

The 7 Decisions

Andy Andrews



Andy Andrews is an internationally known speaker and novelist whose combined works have sold millions of copies worldwide. After suffering tragedies during his childhood, Andrews set out to discover how much power an individual has over his own future. He discovered seven common characteristics in biographies of great men and women, inspiring his bestseller, *The Traveler's Gift: Seven Decisions That Determine Personal Success*. A *New York Times* writer called Andrews one of the most influential people in America. He has spoken at the request of four U.S. presidents and has consulted with military leaders, athletes, and entertainers.

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Thank you very much. Everybody awake? Everybody good? Man, I loved hearing Bruce. Where is he? You were great. You were really great. I was watching backstage, and I was waiting to come and say hi to you, but you came out front, and I said, "Oh, my gosh." Anyway, I'm very glad to be here. Let me tell you before we get started that I don't know what you expect, but this won't be it. We are really going to have a good time. I'm so excited to be here with you. I was so excited to be asked to do this. I should probably tell you a little bit about myself before we get started because this is truly going to be different. I'm not nearly as smooth as Bruce. I was back there watching, and I was just in awe.

I don't really do a speech or a presentation or even a show. I used to, but it just makes everybody nervous because when you do a speech, you have to be interesting. As an audience you would be obligated to act interested, so it's much easier just to pretend we're in a big living room and having a conversation. So that's what we'll do. We'll pretend we're in a big living room and having a conversation. And I'll go first.

The other thing is—and I should tell you this before we get started—I don't really spend a whole lot of time on the stage because it makes me nervous. I am not a motivational speaker. This is something you should know before we get going. I'll tell you how this started, but I'm not a motivational speaker. I'm not even sure I like them myself. The subtitle of my book *The Traveler's Gift*, which was *Good Morning America's* book of the month, is "Seven Decisions that Determine Personal Success." And so when the word "success" became associated with my name, everywhere I went people introduced me by saying, "Please welcome motivational speaker . . .", and it terrified me because I'm not one. I have come to feel that if what you want is for somebody to tell you to have a good attitude, I'm probably not your guy because I feel like your mother should have told you that.

Why do we come all the way here to listen to somebody tell us to have a good attitude again? I'm more into proof than I am into encouragement. I think encouragement is

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good. I just think proof is better. I think that when you prove something to somebody, then the guy doesn't have to be in the room. Does that make sense? So when you encourage somebody, that's very good, but what we're going to do is prove some things today that I think you'll get a big kick out of.

This is very nice. I've just got to tell you, this looks like Martha Stewart did it. She didn't, but she could have because she's "out" and shouldn't have been "in" is my theory. My wife says I shouldn't say anything about that because she says, "You know, people feel differently about it." But I don't think she should have been "in." I mean, Michael Jackson is still roaming around.* It took us 13 years to get O.J., and then here's Martha Stewart, the last woman in America who is evidently still willing to cook and clean, and they threw her in jail. But this is beautiful.

Before we get started I should probably tell you a little bit about myself. I don't know if you know anything about me at all. I have always wanted to do this—to speak. Most little boys want to be a cowboy or a fireman, but I wanted to be a speaker. Isn't that odd? My parents told me that one day I'd speak in front of thousands of people. My friends at school said that one day I'd be on TV. So isn't it weird that I would have done that? I knew what to say was important. I always wanted to be a speaker, but I just didn't have anything to say and that will kill a speaking career. I knew that what we say is important and also what we hear is obviously important.

The gifted children are proof that it's important what we say, because what they hear, they do. You know what I'm talking about—the gifted children? The honors English and advanced math and college preparatory kids? These kids are everywhere. It's not new—it has been going on for a long time. Most cities now have entire schools for gifted children. This is not new.

Of course, I always wonder, How have we turned generations of gifted kids into us? With all the gifted children, where are all the gifted adults? But I know how

we've done it—we team up on kids. When I meet your kids, I tell your kids what you expect me to say. And when you meet my little boys (I have a seven-year-old and a nine-year-old), I know you'll say the right things. Because we tell kids the same things.

We say, "You can do anything you want. You can be whatever you want to be. In this world today it doesn't matter where you start; whatever you can conceive, you can achieve." That's what we tell kids. And then somewhere around age 24 or 35, we start telling them, "Don't get your hopes up. You need to be more realistic with your goals." What is that? It's that I always want to tell people good things, but I just didn't know where to get started with it.

