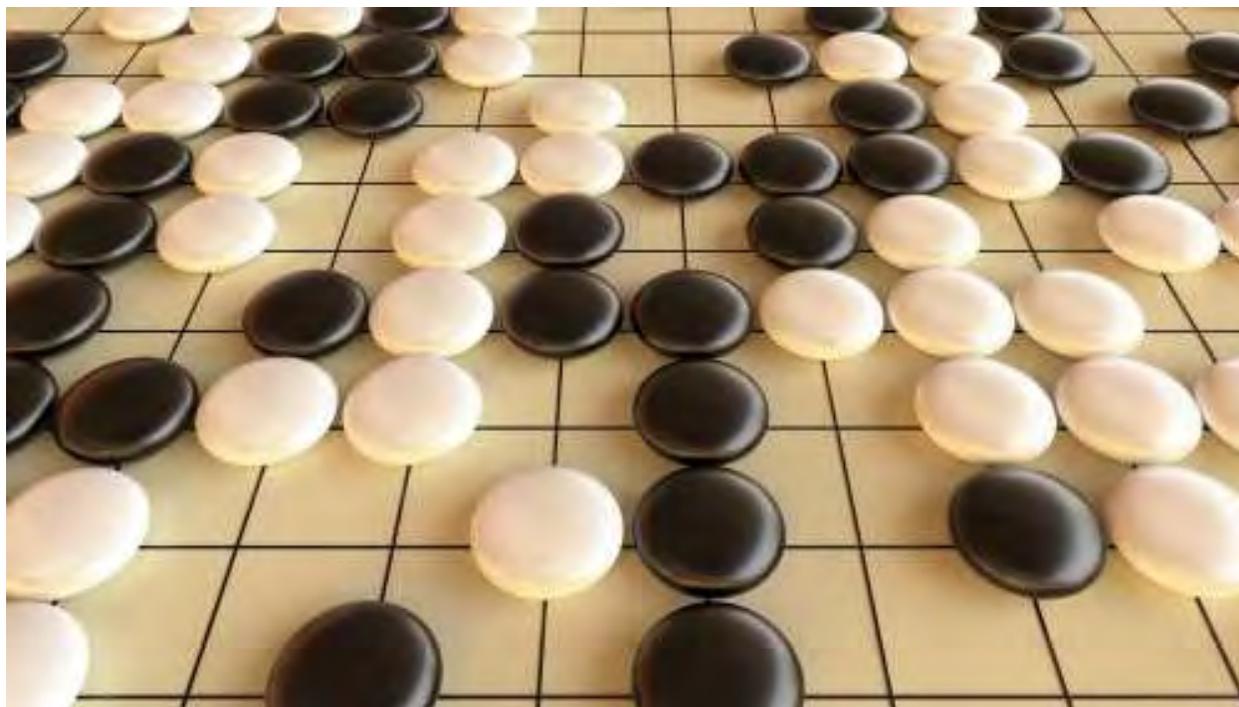


Right Sequencing: Wisdom for Life from the Game of Go

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I love the game of Go or *Baduk*, as Koreans call it. I don't play often, but frequently apply the wisdom learned from it.

Go is an ancient strategy board game where the player's objective is to surround a larger total area of the board with one's stones than your opponent. The board, marked with a grid of 19 lines by 19 lines, may be thought of as a piece of land to be divided between two players.

One player has a supply of black pieces, called stones, the other a supply of white. The game starts with an empty board and the players take turns, placing one stone each turn on a vacant intersection point. If a player claims the first move, the black stones are assigned and the opponent is given the white stones.



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A territory is represented by the sum of empty points, called the "house" (집) in Korean, as encircled and enclosed by stones much like walls. The minimum points one can have are two, called a live territory. And it's technically separated into at least two empty points, called "eyes" (눈). This is based on the rule of Go that a player cannot place more than one stone at a time.

Stones that fail to form a live territory can be taken out by the opponent whenever the opponent's enclosing stones remove all the empty points adjacent to the failed stones, which are automatically used at the end of the game to remove the live points of a territory of one's own. So the opponent's attack point is to remove the chance for the other player to form two eyes.

Playing Go is different from playing chess in Western culture, typically in that a placed stone can never be moved again unless it's taken out as a "dead stone" (사석). So, Go or *Baduk*, is a game of filling up the board with one's stones like a construction project. The game of Go has no kings or other pieces with specific roles like queens, knights or rooks — just plain stones.

Go is a lot like life. The 361 intersection points on the board can be likened to the 365 days of a year. It reveals and teaches all kinds of tactics and strategies to live life. Living life is not an easy job. Especially for Unificationists, life is more like a mission, with the goal of completing one's life while in the physical body to grow one's spirit into a perfect being, who can then enjoy a life of eternity in the spirit world.

As with Go, which requires a great deal of tactics and strategies, a Unificationist needs to be wise to survive and overcome all kinds of challenges and temptations. We can learn to deal with quite a number of them from playing games of *Baduk*. As Divine Principle describes distinct periods of growth, the game of Go also builds up territory based on certain phases of winning in battles.

