Seek God’s Kingdom first</i>	Synergize <i>Trust God</i>	N/A <i>Walk with God</i>

Each of the three sets of three “Travel P’s” are fully integrated as they correspond to the three loves in Agape Triangle and they align with the three fundamental business concepts of tactical management (Hands), strategic leadership (Head), and value system priorities (Heart). As previously noted, a fourth “H” of Habitat is included to describe the environmental conditions which affects *how* one applies the Head, Heart, and Hands. This includes the ordered and unordered environments and their associated complexities that we can see and attempt to measure (Snowden, 2010). It also includes the metaphysical and the spiritual of being immersed within the kingdom of God.

When one combines all these elements the road map begins to take shape. The journey (PATH) is to follow Christ and the destination (GOAL) is to be like Christ. Christians follow

truth and respond in love in a continuously improving (spiritual kaizen/sanctification) manner. Through the one body ecology, believers serve (1 Pet 4:10), accept (Rom 15:7), forgive (Eph 4:32), and encourage (1 Thess 5:11) others in their journey. It is helping them find their voice (Covey, 2006) and path (Prov 16:9). It is an all-in (Head, Hands, and Heart) commitment. It is a personal development story of growing from a spiritual infant to an adult (Putman, 2010). The journey strategy is not management by objectives (focusing on outcomes), it is focused on process—the journey itself (Wooden, 2009). One finds wisdom at the intersection of truth and love and traveling with Wisdom (1 Cor 1:24), is to travel with Truth and Love (John 14:6, 1 John 4:8). This will naturally produce the proper fruit for we reap what we sow (Gal 6:7—8). The transformational process of becoming like Christ will have the by-product fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control for against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22—23).

Sternberg (2001) noted that wisdom employs the use of tacit and explicit knowledge toward the goal or achievement of a common good through a balanced combination of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extra-personal interests. These interests are merely expansions of scope where intrapersonal relates only to the individual, interpersonal involves other people, and extra-personal affects or addresses the wider organization, community, country, or particularly defined environment. These interests are weighed over both the short and long term time intervals and are flexible for shaping, adapting, or even formulating new strategies. The driving motivation is to optimize outcomes in the best interest of all where “all” includes the larger defined extra-personal subset. In essence it is doing the greatest good for the most people. This principally aligns with the three “loves” in the Greatest Commandment.

Viewed collectively, a pattern begins to form regarding the key metrics to consider for

wise living and decision-making. There is an overarching “greater good” and under that umbrella is to individually be one’s best and to optimally interact with others—to have their best interests in mind. The following illustration merges and summarizes these concepts and traits of Covey’s *8 Habits*, Sternberg’s *Balance Theory of Wisdom*’s interests’ triangle, the critical life journey questions, and select relevant scripture presented in the context and support of the Greatest Commandment (Agape Triangle) of loving God, loving others, and loving self.

Figure 13

The Nine Habits within the Greatest Commandment



Created by Tom McAllister

As depicted in this illustration (Figure 13), a new (9th) habit promoting the intimate relationship between the Creator and those created in His image is inserted. It is the habit that joins and interconnects (Lowe, 2018) all the other components together in meaning and ultimate purpose—it is the inclusion of the true vine (Christ) for without Him, one can do absolutely nothing (John 15:5). The apex of the life journey strategy is to walk with Christ. This author provides a summary perspective:

- To love ourselves best is to be our best selves. To be our best selves is to prepare ourselves for every contingency on our journey—to perform optimally which includes acting with wisdom. To be our best is to fulfill one’s God-given purpose which ultimately is to glorify God. To be our best is to be efficient in our travel and have the proper priorities—to seek God’s Kingdom first in all that we do.
- To love others best is to share our best—to not act out of selfish, vain conceit but have others’ best interest at heart (Phil 2:3). To submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21) and share what is most important (what is in their best interest) which is the Gospel message that calls unbelievers to Christ and encourages/uplifts fellow believers. We are to be efficient through synergistic engagements which is the spiritual ecology of abiding in Christ and loving and interacting with one another as one body.
- To love God is to be your best which to be your best is to imitate His Son. We love God by fully submitting to His will to love others as His Son loves us. To love God is to delight in His Presence—to walk with Him.

The fruitful objective of every human is to crank up the wattage and be a bright light for the LORD (Matt 5:16). In the discipleship journey, the wise decision is to follow Christ as it is the best way, the absolute truth, and the most joyous and productive life a person can live. It is the best principles and practices. Charles Hodge (1837) states it more eloquently, “To be in Christ is the source of the Christian’s life; to be like Christ is the sum of His excellence; to be with Christ is the fullness of His joy.”

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

As James (3:13) observed, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” The study of wisdom and its practical application to making good choices in life offers immense benefit to humankind. Though its depths are unreachable, it warrants a lifetime of pursuit.

Rationale for Study

The rationale for this study is to increase enlightenment to the glory God. Strategically, that in and of itself makes it meritorious. Specifically, this study addresses the scriptural fact that

Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) and believers are commanded to follow Him.

Philosophically, the study follows the shape of an hour-glass (nozzle-diffuser) that begins with an extremely broad top of examining a life journey (as leader and follower) and identifies the key metrics and components of that journey. It recognizes the near universal opinion that there are better and in some cases, best ways to navigate the journey (Stanley, 2008), (Deming), (Covey, 1990, 2006), (Snowden, 2020), (Hodge, 1837), (Cloud, 2006), (Craig, 2008), (Lowe, 2018), (Lewis, 1952), (Smith, 2013), (Laniak, 2018), (Pettit, 2016), (Warren, 2002), etc. The study quickly narrows to wisdom in general, then biblical wisdom, the fractal nature of biblical wisdom, and finally zeroes in (constraint point) on evaluating the fractal nature of biblical wisdom for decision-making in the context of complicated and/or complex environments.

As Stanley (2008) observes that it is one's decisions, not desires, that determines one's destination. Decisions are at the transaction level of life—the discrete function where steps along one's path are taken. It is where (using a travel metaphor) “the rubber meets the road.” If a methodology, a model, a thought pattern, an attitude, a mindset, a value system, or a combination of these can be discerned and practically applied, then it could be utilized to help every person on the planet be more efficient, effective, and experience greater joy in their life journey. This is the abductive and inductive reasoning (diffuser) that represents the outward expansion of thought, potentiality, and application and the rationale for the study.

Gap in the Literature

As Staudinger (2013) noted that wisdom has been studied since the formation of humankind and though there is a plethora of research on wisdom, the discipline of pursuing wisdom is still in infancy. Much of the research involves application as one example Jeste (2020) notes, “Wisdom has gained increasing interest among researchers as a personality trait relevant

to well-being and mental health” (p. 174). He further observes that wisdom is a common topic in religion, philosophy and even humanities; it has been receiving increasing attention as a topic of scientific research during the past five decades citing (Ardelt, 2000; Clayton and Birren, 1980; Jeste and Lee, 2019; Smith and Baltes, 1990; Sternberg and Jordan, 2005) as examples. Acknowledging the work of Baltes and Smith (1990) in developing wisdom theories related to expertise, Sternberg included the work of Holiday and Chandler (as well as himself) in developing wisdom definitions and theories into factors and clusters (Sternberg, 1990). Sternberg (1998) goes on to note Clayton and Birren’s work in 3D-WS (3 Dimensional Wisdom Structure) and along with Ardelt (2004) concur that cognitive, reflective, and affective personality attributes need to be integrated and simultaneously present for an individual to be characterized as wise.

The gap in all this research is both the specific target and the analytical approach. Similar to the research efforts that Sternberg referenced, Jeste’s work of reviewing scores of peer-review literature noted the following characteristics and six common *components* of wisdom: (1) pro-social behaviors - e.g., empathy, compassion, altruism, and a sense of fairness, (2) emotional regulation, (3) self-reflection or insight, (4) value relativism or acceptance of divergent perspectives, (5) decisiveness or ability to make timely and effective decisions, and (6) general knowledge of life and social decision making (Jeste, 2020). Though these six traits can be called “components,” a more appropriate characterization would be as an output or the fruits, attributes, or manifestations of wisdom.

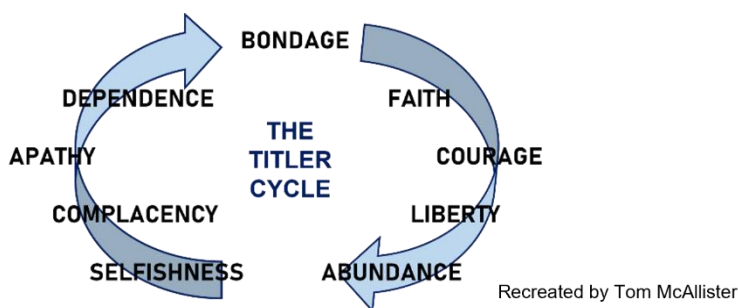
One study that most aligns with this research was an effort done by Intezari and Pauleen (2018) who interviewed nearly two score of business CEOs for their input regarding the role wisdom and how it played in decision-making within the workplace. They also utilized a grounded theory approach to catalogue and code the responses. This research served as a useful

guide and framework. Although wise decision-making was the common topic, the differences in the research parameters were significant. This research focused on a particular wisdom (biblical), in a particular environment (complex), across multiple leadership disciplines, with the purpose of examining a particular aspect (the fractal nature) of biblical wisdom.

The inclusion of fractals adds a unique perspective to the study. What frequently appears as chaos at the surface level of experience is often undergirded by complex systems (Leute, 2017) that produce similar patterns of individual and/or organizational behavior (Lustig, 2017). In her text, *Strategic Foresight*, Lustig employs the term monomyth to describe the storyline commonalities and repeatable patterns of the myths and legends within human history. A quip most associated with Mark Twain is that “history doesn’t repeat itself but it does rhyme” (quoteresearch, 2019). The Tytler lifecycle of a Republic (Woodhouselee, 1854) developed by Scottish professor Alexander Tytler accurately describes nine common stages that every Republic in human history has followed until its eventual demise.

Figure 14

The Tytler Cycle



Likewise, the numerous biblical examples of the nation of Israel rising to the challenge with spiritual faith and courage, achieving victory, experiencing abundance, then lapsing into complacency, spiritual apathy, and returning to bondage all indicate a discernable theme and repeating pattern of behavior. Similarly, at the individual level (fractal sub-pattern), this

regressive spiritual entropy is reflected in the life of Solomon who began his reign with great wisdom (1 Kings 4:29—31) and ended in a state primed for chaos as the kingdom of Israel split apart (1 Kings 11:9—13) shortly after his death. Gaining insight on the interrelationships of fractal patterns and biblical wisdom is both unique and central to this research effort.

Profile of the Current Study

The journey of life is a complex one and challenging to master. A critical metric for successful travel at the transaction level is sound decision-making—to be wise in discerning and executing the correct choices in life. Through grounded theory, this study sought to understand wisdom from its source and not its output. Compared to the aforementioned studies, it is an inside out approach seeking to discover the ingredients (hypothesized as truth and love) within wisdom and how they relate to the fundamental aspect of decision-making. As a science metaphor, the current wisdom research efforts are primarily Newtonian physics whereas this study seeks a Quantum physics approach to analyze the core essence, root source, and foundational components of wisdom. If biblical wisdom follows a fractal pattern (tiny amounts of wisdom reflect large amounts of wisdom and individual wise decisions fully integrate with the overall optimal strategy), then successfully filling this gap should provide a “source code” structure to virtually all these other studies in that one should see the elements and effects of truth and love within all wisdom attributes...all to the glory of God. As Gottfried Leibniz (2015, p. 35) observed, “God, possessing supreme and infinite wisdom, acts in the most perfect manner, not only metaphysically, but also morally speaking.” Focusing on the human aspect he then added, “With respect to ourselves, we can say that the more enlightened and informed we are about God's works, the more we will be disposed to find them excellent and in complete conformity with what we might have desired.”

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Synopsis

The aim of all research is to advance, refine, expand, and explain a body of knowledge, establish facts and truths, and/or reach new conclusions and theories using systematic inquiry and disciplined methods (Tie, 2019). The research design of a study is the strategy or plan to investigate and answer the research question(s) which includes both a method (type of strategy) and a methodology (execution of the strategy) (Leedy, 2016). The intent of this research was to study the application of biblical wisdom in decision-making with specific intentionality of examining certain attributes or characteristics exhibited and then create a theory or concept related to patterns of outcomes for the decision-making process. The subject matter falls into the broader category of Decision Theory. The act of decision-making merges two disciplines of philosophy of utilizing one's epistemology (what one knows) with their axiology (what one values) to choose a course of action (decision) toward attaining an objective. This research examined how people make decisions in specific environmental situations—namely complex environments. In analyzing the decision-making process, major critical questions are what metrics are considered, how are they evaluated, and why.

This line of questioning lends itself to descriptive types of answers which is best pursued by qualitative research (Creswell, 2018). The desire was to develop a theory or concept from the research. One method or research tool suitable to discover patterns, principles, and concepts is grounded theory (GT) for grounded theory is the study of a concept (Glaser, 2010). The power of grounded theory is in its flexibility to utilize multiple data-collecting methods. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be employed and applied (Moerman, 2016). The specificity of GT as a method is not so much in the data collection process but in the management and analysis of

the data once collected. Therefore, the use of surveys, focus groups, qualitative interviews, case studies, and other recognized research methods can all be incorporated into a grounded theory study (Sebastian, 2019).

In particular, qualitative interviews are a versatile means of gathering data for research (Creswell, 2018). The advantage of using qualitative interviews is that the researcher guides and controls the questions (McGregor, 2018) and has the ability to precisely target individuals through the theoretical sampling aspect of grounded theory (Bryant, 2019). This methodology aligns well with the coding and memo writing process of GT while being flexible to the iterative data collection process. This research utilized qualitative interviews from a targeted set of individuals to provide the raw data for the grounded theory method of analysis and theory construction.

The Problem

Within the life journey or life is a game metaphor, every human desires to be a winner and successful or as Pascal stated to achieve happiness (Bloom, 2019). Rarely does one start their day with the intention of making as many mistakes as possible, although a few do achieve this tragic distinction. As previously noted that within the realm of one's control, it is the decisions that one makes that dictates their destiny and final disposition (Stanley, 2008). Humans make hundreds of decisions a day; some, like choosing what flavor of gum to buy or what blog article to read first rarely affect one's destiny while others hold immense consequences (Brightlight, 2013). Decisions are at the transaction level of life. It is the one discrete function that solely rests upon the individual and is the most influential and deterministic for one's life path (Stanley, 2008). Thus, making good choices and sound decisions is the single largest controllable contributor toward achieving success.

The attribute associated with making good decisions is wisdom. If one is consistently wise in their decision-making, then their probability of being successful is optimized. There is the execution aspect where one can make the proper decision but fail to successfully act or implement the decision, but the first step of choosing wisely is essential. Thus, a significant emphasis of this research is to investigate how to consistently make wise decisions. A heuristic analysis would recognize that the desired output would be an optimized process (George, 2005) or a type of system, strategy, and/or methodology for accurately assessing a situation and making appropriate responses. This tactic of gathering and analyzing data to synthesize a concept or theory lends credence to inductive reasoning and a descriptive and qualitative approach (Creswell, 2018). It is how one asks the question that best determines the research method. As example, in the crazy, dualistic world of quantum physics, if one asks a particle question, one gets a particle answer and if one asks a wave question, one gets a wave answer (Polkinghorne, 2005). For this research, the specific focus was to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom for decision-making in complex environments. Here, three distinct and delimited components are presented that impact the decision-making process:

- 1) A complex environment which often has stochastic, nonlinear relationships and interactions
- 2) biblical wisdom which is a particular system of thought, principles, and worldview
- 3) fractal nature which recognizes a unique and specialized pattern of self-simulation within relationships and behavior in that subsets appear similar to the whole.

Restated, the desired output is to discover self-simulating patterns (fractals) within biblical precepts/principles (wisdom) in challenging (complex) environments to optimize decision-making. Thus, the desired output or result was to conceive and develop a methodology, system, strategy, or theory.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to utilize grounded theory to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom within the context of leading a discipleship journey centered on the Greatest Commandment and the wisdom components of truth and love as a viable decision-making method, tool, or template within complicated/complex environments. The grounded theory approach was to discern fractal patterns in which to develop a discipleship decision-making model or template. The selection of the realm of complicated and complex environments as defined by Snowden (2010, 2020) offer the greatest potential fruit for ultimately developing a universal solution. A decision model, template, or theory description that functions well in a complicated environment logically should create a solid framework, that with further refining, would work well in a simple or obvious environment. Likewise, a decision-making model that is useful in complex environments will have value in navigating one's way through or out of a chaotic environment. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Questions

RQ1. What critical principles in loving God influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ2. What critical principles in loving others influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ3. What critical principles in loving oneself influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ4. Is the tandem truth-love component of wisdom viable in guiding decision-making within complex environments?

Research Design and Methodology

As per Glaser and Strauss, the recognized fathers of grounded theory, the intent of the methodology focuses on the "discovery of theory from data [that is] systematically obtained and

analyzed in social research” (Sebastian, 2019, p. 1). Conceptually, the method functions in reverse of a typical quantitative study where a hypothesis is generated, an experiment is designed, and the resulting data is tested to confirm or refute the hypothesis. In grounded theory, the data from potentially multiple constructs is gathered and then categorized and analyzed to develop a principle, concept, or theory (McGregor, 2018). Therefore, the resulting theory is developed inductively from data rather than tested by data (Hood, 2007).

Since its introduction in 1967, “official” grounded theory (GT) has since evolved into three distinct classifications of classical (Glaser), modified or interpretive (Strauss) (IGT), and constructivism (Charmaz) (CGT) (Sebastian, 2019). Though each qualify as a grounded theory (GT) method, they differ in their philosophical approach which then affects the methodology employed. The strategic goal of each methodology remains the same and there is broad agreement on the major processes of data collection, coding and memo writing, the constant comparative analysis, and achieving theoretical saturation (O’Connor, 2017). The nuance is primarily in describing the role of the researcher, allowance of prior knowledge, and data coding techniques to evaluate and classify the data to facilitate discerning the proper concept or theory. While Glaser’s classical method strictly follows inductive ratiocination, Strauss and Corbin, as well as Charmaz, acknowledge a broader technique (modified and constructivist GT) through the inclusion of abductive reasoning as a viable paradigm (Sebastian, 2019). Despite these subtle differences, Walsh (2015, para 1) references Bryant and Charmaz in noting, “Grounded theory (GT) has, since the late 1980s, become the dominant qualitative approach in many disciplines.”

Examining wisdom with a Kingdom of God worldview for decision-making patterns and analyzing the relationships of fractal patterns, self-organization, and complex adaptive systems (CAS) requires an open systems approach (Leute, 2017). Grounded theory offers such a

methodology. Of the three GT methodologies, the constructivist method (CGT) appeared most suitable for this research project. First, it recognizes that the preconceptions of the researcher are challenging to eliminate so the approach is to work within that bias while still letting the data develop the theory. Using qualitative interviews as the primary source of data, CGT encourages co-development of the theory and interpretation of the data with the participants (Charmaz, 2006). This aligns with the biblical precept that there is success with many counselors (Prov. 15:22).

Second, CGT's inclusion of abductive lines of reasoning allows for multiple interpretations to be constructed. The data coding and analysis process within CGT is malleable and is presented more as a set of guidelines vice strict rules (Sebastian, 2019). This flexibility in data collection, analysis, and interpretation is necessary. The study of fractals and fractal behavior is literally and mathematically defined as complex. There is a proper sense of humility in acknowledging that the grounded theory eventually developed may have competing interpretations.

Finally, CGT is ambivalent in the timing of researching the related literature. Classic GT promotes writing the related literature after the grounded theory has been developed as part of supporting documentation/peer-reviewed research (Glaser, 2010). CGT allows the researcher to choose (Sebastian, 2019). Writing the related literature first develops a stronger working knowledge of the subject within the researcher. Combining this research with the study's delimitations provide some guardrails to the coding and analyzing process. This may sound like heresy to the GT purist where all is data (Moerman, 2016), preconceived ideas are removed, and all options are open for theory production (Glaser, 2010). However, beginning with the end in mind (Covey, 1990) and knowing that multiple interpretations are possible, funneling the

research effort via the related literature adds efficiency to the methodology. It is not the methodology or method but the output or resultant theory that's most important. As a comparative example, Glaser's critique of Strauss and Corbin's modified or interpretive grounded theory (IGT) was that the methodology was so systematic and recipe-like that the methodology drove the theory (Moerman, 2016). Again, the emphasis is on the final resulting concept. Once developed, the concept, principle, or theory can be rigorously tested through future research or practical application and will stand or fall based on its own merit.

Setting

The setting for this study was focused on various Christian leaders who commonly operate in complex and complicated environments where the terms "complex" and "complicated" have specific meanings in accordance with the Cynefin model as developed by David Snowden (2010, 2020). As per the Cynefin model, a complex environment is one where there are several critical unknown variables and typical cause-effect relationships are either unclear or not present. Complicated environments are where most interactions have causal relationships and are predictable but require a sophisticated level of expertise to understand.

Geographically, these types of leaders were selected from the United States although this was not a prescribed limitation. The influence of culture is a factor that requires consideration however, biblical wisdom should be universal in scope. Thus, the restriction for sampling was contained within English-speaking (Western culture) nations. The critical metric sought was the associated decision-making challenges found in the operational environment. The disciplines or vocations of these leaders were cross-sectional to promote a broader context of the source(s) of the level of complicatedness and complexity. As Bredfeldt (2018) described leadership as moving people from here to there, eight common variables are involved in this "journey" and

any of them can be a source of complication or complexity. These variables are the leader or the challenges of leadership, the followers or organizational make-up, the difficulty of the goal chosen, the sophistication of the path taken, the peculiarities of the customer or end-user served, the various relationships of the supporting organizations of vendors, partners, and suppliers, the presence and influence of competitors or enemies, and the numerous nuances within the environmental conditions.

