

Speaker 1:

Welcome to the Vanderbloemen Leadership podcast. I'm your host, Holly Tate, vice president of business development here at Vanderbloemen. In today's episode William Vanderbloemen, our founder and CEO talks with Andy Stanley author and senior pastor at North Point Community Church and founder of North Point Ministries. In this conversation, Andy shares the five key questions from his newest book, Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets, that you should ask yourself every time you are faced with a decision. Andy shares that he lives out this process in his own life. And his hope is that we would make better decisions in our Christian walk and consequently live with fewer regrets. Andy reminds us that our decisions determine the direction of our lives. So it is important that we are honest with ourselves in answering those questions. Tweet your takeaways from today's show, using the hashtag vanderblast. and check out today's show notes to join our Facebook group, where we post behind the scenes content we'll even post today's behind the scenes video in that Facebook group. Without further ado here is William's conversation with Andy Stanley.

William:

Well, hey everybody. We're so glad to have you here today. And I'm thrilled to have Andy Stanley with us. I would say Andy is a preacher's kid, but he is now a preacher emeritus' kid, which is a new thing and in the world. Andy I guess your dad is officially transitioning from first Baptist Atlanta and has been there for a while [crosstalk 00:01:23]. How long?

Andy:

He's his pastor there 50 years. He made it to 50 and then he just turned 88 last week. So the joke is this was not a decision he rushed into so.

William:

Well, so my very first church I served was in a little town in North Carolina called Hendersonville, and I did triathlon back then. So I would ride my bike all over and I'd go by the Fruitland Bible Institute all the time. And I don't know who in the world went to Fruitland Bible... I used to say that out loud because I was just dumb Presbyterian... thought I knew everything.... who in the world goes there? Well, it turns out actually pretty good preacher graduated from there.

Andy:

Well, actually he didn't go there. After he graduated from seminary, he went there to pastor the first Baptist Church of Fruitland and to teach in that bible training center that you drove by.

William:

Wow.

Andy:

And don't tell anybody this, that's where I was born. So I was born in Fruitland, North Carolina. I tell people Hendersonville, my wife says no, it was Fruitland, so.

William:

There is a difference. [crosstalk 00:02:32]

Andy:

It is beautiful up there though, right?

William:

Yeah, It is just apples. It's not-

Andy:

It's just apples. Yeah. Yeah.

William:

Well, Andy, you've given so much of your life and your story to helping Jesus' name move forward and his cause. And I'm just thankful for you. You've influenced me as from a distance for many, many years, and now I want to visit with you today. I mean, you've had so many good books, but this newest thing you've been working on and really caught my attention because... and for those of you listening, it's Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets. And it... I mean like every Andy Stanley message the title kind of tells you what it's going to be about. But there were some questions that you asked and I'm learning. I think the older I get the more I'm trying to ask questions rather than give directives.

William:

And now I'm reading through the new Testament I'm seeing, that's probably the sentence form Jesus used more than commands, was it? He answered them by asking a question. And so I want to talk about the questions that you're using as a filter or suggest that we use as a filter. But before that I want to ask what I ask every author. Having only written a few books, it's labor. And I mean, I've got seven kids. I have not been in labor but it feels like...

William:

So there's got to be something inside an author to really make them want to get it out to the world. So was there a burden that you felt that you needed to get out to the world? And if so, tell us a little bit about that.

Andy:

Well, to your point, every time I write a book I said Sandra, that's my last book I'm done. When I wrote Deep and Wide, I'm done. And when I wrote Irresistible, I was really done because I do it on my own time, it's not part of my day job. And my day job is very demanding as most pastors can attest to. So for this book, part of why I wanted to write this book is one of the things that breaks my heart. In fact, that's one of the questions I ask our church all the time. Hey, what breaks your heart? Because that can lead to life change in terms of career change all kinds of things. So the thing that breaks my heart is watching people make decisions that undermine their own success. There's isn't that headwind in life. We don't need to help ourselves into a ditch or to make a bad decision.

