

IN PURSUIT OF ELEGANCE: Why the Best Ideas Have Something Missing

Not everything simple is elegant, but everything elegant is simple.

Scripture has many examples of elegant simplicity. Faith, in particular, is always characterized by simplicity. "Hezekiah, king, soldier, and poet, was artless in his relation with God. Rabshakeh and his overwhelming hosts were surrounding the royal city. He was using every wile to shake the morale of the people. When confronted with a taunting and blasphemous letter from Rabshakeh, Hezekiah's spontaneous reaction was to commit the matter to his God" (Sanders, 2015).

"Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord."
Isaiah 37:14

"Then the angel of the Lord . . . smote . . . of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand." Isaiah 38:2-5

Hezekiah's enemies were destroyed, not by his military might or strategy, but by his simple prayer.

		7						
	4			7		8	6	
			7		9		3	
	3	4		1		5		
	8			2			5	
	7		6		4	3	9	

What denotes an event or thing as elegant? There are four criteria that have been noted by one author (May, 2009) who uses the game of Sudoku as an example:

- Symmetry—There are squares inside of squares and repeating patterns. Symmetry is the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts.
- Seduction—There are empty squares to be filled in which promotes creative engagement. Seductive ideas rest on the ability to spark the kind of intrigue that will keep the imagination engaged.
- Subtraction—The solution is created first, then numbers subtracted to create a grid with missing numbers. Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to take away.
- Sustainability—There is the potential for an infinite number of games that makes the process repeatable and lasting. To be sustainable, any given asset must be kept whole, without making significant trade-offs that undermine the capital used to generate and maintain it.

Thus, the power of elegance is achieved when the maximum impact is exacted with the minimum input.

Give consideration to the concept of elegance when, as educators, we plan, instruct, and assess. In the end, evidence suggests that our efforts will be more sustainable.

References

May, M. E. (2009). *In pursuit of elegance: Why the best ideas have something missing*. New York, NY: Crown Business.

Sanders, J. O. (2015, November 30). *Hezekiah—Simplicity in Prayer*. <http://www.kingdomcapstone.org>