Participants

The primary instrument to conduct this grounded theory study was qualitative interviews. The theory comes from the data through coding and classification (Creamer, 2018), and Glaser (2010) notes that all data is useful and applicable. This broad interpretation for data collection enables the selection methodology for participants to follow nonprobability sampling. Convenience or more specifically, purposive sampling was utilized to identify participants (Leedy, 2016). This is justified as the iterative data-gathering process continues until theoretical saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, a targeted approach was employed to choose participants who profess their faith in Christ and are in or have been in leadership roles within organizations that operate predominately within complex environments. There was no defined “litmus test” to assess their level of faith in the selection process. A profession of faith ensures at least a minimum awareness of the Kingdom of God and that was adequate for qualification. Specific questions were incorporated within the interview process that provided indicators on the level of spiritual maturity of the interviewee.

To develop the broader context, several categories of leadership positions were pursued. The first category was business leaders, particularly of large organizations where significant human interaction and accordingly, complexity exists (Stacey, 2012). The second was leaders of

large churches which have different goals and challenges but still contain significant human interaction (Hartwig, 2015). The third group was missionaries where the environmental conditions are often complex and adversarial relationships may exist (Hiebert, 2008). The fourth through sixth groups were military (or law enforcement) leaders, coaches, and politicians where rapid decision-making is often required and the presence of competition and adversaries are prominent concerns. The final group was thought leaders or subject matter experts (SMEs) in philosophy, theology and/or decision theory. These seven leadership categories provided a good cross-sectional coverage of the listed eight variables in varying degrees of complexity and provided a diverse set of perspectives in their decision-making processes. Some of the participants had experience in more than one category (i.e., former military officer or business leader-turned politician). The desire was to have a minimum of two and ideally three or more representatives from each of the seven categories. The initial plan was to conduct 20 interviews recognizing that more may be necessary. Research was done through LinkedIn, Google/search engine techniques, and other software tools, and methods to build a list of potential candidates for interview. These candidates were contacted for willingness and availability to conduct the interview. This process continued until the initial target of 20 participants were met.

Role of the Researcher

Among the three GT methodologies, there is significant differences in describing the role of the researcher. One of the critiques of GT is the difficult challenge of curtailing researcher preconceptions and cognitive bias (Thomas, 2006). The constructivist model (Charmaz, 2006) avoids this tension by embracing its presence as part of the data gathering process in that the researcher co-builds the theory from the data. O'Connor (2017) observes that "the role of the researcher is formulated as an active one in a process of co-constructing the final research

product with participants” (p. 94). Recognizing that researchers are part of the world in which they study (Charmaz, 2014), they will incorporate (construct) their past and present knowledge, experience, and relationships into the data. Despite the introduction of researcher preconceptions, they will only be reflected in the theory if they are discovered and confirmed in the data.

This co-constructing approach also allows more flexibility in the data collection (interview) process. Instead of mimicking quantitative studies by rigidly adhering to a common set of questions, the researcher is actively attuned to theoretical sensitivity and can delve deeper by asking follow-up questions where the researcher and participant co-discover concepts. Memo writing by the researcher flags particular data points of “substantive richness” that can be explored in more detail in future interviews (Bryant, 2017). This takes advantage of the proactive role of the researcher in the iterative process inherent in grounded theory to quickly detect and specifically target emerging concepts or principles.

Ethical Considerations

Corbin & Strauss (2015) note the importance of ethics and the associated privacy protections for the participants as well as the integrity of the research and researcher (Rudd, 2019). Before any research was conducted, approval from the IRB was obtained. Consent forms were developed and given to all willing participants for their signed approval and release of the information. The participants were kept anonymous with only a brief description of their leadership roles. Some had achieved a degree of celebrity status and a few were asked if their names could be cited as a reference in the future. However, unless otherwise approved, for the research coding and final output, specific answers to questions were addressed generically i.e., “one respondent noted...” or “three participants concurred that...” The ability to include background info on the participants as well as names will be specifically approved. Privacy was

respected at all times. Those participants who did not wish to be named or provide biographical information did not have that information recorded or published. The data gathered from the interview process was recorded and transcribed and was maintained in a secure location with exclusive access only by the researcher. The transcripts of each interview was available to the applicable participant for final review, clarification, and if necessary, approval before inclusion into the final work product.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Though all studies are grounded in data, it is the specific methodology of analysis, coding, and categorizing of the data that then produces the “grounded theory” for this goes beyond a descriptive study of a descriptive problem (Sebastian, 2019). The flexibility that all is data (Glaser, 2010) opens up a wealth of data gathering instruments and methodologies. The goal for this research effort was to develop a grounded theory surrounding the fractal nature of biblical wisdom and its impact for decision-making in challenging environments. Thus, the potentiality to use multiple tools is advantageous to the intended research (Moerman, 2016). As the coding and constant comparison process occurs and the concepts and principles emerge, the versatility within grounded theory of utilizing a different means of gathering data becomes quite beneficial.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory employs a very sophisticated and somewhat tedious data analysis methodology. All three recognized GT methods follow a common strategy of initial funneling through theoretical sampling of selecting sites or participants that align with the theory construct (McGregor, 2018). They also follow the steps of data collection which can be achieved through various or multiple methods, and an iterative constant comparative analysis with memoing and

categorization until data saturation occurs. However, the specifics of these techniques or “methodologies” as well as the approach to data interpretation do vary significantly (Tie, 2019). The constructivist model (CGT) as promoted by Kathy Charmaz considers theoretical sampling to be the primary method for producing the necessary data to aid in concept consolidation and theory development (Flick, 2018). Philosophically, she proclaims that CGT has a practical or pragmatist ontology with a relativist epistemology (Sebastian, 2019). This more pragmatic approach recognizes the difficulty of separating the researcher and researcher bias from the research process and utilizes a synergistic approach to co-build the theory from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Emphasizing less stringent techniques similar to Glaser, her process employs the original sequence of code → concept → category (Bryant, 2019). The goal in mind is the researcher then tries to define category properties, its operating conditions, the scenarios under which it changes, and its relationship to other categories (Charmaz, 2006). Using mathematics terminology as analogy, the ample collection of scalar values or bits of data (knowledge) are transformed into vectors showing direction (meaning and purpose). As relationships between categories are recognized, the semblance of a theory begins to emerge.

Allowing for theory co-construction and recognizing the preconceptions of the researcher, the eventual constructed theory is an interpretation of the data and not a proclaimed or exact representation (Sebastian, 2019). Mills (2006, p. 35) observes,

Researchers, who first identify their ontological and epistemological position, are able to choose a point on the methodological spiral of grounded theory where they feel theoretically comfortable, which, in turn, will enable them to live out their beliefs in the process of inquiry.

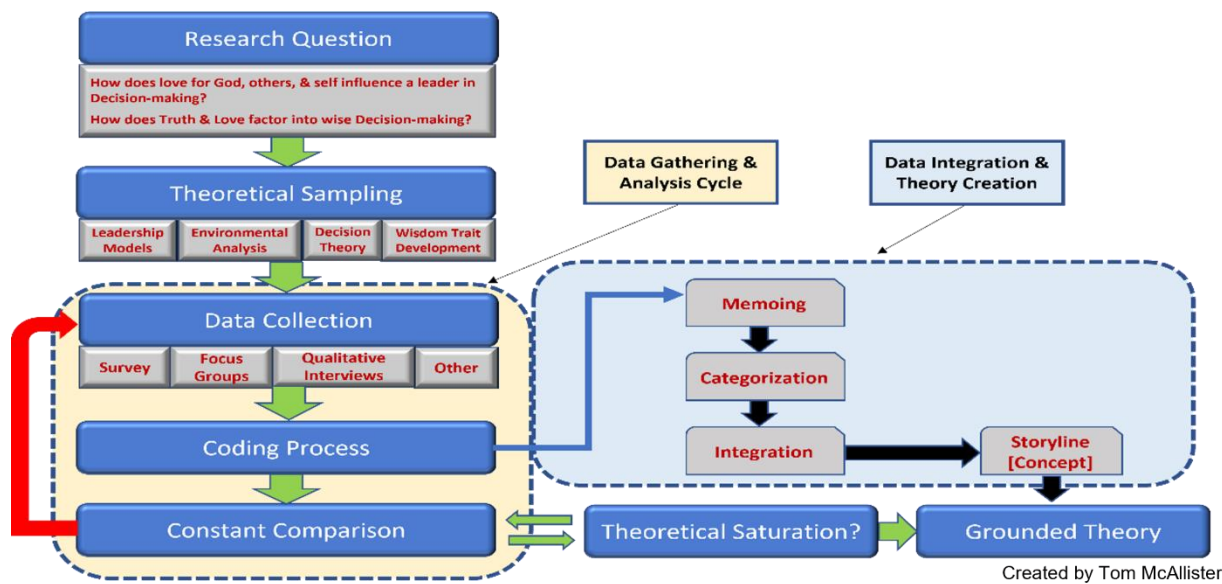
Sebastian (2019) notes that CGT “is based on the researcher’s viewpoint and cannot occur or stand without it” (p. 4). The relativist epistemology aspect of CGT is not a viewpoint shared by this author although it is useful for this research. The apostle Paul recognized that “we see in a

mirror, dimly” (1 Cor 13:12) and thus, complete knowledge or Truth (with a capital “T”) cannot be fully known. That would require omniscience which is well beyond the human grasp. However, one can easily posit that absolute truth exists. This research proceeded from a Kingdom of God perspective from which the theory was constructed and this author considers this perspective to be objective and absolute. Downgrading this to a relativistic epistemology paradigm will not affect the results of the study because truth is truth despite humanity’s limited ability to fully discern it. The subject matter of fractals, principles, and concepts enhance or provide stronger credence to the results of the study by their consistent nature of behavior. The final theory output can be viewed in the limited form of individual interpretation or considered within the broader context of a general, universal theory.

Aside from the different philosophical perspectives, the actual research methodology and approach of grounded theory has a solid framework and structure. All grounded theory methods conform to the same strategic methodology as illustrated in Figure 15.

Figure 15

Grounded Theory Methodological Process Flow



Since CGT is ambivalent with regard to the timing/positioning of related literature, this study conducted the related research first and that served as the boundary values and initial funneling of the theoretical sampling. As shown in Figure 15, the gist of the research questions for this study are displayed at the top and the major categories of leadership models, environment analysis, decision theory, and the topic/traits of wisdom addressed in Chapter Two served as initial guides to the data gathering phase. These categories qualitatively frame the research approach analogous to the common scientific “control volume” engineering problem (Van Ness, 1983). The attributes of the leader and team pass through a defined control volume (Snowden’s Cynefin environmental model), interactions occur (decisions are made), and the output is evaluated to discern the existence and fractal patterns of executed biblical wisdom.

This approach affects the attitude toward theoretical sensitivity. Traditional grounded theory methods as proposed by Glaser is for the researcher to possess as little preconceived notions on the topic as possible—to be a blank slate prior to data collection (Mills, 2006). Mills (2006, p. 28) further notes,

Theoretical sensitivity is a multidimensional concept that includes the researchers' level of insight into the research area, how attuned they are to the nuances and complexity of the participant's words and actions, their ability to reconstruct meaning from the data generated with the participant, and a capacity to “separate the pertinent from that which isn't” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 44).

The tension is that too much prior subject matter knowledge possibly dulls one’s sensitivity toward new concepts, while too little experience/information may not provide a sufficient corpus of knowledge to discern the pertinent. The CGT approach provides a graceful compromise in recognizing the active role and prior knowledge of the researcher while letting the interactive data gathering process be the instigator for the emerging theory. As Charmaz (2000, p. 524) notes, “Data does not provide a window on reality. Rather, the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts.”

Qualitative Interview

The primary instrument for data collection for this research was the qualitative interview. Rupp (2019, p. 90), citing Kvale & Brinkman, observes that “Interviews are the most common format of data collection in qualitative research.” As previously noted, qualitative interviews are a versatile means of gathering research data (Creswell, 2018) as the researcher can employ purposive sampling to identify the desired interviewees as well as guide and control the questions (McGregor, 2018). This further enhances the theoretical sampling aspect of grounded theory (Bryant, 2019).

To facilitate the constructivist and co-developmental aspect of CGT, a semi-structured interview process was chosen. This format is most popular as it provides some structure to the line of questioning while allowing freedom to explore concepts and ideas discovered via follow-up questions (Leavy, 2020). Referencing Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) that an interview has the purpose of obtaining life descriptions from the perspective of the interviewee in order to interpret meaning within the described phenomena, Leavy (2020) observes the key words and metrics of *purpose*, *descriptions*, *lifeworld*, and *interpretation of meaning* (emphasis his). For this research, the purpose is to uncover the application of wisdom in decision-making within complex environments through the descriptions of the interviewee. The inclusion of leaders from various lifeworld experiences (business leaders, pastors, missionaries, coaches, politicians, military, and law enforcement personnel) will provide a broader context of environmental conditions and prioritized objectives to seek a consolidated grounded theory and an interpretation of meaning.

For this type of interview, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required an interview guide (Rupp, 2019) and this is provided in Appendix A. It also includes a brief rationale for the purpose of each question. The set of questions allowed flexibility in the interview process and

enabled the interviewee to speak more elaborately in areas of their comfort, expertise, and experience. This approach conformed to the spirit of CGT in co-constructing the precepts and categories for the coding process.

The interviews were conducted based on the terms and conditions requested by the interviewee. The options were remote using a computer conference call or conducted in person. For each interview, the conversation was recorded and transcribed using Zoom and Otter.ai software and edited for grammatical errors and clarity. The edited script was offered to the interviewee for final review and approval prior to publication. Completed transcripts were securely maintained for reference support but are not included in the final document.

Data Analysis

The constructivist technique within CGT allows for a flexible and interpretive approach in the data analysis and final conclusions/theory. As previously noted, this is an attractive feature for this study. The examination of the fractal nature of biblical wisdom is new and inherently complex. Its existence is logically hypothesized. Wisdom and the Bible both have God as the root Source. Godly or biblical wisdom is universally useful. Fractal patterns occur in nature of which God is the Creator. There must be a reason why they exist. As Stacey (2012) describes the entanglements within complex adaptive systems of groups, organizations, and society nesting within each other and the more generalized observation by Lowe (2018) of a highly sophisticated and interconnected ecology in all aspects of human existence from the micro to the macro level, the entire structure reveals a Designer that is acutely intentional on dynamic relationships. Therefore, it appears safe to postulate that God's wisdom and fractals possess some form of relational connection. This research was to investigate this relationship. The openness within the CGT method allows the related literature (particularly scripture) along with a proactive

researcher (with an embedded hypothesis) to construct a theory *from the data* despite these preconceptions. This approach is not without critique and this is addressed in greater detail in the “Evaluation of the Research Design” section of Chapter 4. In terms of priority, it is the final resulting theory and not the details of the method that obtained it that deserves the greater scrutiny.

Data Coding

The coding of data is the central component of grounded theory (Bryant, 2019). CGT has two main phases towards coding and analysis: (1) identifying, naming, and classifying all pieces of data from the interview, focus group, document, or whatever methodology the researcher collects data; and (2) determining the predominately used codes and organizing the remaining data around them (Sebastian, 2019, Charmaz, 2014). All three GT methods employ multiple rounds of coding as each of the GT models follow a three-step data classification technique in translating data to an eventual theory or possible multiple theories as in the CGT method. Table 1 presents the subtle differences of coding within the three grounded theories as a comparison.

Table 6

Coding Distinctions among Grounded Theory methods

Type	Initial	Intermediate	Advanced
Traditional	Open coding	Selective coding	Theoretical coding
Modified	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
Constructivist	Initial coding	Focused coding	Theoretical coding

(Bryant, 2019)

The key feature in grounded theory is providing an initial coding or classification of the data and the iterative process of constant comparison of data to find commonalities and concepts. These concepts are further consolidated into categories where properties and relationships between the categories are evaluated until principles and aspects of a theory begin to emerge (Moerman, 2016).

The first round or initial coding of the CGT model is very open to interpretation to allow for multiple potential theory directions and is achieved through coding styles of word-by-word, line-by-line, or theme-by-theme (Sebastian, 2019). For each data segment, multiple categories may be assigned until comparison and collaboration of other similar data begin the winnowing process into a reoccurring concept. CGT emphasizes the context of the data and the perspectives of the interviewee (Charmaz, 2014). As Sebastian (2019, p. 29) observes,

It is within the second phase where the previously constructed theoretical assumptions are tested against the remaining data and the researcher's own influence can be included. CGT refers to this as focused coding, in which the researcher actively chooses which codes are most significant to carry on with towards theoretical conceptualization (Charmaz, 2014; Lian, 2016).

Diagramming is a critical function and valuable tool in the coding process (Mills, 2006).

Flowcharts, logic, and/or Venn diagrams provide pictorial representations of connections and relationships of concepts. Spaghetti diagrams commonly used in mapping a continuous process (George, 2005) were used in this study to map connections and show the relationships among parties and the value system evaluation of those relationships in the decision-making process.

The final stage was to merge the ideas and concepts together into an evolving theory in the theoretical coding phase. Hernandez (2009, para 1) describes that “a theoretical code is the relational model through which all substantive codes/categories are related to the core category.” Codes may overlap. The important aspect is that theoretical codes emerge from the data analysis process rather than being overlaid onto the data via pre-labeling, conjecture, or the use of popular coding titles. This was an iterative process involving continual comparison of data and reassessing their relationships. Common trait codes become a concept of which these multiple concepts converge into categories and ideally into a single grand category or theme although there may be more than one (Gibbs, 2010). This primary theme guides the development of a storyline or narrative in how the data synergizes together. Thus, coalescing concepts converge

into a grand or core category from which a storyline and theory, grounded in data, emerges. The CGT method is highly interactive where the researcher encourages and exhorts a storyline stream of data from the interviewees (Mills, 2006). Instead of disconnected answers to interview questions, this proactive constructivist approach fosters greater context in linking the questions together toward a developing theme or concept.

Constant Comparison

As data is gathered and coded, it is compared to each other for common or repeating concepts or themes (Moerman, 2016). For this research, the various techniques, metric evaluations, applying value system priorities, and linear process of making decisions materialized from the responses in the interviews and these were compared with one another. This process enabled the tweaking of questions or follow-up questions for future interviews to further refine discovered concepts and themes. This highly iterative process was time consuming but was vital to discerning key concepts as well as their causal links to each other.

Memoing

Memoing is a unique feature where the researcher adds notes, observations, or commentary as supplementary support during the data-gathering and/or coding process (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Due to the active role of the researcher in CGT (Charmaz, 2014), memos enable the researcher to note relationships within the data or target a potential emerging concept. This process continues which may require more initial data collection (note red arrow on left side of diagram of Figure 14). Memo writing is informal (Charmaz, 2006) to guide the researcher in the next steps of data collection, coding, and analysis (Holton, 2007). This technique was utilized by this researcher during the interview process to highlight key points made by the participant. After the interview, memos were written to summarize a discovered idea or concept and/or to

write it in a more concise manner. Several of these memo concepts were then introduced in ensuing interviews to either validate or refute. Through the additional commentary the memo could evolve into an approved concept or principle.

Theoretical Saturation

The discovery process moved along the path of initial sampling and data collection to initial coding, theoretical sampling, constant comparison, collecting more data, diagramming and focused coding, selective coding, and then repeated this cycle. Eventually, the research reached a saturation level where no new codes or concepts were being detected or created (Flick, 2018). This is the point of theoretical saturation. It was determined more by the confidence of the researcher rather than some systematic metric of measurement. Flick (2018) notes that this determination does not mean that no more pertinent data exists, but that sufficient data to develop a coherent theory has been reached. The last step was the continual analysis and smoothing process of the data to concepts, key principles, then to theory subcomponents until a theme, storyline, and a coherent theory was developed.

Trustworthiness

The desired attribute of any research is to be reliable, repeatable (where practical), and to be performed and presented with integrity. Respect for the purity of data must be maintained. Adherence to stated guidelines, structure, and delimitations add credence to the research and value to the results. The methodology, analysis, results, and conclusions within a qualitative study must demonstrate that the research is credible, confirmable, transferable, and dependable (Creswell, 2018). Constructivist grounded theory has more relaxed rules than other grounded theories. This flexibility allows greater participation of the researcher and an openness to the interpretation of the data but is often vulnerable to claims of potential researcher bias.

Credibility

The credibility of a study correlates to the level of confidence one has in the results of the study (Rudd, 2019). For a grounded theory study utilizing qualitative interviews, the information management practices of transitioning raw data through transcription, the coding process, categorization to the final story are critical. Following a clear and repeatable process map with well-defined steps ensures data integrity. For all interviews, the interview transcripts were offered to the interviewee for possible edits or clarification before final approval and acceptance. The specific coding guidelines were line-by-line defining a line as a sentence or multiple sentences in story-telling situations. The codes began with broad classifications that narrowed and consolidated through the iterative coding stages. Adhering to this prescribed technique provided traceability of the data from the transcripts into the coding and cataloguing process into a final category or storyline offering a complete audit trail capability. Though much of the coding process documentation was not part of the final document, it will be stored, maintained, and available for future inspection or use.

Dependability

As noted in the above section, consistent adherence to the defined research methodology is critical. A dependable study is one that can be repeated. Similar to a recipe, the processes were properly articulated and consistently followed. For a constructivist grounded theory, this does not mean that the same results will be reached as would be expected in a quantitative study. CGT is co-developed through joint participation of the interviewer and interviewee. It is also open to interpretation. Thus, the same raw data (transcript) could be coded or interpreted differently. Dependability for this study is reflected in the consistency of the procedures for conducting each semi-structured interview and the ensuing coding process.

Confirmability

In a constructivist viewpoint, the goal of the research is to capture and depend upon the interviewee's perspective regarding a situation or experience as much as possible (Creswell, 2018). Confirmability relates to the researcher's neutrality and the minimization of bias (Rudd, 2019). However, CGT recognizes the presence of researcher bias and allows for researcher interpretation (Charmaz, 2006) which mitigates many of the safeguards for ensuring neutrality. It also includes the researcher in the theory development process as a co-constructer. The confirmability of this study rests in the documented collective responses by the participants which are representatively provided in separate tables in Chapter 4. The viable precepts, principles, and/or guiding theory that was produced came from that data.