Here's the thing—I need to tell you what we're going to do today. We're going to figure out a way to double your income this year. We're going to figure out a way to solve our country's problems, and we're going to send you out of here happier and more excited and more confident than you've been in the past 20 years, and we're going to do it in 33 minutes and 48 seconds. Is that okay?

First, you need to know where I'm coming from. Do you know the old saying about being careful what you ask for? Sometimes the answers you get are not what you expect. This was my life. I wanted to be a speaker, but I didn't know how to be a speaker.

Let me tell you this, too. It's funny to me to see some of the honchos down here in the front. They're looking at each other thinking, What educational background does this guy have? I know that I'm scattered. I know that I am. You don't have to tell me. My wife tells me, "If you were six or seven years old today, they'd be giving you some kind of medicine." And I know that.

But it's funny to me to watch the honchos over there kind of get nervous because I know that I don't have much real education. I actually went to school to be a veterinarian. Seriously, I wanted to be a veterinarian. Actually, I wanted to be a veterinarian and a taxidermist so that I could say, "Either way, you're getting the dog back." I remember the day that I left school, and it was very odd.

*This speech was given before the death of Michael Jackson.

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Here's what really happened. My parents died when I was 19. My mom died of cancer, and my dad was killed in a car accident. It was a crazy time in my life, but I've always had the ability to take a bad situation and make it worse. And I did, boy. I made some bad choices and ended up literally homeless before that was even a word.

You know what I'm saying? Thirty years ago nobody was talking about homeless people, and it wasn't even a term, but I slept under a pier on the Gulf Coast and was in and out of people's garages, which was not safe or smart, but I did it.

My big question when I was under that pier was, Is life just a lottery ticket? Does this guy just get happiness and a family and that guy ends up under a pier? Because at my worse times, I really did feel that if life is a lottery ticket, and if this is my ticket, then I may quit. But then I began to read.

I met an old guy late one night under my pier. We called him Jones. Not Mr. Jones, but Jones. He carried a suitcase; we never knew what was in it. But he was the first guy ever to tell me the truth about myself. When we meet people in bad situations, sometimes we give them a ten dollar bill or we bake cookies for them or we put them on the prayer list, but very rarely do we sit down and talk to them about something that might make them angry at us. But he did. He had enough guts to tell me the truth. He stuck around in my life for several months and was the guy who got me to start reading. He gave me three biographies, and he said, "Hey, they're from the library. When you get through with them take them back." I never will forget that he had me read Will Rogers, Winston Churchill, and George Washington Carver. I took the books back to the library, and I found a whole series of biographies. Over the next several years I ended up reading more than 200 biographies of happy, influential, financially secure, great people. I read books about great people. When I say that, it makes me think, Do they do books of any other kind of people? There's not a loser section at Barnes & Noble, is there?

When I read those books, I tried to think what it was about these people and how they turned out like that. Is it something they did, or were they born that way? Because if it's something they did, what did they do? And how long did it take them to do it? I identified seven things. It's very curious to me. It seemed very obvious that there were seven things, but I wasn't sure that these people knew they had all seven. Does that make sense? Then I remembered thinking, What happens to a life that knows all seven?

So I started taking those seven things and throwing them in my life, yanking myself out of certain situations. Years later they became the seven decisions in *The Traveler's Gift*. I don't know how many of you have read *The Traveler's Gift*. I don't know how many of you have seen me. How many of you have seen me before? Or this is your first time? One or the other, I know.

The Traveler's Gift is a story. All my books are stories. They make the smart authors write the nonfiction books. People like me have to write stories. So *The Traveler's Gift* is a story about a family going through a tough time. The dad travels through time meeting with seven historical figures who are also going through a tough time in their own life. He gets to sit down with Harry Truman while Truman is determining how to end the war. He gets to be with Anne Frank in the annex and talk with her and question her. And he gets to be with Columbus as he's crossing the ocean, and King Solomon right after he says, "Bring me the sword and I'll tell you whose baby this is." And each of these seven historical figures gives this man a different decision to put in his life so that things will change.

These are the seven decisions, and we're going to row through them quickly because one of them will allow you to double your income this year. I'll tell you when we get there, but we'll row through the rest real quick because we don't have much time.