I apply wisdom learned from Go particularly in creating new relationships with others. Those could be human beings or organizations (not a big distinction because all organizations are composed of human

beings). So this wisdom is all about human relationships or networking. And territory can be likened to one's reputation among others.

Reputation such as personal property are achievements accumulated throughout life. And they are translated into certain positions, rewards (possibly monetary), or something valuable. In light of Divine Principle, they may represent each level of achievement of the growth period. People around me recognize and show respect based on that growth level.

Baduk experience is especially helpful when I create relationships with new people. They initially have little to no idea about me or even heard unflattering rumors about me. Bad reputations are like lost battles on the board. They affect my moves today: the placing of my stones, my choices. I have to live with that. It's a part of karma, a destiny or "indemnity" in our terms.

One of the beauties of Go that players become very excited about is the grand reversal or *turnaround*. Yogi Berra's famous baseball maxim applies here: "It ain't over till it's over." Every Go player knows this clearly, so he or she never gives up a single battle or struggle, always waiting for the grand reversal. This property is the very one every man or woman of faith longs for in life. Perseverance pays off.

One piece of wisdom I apply most on a daily basis is that a "certain order of placing stones should be precisely designed." Every move I make affects my opponent on his/her choice, which then limits my choice. So, before actually making a move, it's very important to think ahead how the placement of my stone later affects the game. It's like a simulation inside one's brain.

Temporary retreat therefore is oftentimes a wise tactic in life. What looks like taking a detour is actually in many cases the only choice of right sequencing to win a contest. It can help mostly by avoiding unnecessary attention from others on my choice and move. That's because it appears a mere distraction if my opponent is more interested in his/her own territory-building.

The game of Go requires patience. Patience does not mean, however, blind withstanding. Reading the sequence in depth generates such a quality. It's similar to the lessons learned from the trials and errors in life. Hurts and scars or joys that have been carved in our flesh are used to guide us like an invisible compass. We flap our wings guided by our lessons over a lifespan.



Google DeepMind's artificial intelligence program, AlphaGo, defeats legendary Go player Lee Sedol in an historic victory in March 2016.

An opponent can defeat us anytime in a number of battles. Losing some battles does not mean losing an entire match. One of the worst things in *Baduk* is to get a number of our stones cut off and thus be taken out. If the case is unavoidable strategically, it's much better to reduce the size to the smallest. So, a Go player needs to separate one battle from another.

One piece of advice regarding right sequencing is, “Do not connect your stones recklessly.” Even though there’s a precious stone sitting right next to me, stretching our hand to retrieve it, on the board, to get it connected, could cause one’s situation to be put in danger. If the connection is made prematurely or too early, it right away becomes so vulnerable as to be tackled by the opponent.

In order to obtain a certain goal, whether it be a parcel of territory or a bundle of stones, we need to calculate how to approach it carefully and in what sequence. It’s the worst thing if my intention to come closer is disclosed in the middle of an approach. As soon as the opponent senses the intention, the next move will soon be disturbed on the way to achieving the goal.

Usually, Go players tend not to reveal their real intentions. This is one of the key techniques to play the game. Occasionally a player realizes that obtaining certain goals requires many preparatory stone placements. So, the point to be occupied doesn’t have to be the one right next to the current battleground. It can be located in another corner — of a life.

Finally, you may have heard about the historic 2016 match of Go between top master Sedol Lee of Korea and Google’s AlphaGo AI program. Lee could beat AlphaGo only once in five games. Since then, no human being has ever beaten AlphaGo’s successors. Although human beings may never again be able to beat a computer program in Go, one thing is clear: a human did come up with a brilliant and creative placement of a stone.

It was a thing of beauty at the time when Sedol Lee was able to make his surprising 78th move of a stone (the “divine move”) that threw AlphaGo’s processing logic into confusion, and he could go on to win the only Go game of a human versus machine. If one can come up with a genuinely creative move, it will be a real killer one. Of course, such a move or stone placement was not possible without prior placements of stones, that is, preparatory sequences.

People of faith are accustomed to patience. They know how to wait and persevere. A long pathway leads them, sometimes to the valleys and mountains, oftentimes to the desert and wilderness. They seem fools because they do not try to avoid that path. But they are not fools because they know after all there’s real victory through that. From the stories of his path of indemnity, Reverend Moon taught us to become the winners over all bitterness and kings and queens of eternal bitterness.

Temptations are everywhere. But we do know they are in vain. We do not stretch our hands out to take them. What is sitting right next to me easily could be a poison pill. There’s a deep valley, deeper than an abyss, between that which is sweet and ourselves. It’s never easy to stay on the right track. But the right path is actually the real shortcut, we’ll find out sooner or later. Life is so short to find this out.

Another piece of advice is: “Sometimes that which is sweet unexpectedly gets connected.” It’s just given like heavenly fortune, a sweet taste of life. Then we just need to prepare an expression of gratitude. Patience rewards it. It’s not just a lazy bird killing time but deep breathing. Avoiding temptation is a form of combat, and so people of faith should be wise and clever.

Give it a try and learn the game of Go. You may soon realize that the board is grander than you ever imagined and that the placement of a stone is many times not an easy choice. Also you may learn that patience requires a great deal of courage. Any man or woman of faith should be armed with all kinds of tools, knowledge and wisdom.

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