Transferability

Like confirmability stated above, the results of the study are a strong indicator of its transferability. This study has immense transferability potential for its results have a biblical foundation. Biblical principles are universal in nature and application. Decisions occur in all walks of life. Tough decisions occur in complex environments where desired information is unknown or unpredictable. Defining key variables and principles and developing a tool set, thought process methodology, and/or decision matrix that enhances one's probability of making wise choices and decisions would be invaluable to all of humankind. The practical biblical principles derived from this study fit that description and thus are highly transferable to other areas and applications.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this research effort was to examine the fractal nature within biblical wisdom and how it applies to decision-making in complex and challenging environmental conditions.

Like any skilled and experienced craftsman, it is not just knowing how to do something but what tools are necessary to successfully accomplish the task. The objective was to develop a concept or set of related concepts that evolve into principles and/or a theory. The line of thinking for this study was primarily inductive and abductive and the ideal research tool was grounded theory.

Grounded theory is a method of research that has enormous appeal for a vast range of topics or disciplines due to its explanatory power (Mills, 2006). Within general grounded theory there are specialized tools or sub-methods. The constructivist method (CGT) championed by Kathy Charmaz aligned best with the goals and approach for this research in that CGT allows the related research to guide and become part of the data set, it recognizes the existence of preconceived ideas within the researcher and makes a proactive allowance for it, and it promotes an interpretive conclusion noting that other interpretations may be found within the same set of gathered data. This author considered this methodology and to conduct qualitative interviews as the approach for this research to be the best toolset to achieve the desired results. The rationale of utilizing qualitative interviews as the primary construct for data collection further enhanced the constructivist approach in that researcher and interviewee co-constructed the concepts, principles, and storyline (Sebastian, 2019). This was put into practice as the conducted interviews enabled a dialogue approach to discuss the interview questions and then perform a follow up on the interviewee's initial responses. Through the constant comparison function and the use of memos, select responses from the initial interviews were incorporated into the next set of interviews to confirm the developing concepts and themes. This practice facilitated a layered construction of the accumulating data into common themes, concepts, and principles.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The central theme for this study was to analyze wisdom in decision-making. If decisions are at the transaction level of life, then making good choices and wise decisions would be of great benefit to everyone. As previously observed, we are the sum total of the decisions that we make (Brightlight, 2013). This study funneled this broad theme to specifically address a subset type of wisdom—biblical wisdom. It further narrowed the scope of the research to a particular setting of a complex environment. The use of semi-structured interviews with leaders who operated in a complicated and complex environment focused on gathering data to address these biblical wisdom principles for decision-making. The numerous industry verticals of business, politics, ministry, sports, academics, and preservers of national/societal order provided a broad spectrum of complexity experience along with their specific nuances and challenges. The feedback from these volunteers was exceptional in its depth, breadth, and insightfulness.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

The primary step of the research was for the researcher, utilizing grounded theory, to examine and codify the answers and discussions from the interview process to discover concepts, precepts, and principles that describe the use of biblical wisdom in decision-making. The final step was to analyze these wisdom components, concepts, and principles derived from the grounded theory process to search for a fractal pattern. Were there self-similar patterns or components of wisdom that consistently appeared in the decision-making process? Were they present in the various categories of decisions? The research sought to discover universal metrics or outcome considerations that were always incorporated (or should have been incorporated) in the decision-making process whether the issue was a big decision or small, the decision was

made under pressure or time constraints, the decision involved intuition or gut feel, or whether the decision remained synchronic and aligned with overall goals and objectives. This was the desired final output for the study.

The technique used for selecting interviewees was purposive sampling. Potential subjects were identified via personal knowledge, LinkedIn, third party reference, and/or awareness through the participant's public (celebrity) status. There were seven leadership categories and a balance among these various groups was sought. A minimum of three representatives for each group was considered the baseline. It was anticipated that a significant subset of interviewees would qualify for more than one category. As the interview process progressed, the researcher monitored the qualifications to ensure all groups were adequately represented.

The initial target was to conduct 20 interviews. The final result was that twenty-one interviews were conducted and there were an additional two candidates who provided input or commentary but not a full interview. Forty prospects were initially contacted to participate in the study which resulted in the twenty-three who assisted in full or in part which results in a 57.5% solicitation success rate for participation and a 52.5% success rate for the interview. The data input collected from the interview and discussion process produced over 140,000 words of text including the comments from the interviewer. The grounded theory utilized was constructivist grounded theory which encourages a dialogue vice monologue interview process to ascertain specific points relative to the study. The researcher had a proactive role and often distilled comments and restated them back to the interviewee to confirm a concept or principle described.

In the majority of cases, the interview process was conducted via Zoom. The interview was recorded via the Zoom software and was also recorded and transcribed by Otter.ai software. This provided a redundancy in the recording function in case one software platform

malfunctioned. The transcription process of the Otter.ai software was reasonably good but it was certainly not flawless. The software also has the audio portion which could be replayed to understand the actual term(s) or wording used. If that was not discernable, then the researcher could use the Zoom recording to troubleshoot to ensure an accurate transcription. However, this was a slightly more tedious process and fortunately was only required in a few instances. Four interviews were conducted via a phone call where the Otter.ai software was the only tool used to record the interaction.

All the interviewees were very cordial and helpful during the interview and most offered follow on assistance should it be required. The researcher made informal memo notes during the interview process and these were included in the coding process. Some memos, which often summarized an interviewee's point, were introduced to future participants to obtain their comment or concurrence. Thus, there was an iterative process to introduce emerging ideas and concepts to future interviewees.

The baseline set of questions are provided in Appendix I and most of the interviewees volunteered concrete or real life experience examples to highlight their points which provided greater depth and context to their answers. Not all questions were asked directly as some became evident during the discussions. Since it was a semi-structured interview, details within an interviewee's particular area of expertise were explored via follow on questions. This provided greater illumination in the particular challenges within their complex environment.

Once an interview was conducted, the next step was to begin the coding process. The first round or initial coding was performed doing line coding where the default definition of a line was a sentence. The primary theme or concepts for each sentence was analyzed and documented. In certain instances where the interviewee was sharing a story, long narrative, or an analogy,

multiple sentences were considered together as a “line” and were coded using the same analysis and documentation process described above. Though preset categories are typically discouraged in grounded theory coding (Flick, 2018) as the data is to determine the codes, this researcher used two overly broad classifications that directly related to the research questions to establish an initial broad grouping. Each initial coded line was flagged with a prescribed two character code to classify it as a “love for God,” “love for others,” “love for self,” a combination of two or more, or as unclassified. The second classification was similar in that it flagged each line code as being a truth statement, a love statement, a combination of the two, or undetermined. The transcripts were transferred into Excel where they were initially coding and classified.

After eight interviews had been conducted and initially coded, the researcher began the second round of analysis of focused coding. Here, the broader classifications were broken down into smaller conceptual ideas. New categories were created as the themes and statements were distilled into more concise principles and precepts. As the researcher conducted more interviews, this staggered coding methodology of interview→initial coding→ focused coding was continually employed.

To provide some visual aids to the expanding data set, the researcher referred back to two systems and illustrations introduced in Chapter 2. The overview or strategic visual was the Fractal Method Lifecycle (Figure 12) which identified the major players and key metrics in leading an organization to a defined goal. As concepts and principles were developed in the coding process, these were plotted onto these systems to illustrate relationship characteristics and bonds. The second system utilized, evaluated the tactical action level of the individual decision-making process via the OODA loop discussed on page 58. Again, key metrics discovered through the coding process were plotted onto this cycle. This enhancement or contextual insight

inserted into these two systems provided a pragmatic application of where the concepts being developed would apply. This proved to be an especially useful tool to the researcher. Instead of sorting through scores of isolated theoretical concepts in a software tool, plotting them to a system or systems provided a visual guidance of practical application. At the conclusion of the coding process these two contextually enhanced systems provided a visual “storyline.” The summarized results of this effort are presented in the ensuing section and in Chapter 5.

After the first sixteen interviews were conducted and the two rounds of initial and focused coding were completed, the third and final round of theoretical coding was initiated. Although the 80-20 rule could apply, there was no real magic in the number sixteen. There was simply a lag time in the scheduling of interviews and with roughly 80% of the interviews completed, this allowed the researcher to complete the three rounds of coding and to be prepared to test for theoretical saturation with the remaining interviews to be conducted. In this third phase, the numerous distilled codes from the second coding round were combined to merge major principles and precepts together to form an overall concept or theory—the “story” as alluded to above. This architecture was reasonably formed by the time the last interviews were conducted. Though new data was introduced and insightful perspectives gained, no new principles or themes were acquired that altered the developing theory. These remaining interviews and commentary were added to the data set providing broader context and support for the existing theory.

Demographic and Sample Data

The interviewees were all U.S. citizens that were currently living in the United States. One had dual citizenship with an Asian country. Most resided in the Southeast although one lived in California. Though classification of their primary category was typically obvious, many

had secondary qualifications and a few could have been reasonably argued to fit into three of the prescribed leadership categories. However, as a self-imposed rule, a limit of two qualifying categories was established for classification. The distinction among categories is not overly critical in affecting the results of the study as the goal is to discover a universal concept or theory for decision-making. The differentiation in categories relates more to types of challenges or complexity experienced. The criticality is to ensure that multiple perspectives are obtained and analyzed in the study. The breakdown of the seven leadership categories and their respective representative totals are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Qualifying Categories of Interviewees

BUSINESS LEADER	MILITARY/LAW ENFORCEMENT	PASTOR	MISSIONARY	COACH	POLITICIAN	ACADEMIC / SME	Total
6	5	4	3	4	5	8	35

Of the twenty-one interviewees and two commenters (total 23), there were twelve that were charted as fulfilling two categories leading to the representative total of thirty-five. Seven of the twenty-three were founders where five are still serving as president or leader of their organization. Of those who had changed roles, one founder serves his company in a consultative role and the other founder is now organizing a team for a potentially new nonprofit startup...at eighty years old. As a follower of Christ and a dedicated student of His Word, this individual notes, with gracious prudence and a smile, that the scriptures do not mention retirement. Another elder leader made that same comment also noting that “Satan never quits so neither should we.”

All of the interviewees would be considered successful leaders from a worldly perspective. Though each of them possessed different talents, spiritual gifts, and levels of faith, they all led their respective organizations and personal lives from a Kingdom of God

consciousness and worldview. Several oversaw organizations that functioned on an international or global scale. Some have a significant level of notoriety. All were committed Christians. The breakdown of their current/former occupation(s) and skills/expertise are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

Careers of Interviewees

3-star General, Leadership Consultant	President, Christian university, Pastor
Founder/President for International Aid Nonprofit, author	College Basketball Coach, Small Business Owner (Founder)
Royal Family member (Princess), author	Global Recruiting Executive/Branch CEO
Founder/CEO large manufacturing company, youth football coach	Fortune 500 Sales Executive, Founder of Nonprofit Residence for unsheltered men
Founder/CEO Christian Leadership Roundtable, author	Corporate Sales & Marketing Director, Fundraiser
Principal, HS Football Coach	Governor, member of Congress
Police Detective/College Baseball coach	Large church Pastor
Appellate Court Judge	Small Business Owner, President
Large Church Associate Pastor, overseas Missionary	CIO of Fortune 1000 Company, Fighter Pilot, Small Business Owner/President
Lieutenant Colonel, author, Pentagon consultant, Fox News (media) contributor	Interviewee's spouse, Stephen Ministry Leader, and wise counsellor
Sheriff, US Marshall, County Commissioner	Founder/CEO Nonprofit Ministry, author* Founder, Megachurch Pastor, author*

*Provided some input/commentary but not a full interview

The above participants provided a diverse and balanced cross section of disciplines and experience within each of the categories. Two of the Missionary participants operated overseas while the other was based within the United States. The business leaders served in manufacturing, retail, marketing, human resources, and consulting for both product and service-oriented organizations. The coaches spanned leadership experience with youth, high school, and college students, while politicians served at the local, state, and national levels. Finally, the military and law enforcement depicted leadership experience at the highest levels for local, national, and international concerns.

Data Analysis and Findings

The initial coding process of the interviews produced over a thousand coded ideas, themes, opinions, concepts, precepts, best practices, and principles. Many were repetitive and/or overlapping which gave confidence to the researcher that a saturation level had been achieved. As described in the previous section, all codes were classified according to the research questions as applying as acts of love for God, others, or self or some combination thereof. This simple classification idea became a challenge to parse out the loves as in theory all the concepts and principles identified were a combination of two or more. As example, multiple leaders noted the importance of consistently spending time in prayer, devotion, and meditating on God' Word. One leader called it "the most important hour." Doing so gives honor to God, but it also strengthens one's faith (love for self) and if intercessory prayer is involved, it completes the triangle by showing love for others. Christ's new command to love others as He loves us (John 13:34, 15:12) implies that any act of love for others honors and glorifies God. Thus, in one sense separating these concepts into a particular love silo was a bit arbitrary. To clarify the distinction, acts that recognize the attributes of God and His Law and Authority were classified under loving God and actions that were considered self-improvement were classified under love for self.

The baseline interview consisted of twelve questions with seven prescribed follow-up questions. All interviewees were quite engaging sharing detailed stories which led to specific follow-up questions. The intended goal of concise, short answer responses became unattainable as the interview would have gone well past the prescribed timeframe. Thus, the researcher in many cases had to glean out the answer to the questions even if some were not asked directly. The following four Tables provide a sampling of the answers received from the interview process.

Table 9.*Interview Question Responses - LEADERSHIP*

#	Baseline Questions	Select (Representative) Comments
1	What's the most rewarding?	<p>"Seeing kids graduate and handing them their diploma."</p> <p>"Making progress and getting things right" "Using your position to help people"</p> <p>"God putting a dream in me and seeing it unfold"</p> <p>"Minister & witnessing to young men...and optimizing their potential"</p> <p>"Most rewarding is relationships with the people"</p> <p>"You know, it's a thrilling ride to grow and to fulfill and all of that, but it's the personal nature of hearing, like yesterday after chapel, student came up to me and shared how she had come to Christ a few days ago."</p> <p>"I got to watch God do something through me that I didn't know how to do"</p> <p>"Enjoyed finding people to fit organizations."</p> <p>"I get an energy rush...to see people succeed."</p> <p>"I love the way teams work. Just getting the most out of people, whether it's just in their development as a person or on the court...having a kid who had 50 people in her school, and a person from an inner city that had 4000, and you ask them to play together and make it work."</p> <p>"Seeing lives transformed..." "It's a showcase of what God has done..." "I'm just the instrument."</p>
2	What's the most challenging?	<p>"Communicating overseas needs to people here in the US"</p> <p>"Politics/multi-party self-interest & channeling that to common goals"</p> <p>"Managing people" "Overseeing 240 people who have guns, 24/7"</p> <p>"Freedom of expression/action in a government-controlled country"</p> <p>"looking inside a man's head to see if he's truthful & wants to change his life"</p> <p>"Finding the right person to fill a need"</p> <p>"Like, the church is not the building, it's the people... And so, the business is just the people and I guess the biggest obstacle is this work, being coaching, training, working along with people."</p> <p>"For me, it's always been people, which, I enjoy, but people are complex machines."</p> <p>"I think the number one challenge is the cultural of ours. Where we live you know, you're expediting yourself towards depravity at a quicker pace in American history we've ever seen."</p>
3	Describe your leadership style and techniques?	<p>"Influencer" "Servant Leader" "Transformational leader"</p> <p>"Set the standard...lead by example (Jesus set the standard for all of us)"</p> <p>"Our mission is transforming lives through Christ." "Set expectations and empower them"</p> <p>"Be authentic" "Talk about excellence and God is an excellent God."</p> <p>"Jesus demonstrated servant leadership by washing His disciples feet."</p> <p>"A big part of leadership is to be a purveyor of hope and our hope is based on scripture and God's sovereignty."</p> <p>"somebody who's willing to make, in some cases, tough decisions no matter what the consequences" "Be willing to stand alone in tough times."</p> <p>"Lead with ambiguity...be open." "In leadership, I deal with each individual player."</p> <p>Accountability: "to lead is to decide" "Accept the fears of those who follow you."</p> <p>"I really appreciate a transformational leadership style. And I think that falls within the umbrella of authentic transformation."</p> <p>Leader as dynamic teacher: "instruction/modeling with kindness and intention."</p> <p>"I think that humility is of the utmost importance when it comes to leadership"</p>
4	Are you Process- or relationship-oriented?	<p>"I'm a process guy...but it first starts with relationships"</p> <p>"I've always been relationship oriented." "Trust is the backbone to relationships."</p> <p>"Process is the map and relationships are the means and method."</p> <p>"Balance of empowering and having some guidelines to create focus."</p> <p>"Optimally, both." Observation: "It's gift to give your vision and have another capture it."</p> <p>"Relationship first...must get buy-in before presenting the process."</p>

The complete interview question template is found in Appendix I. Although Question 11 asked directly about three of the research questions, the other questions were designed to provide context to the data development. Questions 1 through 4 focused on their leadership traits and attitudes, Questions 5 through 8 evaluated decision-making, and Questions 9 to 12 addressed the leaders' embedded value systems. Collectively, the goal was to illustrate how one leads and interacts with others, how one prioritizes, and how one decides. The semi-structured interview format was most appropriate as variance among answers was anticipated because of the variance within complex environments. The surface level answers of a judge and a missionary would expectantly be different, but through analysis, the discovery of the underlying biblical principles would or should be congruent.

The first four questions addressed leadership (see Table 9). The first two questions addressed the high-low boundaries of joy and stress in having interviewees state the most fulfilling aspect of their work and its most challenging. The third question asked broadly about their leadership style and the fourth question addressed a specific preference of their methodology and approach.

When it came to work fulfillment, the answers were strikingly similar. One noted the pragmatical satisfaction of seeing things done right or witnessing excellence. Two leaders remarked with a certain sense of awe the amazing experience of sensing God's presence and Spirit guide them in their business journey from vision to fruition. The common theme of the remaining participants all celebrated in one form or another, the success of others under their care. Several noted the blessing received and the bonds formed from their investment into others. One educator commented about being contacted by a former student ten years later seeking advice on marriage. The trust developed a decade ago had not faded such that counsel was

sought on an important matter. As a collective response summary, the rewards were witnessing and experiencing the work of the LORD in bringing about excellence and success in others.

The biggest challenges reported primarily fell into two 8M categories of Manpower and Mother Nature. For those who were responsible for leading large numbers of people as well as those immersed in highly interdependent transactions requiring intense interpersonal relationships, the biggest challenge was the difficulty of managing and/or interacting with the people themselves. Communicating and connecting with one another were commonly discussed hindrances. This confirms the related literature that human interaction is complex and one leader even used that precise terminology.

For others it was the environmental conditions of operating under the restrictions of an oppressive, dysfunctional and/or corrupt government, or within a challenging and distracted culture and society. As one leader sadly observed, “governments are the biggest violators of human rights” and also referenced the commonly known passage “that absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Recognizing this as not an unexpected outcome of humanity’s fallen state, he encouragingly added the notion of the power of conscience within each of us, “to ameliorate or rectify the things that are fallen in this world.”

Another leader had firsthand experience in an Asian nation where the topics for her radio program had to be screened before being broadcasted. A few interviewees lamented the ongoing moral decay within the United States, the nation’s drift toward secularization, and the increasing trend and accepting attitude toward censorship. One participant critiqued the cultural attitude change, “the quicker you run away from capitalism, the more you get into socialism...an outcome they’re going to regret.” Another noted the rise and acceptability of cleverly disguised Marxist ideas that seeks to dethrone God and destroy capitalism. Stating that Marxism

undergirds socialism, he added, “I think the progressive movement tried to replace Christianity with a lot of their values...and this trend has been going on for decades influencing Hollywood, academia, and journalism.” Others more generally noted the challenge that many people are not aware of the truth or have difficulty discerning the truth within the deluge of available information. Despite these challenging circumstances, all of the leaders dutifully took their respective environmental situations in stride and generally aligned with the Shamgar strategy of “trust in the LORD, start where you are, use what you have, and do what you can.”

The common themes for leadership style was servant and transformational leadership, being an influencer, and leading by example. The critical metrics of recognizing God’s authority and sovereignty and having Christ as benchmark and example were cited by virtually everyone. Key traits expressed were humility, openness, and the accountability aspect of willingness to stand firm despite the pressure. As one leader succinctly noted, “To lead is to decide.”

The last question for the leadership segment was to split the tandem components of process and people to discern which was the predominant preference or strength. As Bredfeldt’s basic leadership definition of “leading people from here to there,” was it the “people” or the “here to there” aspect that was most important? In this small sample size, a slight majority expressed more comfort with the process part, but all acknowledged the greater importance of influencing the people to make the journey. This concept of utilizing one’s personal leadership preference (process) to emphasize importance (relationships) could be summarized in one leader’s response that “we have a staff meeting, and I said every fifth Tuesday we’re going to devote that purely to relationship building.” All affirmed it is a blending of the two. A common agreed upon statement that came from a memo of the researcher was that the process was the map but it’s the people that’s the means and method. The latter is obviously the more important

of the two. A leader can wander map-less with the people and eventually get from here to there. However, a map without the people is just a piece of paper.

A second subtle contrast in leadership strategy emerged from the interview discussions in the prioritization of the goal and the path to get there. One strategy is to clearly articulate the goal and empower the people to achieve it. As one military officer noted, “I was never told what to do. I was told what to get done.” This is a management by objectives approach and is useful in complex environments where decision-making is best handled at a local level. Within complex adaptive systems, this approach recognizes the power and efficiency of self-organization.

The other tactic aligns with Coach John Wooden’s (2009) observation that the journey (path) is the destination (goal). It’s a systems approach where the focus is on the path and the intense and necessary preparation to travel that path. Despite coaching being in a zero-sum gain of either winning or losing which is exclusively goal-oriented, by emphasizing the training and preparation, the goal (winning) becomes merely the fruit of that effort. This approach emphasizes team development and the gains of synergy where the whole is greater than the sum of the pieces. Both techniques have their merits and strategically can be blended together dependent upon the tactical situation. They both require proper training and equipping and then the empowering of the people in making it happen (execution).