The first one is first, by the way, because it's first. A lot of people ask me, "Why did you line them up like that?" Well, this one's first because if the others don't come after it, they don't really make sense. The first one is the greatest fight you'll hear on talk radio. I mean, they're fighting

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about this one all the time. It's responsibility. There are two distinct sides on the fight about responsibility. You've got one side saying, "Until these people accept responsibility for where they are, they will never be able to accomplish anything." And you've got the other side saying, "But it's not their fault. Don't you understand the circumstances of their lives?" Two distinct sides—right?

Here's the crazy thing. Neither side understands responsibility, because responsibility doesn't have anything to do with blaming people or feeling bad or making people feel bad. Responsibility has to do with hope and control. Who among us doesn't want to have hope for a better future that we can control? If we had a society of people that understood responsibility, we would be so much happier and so much more productive in every way. See, if you're blaming your momma or your daddy or the president or your neighbor or your husband or your wife, how much power is that, really? You know what I'm saying?

If my life is in the tank financially and emotionally, and my relationships are in the worst place, and it really is the fault of the president of the United States, I might as well jump off a cliff now. Right? Because what the heck are we going to do about the president, whoever the president happens to be? But if somehow I could look in the mirror and I could say, "You know what? I've had some crazy things happen in my life. I've had some tragedies happen, and I couldn't control any of them. But the responses and choices I have made in response to those crazy things have led me right down a path to a place I don't like."

If you can understand and believe that you can make choices that will lead you to a place you don't like, that's great news. Isn't it awesome, because doesn't it make logical sense that if you could make choices that will lead you to a place you don't like, you could also make choices that will lead you to a place you do like? That's the game—it's making better choices, right? And that's what the other six decisions are about.

The second decision is seeking wisdom as an adult. This is part of what you're doing here. I'm so excited to be here and be with you specifically. I believe that you

people are the backbone of the competence of this world at this point. It's so neat to see you seeking to become more competent. But we as adults need to be purposeful. There's not a parent in here who isn't desperately concerned about the kids their kids hang out with, right? Why? Because you know they're going to turn out just like them. At what age does that cease to be a factor in our life? Twenty-four? Thirty-five? Fifty-two? You know the answer. We walk, we talk, we eat, we vote, we laugh just like the people we hang with. And I'm not saying to dump your friends, but I am saying we should at least be as concerned about the people we hang out with as we demand our children to be.

Here's the other part of it. The other part of seeking wisdom is to be purposeful in your reading and to be purposeful in what you're listening to. This is very important. And listen—a little caveat here—you know I'm an author, you know I'm a speaker, and you know I'm bound to have tons of stuff. And I do. But I'm not saying you have to listen to my stuff. I am saying you need to listen to something. You don't have to read my books, but you have to read somebody's books. Find somebody that doesn't bore you to tears and get purposeful about what you do.

People say, "Well, I kind of get that in the atmosphere." Well, oh no, you don't. What you get in the atmosphere is what's in the atmosphere. It's true; it's true. It's amazing to me to hear people say, "Well, I haven't got time." Because people think they have to control their lives and sit down and clear the house and get a pad and pencil and put a CD in and watch it going around and concentrate while they take notes. You don't have to do that. Just play it as background, and you'll get it. And you know you'll get it. We could spend all day talking about the things that we learned that we didn't intend to learn.

Two all-beef patties. That commercial hasn't been on in 25 years. How do we know it? There's not a person in here who if he had to couldn't struggle through the *Gilligan's Island* theme. Why did we learn this?

Everything we knew when we were kids, now our kids are getting. The other day my little boy asked me, "Dad, have you ever heard of anybody called Underdog?" And I

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said, “Underdog? You mean when criminals in this world appear and do the things we all should fear, there’s no need to worry here, the cry goes out both far and near for Underdog! Underdog! Underdog! Underdog! Speed of lightening, roar of thunder, fighting for the one who’s under. Underdog! Underdog! Yeah, I’ve heard of him.”

And I’m thinking, Where did that come from? It is purposeful to read what you know you should read and stick with it and listen to what you know you should.

Now, number three. This is probably the most important of all of them, so let’s save it to the end.

Number four is to have a decided heart. This decision is represented by Columbus in the book. You know what an undecided heart is? People who have a decision to make but they’ll think about it and they’ll talk about it. They’ll talk to their friends about it. Then they’ll make the decision, and then they’ll talk to their friends about whether they should have made that decision. Then they’ll talk to their family about what their friends said. Then they’ll take it back. Then they’ll talk to people about whether they should have taken it back, and life is this ongoing state of analysis. This one is pretty simple.