Andy:

And so whether it's relationship decisions, financial decisions, professional decisions when... And we've all seen this right, in slow motion. The person begins to make bad decisions and you think, wait a minute, you're just hurting yourself and you're helping yourself hurt yourself. So I wrote this book to basically present these five questions and you just spoke to it William to basically offer people a decision

making grid. And which sounds a little strange, but everybody has a decision making grid. There are questions that we all ask ourselves intuitively whenever we make a decision. Am I going to like this? Is going to make me happy? Will anybody find out? Will this hurt me? Could this become a problem down the road? How can I afford this? So unfortunately we don't always ask the right questions. And here's kind of the point of the book.

Andy:

There is an extraordinarily important relationship between the questions we ask and the decisions we make. And the reason everybody knows that is because everybody can think of a decision they made and after they made it, they realized it was a bad decision. And they said to themselves, I should have asked more questions. So essentially I'm offering readers five questions to ask. Every time you make a decision of any importance and hoping that these five questions become part of their permanent decision-making grid. These are five questions I learned in some cases from my dad, learned from just doing ministry. And I assure you these are the five questions that I set out in front of my own three children, all of them in their twenties. Two of them married now, their entire life. And the title of the book is somewhat of a promise. Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets.

William:

Wow. So I grew up with... my dad was like a chronic Rotarian. He would go when he was out of the country, he'd just go find a rotary meeting. And they have those four questions that are not the same as these at all. But he had it up everywhere. He did everything. So you have five questions, kind of a grid that your kids are saying, Oh yeah, dad always said, are you asking these questions? Walk us through them. What-

Andy:

Yeah. So the five questions that are kind of in five categories. The first one is kind of the self leadership question, which a lot of your viewers or listeners can identify with. The first question is, Why am I doing this?, pause, really? Why am I doing this, really? As everybody listening or watching this. The easiest person in the world to deceive is the person in the mirror. And so the first question is okay. Why am I buying this really?, really. Why am I purchasing? Why am I leasing this, really? Why am I going there, really? Why did I say yes to that, really? Why? In other words, I may not change my mind and I might fool everybody else, but I owe it to myself and you owe it to yourself to at least tell yourself the truth about why you're doing what you're doing.

Andy:

Why am I doing this, pause really? And the really part is the most important part because there's an internal sales person in all of us. You may not be able to sell anything to anybody else, but my goodness, you can sell yourself on one heck of a bad idea. We've all done it. So in the book I say, when you catch yourself selling yourself that's when you need to hit pause, because we rarely have to sell ourselves on a good idea. The moment I start selling myself you hit pause because, you're selling yourself on a bad idea. So this question is kind of the self leadership question. Why am I doing this, really? The second question is one of the questions I've tried to keep in front of my kids at all times. And that's the question, what story do I want to tell?

Andy:

What story do I want to tell? We don't think in terms of story, we think in terms of isolated events, but every decision you make, even minor decisions. Every decision we make becomes a permanent part of the story of our lives. So when we're making a decision, if we can stop and ask the question, okay? When this incident, when this relationship, when this invitation, when this season of my life, is nothing more than a story I'm telling. What story do I want to tell? And you get to decide. We get to decide the story we tell because we decide that we create this story one decision at a time. In the book I talk about a friend of mine who went through a long, protracted, expensive divorce. He's super successful guy here in Atlanta. I've known him since he was in the ninth grade.

Andy:

And I just watched this guy just do amazing things. But at the front end of what was going to be a really difficult divorce. I said to him, I said it's going to be hard to imagine this but one day this whole divorce thing is just a story you tell. And you want to tell a good story. So decide through this season in such a way that you can tell your whole story and be proud of your story. And about every other week I would get a text from him that would just say, I can still tell my whole story. I can still tell my whole story because I told him I said, one day your kids are going to be old enough. They're going to ask different kinds of questions about this. This needs to be a story you're proud to tell. So when we think in terms of story, then really the decisions for making become part of the... they're contextualized properly because again, these are just stories that we tell.