The next four questions relate to decision-making scenarios and several of the responses are provided in Table 10. One leader summarized, “We have Christian principles, precepts, and values that should govern the decisions that we make.” All emphasized alignment with God’s will. This was a foundational principle. One leader described a progression path to discern the right decision by beginning with prayer and communion with God. Then to seek solutions from God’s Word and thirdly, entertain wise counsel. The final step returns to God and to wait upon

Him for a confirmation within one's spirit. Though not so concisely stated, this was a common approach by most of the interviewees. The first steps are internal of seeking God's will and doing one's own research through His Word. Finally, expand to the external and seek the advice of others (Prov 15:22). As one leader confirmed, "I almost never make unilateral decisions."

Table 10.

Interview Question Responses – DECISION-MAKING

#	Baseline Questions	Select (Representative) Comments
5	Key Decision metrics to monitor?	<p>"Guiding principle for decision-making is the will of God."</p> <p>"engagement with the people and having a shared vision of the organization to succeed"</p> <p>"Trust. Collaboration. Growth."</p> <p>"Get the facts."</p> <p>"Getting feedback on decisions...provide a broader perspective."</p> <p>"I seek the wise counsel of others."</p>
F1	Role of others in decision-making?	<p>"Have a plan and let God confirm it in your heart."</p> <p>"when under stress--keep it simple--easy to remember goals...break it down into small parts"</p>
F2		<p>"Everything we do is collaboration. Yes, the leader makes the final decision, but all the coaches, players are integrated into every aspect."</p> <p>"God is in charge is the key part."</p>
6	Describe decision-making process?	<p>"Basically, everything starts with looking for God's will."</p> <p>"I've always started out with a long term approach to decision making"</p> <p>"I don't call it gut feel; I call it Holy Spirit talk" "Prompting of the Holy Spirit"</p> <p>"Gut feel is intuition developed through experience and discipleship."</p> <p>"I think it was the way I coach was my gut as much as I fight you know, the science and the art of basketball, right?"</p>
	How about "gut feelings"?	<p>"I call 'gut feel' intuition... and is more pattern recognition."</p> <p>"God led me through a myriad of decisions."</p> <p>"There's no info sometimes...have to go with gut experience."</p> <p>"My gut feel is God and I put trust into my leaders."</p>
7	Methodology for big decisions?	<p>"big decisions: I don't want to make them; I want to think through them...and think about the unintended consequences of that decision."</p> <p>"avoid time pressure whenever possible"</p> <p>"I won't be forced to make a decision I'm not comfortable with."</p> <p>"Prayer before every big decision."</p> <p>"Even for quick decisions there's a methodology to follow."</p>
8	Making decisions under a time constraint?	<p>"I believe the Holy Spirit's always active inside of us. And when you're asking God for guidance, I think He's pretty much bound to give it to us because He's going to judge us, and so I think, if I'm truly asking; I think the answer will be there."</p> <p>"What's my vision; what's God's will?"</p> <p>"Be proactive—anticipate decisions and not be driven by them"</p> <p>"Preparation. Going 400 to 500 knots—there's not much time to problem solve."</p>

The next two tables (11 and 12) address the value system of the leader. The importance of doing all things with integrity was universally corroborated and the greatest love or highest priority was unanimously confirmed in describing one's cornerstone as Christ or more broadly as their relationship with God. Both of these were considered foundational principles. The topic of wisdom and its concept, traits, and definitions are complex and the collection of answers reflected that. However, they all are grounded to their cornerstone and relationship with God.

Table 11.

Interview Question Responses – VALUE SYSTEM (PART I)

#	Baseline Questions	Select (Representative) Comments
9	What is your cornerstone?	<p>"God" "Christ" "relationship with the LORD" "my Father"</p>
10	<p>What's your definition of wisdom?</p> <p>What are some of its attributes?</p>	<p>"Wisdom is the ability to see things from God's perspective"</p> <p>"Self-management, emotional intelligence"</p> <p>"I think wisdom is experience."</p> <p>"Our greatest need is salvation."</p> <p>"Take advice from others with biblical principles." "The beatitudes in Matt 5"</p> <p>"You're only as good as your last step."</p> <p>"There is knowledge and experience but if we're following God's truth, His Word, principles and precepts then that is wisdom." "Wisdom is the application of truth."</p> <p>"Must consider the audience."</p> <p>"Wisdom is hearing and listening to one's conscience and following it and all the other things will fall into place."</p> <p>"Wisdom has truth as its foundation and knowing how to proceed."</p> <p>"Well, we have Christian principles, precepts and values that should govern the decisions that we make." "We're challenged because we're all sinners."</p> <p>"You can have knowledge without wisdom, but you can't have wisdom without knowledge"</p> <p>"Look at things through a prism of spiritual discernment."</p> <p>"I'm trusting You (God) for the calling you placed on my life, my family's life."</p> <p>"Must think short and long term"</p> <p>"Wisdom is the aspect of taking that knowledge in a critical vein in order to come to a biblical solution."</p> <p>"Generally, we have a decent sense of right and wrong."</p> <p>Must have the proper worldview...and experience it through your faith."</p> <p>"Be a good listener." "People want to be listened to."</p> <p>"a key principle of wisdom that's one of the most important things, both individually and from an institutional standpoint, is the ability to exercise self-government and self-control and self-discipline."</p> <p>"Life and Death are in the power of the tongue."</p> <p>"We have that still, small voice. If we listen to it marvelous things can happen."</p> <p>"be marinated in God's Word"</p>

The final two questions addressed three of the research questions and sought a summary slogan or piece of advice for future sojourners. The wise counsel shared was “to start with God” and “discover His will” for one’s life. Another added, “To be our best self is to fulfill God’s purpose for our lives.” The love for others was also reflected in these leaders’ joy in seeing success in others (Question 1). It confirmed Paul’s advice, “Do all things in love” (1 Cor 14:16).

Table 12.

Interview Question Responses – VALUE SYSTEM (PART II)

#	Baseline Questions	Select (Representative) Comments
11	How does love for God, others, & self, influence your decisions?	<p>“All are created in God’s image and entitled to respect” “Do all things with integrity” “Do the right thing.” “I think the formation of a definition of love is that desire that that person's life would be transformed by the mercy of Christ.” “Golden Rule” “I’m not loving others if I’m not giving my best.” If you have a biblical worldview, then act within the Greatest Commandment. “Loving and accepting others for who they are with humility.” CS Lewis noted, “I have never met an ordinary person” “God set the example in John 3:16.” “There’s always a higher purpose than us.” “cultivate (relationships) with a very genuine and sincere, spirit and interest in others” “Kids...they really pretty much want to know what reality is and they want to know the truth.” “Give tools to others to be successful.” “Make your boss look good.” “Conscience inspires that “I should, I ought, I must help that person.” “The best relationships and the most stable ones are those based on each person or each party having a strong tie to the wants and needs of the other party.” “Remember your customer.” “Love of God affects all relationships.” There's a perseverance of love...and the principal love, which is 1 John 4, which is the character of God, emulated through the hands of man. Hands, heart, head. So there has to be that definition of love and love is unconditional.” Forgiveness: “Recall Jesus said, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’ There are many who are ignorant of God.” “How does this decision show that we are completely in love with God and are acting out of our love?”</p>
12	Best advice for being successful in life?	<p>“Start the day with God.” “Discover God’s will for your life” “Do things with excellence.” “Our purpose is to make disciples.” “Examine yourself. When people see you coming, what do they think? How does your light shine?” “Spend quiet time with God and journal the journey.” “When studying God’s Word, when something jumps off the page, pause and reflect upon it.” “Benchmark off Christ.” “Start the day with a devotional and prayer...that gets me focused on the vertical.” Put in extra-effort (“punch above your weight class”) & freely give others credit “To be our best self is to fulfill God’s purpose for our lives.”</p>

As part of the semi-structured interview process, offshoots of baseline questions were often explored. As an example, for those that had knowledge of the subject, the OODA Decision Loop was discussed. Using OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) as a decision template, the key metrics for each phase of the process loop were evaluated. In the initial Observe phase, the quantity (sufficiency) and quality (accuracy and applicability) of the information gathered or “observed” were identified as critical. A military general stressed and other interviewees indirectly concurred the extreme importance of discerning truth in the Observe phase. The theory is rather obvious in that virtually everyone has made decisions based on faulty information in which the outcomes or consequences were rarely good. The converse of this concept is confirmed through a maxim of Sun Tzu in that all warfare is based on deception (Griffith, 1975). Thus, hiding, or distorting truth with an opponent is a central tactic. Actual discernment of truth in the Observe phase can be a challenging endeavor. One of the biggest issues is filtering the truth from all the propaganda and spin. An academic leader insightfully observed,

“I think you've got two other aspects from the beginning of recorded time until about 2010. Everything (until 2010) was the accumulation of knowledge and education. Everything. And with Google now, it's not the accumulation of knowledge. It's the discernment of what's true.”

It's not a lack of available data or information, but it's the quality or truthfulness of the information received that's the key metric. When asked about the difficulty of promoting the truth, another leader noted the challenging environment, “Because there's not enough room to put your message into their minds...because it's crowded out by all the noise of other folks who are sitting saying things one way or the other—(motivated) mostly for money.” These two astute comments highlight the importance of a proper cornerstone. In addressing motivated reasoning, Kraft (2015) notes, “Individuals do not accept and internalize informational and contextual frames irrespective of their predispositions” (p. 125). The core of one's beliefs always influences

how they view the world. Jesus stated that “no one can serve two masters...one cannot serve both God and mammon” (Matt 6:24). Paul adds, “Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6). If the love of money is one’s cornerstone, then truth is often a casualty.

Truth is the fertile ground that produces trust. Without trust, there can be no meaningful relationship. Thus, trusting the source or provider of the information is a critical aspect in the Observe phase. The biblical principle of testing the spirits to see whether they are from God or not (1 John 4:1) applies. Several leaders emphasized this principle of validating the incoming data. There appears to be an inverse correlation between trusting and testing—the more you trust, the less you need to test.

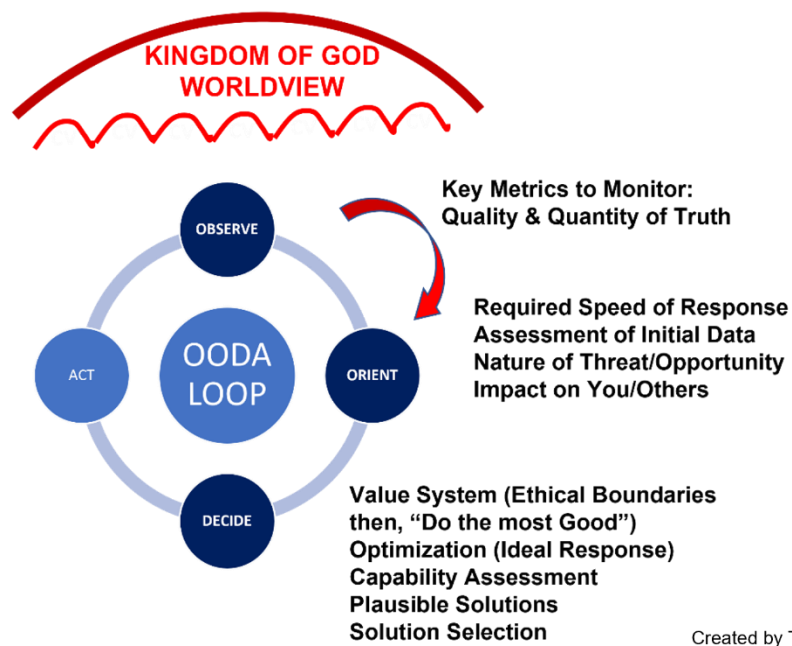
If truth is not discerned or recognized in the Observe phase, then the decision loop is severely degraded and often breaks down and fails. A dramatic and famous example that is perhaps the greatest incident of tragic irony in all of human history is recorded in the Bible. It is found in John’s Gospel (v. 18:38) where Pilate asked Jesus the question, “What is truth?” Here, the prefect of Judea is looking at the very embodiment of Truth (John 14:6) but does not see it. Had Pilate recognized truth at that moment, instead of scourging and crucifying Jesus, he would have fell down and worshipped Him. The diversity of outcomes could not have been greater and it all hinged upon knowing the truth.

The critical function in the OODA Loop is the Orient Phase. As noted above, failure to observe truth significantly impacts the rest of the cycle. However, there are some preparation steps within the Orient phase that can minimize these dangers. Practical steps such as validating the data, getting alternate or confirming sources, utilizing guiding principles, and having wise counsel all help mitigate risk. It is in the Orient phase where one’s worldview significantly comes into play. This viewpoint must be from a Kingdom of God perspective. All other

viewpoints are not from truth and thus, are built upon sand (falsehoods). Therefore, the entire ensuing process, thinking, and methodology is out of synch. As one leader observed that we will not have all the information we want before making a decision, but one must focus or emphasize on what they know is true. A more detailed presentation of the key attributes that one must possess to operate with a Kingdom of God perspective is presented in chapter 5. At the tactical decision level, the OODA Loop and its key metrics are illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 16.

OODA Decision Loop



Once a leader has gone through the Orient phase and assessed the situation, the next step is the Decide phase. Here, the basic tenets of the scientific method apply. The goal is ROI or do the most good (however one defines good), formulate solutions, then select the best one that can be successful. It should be noted that this is a very dynamic system. While one is deciding, more information (Observing) is coming in to be processed (Orient) and considered.

Inserted in this evaluation process within the Decide phase is "Capability Assessment."

In Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, the author describes a condition called desperate ground or death ground (Griffith, 1975). It is in these extremely challenging situations where a unit must fight to survive or die. The Alamo, Guadalcanal, the 20th Maine on Little Round Top are a few familiar examples. Units in such extreme environments act with tremendous bravery, courage, and valor. This researcher asked a military leader how does one evoke that level of performance without having to be placed in that situation? How does one achieve maximum effort? He responded by referring to the Hope Experiment. It was an (in)famous experiment where rats were placed in water and timed for how long they would swim before they drowned (Maust, 2016). Most drowned within 20 minutes. If the rats were rescued and allowed to revive and then placed back in the water, some would swim for forty or more hours. There was hope for rescue. Using that as a crude illustration, the officer affirmed that hope is one of the greatest things you can give someone. It's value cannot be overstated for if one has hope, they can overcome great obstacles.

Research Question 1

To properly conduct this study, this significant amount of background information was desired to provide depth and context for the research questions. As revealed above, knowledge of leadership traits, value systems, and techniques in decision-making had to be collected. The research questions were more specific in addressing the interconnections and interactions within the Greatest Commandment. The first research question addressed what critical principles in loving God influence a leader's decision-making in a complex environment. Virtually every participant noted God's sovereignty. One leader referenced the biblical account of the Centurion, concisely summarizing, "I understand God's authority." He also noted that the target area or boundaries for human behavior must be within God's moral will as moral will is central to wisdom. This is undergirded by biblical principles that "obedience is greater than sacrifice" (1

Sam. 15:22) and Christ's chastising question, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Another leader made a similar observation in noting that the "first part of wisdom is that God is in control" (ref: Prov. 16:9). A third emphasized the work ethic that "You're here to glorify God in how we do things and it's not done through laziness" which is biblically supported by Colossians 3:17, 23 and 1 Corinthians 10:31 of working with all your heart for the Lord and glorifying Him in all that you do.

All leaders spoke directly or strongly implied their trust in God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all their endeavors (Prov 3:5—6. John 14:26). Each recognized their dependence upon the LORD. One entrepreneur reminisced the vulnerability when his company was just getting started and how a wrong decision could bankrupt the company. There were so many decisions to make in their early years and he stressed his dependence on God for guidance and direction. He noted that doing things ethically and with integrity was critical.

"I didn't know which fork to take but the guidance from the Holy Spirit, prayer, whatever...we've been blessed by God because no one can accomplish what we've accomplished without God in on the business...and looking back we always made the right decision."

However, for most of the research participants, there was not a conscious or direct "how does my love for God influence my decision" thought in the decision-making process. There was prayer, a seeking of God's will, being Christlike, and a conscious effort to see the world how God sees the world, but it was more "baked in" as part of the character of the leader that guided his or her steps. As one leader described above, God's moral will provides the boundaries and to operate within those boundaries is to operate within God's permissive will. As James (4:8) advises, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" applies. Our drawing near to God honors Him, but the benefits all come back to us in terms of confidence, comfort, and a peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7) gained from sensing His presence.

Attitudes of humility, submission, dependence, and imitation of Christ were common themes promoted by the interviewees. One commented, “Gratitude always, always precedes a miracle.” In summary, it was the awareness of God’s sovereignty, power, trustworthiness, mercy, grace, and love that provided the framework and worldview from which these leaders operated and that influenced their decisions. Several recognized God leading them in their life journey and all were inspired by the experience. They noted that one of the most basic ways of showing love to God was to follow and obey. As one interviewee declared, “There is always a higher purpose than us.”

Research Question 2

The second research question was what critical principles in loving others influence a leader’s decision-making in a complex environment? This was demonstrated or evident in almost every answer by the participating leaders. The general theme for the vast majority of answers for the first interview question of “what was the most rewarding aspect of their job” involved building relationships with others and seeing them succeed. The leadership techniques of empowering subordinates to do and be their best, of trusting in them, and of celebrating in their success was consistent among those who led large organizations. For those in mission work or politics, their staffs were small but the focus was on their constituents or those receiving relief or assistance. One leader whose mission work overseas takes him and his team into areas that are often hostile to Christians faithfully quoted Matthew 10:42 (cold cup of water) and 25:40 of taking care of the hungry, thirsty, the stranger, the naked, sick, and those in prison. He then cited Isaiah 58:10-12 as his personal investment test:

if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.
And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,

like a wellspring of water, whose waters do not fail.

And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in (Is 58:10-12 ESV).

He shared a story of being in a tent meeting with other aid workers in refugee camp in Iran surrounded by guards with machine guns to ensure they didn't do anything they wouldn't supervise. When asked why he was there he said, "Isaiah 58:10-12" in which another worker began to recite those verses. An inspired, Spirit-led connection and confidence over a Bible verse was made among those gathered who would become a "wellspring of water" to those afflicted. Each, in their own way, recognized that the promises of the Bible enable one to effect change.

One business leader shared that when his company began to grow he brought in a coach (seeking wise counsel) to help formulate company values. His leadership team produced a list of twenty values which was too many and he was advised to pare it down to three. They chose very "relationship-oriented" values that were both scalar and modular in scope. The three values were trust, collaboration, and growth. To start a relationship, one must have trust (which is founded upon truth). Once trust has been established, they can collaborate. Once they begin to collaborate and synergize, they will have growth. Growth in this sense is holistic. Yes, it's growth of the company in size and revenue but it also means growth and development of the employees and leadership team in their talents, skills, and character. This creates an environment of love to continuously grow and improve. Another interviewee described loving others in a more civic sense, "It's your duty and responsibility to help your fellow man." A pastor shared his devotion to his congregation noting his spiritual gifts were shepherding and hospitality which are highly customer-centric or people-oriented gifts.

One leader shared the immense challenge of managing a sixteen billion dollar project and the multitude of entities involved in the effort to include all the political posturing. Each had

their own self-interests about which they were most concerned. Developing a multi-win-win solution (doing all things in love) was an extremely challenging task and it took compromise, tact, and building trustworthy relationships to make it succeed. Similarly, a business leader noted his comfort in speaking in secular or spiritual terms dependent upon the audience. This concept was confirmed by another interviewee that knowing one's audience is an important feature of leadership. Covey (1990) addressed this in his 5th Habit of "Seek first to understand; then to be understood." This relational awareness is built upon the biblical principle offered by the apostle Paul to "become all things to all people so that I may save some" (1 Cor 9:22).

Virtually all of the leaders confirmed that trust was the key or central connection to building relationships. They also agreed that the general definition of loving others is having another's best interest at heart. Even this agreed upon statement requires further scrutiny. Who defines the "best interest?" The answer is based on a Kingdom of God worldview. Two business leaders both made the same remark that loving another may mean that you should fire them. This may be counterintuitive to what one might expect as an act of love. However, if an individual is not succeeding, they may not be fully equipped by God at that particular point in time to do their job well or it may be an indicator that they are not aligned with God's will for them.

To love others and have their best interest at heart is foundational in the Greatest Commandment, the Golden Rule, and Christ's new command (as Pastor Andy Stanley refers to as the Platinum Rule) which is to love others as Christ loves us (John 13:34, 15:12). One leader incorporated this emphasized attribute in his definition of loving others by asking "what is best for the other person in spite of your personal cost?" To love others is to honor God. These two loves are inseparably synchronized and interconnected.

Research Question 3

The third research question addresses the final love in the Greatest commandment which is love of self. The question reads, “What critical principles in loving oneself influence a leader’s decision-making in a complex environment?” This is the most common motivation of all humanity as by nature (a fallen one) we are naturally myopic and self-centered. Few have trouble loving themselves. The critical metric is how do they love themselves? Though the question was often asked, it was rarely answered directly. Most responses that fell into the category of loving thyself were expressed as personal self-improvement. As previously noted, by honoring God with one’s time in praise, prayer, and meditation, one strengthen their faith and improves themselves which is in their best interest. One pastor mentioned the beatitudes in Matthew 5 as being a part or core foundation of wisdom. Matthew 5:8 states, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” There’s a depth to this verse that goes beyond this researcher’s reach, but there appears to be a correlation between one’s purity of heart and the ability of God to do His work through that person. In a discussion with another participant, the parable of the Good Samaritan came up. A priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan all saw a stranger in need along the side of the road. Only the Samaritan saw as God sees and recognized that this person needed assistance *and he* was required to respond. As the definition mentioned above, he was “seeking the best interest of another even at one’s own personal cost.” Although this example is a demonstration of a love for others, it illustrates a person who “sees as God sees.” Through dedicated prayer, meditation, and discipleship, this purifies the heart and gives the ability to see as God sees and develops this capability such that it becomes more automatic—like a spiritual muscle memory. This is how one loves themselves by surrendering to God, allowing Him to continuously perform a good work in them (Phil 1:6), and aligning to God’s will and purpose for

one's life. Being fully aligned with God's will is being the best one can be and being the best one can be is how to love oneself best. As one leader noted, "seeking God's will for your life is a very proactive consciousness." Even Jesus admitted, "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19). Summarizing, if one loves God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength (head, heart, hands), then they are fully surrendered to His will. If one is fully compliant with God's will, they have fully optimized their life. It is this proactive consciousness that drives the continual pursuit of perfection—that perfection is Jesus Christ.