The purpose of analysis is to come to a conclusion. That’s the purpose of it. The purpose of analysis is not to continue to analyze. This is the leadership principle, by the way. And I have people say sometimes, “Well, you know, I’m not in a leadership position.” Oh, yeah. Listen, baby, if you’re a momma or a daddy or a friend to somebody or you’re in sales, you had better figure this out pretty quickly because we are all leading somebody to something or leading them to nothing.

Your clients want people who know where they’re going. They want to follow leaders who know where they’re going. People buy from people who know where they’re going. Kids want parents who know where they’re going. This is leadership. I’ve got a friend who’s the leadership guru of the world. I tease him sometimes because he really is. He’s written more books and more seminars on leadership. I tease him by saying, “You know, a lot of people are going to be upset with you when they finally figure out

that leadership has to do with stating an opinion, sticking to it, and moving on. And he says, “Oh no, there’s more to it than that.” And I know there’s more to it than that.

But a lot of leadership really does have to do with setting yourself on fire and running down the street, because people will follow you just to watch you burn. People want people who know where they’re going. I will have a decided heart.

Number five is a decision that will help you double your income. It will allow you to double whatever you’re doing. And I’m not just throwing that out there. I work mostly with corporations. That’s what I do. I work with government entities—some of the alphabet people sometimes—and I work with some NFL teams and Major League baseball teams, but mostly I work with corporations. I don’t even know what they do. I mean, I don’t know what you do, really. You know what I’m saying? I kind of know what you do, but I don’t know your numbers and I don’t know your daily routine. I’m telling you this because I don’t want you to think I’m up here acting like some big dog and saying, “Oh, let me tell you how to be successful.” You already are.

I’m just saying that I am a noticer. I’m a second generation noticer. That’s what that old man under the pier used to tell me. He said, “Son, when God was passing out talents, I didn’t get the cool ones. I can’t swim fast; I can’t sing great. I notice little things that make a big difference in people’s lives.” That’s what he would tell me. He said that people need perspective. In times of trouble, people need perspective more than answers because perspective brings calm. Calm brings clear thinking. Clear thinking yields ideas and from ideas you get answers.

If there’s one thing that I’m proud of and what we laughingly refer to as my career, it is that when I work with corporations, they see huge increases. The best ever done was 400 percent. That was two years ago with a national real estate chain, and it was during the housing downturn, and its business increased 400 percent. And I don’t even know anything about real estate.

It’s just little bitty things, and I’m going to tell you this one was huge. Are you ready for it? Number five is this:

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Today I will choose to be happy. Here is the best way I can explain this. How many of you have friends or people in your life who you don't dare ask how they're doing? You don't dare say, "How are you doing?" because if you ask them, they're going to tell you and you're going to have to sit there and listen to it and it's going to be brutal, isn't it?

Well, you know how our lives have been. It just seems like every time we think things are going to get better, the dump truck backs up in our yard and dumps all over us again. It seems like our lives are just getting worse and worse.

You know those moaney, groaney, whiney, complaining people who feel like their life is getting worse and worse? I want to tell you something. This'll blow your mind. Their lives really are getting worse and worse. But I'm not telling you their lives are getting worse and worse in a motivational speaker kind of way. I'm telling you their lives are getting worse and worse measurably. With their finances, with their relationships, in every part of their life, their lives are measurably getting worse and worse. And here's why.

You would agree with me, wouldn't you, that our opportunities, our encouragement, our yeses come from people? Even if you believe as I believe that God can put people in our path at certain times, it's people who deliver the yes or the no. It's people who decide to work with us or not. It's people who decide to share an opportunity or not, right? It's people.

Would it make sense to you if, over a period of time, a person who received less encouragement, more noes, and fewer opportunities would have a life that got worse and worse? Well, that's exactly what's happening to those moaney, groaney, whiney, complaining people. They're getting fewer opportunities, they're getting more noes, and they're getting less encouragement. You know why, don't you? It's because nobody wants to be around them. That's it. I hate to be blunt, but nobody wants to be around them.

Think about this. How do you treat them? Do you want to be around them? Do you say, "Great, let's spend the week together. I can't wait to get my family around

you." No, no, what we say is, "Oh, so sorry to hear that. We did not know. We'll be thinking about you."