Andy:

The third question is the conscience question. The third question is, Is there a tension that deserves my attention? Is there a tension that deserves my attention? And the point of this question is from time to time all the logic and all the answers and all the... everything lines up perfectly on one side. Everybody else is doing it. Everybody else bought one. Everybody else is moving in that direction. It seems like the thing to do. And as we get closer to the decision or as we get right up to the decision, there's just something on the inside. That's just kind of a hesitation. My dad would call it a red flag moment. We can't explain it. And because we can't explain it, our tendency is just to brush right by it and to push right through it.

Andy:

And this question is the conscience question. Is there a tension? Is there anything in you that's kind of like, I don't know. And again, as soon as you start trying to explain it, it just sounds so silly but it's real. And my encouragement in the book is pay attention, pay attention to that tension because if we pause long enough to kind of sit in the tension, it's amazing what begins to surface in terms of actual reasons why this is a bad idea, but sometimes that just takes a while. So pay attention to that tension. Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

Andy:

The fourth question is one of the other questions. I grew up with my dad and that's this, What is the wise thing to do? Not what is the right thing to do? You can get yourself in a lot of trouble just doing the right thing, because every regret think about this. Every, if you think about your greatest regret, everybody's greatest regret is generally preceded by a series of unwise decisions. Not illegal, not immoral, unwise. Most of our greatest regrets are preceded by a series of unwise decisions. So the question is, what is the wise thing to do? And then we'd split this up into three different perspectives. And a lot of my past experience, what is the wise thing for me to do, in light of my current

circumstances, my current state of mind, what is the wise thing to do? And then this is the big one in light of my future hopes and dreams, financially, professionally, relationally, and a lot of my future hopes and dreams. What is the wise thing for me to do?

Andy:

And then the fifth question is the one of the five where there's no guaranteed return on investment. The other four questions you ask those questions, you will be better off. This question may cost you, it's the relationship question. And the relationship question is, what does love require of me? What does love require of me. As I teach this to my kids and to our church. I always say this when you're not sure what to say or do stop and ask what love requires of you. What does love require of you? This is perhaps the most important question we can ask in any relationship because again, it brings clarity. It brings clarity to our responsibility in the relationship, but unlike the other four questions, this one might cost you, but love generally cost us something.

Andy:

So those are the five questions. And again, the goal is simply to incorporate these into a person's current decision making filter. And again, we all have some sort of filter that we use either consciously or subconsciously.

William:

Wow. Amazing questions, I immediately go to because I don't want to apply them to myself, but what am I going to do with my kids? Oh,

Andy:

Exactly.

William:

So I'm just wondering. I have seven kids now, two of them are over 25, so there's a pretty good chance their frontal cortex is developed, but the others not so much. And I think about that first decision to self... that I am pretty good at sales particularly to myself. And I remember in high school my parents were just like, if you don't get out of bed and you don't get to school then you got to deal with it. And I couldn't quit hitting the snooze button, which might be the first bad decision most people make every day. So I moved my stupid little NFL helmet alarm clock across the bedroom and set the alarm where I had to get out of bed.

Andy:

Exactly me too.

William:

So, okay, well, fast forward to now and my 16 year old son. He didn't have an alarm clock it's Alexa, just wake me up a half an hour. How do you sell that to someone that's younger? What do you tell your kids to try and get them to keep from making the bad decisions, that really are just the small ones that start the day in a wrong way?

Andy:

Well, you touched on it and again good parents know the best thing we can do especially when the stakes are low, is to allow our kids to face the full on consequences of their decision and decisions. And of course the tendency is to bail them out. But... And this is why this is so important because, one of the most important, maybe the most important thing we can teach our kids is how to make decisions. And here's how my dad did this. In fact, the introduction to the book, I tell this story in full. My dad would not make a decision for me. In fact our kind of running conversation was, I'd say. I'd ask him for advice... how to do something or what should I do? And he wouldn't tell me and that he would say this. He'd say well, "what would you do if I weren't here?"