Many of these leaders are driven and thus are quite competitive by nature. One noted that this was not necessarily a good thing or it was something to be managed. Three different leaders confirmed the mindset that one does not compete with others but with themselves. The way to measure oneself is to compare one's current state to their best self. This noncompete and concern with others concept is confirmed biblically in John's Gospel, where Peter and Jesus are having a discussion where Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Afterwards, Jesus gives Peter an indication of what his future holds. Peter then asks what's to become of John. Jesus replied somewhat harshly, "If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21:22). It was a divine "stay in your lane, bro" reprimand. The greater point is that each follower of Christ runs their own race and the competition is with themselves to be the best they can be. This is how one loves oneself.

Research Question 4

The final research question had a different goal in mind. The question read, "Is the tandem truth-love component of wisdom viable in guiding decision-making within complex environments?" Throughout the frameworks and related literature provided in Chapter 2, the

general themes and best practices emphasizing truth and love became readily apparent. In secular terms, knowledge (both theoretical and practical), experience, situational awareness, timeframes, and value systems were consistently identified and invoked in wisdom literature. Though hypotheses are not typically utilized in grounded theory (Moerman, 2016), they can form the basis and act as a guide for a research question to either confirm the preconceived theory or invalidate it. For this study, the grounded theory only produced the concepts and theory of biblical wisdom in decision-making. The first three research questions addressed this directly. To discern if a repeating pattern or fractal nature exists, additional analysis was required.

Inferring from the related research, this question seeks to discover how the elements of truth and love appear in the decision-making process. The short answer is everywhere. The previous three research questions addressed the three loves of the Greatest Commandment and as noted that love for others as well as for self was to have the object of one's love's best interest at heart. That best interest is defined as being fully aligned with God's will. In this journey of life, Christians don't compete with each other but encourage one another (which is an act of love). There is competition on a secular scale as there are complex environments that have a zero sum gain. Politicians experience those situations during an election year and coaches operate in that environment during a game. There are winners and losers in situations and events. The military and law enforcement often must engage in such situations where lives are on the line. These aspects will be addressed further in Chapter 5.

Through this research, it became obvious that discerning truth is critical for every decision as well as being the foundational value for establishing trust in a relationship. Most of the participants shared stories as examples to their answers. A word search of the raw data from the interviews showed that the word "truth" appeared 108 times and "trust" appeared 83 times in

those conversations. One leader captured this universal aspect referencing Augustine when she observed, "...it's not very articulate, but I think it's true that all truth is God's truth." Another leader summarized, "You know, if we follow His truth, His commandments, His precepts and principles of the scriptures, and we apply them to our life and I think you're living a very wise life."

To be trustworthy is to be truthful and trust is the connecting bond of any worthwhile relationship. It's the first core value for one leader's company. Every leader spoke of trust as essential in relationships. God's Word is truth. Virtually every leader referred to the Bible as a source of wisdom, inspiration, and useful for guidance. That would not be if it weren't true. Seeking the truth is the first step in the decision-making process. Prayer is seeking truth through the Lord. Christ is Truth Himself (John 14:6). The next pragmatic step is to gather the facts about a situation. Gathering falsehoods and propaganda serves no useful purpose. Truth is the accurate depiction of the real and knowing the truth gives one an accurate appraisal of the circumstances. Though one never has all the facts, the goal is to have a sufficient amount to make an informed decision. With that information, one responds in love as Paul writes, "Do everything in love" (1 Cor 16:14). Therefore, to have wisdom requires both the presence and the full integration of truth and love.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The research methodology for this study was grounded theory using the particular genre of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as championed by Kathy Charmaz (2010). Semi-structured qualitative interviews were chosen as the mode or method to gather data. Purposive sampling was employed to choose participants. This was necessary as the research desired to have a reasonably equal spread of representation from the seven identified leadership categories.

The results were presented in Table 7. Twenty interviews were the initial target and the study actually performed twenty-one interviews and had limited additional commentary input from two other candidates.

Methodology and Approach

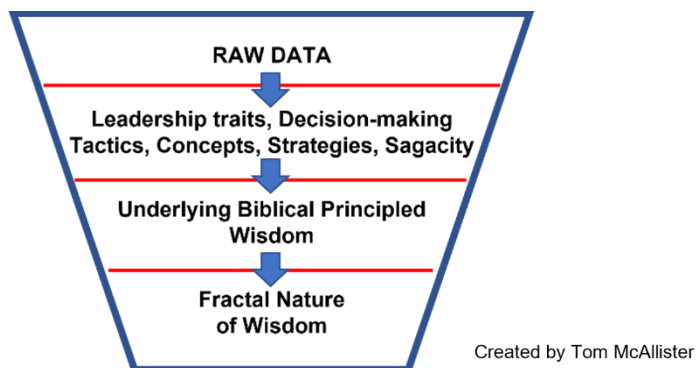
Every interview was audio recorded and the majority included video. The accomplishments and more importantly the character of all the interviewees was impeccable. It was an honor and privilege for this researcher to be able to interview them and have their valued input for this research. The semi-structured interview process offered considerable leeway in how a discussion ensued. Each interviewee had different experiences and knowledge sets and they often shared stories or examples to highlight their points. This came at a sacrifice of strict adherence to the set of interview questions but it provided greater context and depth as opposed to a structured set of answers to a particular question. The quality of the interviewee and the data they provided were excellent, enabling the researcher to possess a wealth of information from which to analyze and code.

The coding process was the most involved and time consuming given the volume of raw data and as mentioned in the research limitations section, the researcher did not utilize the most effective software tools. A second challenge was the level of data mining necessary to achieve the desired results and study objectives. Essentially, there were four levels or three iterations below the initial raw data that had to be analyzed and distilled. The interview questions sought responses in leadership traits, problem solving, and critical metrics determination in their decision-making methodology. There were additional questions, both direct and indirect, that revealed insight on their axiology or value system that interviewees employed in their decision-making process. These had to be determined and coded. The next step was identifying any

biblical principles that undergirded these developing themes and concepts. The last step was conducting analysis to seek the existence of any fractal relationships or patterns. This winnowing process is illustrated below in Figure 17.

Figure 17.

Data Mining Funnel



Strategically, the research process followed the general model depicted in Figure 15. The last five interviews were also utilized in the coding process to serve as a test to confirm no unique concepts or ideas were being presented and that theoretical saturation had been reached. A summary chart illustrating the design characteristics for this research is provided in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18.

Summary Research Design

Research Type	Qualitative
Research Tool	Grounded Theory
Tool Type	Constructivist Grounded Theory
Population	US Citizens
Sampling	Purposive/Convenience
Participant Qualifications	Leadership role in Business, Military/Law, Politics, Pastor, Missionary, Coaching, Academic/SME
Data Collection Instrument	Semi-structured Interview
Research Topic/Theme	Biblical Wisdom in Decision-making
Output	Written Research Paper

Critique

The first stated delimitation of this study recognizes the Bible as the true Word of God and this salient point is critical to understanding the results of the research. The author hypothesized in Chapter 1 that all excellence comes from God and that truth and love would be a central theme in wise decision-making. Using the research tool of Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) which encourages interviewer participation in the data generation, the results of this study confirmed these two hypotheses. Therefore, the critique of potential cognitive bias influencing the outcome is a valid one and could be construed as a weakness within the study.

There are two counterpoints to this perception. The first is the attributes and flexible nature of CGT in that it makes allowances for multiple interpretations of the acquired data set. This does not refute the existence of cognitive bias and influence on the part of the researcher; it simply acknowledges and accepts it. The second relates to the subject matter itself. The topic was wisdom within biblical principles. Throughout the frameworks and background literature presented in Chapter 2 as well as the majority of interviewee responses presented in Chapter's 4 and 5, the recognition of God's excellence and the emphasis upon truth and love are self-evident. As an alternative interpretation, it is the reliability and trustworthiness of scripture that enabled the researcher to make an accurate hypothesis and forecast of an expected result. This actually confirms the value of the research and the reason to conduct it. Biblical principles are trustworthy. It is this predictability and dependability of scripture that enables one to confidently migrate through difficult, complex, and even chaotic environments "fully equipped for every good work" (BSB, 1 Tim 3:17). Recapping, the least effective synopsis is that this study is one interpretation of many possible interpretations. The most fruitful conclusion is the affirmed dependability of biblical principles to successfully guide one through their journey in life.

Summary

Overall, the research architecture and plan was thoughtfully designed and was faithfully albeit not necessarily efficiently executed. There were no serious issues that impacted the execution of this study. Any research plan can be improved and if time had allowed, an additional group forum could have been conducted among a select subset of the interviewees after the coding process to review and discuss the results. Although this would not have altered any of the conclusions of the study, this gathering of wise counsel would have provided greater insight, depth, and detailed techniques into several discovered complicated topics such as discerning truth amongst the plethora of propaganda, gaining greater specificity in daily spiritual preparation, and achieving detailed insight in seeking to discover the will of God. Though not the direct objective of the research, this enhanced understanding would have significantly augmented the final output.

The guidance from the researcher's supervisor in particular, and the course instructors in general along this doctoral journey of authoring this paper was beneficial and concise. The quality of the participants was outstanding and their willingness to take time out of their busy day to offer their insight and perspective was greatly valued and appreciated by this researcher. The data they provided through their thoughts, ideas, and life experiences was exceptionally fertile ground for conducting this research analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

As the speed of business and life continue to increase significantly driven by both advances and the predominance of technology in our lives, the need for sound decision-making becomes paramount. Speed is a competitive advantage (George, 2005) and shortening project lifecycles to get a product or service to market is a prized goal. It is also a battlefield tactic as expressed in a colorful quote questionably attributed to Confederate general Nathan Forrest to “get there firstest with the mostest” (Holder, 1996). Shorter lifecycles require quicker decisions. One leader remarked upon the challenge using an orienteering metaphor, “you’re only as good as your last step.” In his book *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler (1990) warned of the stressors to society that the coming Information Age and its multi-faceted influence and impact would have. To compound the trouble, the trending postmodern influence upon society presents an ever-growing, post-fact Disinformation Age (Bennet, 2020). The difficulty is as one educator sagely stated is sifting through the massive amount of information to “discern what is true.” The foundational step to prepare oneself for this complex environment is to build one’s character and worldview with Christ as one’s cornerstone. As one interviewee advised, “we should employ an ongoing practice of viewing the activities of the world through a prism of spiritual discernment.”

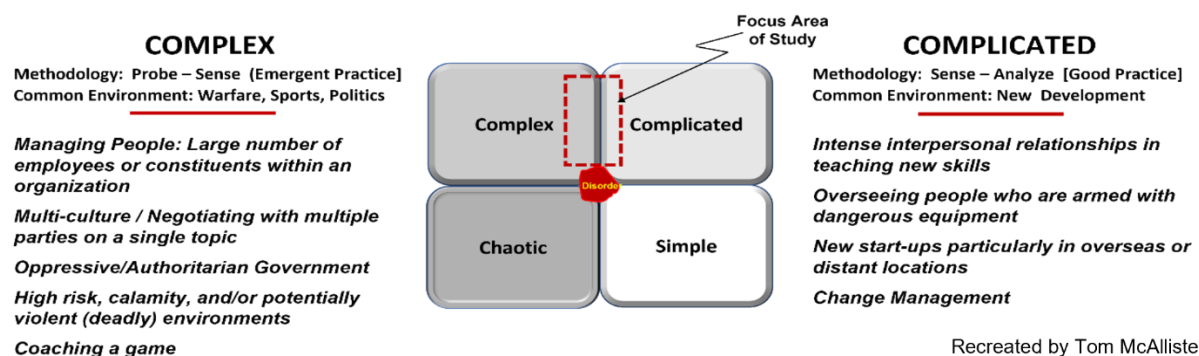
Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to utilize grounded theory to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom within the context of leading a discipleship journey centered on the Greatest Commandment and the wisdom components of truth and love as a viable decision-making method, tool, or template within complicated/complex environments. The approach was to discover a set of principles related to a discipleship decision-making model, tool or theory and

then analyze its viability within complicated and complex environment types. In conducting the research, the author utilized semi-structured qualitative interviews as the mode for data collection. The interviewees were all leaders from various industry verticals whose commonality was that they operated in complicated/complex environments as described by Snowden's Cynefin model (Snowden, 2010). The model observed that in complex environments, there was much uncertainty and a lack of predictability due to less causal relationships between participating parties and associated elements. Solutions to problems were not obvious and no "best practice" template or methodology was applicable. Complicated environments, though ordered, required significant expertise where there did not exist one best solution but "good practices" could be employed with reasonable confidence of success. As the operating environment became more complex, new solutions or "emerging practices" were often required and prudence often dictated that initial implementation should be conducted on a smaller scale (Snowden, 2020). As one transitions from Complicated to Complex, the amount of uncertainty and predictability within the environment correspondingly increases. Within large organizations, multiple environments may exist which only adds to the complexity and the challenges for leadership to make wise decisions. Figure 19 illustrates the area of concentration for this study.

Figure 19.

Environmental Area of Study



Environmental conditions are often overlooked or misunderstood (Snowden, 2020), yet are critical to sound leadership and wise decision-making as it significantly influences the management practices required to be effective. Leaders who have developed techniques to perform well and thrive in the midst of uncertainty will be highly successful (Bider, 2017) as they can easily transition to less complex (stronger cause-effect) situations. They also have better preparation and skills when encountering chaotic environments. Thus, learning the techniques and strategies for successfully navigating these circumstances provided the greatest insight into universal principles of wisdom for making sound choices.

Research Questions

There were four research questions associated with this study. The first three questions serve as a prerequisite finding to the focus of the study which was to discover (if the phenomena exists) and examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom in the decision-making process. These first three research questions address and relate to the three relational parties depicted in the Greatest Commandment:

Jesus declared, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37-40).

The intent of the first part of the research was to discover how leaders incorporate love for God, love for others, and love for self in their decision-making deliberations and practice. Some decisions emphasize one aspect of these three loves while most involve a combination of them. The incorporation of these three loves (labeled the Agape Triangle in Chapter 2) may be conscious or subconscious, direct or indirect, but would be reflected in the dialogue and reasoning principles provided in the qualitative interviews. Since “all the Law and the

Prophets” are dependent upon the interconnection of these three loves, then every biblical principle must also be incorporated into and subjugated to the Greatest Commandment. Through the coding methodology within the Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) technique, these concepts and biblical principles emerged from the feedback from the interviewees.

The fourth question addressed two components that consistently appeared in the Theological Framework and Related Literature sections of Chapter 2. The components of truth and love seemed integral to the concept of wisdom and the research brought that out. They function together as a couplet where each enhances the value and meaning of the other. Truth without love is an accurate, yet sterile environment. Love without truth is an unguided force. Together, at full extension, they are the character, nature, and Person of Jesus Christ. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1. What critical principles in loving God influence a leader’s decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ2. What critical principles in loving others influence a leader’s decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ3. What critical principles in loving oneself influence a leader’s decision-making in a complex environment?

RQ4. Is the tandem truth-love component of wisdom viable in guiding decision-making within complex environments?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

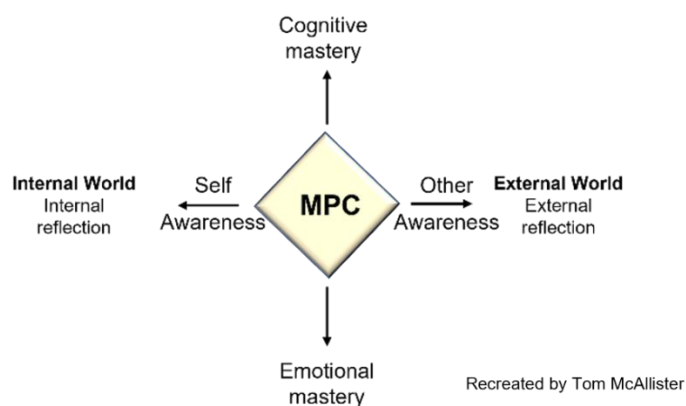
This research addressed the topic of wisdom in decision-making which has universal application as virtually all would benefit from making better choices. Specifically, it focused upon biblical wisdom which comes from biblical principles which are merged and summarized in the Greatest Commandment. The research further concentrated its analysis into the challenging and stochastic Complex environment where there exists considerable uncertainty and

unpredictability. Finally, the research sought to discover and examine fractal patterns or self-similarity of wisdom principles and application. The overall discovery is that truth and love are essential in making wise decisions.

A similar grounded theory study from a secular perspective was conducted by Ali Intezari and David Pauleen (2018) entitled *Conceptualizing Wise Management Decision-Making*. Their study interviewed nearly forty business CEOs in their use of wisdom in decision-making. They developed a model of which the skeletonized framework has been recreated and presented in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20.

MPC Wisdom Model



The initials MPC stands for Multi-Perspective Consideration which any wisdom model should consider multiple perspectives. The cognitive mastery reflects the leaders knowledge, experience, creativity, and innovation and the emotional mastery includes attributes such as empathy, sensitivity, passion, and discipline. One could easily configure the data gathered from this research into this model where the cognitive skills are contained under the umbrella of truth and the emotional mastery is the expression of love. The model recognizes and incorporates two legs of the Agape Triangle of awareness of self and others. Sadly, it excludes the most importance piece—God. To be fair, the spiritual dimension may not have been in scope.

Their research discipline and methodology were superb and their results produced sound, pragmatic advice. Similar to the book of Proverbs, people can follow many of its precepts and principles and find success without belief in God. Stephen Covey's mega bestseller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is an outstanding book, significantly referenced in this study, and his habits are thoroughly supported by biblical principles. Yet, Covey only mentions God as a personal note at the back of his book. To truly have wisdom, God must be first. That is the proper way of putting "First things first" (Habit 3). As one interviewee declared, "We're called to be bold for Christ."

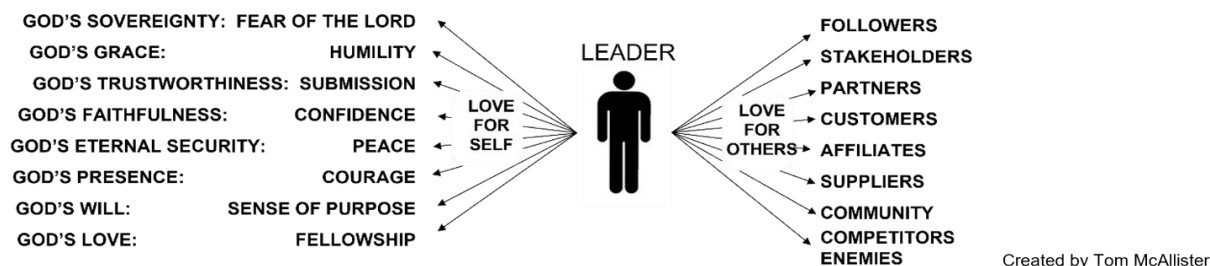
In the search for fractal patterns within biblical wisdom, several corollary principles came to light. It was noted in Chapter 4 that the Orient phase within the OODA Loop was the most important and that it should be fully directed from or aligned with a Kingdom of God perspective. The apostle Paul promoted this Kingdom of God viewpoint when addressing the church at Corinth, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). This eternal point of view allows a leader to see as God sees and a few interviewees appreciated John Polkinghorne's (2005) metaphor of "putting God's spectacles behind one's eyes." This general trait of seeing the world as God sees it and doing one's part to implement His will on earth as it is in heaven is a core value of the mature disciple of Christ. Unlike physical vision, it doesn't just appear when one opens their eyes, but it develops slowly. It follows the sowing and reaping/sharpening of the saw concept of investing over time and reaping its benefits. There are several spiritual traits that came forth from the interviews to acquire and develop. To see as God sees makes it easier to understand God's will. To understand God's will aids in defining one's purpose which enhances the success rate of following God's uniquely chosen path for each individual. To accurately

follow God's chosen path for an individual is to be optimized or the best one can be. To be the best one can be is to love oneself.

Referring back to the Fractal Method Lifecycle (Figure 12), there were several parties and relationships identified with the leader. These are listed again in Figure 21 on the right where the left side lists select attributes of God related to leadership and the proper attitude of one's response.

Figure 21.

Truth and Love in Leadership



The foundational block in building one's spiritual character is recognizing God's sovereignty. The first part of the leadoff sentence of God's Word proclaims this priority, "In the beginning, God...." It all starts with God. The proper response is fear of the LORD. This is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). The remaining attributes listed follow a discipleship growth path but could be arranged differently. Humility is inspired by God's grace in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). As one leader affirmed, "I do think that humility is of the utmost importance when it comes to leadership." The Bible confirms the value of these two principles: "the rewards of humility and the fear of the LORD are wealth and honor and life" (Prov 22:4).

To discover God's will, one must submit to His teaching and in order to submit, one must trust. This is the initial bond of a relationship. Christ followers are to trust in the LORD with all their heart and lean not on their own understanding (Prov. 3:5). If one submits to God in every

way, He will direct or make that person's path straight (v.6). God is perfectly faithful—humans not so much. Yet, “faith is *confidence* in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb 11:1 *emphasis mine*). Faith is not in oneself but in God and His promises. One also gains confidence through God's eternal security that once in the Father's Hand, no one can snatch them away (John 10:29). This also provides peace of mind. One achieves peace with God when he/she accepts Christ as Lord and Savior. Then one receives peace from God—a peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7).