If you're Baptist, you put them on the prayer list, but do you hang out with them? No, you don't hang out with them. Why? Because they're a drag. You think, Oh my God, could I be around someone more depressing? No, you don't hang out with them and neither does anybody else. They are people who are drifting around. I mean, people tell them "no" just to get away from them. "No, I'm so sorry, we're busy that night." "No, I'm so sorry we've already filled that position." "No, I'm so sorry I'm washing my dog." Whatever, just no, please leave.

Now the opposite is true, too. For some people it seems as though everything they do works. It seems like everything they go after happens. They've got life on a roll. There are people like that. I want to tell you something about them. They're getting more opportunities; they're getting more yeses; they're getting more encouragement for a very simple reason. There are more people around them. And when there are more people around them, when there are opportunities to be shared and yeses to be given, they're getting them. Why are there more people around them? Because they have become people that other people want to be around. This is huge.

Here's the nuclear option. Are you ready for this? Even if I had only 30 seconds, I could have delivered this to you and changed everything for you. Grab hold of this. I have two little boys, a seven-year-old and a nine-year-old. This is by far the most important thing I want them to learn, other than a relationship with God. I want them to have this skill before I leave this Earth. It's more important than a college degree, and it's more important than getting A's. And this is the key to your doing whatever you can. You're already hugely successful. You can walk out of here and train your people, and you can walk out of here and train yourself to do this, and you will not believe the results.

Are you ready for this? Smile while you talk. I didn't say smile a lot. I don't greet each day with a big old cheesy grin. What I said was to smile while you talk.

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It's a lot more subtle, but hugely more powerful. Most people don't do it. Most people have two looks on their face, and that's what they use most of the time. Very few people smile while they talk.

But it is an amazing thing that even when people are telling jokes, they don't smile while they talk. They don't smile until the punch line. When everybody else smiles and then when everybody is through laughing and smiling, they're through, too.

Very few people smile while they talk, but you can take 90 seconds a day for the next three weeks and change everything. You can walk out of here today and change everything. I'm assuming you're by yourself nine times a day. Use ten seconds of that time, nine times a day, in the bathroom by yourself, and talk to yourself in the mirror. I want you to see how you look. I'm not telling you to start channeling Bozo the Clown. I'm not telling you to stretch your lips over your ears. What I'm telling you to do is something that's hugely more powerful and yet subtle. I'm saying to get your countenance up. Get your eyebrows up. Get the corners of your mouth up and smile while you talk. It is unbelievable that when you smile while you talk, how many people can't help smiling, too. They can't help it. If you start smiling while you're talking, even people that are trying their best not to smile can't help it. They can't help but smile.

Then you get good at it. You get good at smiling while you're talking. You start throwing in that nod. I mean, look at him, he's nodding. He doesn't know why he's nodding, but he's nodding. When people are nodding and smiling at you, they can't say no to anything. They'd like to, but they can't get their head to work that way.

Today I will choose to be happy.

Number six is that I will greet each day with a forgiving spirit. I used to think forgiveness was like knighthood and something that I would bestow on somebody who deserved it or begged for it. Thirty years of research later, I can't find one expert or one book to tell me that in order for one person to forgive another person, that person has to ask for it, deserve it, or even know that it's happening.

Everything I find tells me that forgiveness is something that we choose. It's a decision, not an emotion. We treat it like an emotion and that's why it drags on our life like a dog on a leash. When we make a decision, our emotions follow our decisions.

Make a decision to forgive whether they deserve it, whether they ask for it, whether they even know about it because we're talking about you. You're the one lying awake at night. Those bozos didn't even know you were bent out of shape. All it takes is a decision.

Let me just clarify something, too, because people will say, "Oh what, so they're just going to get away with it?" No. I'm talking about us. What do we determine in our lives? Okay, I'm not talking about trust, and I'm not talking about them. Forgiveness is about us. Trust is about them. Forgiveness is about letting go of the past. Trust is about the future. Do we forgive somebody who lies to us? Sure. Do we continue to believe everything they say? No.

Do you continue to work with people who steal from you? No. But do you forgive them? Sure. Forgiveness is huge, even when we forgive ourselves.

Number seven is this: I will persist without exception. I heard Bruce say that persisting without exception is huge. Most people have heard their mommas and their daddies and their coaches and their teachers telling them to persist. Very few of us have ever heard that we should persist without exception. When you persist without exception, miracles occur. When you persist without exception, you are allowed to find a way where there is no way.