Andy:

And I would say but you are here. He'd say, "well what would you do if I wasn't here to help you". But I am... But you are here to help me. And he just would push back on me. And then his kind of last ditch thing was, "will you pray about it?" And you just do whatever you feel like God would have you do it. And my mom would be like, Oh no, that's just too much freedom. But early on he just put the responsibility of both. And this is so important of both the decision and the outcome of the decision on me and on my sister. He did that so early, but what he did is he basically was teaching us how to make good decisions. And then as we made decisions, he would ask us these questions and he just wouldn't make the decision for us.

Andy:

And again he started when the stakes were low so that if we made a bad decision we were going to recover from it. But parents who don't do that... then off to college or off to wherever they're off to. And now they just aren't equipped to make good decisions. So this is a big deal. In fact, I... you've probably done the same thing when our kids were younger, our kids are all in their twenties. We would pay our kids to read certain books and to listen to certain podcasts or messages. And I... Sandra and I were looking at this manuscript when I was finishing it up, she said "this is one of those books that if somebody gave us, I would pay our kids 20 bucks to read two of these chapters, not even the whole book". So these five questions are so transferable for your kids or your grandkids, certainly for us as adults. But the earlier we can instill this kind of thinking in our kids' hearts, again the better decisions, fewer regrets.

William:

That is really good. I hadn't thought about paying them for books. We've done a reading calendar. We actually have a... So Adrian and I both are firm believers that the frontal cortex doesn't develop till 25, it's biology, right. So we told them, Hey, you want to smoke? No big deal. You want to get a tattoo? We're fine with that. If you'll wait until you're 25 to do it, I'll give you \$2,500. And...

Andy:

That's a good deal.

William:

Well that's... It buys them and out. There get with their friends and they're all smoking like, Hey I got \$2,500. I can't you know I mean. Nobody starts smoking when they're 25.

Andy:

No, that's... that frontal lobe development, it is... Sandra and I looked at each other's multiple times and just said frontal lobe, this is he's going to be fine. She's going to be fine. Yeah, it's a big deal.

William:

It's real. Well, what about the person who... I think it's hilarious Adrian, my wife could probably organize anything on the planet. And so what magazines does she read? Real simple. What is she reading for a book, Atomic Habits. She's the last person on the planet that actually needs to read this thing. She's going to be the first one to read your book. What do you say [inaudible 00:18:19] like look, I've been overweight too long, or I'm in debt and I shouldn't be and I know it. I mean how do you move them from the guilty conscience to the asking these questions in a way that produces a result?

Andy:

Well, one of the things I do with each of these questions, I'm glad you asked that question is I say to the reader look, you don't have to do anything with your answer. In other words, the first question is, why am I doing this really? And I say look, I'm not suggesting you not do it. I'm just suggesting you be honest with yourself. So the pressure is off, okay. The pressure is off, you can go ahead and eat that anywhere. You can go ahead and go anyway, but at least be honest with yourself.

Andy:

But here's what we've discovered is, when a person is honest with themselves, without feeling the pressure of making the right decision, they are more inclined to make the right decision. What is the wise thing to do? Now, that's a terrifying question. Its terrifying because it's so clarifying almost instantaneously. We know this is not the wise thing to do. It may be legal. It may not be immoral. I may... It may not be habit forming, but is it the wise thing to do? And I'm like look, you owe it to yourself. Nobody can read your mind. At least answer the question honestly for yourself.

Andy:

And once we get in the habit of being honest with ourselves, we are going to be more inclined to follow through. Every counselor would tell you if you have counselors in your audience, that you can't make a person do something, you can't preach them into it. You can't talk them into it. They have to decide and a good counselor... What does a good counselor do? They just breadcrumbs questions, question, question, question. And a good counselor is patient enough. It's why I'm not a counselor to lead a person to make their own decision because that's the only decision they're going to keep.