Knowing that Christ walks with each believer (Matt. 28:20) provides courage and they can do all things through Him (Phil 4:13). One interview discussion addressed the courage to step up and not do what is easy but do what is right. Another leader noted, “you've got to be willing to stand alone in difficult times...just as Christ did.” It could be one's purpose to be an example to others and make a stand. God has a plan and purpose for every human. As the prophet Jeremiah (29:11) wrote, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” This declaration from the LORD was made to the exiled nation and people of Israel, but many have interpreted it in a *fractal manner* to apply not only to the nation of Israel but to every individual believer as well. Proverbs 16:9 states, “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps” (ESV). To be one's best self is to align with God's will on His purpose for their life.

Finally, there is the sense and need for fellowship springing from the love of God. Love requires an object. One cannot just love. Recognizing that all humanity is created in the image of God, therefore, it is worthy of respect and love. The apostle Paul refers to the collective set of believers as being one body which implies an integrated connection of fellowship. From that

fellowship believers are to serve, accept, forgive, care, encourage...one another. These are all acts of love and growing in Christ by being like Christ. As one leader shared that discipleship is the backbone which strengthens the church, does good works, and becomes a radiant light.

On the right side of Figure 21 lists the distinct types of generic relationships to an organization within a supply chain or project initiative ecology. One entity not listed in Figure 12 that may deserve its own category is Government. Paul advises to “pray for all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives” (1 Tim 2:2). As a few interviewees noted, it doesn’t always work out that way. Governments possess immense power and authority. The model functions adequately as designed as a government falls within the defined spectrum of relationships somewhere between being an advocate or supporter to what one does, reasonably neutral to what one does, or acts as a competitor/enemy to one’s mission. Governments are a major influencer and critical to consider when one makes decisions although their impact is experienced more often in one’s environmental conditions, than in one’s relationships.

Typically, one’s closest relationship is with one’s team members or followers, partners, and stakeholders (for personal relationships it’s family members and friends). The least binding is with competitors and enemies but all are truthfully connected in love. As Jesus said, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44). The connecting arrows shown in the figure are the projections of truth which leads to trust. To be pictorially accurate, the arrows to those at the top (Followers, Stakeholders, Partners) would be thicker (greater trust in the relationship bonds) than the ones at the bottom. The general tactic, however, would be to improve those bonds in whatever initial condition that they are in. One leader observed that across the spectrum of talent within subordinates internally and with other organizations (external), the goal is to continuously make improvements. “If it’s a ‘C,’ grow to a ‘C+’ or if it’s

a ‘B+,’ then raise it to an ‘A-.’” He went on to add that a leader can “work more hours from 40 to 80 or a 100 hours a week but getting more from your relationships ultimately adds greater value.” It’s the power of multiplication.

The best example is being an example. This is accomplished by being a leader and/or an organization of integrity. Being a person of integrity enhances one’s ability to influence. One cannot control how another entity responds, but the call to be a witness and a light to others is a command from the Lord. A bright light is compelling.

It was noted in Chapter 2 that the motto of both the Boy and Girl Scouts is “Be Prepared.” As an Eagle scout, this researcher can still cite from memory the twelve points of the Scout Law a half century after he first learned them. A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. When a scout becomes those things, he is prepared. Yes, there were first aid kits and survival gear, but it’s the character building that’s the true preparation. Likewise, this small sample of superb Christian leaders spoke of spending time with God, having a disciplined approach to spiritual growth, and recognizing God’s authority and control over this world. It is this perspective, this devotion, and being “marinated in God’s Word” as one leader described that prepares one for whatever environment he or she may encounter. This love and devotion for God is reflected back to be a betterment of self—to prepare one for their journey.

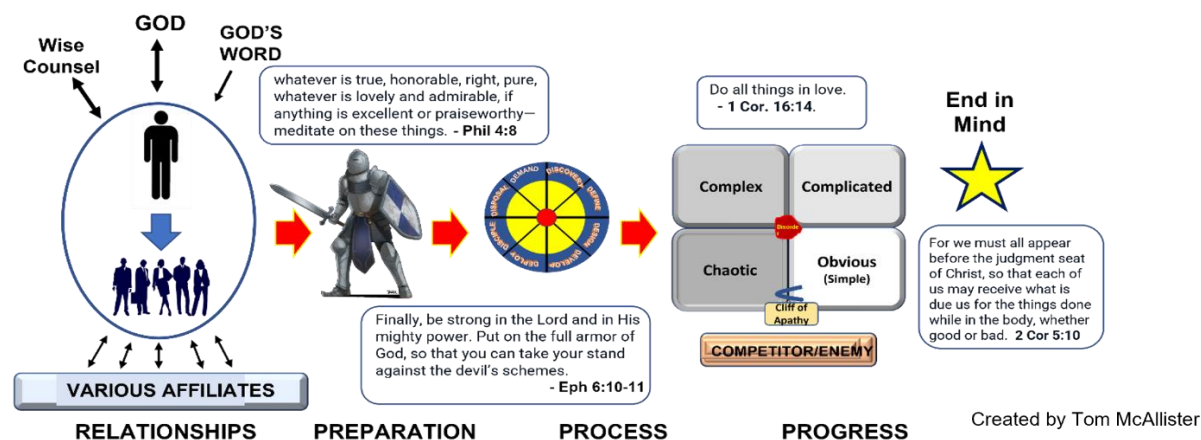
This type of preparation requires consistent practice over time. This is the pursuit of wisdom. As James (1:5) declares, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” However, this is not accomplished instantly like downloading an App. It is a steady and ongoing process that every leader should undertake. One contributor noted that decisions are based on emotion. Though

accurate, this is a potentially dangerous methodology to employ. Unless one is grounded in their faith, the whims of emotion and double mindedness will toss them about like the waves in a rough sea (James 1:6—7). It is wise to avoid such emotive seasickness through a consistent connection and dedicated relationship with the LORD.

In Chapter 2 the wise benevolent ruler (WBR) concept was introduced. It described having a grand overview of all the interacting parties of suppliers, customers, partners, and various affiliates and to imagine being in charge of it all and how one should optimize the integrated system holistically. There are the practical process improvement initiatives such as vendor management and compliance programs, Voice of the Customer, gainsharing, joint ventures, and the like (George, 2005), but inserting a Kingdom of God worldview emphasizes the building of trust, acting with integrity, and creating a stronger esprit de corps among all participating parties. This mindset and approach would enhance an organization internally as well as externally. It is the pursuit of total optimization. Figure 22 highlights some key aspects.

Figure 22.

The Wise Benevolent Ruler Perspective



The wise benevolent leader serves as an example and transforms his/her subordinates. A leader is always a teacher (Bredfeldt, 2013). The leader trusts and is dependent upon God,

studies His Word, and considers the advice of wise counsel. By meditating on things that are noble, right, pure, excellent...the leader steadily builds an internal spiritual muscle memory to consistently react to situations from a Christ centered perspective. In as much as he/she can influence, this technique is passed down to subordinates and shared internally and then broadcasted via example to those external to the organization. Strengthened through the bonds of trust, the extended team jointly prepares (suits up) for the journey ahead through whatever environment they may encounter that may include enemy resistance. As for the travel plan, there are best principles maps and processes available such as DMAIC, Agile, or the Fractal Method among others, that enhances efficiency and effectiveness. There are many goals to achieve along the way while the leader constantly maintains a reference point (fixing one's eyes upon the unseen rather than the seen) of the proper end to have in mind. As one leader summarized, "My objective is to run the race itself before me because I can come to the finish line and slide into home plate, look up and see Jesus and He has a look of "I've been waiting for you. Well done good and faithful servant!"

With regard to this research effort, there's a common saying that could readily apply of "not being able to see the forest because of the trees." After conducting hours of interviews and collecting hundreds of data points and trying to drill down to the fundamental components of wisdom and analyze their fractal nature, the answer sought was hidden in plain sight all along. The Greatest Commandment *is* the fractal nature of biblical wisdom. Every decision great or small, quick or methodical, solo or as a group, tactical or strategic, in any environment should have the love of God, love for others, and love for self, considered and embedded in the decision.

Christ later updated this command with His new command given twice in one night (John 13:34 and 15:12). Instead of loving others as oneself, Jesus altered that value metric to love

others as He loves us. As previously noted, all the loves of the Agape Triangle are interconnected. To love others like Christ is to imitate Christ which is pleasing (loving) to God. Collectively, believers are called to an incredible outpouring of love—to the Father with all we have and to others as Christ has to us. This is a monumental task and impossible in human terms, but as many of the leaders have noted, we are prompted and filled by the Holy Spirit and it is He who sustains us (John 14:26, Phil 4:13). It is a life that cannot be followed successfully unless God is in the middle of it.

If all the Law and the Prophets hang upon the Greatest Commandment, then the Greatest Commandment hangs upon the nail of truth. Truth is the frame, the structure, the backbone, the keel (pick your metaphor) upon which this universe is built. It is upon this integrated structure of truth and love is where wisdom resides. Within wisdom, truth is the immovable or undefeatable object—the Rock and foundation upon which all exists and love is the unstoppable force as it never fails. As previously presented in Chapter 2, one finds wisdom at the intersection of truth and love for there one finds Christ. He is the wisdom of God and it is He that we follow and He that we imitate. To follow Christ is to be aligned with God’s purpose and desire, and as one missionary observed, “The safest place to be is in the center of God’s will.”

Implications

The implications from this study does not produce any new revelations from the theological perspective. Solomon was correct in his observation that “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). However, it does serve as another confirmation that God’s Word is true and His precepts and principles can be fully trusted. The study achieves two things where one is to encourage humanity to return to its first love—that of God, and second, the result from this study somewhat distills the critical components of wisdom into more digestible bites. One of the

broadest spectrum of answers from the interviews related to their definition and perception of wisdom. A few had previously developed concise answers and were ready, but many struggled through a list of descriptions and attributes. The topic encompasses an enormous scope and depth, and there is not one flawless answer or definition. However, it would be prudent (or wise) to meditate and develop one's definition of wisdom as it should actively serve as a guidepost and reference point for the multitude of decisions one makes every day.

The implications for the secular aspects of life are immense. One cannot successfully navigate a life journey without the proper worldview. To have an improper worldview is a gross failure in leadership. Referring to Covey's (1990) metaphor, "your ladder would be leaning against the wrong wall" implying that you have the incorrect end in mind (Habit 2). As illustrated in Chapter 2 and in the data input received and analyzed from this study, common business best practices come from or are undergirded by biblical principles. The results of this study indicate that possessing a Kingdom of God worldview gives one the proper perspective to navigate complex environments which infers its success in Complicated and Simple ones. It also provides the confidence necessary to prevail when in Chaotic environments. When it comes to one's life journey, this Kingdom of God perspective offers the best philosophy in how to travel for it has the correct end in mind. This is second part of John 14:6. This paper has emphasized the first part that Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life. The second part of the verse confirms the exclusivity of the path for no one can get to the Father except through Christ.

Applications

The application of this study is both pragmatic and broad. To be conscious of seeking truth and verifying what you observe and to be conscious of showing kindness and consideration with a pay it forward mindset to others in all circumstances is an easy mental concept to grasp.

The mantra of “seeking truth and responding in love” is an easy one to commit to memory and implement into daily life. The elegance is in its simplicity. As an implementation or decision-making tool, the incorporation of considering the Greatest Commandment can serve as a quality check to every decision one makes. In each and every decision, the question to answer is whether one is honoring God, serving others, and improving oneself through this decision and action. Given the numerous decision theory templates, project plans, and leadership techniques, this simple question does not replace or alter them but augments them.

In Chapter 2 the 8 Habits of Covey, Deming’s TQM, MacMillan and Lencioni’s texts on leadership and the ideal team member (respectively) were all shown to have biblical scripture undergirding their principles. All biblical principles are summed up or contained within the Greatest Commandment. Cloud asserted that universal values exist but was vague in defining specific characteristics. Applying the Greatest Commandment provides both the priority system and the boundaries of those universal values. This simple “truth in love” technique also augments Stanley’s (2005) personalized and pragmatic decision-making advice to consider your past experiences, current circumstances, and future hopes and dreams, then ask what is the wise thing to do. That wise “thing” must demonstrate love for God, others, and self. Using modern business jargon, to incorporate “pursuing truth in love” into any business plan, organizational structure, or decision-making template is simply plug and play.

A second application introduced conceptually but not fully developed in this study is the dedication to a lifestyle of training and preparation. This falls within the genre of continuous improvement. Most of the interviewees highlighted this concept as a key success metric. In today’s environment, it is essential. The pragmatic aspect was emphasized by a law enforcement leader who cited the diversity of scenarios his law officers could encounter. He described the

challenge and potential danger of the unfortunately common situation of responding to a domestic dispute where everything in the house—guns, baseball bats, kitchen knives, chairs, lamps, etc. could become a weapon. Other scenarios, such as hostage negotiations, required specific skills and training. By definition, this begins as a Complicated environment (requires expertise) with the high probability of becoming a Complex one. The strategy was to train for these basic situations but it was developing key behavioral principles such as situational awareness, being calm (Prov 15:1), taking control, etc. that provided the greatest benefit. A unique aspect of law enforcement is that their personnel frequently operate in volatile circumstances that can transition from a Simple environment to a Complex or even a Chaotic one rapidly.

Military personnel also operate in elevated risk (life and death) volatile environments where intensive and repetitive training are core features of their standard operations. Though much of the training involves specifics and how to react to certain situations, there is a larger aspect of teaching principles and building a team's confidence to feel prepared for any environment. Thoughtful leaders recognize the importance of the spiritual domain. As General George C. Marshal observed:

“I look upon the spiritual life of the soldier as even more important than his physical equipment. ... The soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustains him, he cannot be relied upon and will fail himself and his country in the end. It's morale—and I mean spiritual morale—which wins victory in the ultimate, and that type of morale can only come out of the religious nature of the soldier who knows God and who has the spirit of religious fervor in his soul.”
(Brightlight, 2010, p. 233)

The apostle Paul warned that all Christ followers are at war—not against flesh and blood but against dark spiritual forces (Eph 6:12). Thus, benchmarking off best practices and principles from law enforcement and the military would be a wise strategy. The primary battlefield is (and

perhaps has always been) the arena of truth. The dark spiritual forces specialize in lies and as noted by several interviewees, the key metric in the Observe phase of the OODA loop is discerning what is true. This function cannot be understated as all downstream decisions and actions are based upon this initial data input. This is foreseen as the Bible warns of a coming deception (1 Tim 4:1, Dan 11, 2 John 1:7, 2 Thess 3, others), and Jesus began His discourse on future events by cautioning, “See to it that no one deceives you” (Matt 24:4). With the current capabilities of technology, the Deception Age is here. Those not grounded in their faith in Christ will be led astray and many may sadly become “useful idiots” for the dark side.

It can happen to the best of believers as well. An insightful lesson is recorded in Matthew and Mark where Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do the people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27). Peter answered correctly and was praised by the Lord noting that His Father in heaven revealed the answer to Peter (Matt 16:17). Jesus then tells of His coming suffering and death of which Peter pulls Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him (v. 22). Jesus replied with the now famous exclamation *and explanation*, “Get behind Me, Satan! *You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men*” (BSB, Matt 16:23 *emphasis mine*).

This was a reoccurring theme among the interviewees to seek and to have in mind “the things of God” in all that they do. This is crucial to surviving and thriving in an atmosphere of deception. This concept was introduced and to a partial extent, developed in this study and should be immediately applied by all believers. Snowden (2010) advised that “emerging practices” should be employed in Complex environments. Solutions are first tested and validated through a trial or pilot program before initiating a full scale implementation. Spiritual preparation to renew the mind toward the things of God is an ongoing, continuous improvement process adding a vital and essential tool to one’s decision-making kit.

Conclusion Summary

In the life is a journey analogy, the Christian sojourner has simple rules to follow that are exceedingly difficult to achieve. Believers follow Christ and seek to imitate and become like Christ in every aspect of their lives. This cannot be achieved by behavior modification but through heart transformation. It is not an outside in but an inside out conversion process directed by the Holy Spirit that resides in every believer (1 Cor 3:16, Ez 36:27, Rom 8:9). This is the preparation and continuous improvement process that enables a leader to transverse any environment. Therefore, to develop the necessary spiritual muscle memory to provide effective leadership is to submit to the Spirit's teachings (John 16:13), to meditate upon things that are excellent and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8), to marinate oneself in God's Word (Ps 119:105), to actively seek communication with the Father (Matt 6:5—15) and enjoin in fellowship and the seeking of wise counsel with likeminded believers (Prov 15:22). A sampling of interviewees' quotes with the researcher's emphasis in bold develops this overall strategy into an action plan.

“Basically, everything starts with **looking for God's will.**”

“I've always started out with a long-term approach to decision making”

“I don't call it gut feel; I call it **Holy Spirit talk**” “Prompting of the Holy Spirit”

“Big decisions: I don't want to make them; I want to think through them...and think about the unintended consequences of that decision.”

“What's my vision; **what's God's will?**”

“Wisdom is the ability to **see things from God's perspective**”

“We have that **still, small voice.** If we listen to it marvelous things can happen.”

“be marinated in **God's Word**”

“I think that humility is of the utmost importance when it comes to leadership”

“I seek the **wise counsel of others.**”

“Look at things through a **prism of spiritual discernment.**”

Thus, the driving strategy is to seek God's will for every decision as His ways are better than our ways, and the tools to achieve this are through a consistent practice of prayer and meditation, listening to the Holy Spirit, researching solutions in God's Word, and seeking the advice of wise counsel. The seeking of God's will is to see the world from a Kingdom of God perspective and

through a prism of spiritual discernment. It is through this training and discipleship process that one develops the proper spiritual reflex in response to the actions and influence of the world. Whatever trial, tribulation, opportunity, or threat that one faces, he or she can meet them with confidence, courage, and peace of mind.

The process is sound, but humans are flawed. There will be disappointments and failures. As an analogy, one interviewee and coach noted, “Baseball is a game of failure.” A hitter is considered good if they have success just thirty percent of the time. A pitcher can be over 95% effective, then a few misplaced pitches can turn success into failure. The need for encouragement to one another (1 Thess 5:11) is great. God’s Word offers that as well in that “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). As a leader previously noted the power of hope to sustain an individual, Christ followers have something better—faith. For “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb 11:1). The end is guaranteed victory. The believer’s journey is simply how motivated is one to fully participate in the glory of God’s success.

The first three research questions inquired as to what critical principles in loving God, others, and oneself influence a leader’s decision-making. The broadest answer is that all biblical principles are useful in the decision making process. Thus, the benefit of summarizing them into the Greatest Commandment as a single, universal principle is an efficient one. As noted, it is the fractal nature of biblical wisdom in that every decision should consider how does my decision and subsequent action reflect my or my organization’s love for God, love for others, and love for self? As to the specifics of the “how,” there is a viable range of actions that extend from the minimally acceptable to maximum effort. The defined range for all three acts of love for decision-making are virtually the same.

The minimum standard for the love of God is as one leader expressed to “act within His moral will.” It is as Christ challenged His would-be followers, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Therefore, the minimum standard is obedience. The apostle Paul noted that “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful” (ESV, 1 Cor 6:12) which highlights the fact that not all actions are optimal. The ultimate act of love expressed in its highest form is sacrificial. As the Son of God declared, “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (NLT, John 15:13). Repeating one interviewee’s observation, “you’ve got to be willing to stand alone in difficult times...just as Christ did.” This action may cost a person their earthly life.

Likewise, the love for others in decision-making has the same boundaries. The minimum standard is to treat others justly. Improving upon this minimum standard is to engage in activities as presented and illustrated in Figure 2 of serving, caring, forgiving, accepting, submitting, encouraging, etc., one another. God prioritizes this loving interaction among His children over offering gifts to Him (Matt 5:23—24). It too ends in the ultimate sacrifice of giving one’s life for another. Repeating a leader’s response is that love for another incorporates “what is best for the other person in spite of your personal cost.” One should note that this potential cost is in this world only. If believers are to store their treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20), then the true Return on Investment (ROI) of this sacrificial action pays back in perpetuity in heaven. It is a net gain.

The love for self is best described as to be one’s best self where best is correlated to one’s alignment with God’s specific will for that person’s life. The full depth of this concept would take multiple studies to explain. However, like the other loves within the Greatest Commandment, the minimum is obedience to God’s law and the maximum is complete surrender of oneself. It is that losing one’s life to save it (Mark 8:35) and being a living sacrifice (Rom

12:1) that produces a maximum effort. Unlike the others which may result in a loss of one's physical life, this is the death of one's will in exchange for God's will. As Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (BSB, Gal 2:20). It is these concepts, principles, and range of performance metrics that should guide and influence a decision-maker in every environment.

Finally, this study focused specifically on Complex environments where a leader must prepare for the unpredictable (Karaulova, 2013). This involves the fourth research question where the elements of truth and love within wisdom have particular influence. A key insight from an educational leader presented previously was that the challenge in today's Information Age environment is that educational learning is not simply the acquisition of knowledge but discerning what is true. These are different skill sets. This elevates on a global scale virtually all environments to at least a Complicated one where expertise in discerning truth is required. This is the fundamental metric in the Observe phase of the OODA Loop and its successful execution is vital in that it significantly affects the downstream phases of Orient, Decide, and Act. Thus, the pursuit of truth is paramount to wise decision-making. Also noted in Chapter 2, an organization often exists in multiple environmental states. The general strategy proposed by Snowden (2020, 2010) for Complex environments is to develop emerging solutions on smaller scales as a test or pilot program to validate success before expanding the solution into full scale implementation. A key prerequisite step is to identify and breakdown the various problems and challenges to isolate the complex and chaotic ones from the more manageable complicated and simple ones. The latter have good/best practice templates to utilize which enables the leadership team to focus on the chaotic and complex issues. The universal tool developed in this study is to

pursue truth and respond in love as a method and motivational mindset for every decision-making encounter. It provides the proper default response to every unpredictable outcome no matter what that outcome is. As a Christian leader, if an organization or some individual betrays you, you point out that truth and take corrective action in love. If an organization or individual fails to perform, then demonstrate that truth and take corrective action in love. If an unexpected event occurs, whether explicable or not, accept this truth and respond in love. This is the Greatest Commandment—the fractal nature of wisdom put into action. A leader relentlessly seeks the truth about one’s circumstances and always responds with a love for God, love for others, and love for self. If God is perfect and God is wisdom, then true wisdom is to bring maximum glory to God. To act with wisdom is a celebration of perfection. God is Truth with a capital “T” (Brightlight, 2010). God is love (1 John 4:8). God and Christ are one (John 10:30). To pursue truth in love is to follow Christ. It is the default and universal solution for every environment.