There's a lot to this. We could talk for a couple of hours, but what is finding a way where there is no way? I'll tell you what it's *not*. It's not money, it's not time, and it's not leadership. Anytime you're in a bad place, you are never lacking money, you are not lacking time, and you are not lacking leadership. You are lacking only an idea. That's what it is, one idea—one idea and the ability to get up and move.

I told you we would solve our country's problems. It occurred to me the other day what old man Jones told me years ago. When I do FOX News and CNN, they

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keep asking me questions because I lived under a pier and there are tent cities springing up all over America. They ask, “What would you tell somebody? What would you tell somebody to do?” And for a while I thought that they needed to read books and to make a list. Then I realized something when I was under the pier and in a position where I didn’t know what to do. Do you know what I did? Do you know what people do when they don’t know what to do? Nothing. That’s what they do. Even if they’re working, when they get through with their work and they don’t know what to do, what they generally do is nothing.

People who are about to be in trouble, people who are in trouble, and people who are past trouble do nothing when they don’t know what to do. The old man told me one day something that I think will solve our country’s challenges, because I really believe that right now we are more divided than we have ever been in the history of this country. We are divided racially and financially. We are divided politically. We’re divided spiritually, and we’re divided culturally. It’s unbelievable. And we have gotten to a point where we do not see the value in each other anymore.

What have we done to little kids? When we ask a little boy, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and he answers, “I want to be a doctor,” we say, “That is wonderful. What a wonderful thing to be. You are so smart.” But what if he says, “I want to hang on the back of trucks with one hand and ride down the street with the wind in my hair and throw garbage in the trucks,” and we say, “You know, I think you probably want to be a doctor. You don’t need to be a garbage man. Why are you thinking of being a garbage man? If you don’t straighten up, you’ll be a garbage man. If you don’t start studying and you don’t act right, you’ll be a garbage man.” When did we decide that when God put it in somebody’s heart to fix cars for a living, that decision is less worthy? I mean, don’t we need people to fix cars? I can’t fix them. When did we decide that it was not as great to be a teacher as it was to be a doctor? I mean, we need garbage people. You think you don’t need garbage people? Let them stop

coming by your house for a couple of months. You know what I’m saying?

But here is the answer. Here is what that old man told me. I said, “Jones, I don’t know what to do.” He said, “I know you don’t know what to do, so here’s what you do. When you don’t know what to do, you do something.” *Something*. He said, “Son, you’ve sat here for so long that you’ve begun to doubt your very value.” He said, “You have huge value. What can you do; what value do you have? Can you read? Get out and read to somebody who can’t read. Can you carry things? There are people who can’t carry things anymore. Go carry them.” He said, “Son, can you pull weeds? Go pull weeds.” He said, “I’m not saying to find somebody and say, ‘If I pull your weeds will you give me \$10?’ I’m saying to find weeds that need pulling and pull them.” He said, “What you’ll begin to do is establish a value in your life that you forgot you had. And other people will see that you’re doing something. They will attach a value to you that they don’t attach to the people who do nothing.” Then he said, “When people are doing something, people look at them as people of value. People of value are the ones who get the job opportunities. People of value are the ones who get the offers and the yeses.” People of value. All it takes to become a person of value and to value each other is for all of us to stand up and do something.

Now here is number three. Did you know that everything you do matters? I know we know that to have something happen you’ve got to do something. But did you know that everything you do matters?

Have you heard of the butterfly effect? The butterfly effect was a doctoral thesis written in 1963. It was presented by the New York Academy of Sciences by Edward Lorenz, and it was laughed out of the place. People thought it was crazy. The butterfly effect stated that a butterfly would flap its wings on one side of the world and set molecules of air in motion that moved other molecules of air that then moved other molecules of air that eventually would create a hurricane on the other side of the planet. The butterfly effect—it was ridiculous, but it was interesting.

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Because it was so interesting, it hung around forever in myth and urban legend until finally physics professors proved the butterfly effect was accurate and viable and it worked every time. And not just with butterflies either. It worked with any form of moving matter, including people.

They gave it the status of a law. They call it the law of sensitive dependence upon initial conditions. And you are an example of the butterfly effect. Everything you do matters.