Andy:

So in this book, I'm basically going to give you the questions ahead of time and save you some counseling, because these are the kinds of questions that result in self-discovery. And it's only the decisions we make for ourselves by ourselves that generally we follow through on. And again, I'm a pastor. I get up every week and try to tell people how to live their lives. But I just know from experience we basically have to come to conclusions on our own, and I'm hoping these five questions again, will help some people make better decisions, follow up on the decisions and consequently live with fewer regrets.

William:

I think it they're all five fantastic. I think too my time with a counselor. And I remember he said to me one time. Hey, just answer this for yourself, you don't have to answer me. I don't care what you say, but... being honest with yourself? And I sat there for... I felt like a hundred years, it was probably a minute. And I said John, how often does that actually happen? And trying to answer the question with a question. And he said to me, not often and that was enough. And I was like, Oh.

Andy:

Yeah there it is.

William:

I think if I could have read one of these five questions as a kid, it'd be that first one because [inaudible 00:21:26]

Andy:

Why am I doing this, really? Yeah.

William:

I mean, and am I being honest with me? I mean, I've done 20,000 face to face interviews with pastors and I'm the worst at this, but self awareness and self honesty are like so rare. I mean it's so rare. I wish I could get better at this, but I... You just closed with one little thing. What does love require of us? It sounds like a song at Woodstock or whatever. I mean like Oh, that's easy. It's just love like Oh, love, love, love. But the older I get the more I'm starting to realize, the commandments around love. And what does love require might be more difficult than following the IRS tax code. I mean, might be more difficult than following all the regulations in the old Testament. Is that really an easy question? It sounds like it's actually hard-

Andy:

No, it's a terrifying question because we instinctively intuitively know the answer and it's going to cost us something. I'm glad you asked it the way he did because within the context of my Christianity and even within the context of that chapter in the book, this isn't just any kind of love. This is tied to Jesus' new command where he said, "this is a new command I give you, love one another", to which the disciples were like well, that's not new to which Jesus would have said well, I'm not through. Love one another, the way that I have loved and am about to love you. And he could have gone around the room. Matthew, remember when I met you. Nathaniel remember when I met you and then the next day he would put on a demonstration of love that would take their breath away.

Andy:

So this is not soft. This is not permissive. This is the toughest question of all because it's a requirement. What does love require of me, but in a marriage when both people are asking that question, the question there is nothing you can't overcome. And in a family when a mom and a dad or a parent, either parent set the pace or the tone and for the family, for the kids of what does love require of me again, it's the relationship question. You don't end up with perfect kids, but you end up with kids who want to be with their parents and want to be with each other when all is said and done. So it's a very demanding question, but Jesus said, "no greater love is this than a person would lay down their life for a friend".

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And then he looks at us as his followers and says Oh, by the way, "I want you to love your enemies as well". That's what love requires of you.

Andy:

And of course your listening audience, if the church had gotten that right consistently, we would be in a very different place as a nation. And perhaps even as a world.

William:

Well, if ever there were a year where we needed better decisions and wish we had fewer regrets, I think this might be it. So yeah, I think God put that burden in you for a reason for this very year. So thank you for spending time with us. And if you're listening today, I'm not going to give you \$20 for reading the book. I might do to the kids that maybe yes and certainly the teenagers. But if you want to get the book, then... just pick up our show notes.

William:

If you go to vandercast.com you can find them or you can subscribe. We won't bombard you with a bunch of junk. And you'll also get links to where you can find Andy's teaching and other resources he's put out there and more about North Point and all that God is doing through them. So Andy, thank you again for making time in a very busy season to visit with us. This has been helpful to me, and I'm going to try and go be honest with myself. And I'm also going to try and disconnect Alexa in my kid's room.

Andy:

Good luck with that. Hey William, it's great to see you. Thanks for having me on.

William:

Sure thing.

Speaker 1:

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