Research Limitations

Though there were a few limitations to this study, their overall impact on the results or finished product of the research were minor. Time constraints almost always play a role but the timing of the research did have a small impact. There was a small window of opportunity to interview some high value prospects in the coaching category during their short down time over the winter holiday period, but the effects from the ongoing pandemic, resource shortages, and the requisite institutional approval process before one can begin a study became a prolonged endeavor. Unfortunately, due to these delays, that short, specific timeframe needed to attempt these interviews had passed.

The second limitation was the choice of tools to conduct the study. The research produced over 750 minutes of audio and 160 pages of single-spaced text from the interviews.

Redundant systems of Zoom (to record the interview) and Otter.ai to also record and provide the transcription were utilized. These were both suitable products. The choice then came between using a product like NVivo (and its accompanying costs) to efficiently organize the data or using MS Office tools such as Word, Excel, and to a lesser extent, Visio. Given no experience on NVivo and an unknown learning curve and significant personal confidence and ability in Excel, this researcher chose to be risk adverse and not use NVivo. The amount of data was considerable and became a bit tedious and cumbersome using just MS Office products. This may have been a less than optimal decision and better tool analysis and testing before beginning a research project is strongly suggested.

Finally, there was a slight limitation or challenge in the topic itself. Not many people have much to say about fractal natures within principles of behavior so the line of questioning had to be much broader in scope leading to more required questions and as noted above, more data to process. Although this produced greater context and a more fruitful study, it took a large funneling effort to process the raw data to useable concepts. This was essentially unavoidable which made the choice in software tools to manage the research more critical.

Further Research

The study of fractals with regard to organizational behavior and human interaction is relatively new (Bider, 2017). With the rapid advances in technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and the push for greater globalization in trade, travel, and policy, the need for decision tools in this increasingly complex environment becomes more pronounced. As evidenced in this recent viral pandemic, decisions made on a global scale have a massive impact upon the entire human civilization and thus, unwise decisions at that level of magnitude can be catastrophic. In our global integrated ecology, problem-solving cannot be done in isolation and major decisions

require foresight to consider long-term future consequences. As the world encounters greater complexity and even chaotic environments, so does the need for greater wisdom in which to successfully manage through it.

This study is preliminary in nature and just a start in that process. Since this study employed CGT as the research method, confirmability is a little more challenging as the method allows for multiple interpretations of the data set and the researcher actively participates in the data generation. A second study of the same or similar nature would significantly enhance and validate the results.

The objective was to discover the core elements and baseline principles for biblical wisdom and how they apply in the decision-making process. Most researchers aspire to uncover some novel and profound revelation in their study. This study brought to light a concept that was presented over two thousand years ago. The foundational principle of pursuing truth and responding in love as the central motivating mindset and force for every decision is certainly not a new discovery but perhaps a research-backed and confirmed reminder of an old one. The benefit is that this simple principle can be inserted into every existing decision tool as an enhancement. For Christian witnessing, it is a way of introducing Christ not with doctrine and dogma, but with tangible action and results. For Christ is the way, truth, life, and love. Pursuing truth in love not only follows Him but imitates Him as well.

From this foundational concept a multitude of off-shoot studies could be pursued. Existing decision systems could be studied (both qualitatively and quantitatively) to see the enhancement effects of introducing this simple truth in love concept into the decision-making process. Since all biblical principles are sourced in the Greatest Commandment, expounding upon the few biblical principles expressed in this research would enhance the depth and breadth

of living out His Word. There may exist additional fractal patterns amongst other biblical principles that could be explored. Bible verses, such as Jeremiah 29:11 and 2 Chronicles 7:14, as well as the many attributes of Christ found in the leaders and prophets of the Old Testament are potential examples.

As noted in the delimitations in Chapter 1, one critical property of decision-making that was exempted from this study was the physiological role and aspect. This study focused on discovering the foundational theory and the specific interactions of intellect and emotion (head and heart) from a brain chemistry and psychological concern within an individual were not considered. This would be a fruitful area for future research to examine causes of decision-making variance among people with a common worldview. Additionally, the introduction of the concept and system of the Wise Benevolent Ruler (WBR) and the Fractal Method Lifecycle as a leadership model and management tool respectively, are still in their skeletonized form. Future research to analyze and develop the described relationships among the various components and explore their fractal natures would be warranted.

Finally, it was noted in the Applications section of Chapter 5 that there was a significant amount of general, ongoing training and preparation that is essential for wise decision making. This goes beyond the normal tactical prep for an individual decision. Strategic consideration of the type of environment one is in enables one to choose the proper implementation process. Likewise, one's walk of faith requires incorporation of a training-intensive lifestyle—a habit of excellence through continuous improvement—a renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2) via prayer, devotion, Bible study, and discipleship. This methodology corresponds to the biblical concept of sowing and reaping or in secular best practices, Covey's 7th Habit of sharpening the saw. This level of dedicated, intentional immersion into biblical principles create a spiritual "muscle

memory” of how to respond in complex situations. This reoccurring theme among several of the interviewees is sage advice. It was introduced in this study but further research is needed to develop a more comprehensive, efficient, and practical preparation technique and decision-making methodology. An in-depth focus should be on the best principles and practices of how to discern truth within an informational flow of data. This specific challenge was mentioned by several interviewees as a source of environmental complexity. These efforts would contribute and enhance the decision-making expertise and experience in one’s discipleship journey.

The search for wisdom is a search for the deep things of God as He is the Father of it all. It is never a vain effort. Obtaining wisdom should be a universal goal for all humanity. To practice wisdom on a consistent basis is excellence. That habit is of God, for all excellence is God’s excellence.

REFERENCES

- Adams, B. (2001) *The everything leadership book. The 20 core concepts every leader must know*. Adams Media Corp.
- Aitken, H. G. (2014). *Scientific management in action: Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal, 1908-1915*. Princeton University Press.
- Ahlstrom, S., Mullin, B. (1987). *The scientific theist*. Mercer University Press.
- Alford, R., Hills, D. (2021). *Redefining possible*. Southwestern Books.
- Ambrose, S. (2018). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Anderson, J., Schroeder, R., Devaraji, S. (1995 Sep-Oct). A path analytic model of a theory of quality management underlying the Deming management method: Preliminary Empirical Findings*. *Decision Sciences*. Vol. 26. Number 5, pp. 637-658.
- Anthony, M. J. and Benson, W. S. (2018). *Exploring the history and philosophy of Christian education: Principles for the 21st century*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Ardelt, M. (2004). Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept. *Human Development*. Vol. 47, pp. 257-285. doi: 10.1159/000079154.
- Austenfeld, R. B. (2001). *W. Edwards Deming: The story of a truly remarkable person*. Retrieved from: http://web.crc.losrios.edu/~larsenl/ExtraMaterials/WEDeming_shortbio_Ff4203.pdf.
- Baltes P, Staudinger U. (2000, Jan.). Wisdom: A metaheuristic (pragmatic) to orchestrate mind and virtue toward excellence. *American Psychology*. 55 (1):122-36. doi: 10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.122. PMID: 11392856.
- Banicki, K. (2009). The Berlin Wisdom Paradigm: A conceptual analysis of a psychological approach to wisdom. *History & Philosophy of Psychology*. Vol. 11(2), 25-35.
- Barajas, J. (2016, February) How the Nazi defense of ‘just following orders’ plays out in the mind. *Science*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/how-the-nazis-defense-of-just-following-orders-plays-out-in-the-mind>.
- Barker, S., Cole, R. (2015). *Brilliant project management*. 3rd Edition. Pearson Education Limited.
- Bass, B.M. (1996). *A new paradigm of leadership: An inquiry into transformational leadership*. Alexandria, US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

- Belcher, C. Rethinking head, heart, hands in education. (Feb 2017). [online]. *Christian Teachers Journal* Vol. 25, No. 1, 22-25. Availability: <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.liberty.edu/documentSummary;dn=761919271478992;res=IELHSS> ISSN: 1443-735X.
- “Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages.” *Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages*, biblehub.com/.
- Bider, I. Perions, E. Elias, M. Johannesson, P. (2017, Jul). A fractal enterprise model and its application for business development. *Software and Systems Modeling: Heidelberg*. Vol 16, Iss. 3. 663-689 DOI: 10. 1007/s 10270-016-0554-9.
- Bloom, J. (2019, October 2). *All men seek happiness*. Retrieved from: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/all-men-seek-happiness>.
- Boice, J. (1986). *Foundations of the Christian faith*. InterVarsity Press.
- Bower, M., Robinson, D. (1990). *Wisdom, its nature, origins, and development*. Cambridge university press.
- Bredfeldt, G. (2018, February 22). *The essence of leadership* [Webinar]. Liberty.edu. https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_626361_1&content_id=_40739619_1.
- Bredfeldt, G. (2013). *Great leader great teacher: Recovering the biblical vision for leadership*. Moody Publishers.
- Bennet, W. L., Livingston, S. (Eds.). (2020). *The disinformation age: Politics, Technology, and disruptive communication in the United States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Brightlight, B. A. (2013). *Short strolls in faith*. Westbow Press.
- Brightlight, B. A. (2010). *Blue collar faith*. Createspace Publishing.
- Brougham, G. (2015). *The cynefin mini-book: An introduction to complexity and the cynefin framework*. C4Media, Toronto, Canada.
- Bryant, A. (2019). *The varieties of grounded theory*. Sage Publications.
- Bryant, A. and Charmaz, K. (2007). *Introduction grounded theory research: Methods and perspectives*. Sage.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. SAGE Publications Ltd <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4135/9781848607941>.
- Burns, J., Rechy, J. (2004). *Transforming leadership: A new pursuit of happiness*. Grove Press.

- Cartwright, J., Etzel, G., Jackson, C., Jones, T. (2017). *Teaching the world: Foundations for online theological education*. B&H Academic.
- Casteel, R. L. II, (1990). *The wisdom Christology of Hugh of St. Victor*. St Louis university.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). *Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods*. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509–535). Sage.
- Cherry, S. (2016). *Discipleship and Christian character*. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0040571X15623705>.
- Chiarelli, P. (2011, Spring). Leadership is Action not Position. *The Evans School Review. Vol 1. Num 1*. Retrieved from <https://depts.washington.edu/esreview/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ESR-2011-Opinion-Leadership-is-Action-Not-Position.pdf>.
- Chisholm, R. (1977). *Theory of knowledge*. 2nd Edition. Prentice-Hall.
- “Christian Quotes: Topic Search.” *Grace Quotes*, gracequotes.org/search-by-topics/.
- Christensen, C. (2020). *Disruptive innovation*. Retrieved from: <https://claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts/>.
- Christensen, C. (2012). *How will you measure your life*. TED^x Boston. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvos4nORf_Y.
- Clark, M. (1991). The will to power. In *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Modern European Philosophy, pp. 205-244). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511624728.009.
- Cleary, B. (2017, February). *Sparking a chain reaction: Fredrick Taylor, Deming, and work life*. Retrieved from: <https://blog.pqsystems.com/2017/02/10/sparking-chain-reaction-frederick-taylor-deming-work-life/>.
- Cloud, H. (2006). *Integrity: The courage to meet the demands of reality*. Harper-Collins.
- Coleman, K. (2019). *The proximity principle*. Ramsey Press.
- Copan, P., Craig, W. L. (2007). *Passionate Conviction*. B&H Publishing Group.
- Coram, R. (2002). *Boyd: the fighter pilot who changed the art of war*. Hachette Book Group.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. (4th ed.). Sage.

- Countryman, J. (2009). *God's wisdom for your every need*. Thomas Nelson.
- Covey, S. R. (2006). *The 8th habit*. Free Press.
- Covey, S. R. (1990). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. Fireside.
- Cox, W. F, Jr; Peck, R. A. Christian education as discipleship formation. *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* Vol. 15, Iss. 2, (Aug 2018): 243-261.
- Craig, W. L. (2008). *Reasonable faith*. (3rd Edition). Crossway.
- Craig, W. L. (2002). *What does God know: Reconciling Divine foreknowledge and human freedom*. RZIM publishing.
- Creamer, E. (2018, Jan 4). *An introduction to grounded theory methods and methodology*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P70mxHyKC1E>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (5th ed.). Saga Press.
- Dahlgaard-Park, S. M. (2009). Decoding the code of excellence – for achieving sustainable excellence, *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, Vol 1 No. 1, pp. 5-28. Retrieved from <https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/insight/content/doi/10.1108/17566690910945840/full/html>.
- Dale, B. G., Bamford, D. R., Wiele, A. V. D., (2016). *Managing quality: An essential guide and resource gateway*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Darmody, P. (2007). Henry L. Gantt and Fredrick Taylor: The pioneers of scientific management. *AACE International Transactions*. 15.1-15.3. Retrieved from: Henry L. Gantt and Frederick Taylor: The Pioneers of Scientific Management - ProQuest (liberty.edu).
- Diamond, R. M. (2008). *Designing and assessing courses and curricula: A practical guide*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Dictionary.com (website). Retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/excellence>.
- Douglas, T. J; Fredendall, L. D. Evaluating the Deming Management Model of Total Quality in Services. *Decision Sciences; Atlanta* Vol. 35, Iss. 3, (Summer 2004): 393-422.
- Edgeman, R. L. (June 1998). Principle-centered leadership and core value deployment. *The TQM Magazine*. Vol 10, Iss. 3.
- Edersheim, A. (1993). *The life and times of Jesus the Messiah*. Hendrickson Publishers.
- Embrey, M. Frechette, G., Yuksel, S. (2018 February). Cooperation in the finitely repeated prisoner's dilemma. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 133, Issue 1, Pages 509–551. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/qje/qjx033>.

- Estep, J. R., Anthony M., Allison, G. (2015). *A theology for Christian education*. B&H Academic.
- “Fancy Quotes: Topic Search.” www.quoteagency.com. Retrieved from: <https://quoteagency.com/quote/1394972/Donald-Rumsfeld-You-go-to-war-with-the-army-you-have-not-the-army-you-might-want-or-wish>.
- Flick, U. (2018). Going beyond. In *Doing grounded theory* (pp. 83-94). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4135/9781529716658>.
- Franklin, J. (2018, June). *Three secrets from Shamgar*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOizhCSUsB8&t=285s>.
- Freeborn, V. (2021). *Beyond OODA: Developing the orientation for deception, conflict, and violence*. Varg Freeborn.
- Gass, S. I. (2003, June 2). What is game theory and what are some of its applications? *Scientific American*. Retrieved from: <https://ScientificAmerican.com/what-is-game-theory-and-w/>.
- George, M. L. (2007). *Lean six-sigma for service*. McGraw-Hill Publishing.
- George, M., Rowlands, D., Price, M., Maxey, J. (2005). *The Lean Six Sigma Pocket Handbook*. McGraw-Hill.
- Gibbs, G. (2010, June 10). *Grounded theory: Selective coding*. YouTube. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9BMjO7WzmM>.
- Gladwell, M. (2002). *The Tipping Point*. Back Bay Books.
- Glaser, B. (2010). The future of grounded theory. *The Grounded Theory Review*. Vol. 9. No. 2.
- Gongwer, T. (2011). *Lead...for God's sake*. Tyndale Publishing.
- Griffith, S. B., (1975). *Sun Tzu, the art of war*. Oxford University Press.
- Guth, W., Kliemt, H. (2010). (Un)Bounded rationality in decision making and game theory – back to square one? *Games*. Vol 1, Iss. 1. p. 53-65. DOI: 10.3390/g1010053.
- Han, J., Micheline, K., and Jian, P. (2012) *Data mining concepts and techniques* . 3rd ed. Elsevier.
- Hartwig, R., Bird, T. (2015). *Teams that thrive: Five disciplines of collaborative church leadership*. InterVarsity.
- Harvey, J. B. (2018). *The Abilene paradox and other meditations on management*. Jossey-Bass.

- Hendel, K. K. (2009, June) Faithfulness: Luther's vision of excellence in ministry. *Currents in Theology and Mission* (Vol. 36, Issue 3) Retrieved from https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA202260275&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon.
- Hernandez, C. (2009, November 1). Theoretical coding in grounded theory methodology. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal*. Vol 8. No. 3. Retrieved from: <https://doaj.org/article/dfc22f0d0e114bb190da8623de1adb9f>.
- Hersey, P. (1985). *The situational leader*. Warner Books.
- Hiebert, P. G. (2008). *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change*. Baker Publishing Group.
- Hiebert, P. (1999). *The missiological implications of epistemological shifts: Affirming truth in a modern/postmodern world (Christian mission & modern culture)*. Trinity Press Intl.
- History of the four-way test*. (2021). Retrieved from: <https://rotary5630.org/history-of-the-four-way-test/>.
- Hodge, C. (1837). *A commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. London: The Religious tract society. pp. xvi, 438 p. LCCN 38018206. LCC BS2665 .H65 1837.
- Hoem, O., Lodgaard, E. (2016). Model for supporting lasting managerial efforts in continuous improvement: A case study in product engineering. *Procedia CIRP*. Vol. 50, pp. 38-43. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212827116304735>.
- Holder, W. G., Vadnais, S. (1996). *The "C" planes: U.S. cargo aircraft, 1925-to the present*. Schiffer Publishing.
- Holton, J. (2007). The coding process and its challenges. In *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 265-289). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4135/9781848607941>.
- Hood, J. (2007). Orthodoxy vs. Power: The defining traits of grounded theory. *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. SAGE Publishing.
- Horn, T. (2019). *Shadowland*. Defender Publishing.
- House, R. J., et al. (1975). *Path-Goal theory of leadership*. Washington University. Seattle, WA.
- House, R. J. (n.d.) *Author: Robert House*. Sage Publications. Retrieved from: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/author/robert-j-houseem>.
- Howell, D. N. Jr. (2003). *Servants of the Servant. A biblical theology of leadership*. Wipf & Stock Publishers.
- Huckabee, M. (2008). *Do the right thing*. Penguin Group.

- Ibrahim, R. (2018). *Sword and scimitar*. Da Capo Press.
- Intezari, A., & Pauleen, D. (2018). *Wisdom, analytics, and wicked problems: Integral decision making for the data age*. (1st ed.). Gower. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4324/9781315547022>
- Intezari, A., Pauleen, D. (2018, April). Conceptualizing wise management decision-making: A grounded theory approach. *Decision Sciences*. Vol. 49 (2). pp. 335-400.
- Jacobson, S. (2015, Jan. 27). *Volunteering—5 reasons why it really does help depression*. Retrieved from: <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/boosting-your-mood-volunteer.htm>.
- Jastrow, R. (1978). *God and the astronomers*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Jeste, D. V., Thomas, M. L. Liu, J., Daly, R. E., Tu, X. M., Treichler, E.B.H., Palmer, B. W., Lee, E. E., (2020). Is spirituality a component of wisdom? *Journal of Psychiatric Research*. ISSN 0022-3956 Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2020.09.033>.
- Johnson, D. (2006, November 13). Corporate excellence, ethics, and the role of IT. *Business and Society Review*. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1111/j.1467-8594.2006.282_1.x.
- Joullié, JE., Spillane, R. Heroic Drucker. *J Bus Ethics* 128, 95–105 (2015). Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10551-014-2068-0>.
- Karaulova, T., Poljantshikov, I., Shevtshenko, E., Kramarenko, S. (2014). Fractal approach for manufacturing project management. *Mechanika*. Vol. 20(3): 352.
- Kiedis, T. (2012, September 27). Think for a Change. *The Leader's Life and Work*. Retrieved from <https://www.leaderslifeandwork.com/blog/think-for-a-change?rq=culture>.
- Kilner, J. F. (2015). *Dignity and destiny: Humanity in the image of God*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Kitzbichler, M., Smith, M., Christensen, S., Bullmore, E. (2009, Mar 20). Broadband criticality of human brain network synchronization. *PLOS Computational Biology*. Retrieved from: <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1000314>.
- Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business review Press.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*. (6th edition). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kraft, P. W., Lodge, M., & Taber, C. S. (2015). Why People “Don’t Trust the Evidence”: Motivated Reasoning and Scientific Beliefs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658, 121–133. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24541811>

- Laniak, T. S. (2018). *New studies in biblical theology: volume 20: Shepherds after my own heart*. InterVarsity Press.
- Leavy, P. (2020). *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design*. (11th ed.). Pearson.
- Leibniz, G. (2015). *Leibniz: Philosophical essays*. Hackett Publishing.
- Lencioni, R. (2016). *The ideal team player: How to recognize and cultivate the three essential virtues*. Jossey-Bass.
- Lencioni, R. (2010). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Leute, J. (2017, March). The fractal organization: What complex systems have to do with PPM. *Meisterplan*. Retrieved from: <https://meisterplan.com/blog/fractal-organization-complex-systems-ppm/>.
- Lewis, C. S. (1952). *Mere Christianity*. MacMillan Publishers.
- Lindell, M. (2019). *What are the odds? From crack addict to CEO*. Lindell Publishing.
- Lindsey, H. (2020, Oct. 15). *The Father's vineyard*. (You-tube). Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUPxU-fTXhw&list=PL_s4kIS0inYVGhf-u9GKqLTuuefP3ZdBU&index=33.
- Lingenfelter, S. G. (2008). *Leading cross-culturally: Covenant relationships for effective Christian leadership*. Baker Academic.
- Livermore, D. A. (2016). *Driven by difference: How great companies fuel innovation through diversity*. AMACON.
- Livermore, D. A. (2015). *Leading with cultural intelligence: The real secret to success*. AMACON.
- Lowe, S. (2019, April 22) With all your heart, soul, wi-fi, and websites. *Christianity Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/may/stephen-mary-lowecologies-faith-digital-age.html>.
- Lowe, S. D. & M. E. (2018). *Ecologies of faith in a digital age*. InterVarsity Press.
- Lowe, S. (2018). *The role of the faith community in spiritual formation*. (Webinar). Liberty University.
- Lustig, P. (2017). *Strategic foresight: Learning from the future*. Triarchy Press.