I was watching TV a couple of years ago and saw on ABC that they were doing this “Person of the Week” thing. The announcer said that the person of Week Four was Norman Borlaug. I was ironing, and I put the iron down and ran in front of the TV. Norman Borlaug. I didn’t even know who the dude was three years ago. Then I wrote a book and did some research. I knew who Norman Borlaug was, but I didn’t know he was still alive. Ninety-four—he’s still alive. He hybridized corn and wheat for arid climates, and it was determined that his work, which spread across the world, had saved the lives of over 2 billion people from famine. The guy saved 2 billion lives, and for that he was Person of the Week.

It’s kind of aggravating to me, though, because I knew it wasn’t Norman Borlaug that saved those lives, but Henry Wallace.

Henry Wallace was the vice president of the United States under Roosevelt. He had been the former secretary of agriculture. Roosevelt had three vice presidents. (Remember that he served four terms.) Wallace was the middle one. While he was the vice president of the United States, he used the power of that office to create a station in Mexico whose sole purpose was to hybridize corn and wheat for arid climates. He hired a young man named Norman Borlaug to run it. So when you think about it, it probably was Henry Wallace who really saved the 2 billion people, wasn’t it? Unless maybe it was George Washington Carver.

You remember Carver, don’t you? The peanut thing? See, what people don’t know about Carver is that when he was 19 years old and a student at Iowa State University, he had a dairy sciences professor who on Saturday and

Sunday afternoons would allow his little boy to go on botanical expeditions with this brilliant student. And it was George Washington Carver who took that little six-year-old Henry Wallace, long before Wallace ever thought about being vice president of the United States, and put a vision in his life about plants and what they could do for humanity. It is amazing to think of George Washington Carver “flapping his wings”—his butterfly wings—while nobody was looking with a six-year-old boy, which just happened to save the lives of 2 billion people.

So then I’m thinking Carver, Person of the Week—unless it was the farmer from Diamond, Missouri.

A man named Moses had a wife named Susan. They lived in a slave state, but they didn’t believe in slavery. When George Washington Carver was a baby boy and stolen with his mother, and then his mother was killed, this man Moses traded the last horse he had on his farm with Quantrill’s Raiders to get that little baby back. He gave him his name, and that is how Moses and Susan Carver came to raise that little baby, George Washington. So when you think about it, maybe it was the farmer from Diamond, Missouri, who saved the 2 billion people.

How far back could we go? How far back could we go to show what move or what time really saved 2 billion lives, and how far could we go in your life to show the difference you will make with the clients you will touch? When you sit down with somebody, is your brain screaming, “They can’t afford this,” but your heart knows you had better get them to buy it for their own good? How many lives will you touch? How far will you go?

One thing I want to tell you before I’m through. I’m not just popping in here to tell you that I hope you have a great year. In fact, don’t think that I hope you do great things with your lives. I don’t know if we’ll ever see each other again, but I hope we do. Keep up with me—I’m Andy Andrews. I have a book out on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List now. It’s called *The Noticer*, and it’s about that old man. But I don’t know if we’ll ever see each other again. I hope we do, but don’t think I hope you do great things with your lives. I tell you that because of my little

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boys, Austin and Adam. I love those little boys. I put them to bed the same way every night. Adam counts the stars. And then I put Austin in bed, and then I have them both there together. I go to them in the dark, and I put my hand on their chest and say, "Before you go to sleep, it's time to check your heart." Then I say, "Did you have a good day?" and they say, "Yes, we did." I say, "Do you know how much daddy loves you?" and they say, "Yes." I say, "You know how much God loves you?" "Yes, sir." "Is there anything you've done today you need to ask forgiveness for?" They say, "I don't know." I say, "Anybody you need to forgive before you go to sleep? Are you proud of yourself, proud of how you've acted, and how you've treated people? Do you know how proud of you your daddy is? Are we going to have a great day tomorrow? Are you going to smile while you talk?" They say, "We are." I say, "Go to sleep because you've got great hearts."

I would never, ever tell you that I hope you do great things with your lives because I'm expecting it. Because everything you do matters. Every move you make, every action you take matters not just for you or your company or your hometown. Everything you do matters to me in Orange Beach, Alabama. Every move you make is shaping the world that my little boys have to grow up in. We are in this together, and we might as well hold each other accountable because we're going to make a difference.

But then the question that still hangs out there is, What kind of difference are we going to make? And isn't it awesome that we have the answer in our hands? We're going to make a great one. So let's go after it. Thank you, guys, very much.