- MacMillan, P. (2014). *The performance factor*. B&H Publishing Group.
- Maginnis, R. (2021). *Give me liberty not Marxism*. Defender Publishing.
- Maginnis, R. (2019). *Progressive evil*. Defender Publishing.
- Mandelbrot, B. (1982). *The fractal geometry of nature*. W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Maust, S. (2016). *Swimming rats and the power of hope*. Retrieved from: <https://www.shawnmaust.com/2016/12/swimming-rats-power-hope/>.
- Mawyer, M. (1994). *Pathways to success*. New Leaf Press.
- Mayer, W. (2016). *Islamic jihad, cultural Marxism, and the transformation of the west*. Pipeline Press.
- McAllister, T. (2019, April 22). The 8th M for Supply Chain Success. *Inbound Logistics Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.inboundlogistics.com/cms/article/the-8th-m-for-supply-chain-success/>.
- McGregor, S. (2018). Overview of research design and methods. In *Understanding and evaluating research* (pp. 207-226). SAGE Publications, Inc, <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4135/9781071802656>.
- McGregor, D. (2006). *The human side of enterprise, annotated edition*. McGraw-Hill.
- McLaren, B. (2002). *More ready than you realize: The power of everyday conversations*. Zondervan.
- Meredith, J., Mantel, S. (1989). *Project management: A managerial approach*. John Wiley & sons.
- Meyer, A. (2007). Strategic epistemology—innovation and organizational wisdom. In E. H. Kessler & J. R. Bailey *Handbook of organizational and managerial wisdom* (pp. 357-375). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412982726.n16.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 25–35. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500103>.
- Milton-Smith, J. (1995, Aug 1). Ethics as excellence: A strategic management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics: Dordrecht*. Vol 14, Iss. 8. pp. 683-693.
- Moerman, G. (2016, Sept 11). *Versions of grounded theory*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX42ld18kao>.
- Morgan, G. (2006). *Images of organization*. Sage Publications.

- Murugesan, V. (2018). *Three ways aligning continuous improvement and industrial Internet of things (IIoT) accelerates digital transformation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ptc.com/en/thingworx-blog/Ins-reinvent-lean-today>.
- Musenze, I., Mayende, T. (2019, Oct). Development and validation of a total quality management model for Uganda's local government. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*. DOI: 10.4102/sajhrm.v17i0.1042.
- Newkirk, V. R. II. (2016, April). Is climate change a prisoner's dilemma or a stag hunt? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/04/climate-change-game-theory-models/479340/>.
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. (8th edition). Sage Publications.
- O'Connor, A., Carpenter, B., Coughlan, B. (2018). An exploration of key issues in the debate between classic and constructivist grounded theory. *The Grounded Theory Review.*, Vol. 17 Is. 1. pp. 90-103.
- Oxley, A. (2014). *The 4 faces of frustration*. BookLogix.
- Patel, N., (Jun 2008). *The 8th habit of self-leadership*. NZ Business; Auckland Vol. 22. Iss. 5. 48.
- Perrin, N. (2019). *The kingdom of God: A biblical theology*. Zondervan.
- Pettit, P. (2016). *Foundations of spiritual formation*. Kregel Publications.
- Plumer, W. S. (2011). *Vital Godliness, a treatise on experimental and practical piety*. Bottom of the Hill Publishing, Memphis, TN.
- PMI. (2016). A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide). 6th Edition. PM Institute. ISBN: 978-1628251845.
- Polkinghorne, J. (2005). *Quarks, chaos, & Christianity: Questions to science and religion*. Bookmarque.
- Polkinghorne, J. (1998). *Belief in God in an age of science*. Yale University Press.
- Powell, D. (2006). *Holman quick source guide to Christian apologetics*. Holman Publishing.
- Powlison, D. A. (2007) "Appendix 4: Cure of the souls (and modern psychotherapies)" pp. 269-302.
- Prince, D. (2007). *The gifts of the Spirit*. Whitaker House.
- Putman, J. *Real-life discipleship*. (2010). NavPress.
- Quotersearch, A. (2019, January 15). *History does not repeat itself, but it rhymes*. Quote Investigator. <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/01/12/history-rhymes/>.

- Raye, J. (2014, April). Fractal Organisation Theory. *Journal of organizational transformation and social change*. Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 50-68.
- Rideout, S. (2017, October 11). Whiteboard Leadership #13: Assisting your Congregation in Change. *Converge*. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_pHkbWz-LI.
- Robertson, J. (2020). *Don't bungee jump naked and other important stuff*. Jeanne Robertson.
- Robinson, L. (2009). *A summary of diffusion innovations*. Retrieved from: https://learn.liberty.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-40739688-dt-content-rid-485530851_1/courses/CLED780_D02_202030/Summary_Diffusion_Theory.pdf.
- Rodenhizer, S. (2018, June 8). Blogpost. Retrieved from: "Choices are the hinges of destiny." (Edwin Markham) – Quotation Celebration (wordpress.com).
- Rudd, A. S. (2019). *A grounded theory study explaining teachers' instructional decision-making on mathematics fact fluency for students with a mathematics learning disability*. Liberty University.
- Russell, N. (2019). *Understanding willing participants, Volume II*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97999-1>.
- Sacolick, I. (2020, Feb 25). What is agile methodology? Modern software development explained. *InfoWorld*. Retrieved from: <https://www.infoworld.com/article/3237508/what-is-agile-methodology-modern-software-development-explained.html?page=2>.
- Samra, J. G. (2008). *The library of New Testament studies: Being conformed to Christ in community: A study of maturity, maturation, and the local church in the undisputed Pauline epistles*. T & T Clark.
- Sandford, K. (nd) *How continuous improvement can enhance your personal life*. Retrieved from (www.lifehack.org) <https://www.lifehack.org/788823/continuousimprovement>.
- Scheve, T. (2008, May 27). How game theory works. *HowStuffWorks.com*. Retrieved from: <https://science.howstuffworks.com/game-theory.htm> 9 December 2020.
- Schroeder, G. (1997). *The science of God*. The Free Press.
- Scouller, J., Chapman, A. (2020, September). *Robert House's Path–Goal Leadership Theory*. BusinessBalls.com. Retrieved from: <https://www.businessballs.com/leadership-models/path-goal-theory-robert-house/>.
- Sebastian, K. (2019, July). Distinguishing between the types of grounded theory: Classical, interpretive and constructivist. *Journal for social thought*. 3(1).
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2016). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu>.

- Shirer, P. (2012). *Discerning the voice of God*. Moody Publishers.
- Sinek, S. (2018, March 1). *How great leaders inspire action*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3SfI4&feature=youtu.be>.
- Smith, J. K. A. (2013) E-book edition. *Desiring the kingdom (cultural liturgies)*. Baker Publishing Group.
- Snowden, D. (2020). *Cynefin: Weaving sense-making into the fabric of our world*. Cognitive Edge Pte Ltd.
- Snowden, D. (2018). *Complex adaptive systems*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4-vpegxYPg>.
- Snowden, D. (2010). *The cynefin framework*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7oz366X0-8>.
- Spears, L.C. (1998). *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-leadership*. John Wiley and Sons.
- St Pierre, S. F. (Sep 29-Oct 12, 2017): The ‘7 habits’: An overview. *New Hampshire Business Review*; Concord. Vol. 39, Iss. 20, 10.
- Stacey, R. (2012). *Tools and techniques of leadership and management*. Routledge.
- Staff. (2012, April). Giants of quality—W. Edwards Deming. *Quality and Reliability Engineering International*. Retrieved from: Giants of Quality—W. Edwards Deming - 2012 - Quality and Reliability Engineering International - Wiley Online Library (liberty.edu).
- Stanley, A. (2008). *The principle of the path*. Thomas Nelson.
- Stanley, A. (2005). *The best question ever: Learning to foolproof your life*. Multnomah.
- Stanley, A. (2003). *The next generation leader*. Multnomah.
- Staudinger, U. M. (2013). *The need to distinguish personal from general wisdom: A sort history and empirical evidence*. In: Ferrari M., Westrate N., (eds) *The Scientific Study of Personal Wisdom*.
- Sternberg, R. (2001). Balance theory of wisdom in educational settings. *Educational Psychologist*. Vol. 36, pp. 227-245.
- Sternberg, R. (1998) A balance theory of wisdom. *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 2, pp. 347-365.
- Sternberg, R. (1990). Understanding wisdom. In R. Sternberg (Ed.), *Wisdom: Its Nature, Origins, and Development* (pp. 3-10). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139173704.002.

- Stetzer, E. (2003). *Planting new churches in a postmodern age*. Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Stewart, G. (1999). *Team work and group dynamics*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Strauss A., Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and Techniques*. Sage.
- Svensson, G., Wood, G. (2008, Feb). A model of business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics: JBE Dordrecht*. Vol 77, Iss. 3. 303. DOI:10.1007/s10551-007.
- Sweetwater Press. (2008). *The art of war: The complete and fully illustrated edition of Sun Tzu's philosophical masterpiece*. Sweetwater Press.
- Tenney, M., Gard, T. (2016). *The Mindfulness Edge: How to rewire your brain for leadership and personal excellence without adding to your schedule*. First Edition. Wiley & Sons.
- Understanding the Agile software development lifecycle and process workflow*. Retrieved on from <https://www.smartsheet.com/understanding-agile-software-development-lifecycle-and-process-workflow>.
- The Holy Bible. *New International Version*. (1973/1995). Zondervan Corporation.
- The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory: Paperback Edition*. (2010). India: SAGE Publications.
- Thomas, T. (2016). *The miracle and magnificence of America*. Michelle Thomas.
- Thomas, G., James, D. (2006). Reinventing grounded theory: Some questions about theory, ground, and discovery. *British Educational Research Journal*. Vol. 32, No. 6, pp. 767-795.
- Tie, Y., Birks, M., Francis, K. (2019, January). *Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers*. SAGE Open Med. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6318722/>.
- Tirri, Kirsi. (2010) Combining Excellence and Ethics: Implications for Moral Education for the Gifted, *Roeper Review*, 33:1, 59-64.
- Toffler, A. (1990). *Future Shock*. Bantam Books.
- Toffler, A. (1990). *Power shift: Knowledge, wealth, and violence at the edge of the 21st century*. Bantam Books.
- Valova, I., Beaton, D., Buer, A., MacLean, D. (2010). *Fractal initialization for high-quality mapping with self-organizing maps*. Retrieved from: https://personal.utdallas.edu/~derekbeaton/attachments/Papers/Fractals.pdf?origin=publication_detail.
- Van Ness, H. (1983). *Understanding thermodynamics*. Dover Publications.

- Van Uden, Jacco. (2005). "Using complexity science in organization studies: a case for loose application." *Emergence: Complexity and Organization* 7.1: 60+. *Business Insights: Global*. Web. 8 Nov. 2020 Retrieved from http://bi.gale.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA140447645?u=vic_liberty.
- Walsh, I., Holton, J. Bailing, L. (2015, October). *What grounded theory is...a critically reflective conversation among scholars*. Retrieved from: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/1094428114565028>.
- Warren, R. (2002). *The purpose driven life*. Zondervan.
- Washburn, A. (2014). *Two-person zero-sum games*. 4th Edition. Springer.
- Wheeler, D. J. (2000). *Understanding variation: The key to managing chaos*. SPC Press.
- Wilhoit, J. (2018). *Christian education and the search for meaning*. Baker Publishing Group.
- "Wise Sayings: Topic Quotes". *Wise Sayings*. Retrieved from <https://www.wisesayings.com/quote-topics/>.
- Wooden, J. (2009). *Coach Wooden's leadership game plan for success: 12 lessons for extraordinary performance and personal excellence*. McGraw Hill.
- Woodhouselee, Tytler, A. (1854). *Universal history, from the creation of the world to the beginning of the eighteenth century*. Fetridge and company.
- Yount, W. R. (2014). *Created to learn: A Christian teacher's introduction to educational psychology*. 2nd Edition. Broadman & Holman.
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations*. 8th edition. Prentice Hall.
- Zacharias, R. (2020, August). *Why comfort will ruin your life!* Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULKhchuQV9Y>.
- Zacharias, R. (2007). *Beyond opinion*. Thomas Nelson.
- Zaleznik, A. (2004). Managers and Leaders: Are they Different? *Harvard Business review*. Retrieved from https://learn.liberty.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-40739677-dt-content-rid-485530849_1/courses/CLED780_D02_202030/Managers%20and%20Leaders_%20Are%20They%20Different_.pdf.
- Zhang, X., Wei, X. (2017 Dec). Superficial Harmony and Conflict Avoidance Resulting from Negative Anticipation in the Workplace. *Management and Organization Review*. Retrieved from: [Superficial-Harmony-and-Conflict-Avoidance-Resulting-from-Negative-Anticipation-in-the-Workplace.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321111111_Superficial-Harmony-and-Conflict-Avoidance-Resulting-from-Negative-Anticipation-in-the-Workplace) (researchgate.net).

APPENDIX A

Qualitative Interview Questions:

#	Baseline Questions	Comment/Rationale
1	What's the most rewarding aspect of your job?	Leadership and Value System
2	What is the most challenging/creates the most complexity in your job? How do you mitigate these challenges?	Leadership SWOT
3	How would you describe your leadership style?	Leadership SWOT
4	If forced to choose a priority, are you more process oriented or relationship oriented?	Leadership Method
5	In leading people, what are the key decision metrics that you monitor? How would you rank those metrics?	Decision Process
6	Describe your decision-making process? Is it systematic or more scenario driven? What major metrics are considered & what level of preparation is involved? How often does "gut feel" come into play?	Decision Process
7	What changes within your methodology and approach for making big decisions as compared to ordinary ones?	Decision Process
8	Do you have a streamlined approach to decisions when under a time constraint?	Decision Process
9	In terms of axiology, what is most important to you? What is your personal cornerstone?	Insight on Value System
10	What's your definition of wisdom? What would you consider to be its components? How does one develop it?	Insight on Value System
11	What role does spirituality play in your decision-making? Address how love for God, others, & oneself influence your decisions.	Insight on Value System
12	What's your best advice for being successful in making wise decisions? For being successful in life?	Insight on Value System
	Potential Follow On Questions	
F1	How often do you involve others in decision-making?	Decision Process
F2	How do you collaborate on decisions?	Decision Process
F3	How do you set goals and inspire your followers toward those goals?	Leadership Metrics
F4	Is making wise decisions a conscious and/or continuous effort?	Decision Process
	Scenario-Driven Decision Questions	
S1	Describe a difficult time/complex environment & how you made decisions in that environment.	Decision Process
S2	In hindsight, would you have changed your approach or tactics?	Decision Process
S3	As a leader of an organization, project, endeavor, or over a season of time, are there standard metrics from which you evaluate yourself regarding success?	Insight on Value System

APPENDIX B

Consent

Title of the Project: Ed. D Dissertation on Fractal Nature of Biblical Wisdom

Principal Investigator: Tom McAllister, doctoral candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
--

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 21 years of age and are serving or have served in a leadership capacity in business, military, law enforcement, church ministry, coaching, politics, missionary work, and/or possess advanced formal education and teaching experience in the areas of theology, logic, philosophy, and/or decision theory. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
--

The purpose of the study is to examine the fractal nature of biblical wisdom for decision-making in complex environments.

The study focuses on the use of wisdom in decision-making by leaders of various occupations who lead and operate in complex environments. The study will analyze the wisdom principles from a biblical perspective with the desired intent to discover fractal organizational and behavioral patterns. Complex environments are challenging and unpredictable and therefore, if some useful concepts and principles (fractal patterns) can be discerned, it can assist leaders in their decision-making skills to successfully lead people and their respective organizations through complex and difficult circumstances.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Set aside approximately 30 minutes (it could extend longer) to respond to a set of short answer questions asked by the interviewer and elaborate where appropriate with your particular insights and experience regarding decision-making in challenging environments. This interview may be conducted in person or via Internet video as per interviewee's preference.
2. After the interview has been transcribed to text format, you will receive a transcript of the interview and will need to take sufficient time to review the transcripts to clarify or comment on them as necessary or appropriate.
3. Upon a satisfactory review of the transcript, accept and approve for publication the final edited document.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Direct Benefits: The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is the possibility that through the question and answer session of the qualitative interview and theory construction process, insight and inspiration may be derived that would enhance one's analytical skills and decision-making methods.

Benefits to society include: The development of decision-making concepts, principles, template(s), and/or a matrix to assist leaders in making wise decisions for their organizations has universal benefit to all leaders.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject unless specifically granted by the interviewee.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes or via generic descriptions such as “one respondent noted” or “one leader observed.”
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and/or focus groups (if utilized) will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- If volunteer participates in a focus group, it should be noted that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Tom McAllister. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REMOVED] and/or [REMOVED]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt at [REMOVED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects

research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations.

The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher[s] will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

Sample Recruitment Letter

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate in Education (Ed. D) degree in Christian Leadership. The purpose of my research is to examine the nature and components of biblical wisdom and how leaders employ its use for decision-making in complex environments. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be over 21 years old and have served or are serving in a senior leadership position requiring impactful decision-making on a daily basis in a complex organization. Participants must be from one of the following industries: business, military, law enforcement, pastor of a church with at least 1,000 active members, a missionary, a politician, a coach, or as an academic/SME in decision theory. Furthermore, participants must come from an English-speaking nation and be a professed Christian. Those willing and who are selected to participate in the study will be interviewed one-on-one, either in person or via remote (online access) as most convenient to the desires of the participant. The interview will last 30-45 minutes and will be a series of short answer questions related to your decision-making process. Follow on questions may be asked to explore in greater depth your insight on the topic. After the interview is completed, it will be transcribed, and a short post-interview meeting (10-15 minutes) will be conducted to review the transcript for accuracy and clarify any answers. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential unless specifically granted by the interviewee.

To participate, please respond in the affirmative to this email, and you or your designated assistant will be contacted in the near future to set up a time for the interview.

A consent form is attached should you be willing to participate, and it provides greater details about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me prior to or at the time of the interview.

Thanks so much for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Tom McAllister
Doctoral Candidate
Ph: [REMOVED]

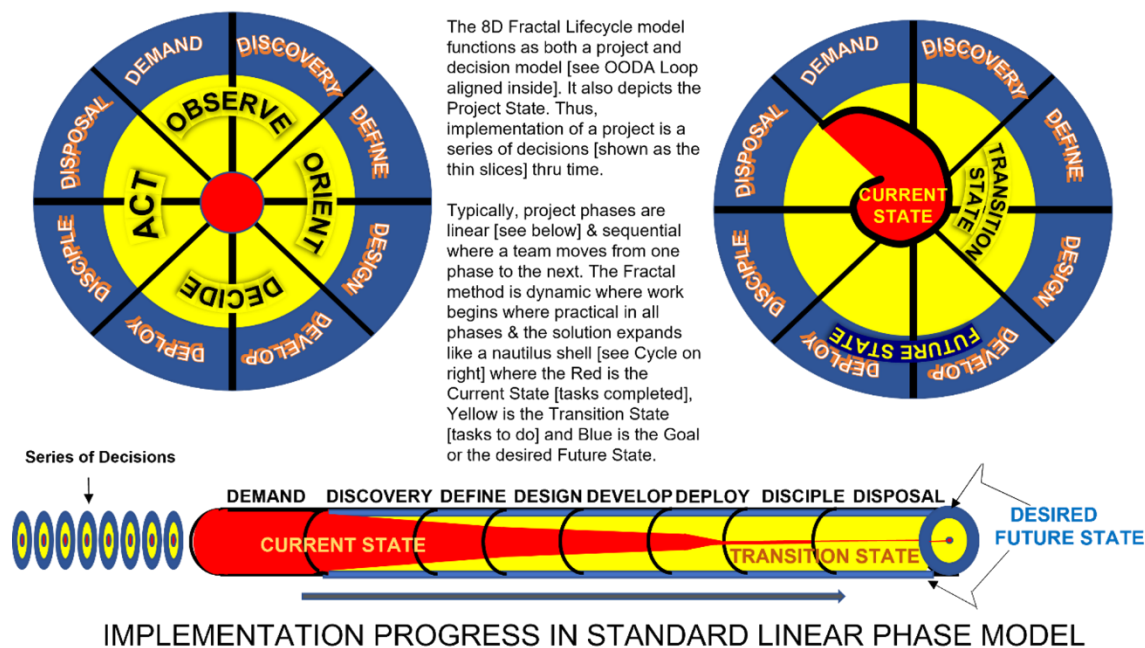
APPENDIX D

The Fractal Method Lifecycle Introduction

The Fractal Method Lifecycle is a conceptual dynamic project implementation tool that recognizes the fractal aspects of decision-making and their alignment with the strategic phases of an organized project. Each decision is in essence, a mini-project that organizes one's thoughts through the same phases from Demand to Disposal to reach a successful solution. Additionally, it incorporates and tracks the different States (Current, Transition, Future) dynamically as the project progresses.

The traditional project management method proceeds through each phase before beginning the next. The Current State is often depicted as static snapshot to mark the project start or initial conditions and is either not updated or done so as a static snapshot on a periodic basis. Thus, the project methodically moves from phase to phase. The Agile method improved upon this approach through enhanced planning of future phases and a focused approach of utilizing accelerated implementation techniques such as Scrum. The Fractal Method begins with the end in mind and is continually flexible to changes in the desired end state. Illustratively, the States are concentric circles along the time pipeline. The center (Red) is the Current State and as tasks are completed, it expands through the Transition State (Yellow) until it reaches the desired Future State (Blue). If new requirements are added, the Blue circle (Future State) simply expands to illustrate the additional functionality or enhancements required.

The actual implementation technique engages all project phases simultaneously though not equally. The completion of phases occurs sequentially but in a more efficient manner as the forecasted work completion should expand in a spiral manner similar to the growth of a nautilus shell. It is anticipated that the use of golden ratios, Fibonacci sequence, or similar patterns found in nature for project task grouping may become the ideal path for optimization, but further research is required. This study merely introduces this new concept.



APPENDIX E

Theological Framework Overview



Created by Tom McAllister