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Week 16: Rescue Life: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Andy Stanley

SHEILA: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm here with Randy Robison. And we have a great guest today; someone that I've known for many, many years. He's written this great new book. It's called *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*. All I want to say, Andy Stanley, is why did you not write this for me about 30 years ago?

ANDY: It's so funny you say that Sheila and you're going to think I'm making this up. My dad, who of course, is 88, when I gave him the book because the book opens with a story about him; I wanted him to read that story. I went over the next day or two and he said, "I read the whole book twice." I'm like, "What?" And he said, "I wish somebody had given me this book when I was in my 20s." I said, "Well, I learned most of it from you so I think we're in good shape."

SHEILA: There is such a powerful lesson here about asking the right questions and knowing the right questions to ask. And you've combined in this little book, I mean it really is, it is kind of life-changing. And it gives you the permission to actually pause and ask questions as opposed to running ahead which I think we do a lot of the time. Was that one of the motivations behind writing this?

ANDY: One of the things that again, my dad taught me early on was the power of questions when it came to making decisions. As I shared the opening of the book, one of the things that he did when I was young, he would ask me questions. I would ask him for help, he would ask me questions. I would ask him how to do something, he would ask me questions. What that did for me is it connected the dots between the power of questions and making good decisions.

And everybody in the audience can think back to a time where they made a bad decision and after they made a bad decision, they said to themselves, "I should have asked more questions." And the point of the book is they may should have asked better questions. So I'm presenting five questions that I promise if you ask these questions, you'll make better decisions, you'll live with fewer regrets.

SHEILA: Absolutely.

RANDY: I was actually going to read that right out of your introduction because to me, that is the powerful thing people need to understand. Two things: Better decisions lead to fewer regrets, and I know as a pastor you hear regrets from people all the time. But the good questions lead to better decisions.

Before we get to the good questions and we will get to them, is this something that you've seen a lot of people coming to you and saying, "I'm overwhelmed with this regret?"

ANDY: Yeah! And to your point, you're a preacher's kid, we grow up hearing the stories and we grow up creating our own stories. One of the things that breaks my heart, in fact, probably the thing that drives me more than anything in ministry is watching people make decisions that undermine their own future, undermine their own future hopes and dreams, undermine their own relationships. Couples who make relationship decisions that undermine their own relationship. Parenting decisions that undermine their relationship with their kids.

So there is enough headwind in life. Life is difficult enough on our hopes and dreams. The last thing we want to do is contribute to the undermining of our own dreams with bad decisions. And so I'm just confident these five questions will help us move forward in the direction we want to move and hopefully live with fewer regrets.

SHEILA: Let's get to the first question and that's the integrity question. Why do you

think it is hard for a lot of us to be honest with ourselves?

ANDY: Yeah, the integrity question is am I being honest with myself? And then you have to pause and say really? Am I being honest with myself really?

We all have an internal sales person in our heads; right? Mine, his voice sounds a lot like my voice, and we have the potential to convince ourselves of just about anything. In fact, here's the bad news, we were there for all of our bad decisions. There is really nobody else to blame but the person in the mirror. So whenever we're making a decision and we catch ourselves selling ourselves on something we should hit pause because we rarely have to sell ourselves on a good idea.

So the integrity question is okay, I know what I want to do, I know what everybody expects me to do but am I being honest with myself really? Why am I purchasing this really? Why am I leasing this really? Why am I going over there really? Why did I call her back really? Why am I moving out really? Why am I moving in really? Just be honest with yourself because the most difficult person to lead is always the person in the mirror.

SHEILA: Wow!

RANDY: That's good. The second question is probably not one I would have come up with on my own, so I think it is interesting. It is what you call "the legacy question." What story do I want to tell? Explain how that is critical to decision making.

ANDY: In terms of raising my children I think this was my favorite question to talk about with them. In the middle of making a decision we are so focused on the here-and-now we forget that every decision we make, every decision we make is eventually just a story that we tell.

If I were to ask one of you or you were to ask me about high school, think about four years we summarized, we summarize high school in one sentence now. Right? High

school is just a story we tell. Every season of life, every decision, it's a story that we tell.

So the question, the reason this is a powerful question is this. When this decision is nothing more than a story I tell, I'm going through a divorce, I just lost my job, I'm thinking about moving, I'm making a big decision with one of my kids, I'm considering a response in light of something one of my children or grandchildren did when this is nothing more than a story you tell, what story do you want to tell?

And the thing is this, we all want to be able to tell our whole story and we want our entire story to be able to be told without us being tempted to skip any parts or to lie about any parts. So again, this is the legacy question. I know it is a big deal right now, I know it seems like it is your whole world but one day, believe it or not, this season is just going to be a story you tell. What story do you want to tell? And when we pause and ask that question, it gives us the opportunity to be the hero in our story rather than the villain in our story. So what story do you want to tell?

SHEILA: One of the five questions honestly that really resonated most with me is the conscience question. I can think of a couple of times in my life where I have simply ignored red flags. And part of it was out of a desire not to ruffle anybody's feathers, to please people. I think this is a huge, huge thing that will resonate with our audience. Will you speak to that?

ANDY: Yeah, the conscience question is this: Is there a tension that deserves my attention? Is there a tension, is there an internal tension, a red flag, as my dad used to call it, "a check in his spirit." When I was a kid this drove me crazy. I would say, Dad, I want to do this or that. He would say, "Well, I kind of have a check in my spirit." I'm like, "Well, what even is that? Give me some reasons. Let's have a good argument." He would be like, "No, I just have a check in my spirit."

And so oftentimes, that internal hesitation is the Holy Spirit nudging us in a direction without any information, and so consequently it is just easy just to brush by that or rush

by that. So in the book I say you know what? If there is a tension pay attention to that tension whether it makes any sense or not because oftentimes, if we pause and allow it to kind of settle in, more information surfaces, new information surfaces, somebody comes along and gives us information we didn't have. But do not rush by, do not brush by that tension, pay attention to that tension. So the third question is: Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

RANDY: I think we're going to do it, we're going to get to all five questions in this program which is great. In your book, the *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*, your five questions, one of them I think people would sort of expect but we don't always do because we tend to ask, is it okay for me to do that? Yeah, it's okay. Or maybe we go, "Is that a good thing to do? Yeah, I can justify that being a good thing to do." But you say in your fourth question: Is that the wise thing to do? Explain why that wisdom is critical.

ANDY: Yeah, this was a question my dad raised me on. Because again, our tendency is to think in binaries of its either right or wrong, it's good or bad, it's moral, it's immoral, and it's ethical, it's unethical. But as Christians we have been called to live by a different standard and the standard is wisdom. The Apostle Paul said be very careful how you live not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity, or literally, redeeming the time.

So this is the maturity question. And the maturity question goes like this if I can tease it out: In light of my past experience, in light of my current circumstances, in light of my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for me to do? Maybe not the wise thing for everybody else to do, but in light of my past experience, in light of my current circumstances, in light of my future hopes and dreams, not the right thing, wrong thing, ethical, unethical, moral immoral, what is the wise thing for me to do?

And here's why this is so important. Everybody in your audience, and the three of us included, if we think back to our greatest regret whether it was a single decision or a season in our life, our greatest regrets and by greatest regrets I mean we did something

bad, somebody wrong, something immoral, something unethical, our greatest regrets were preceded by a series of unwise decisions. The unwise decisions bring us to the threshold of regret.

So we're either going to live on the edge of disaster or regret or we're going to walk wisely. And by walking wisely we stay away from the edge. And so the question is what is the wise thing, maybe not for everybody else to do, but in light of my future hopes and dreams, how I want my marriage to go, how I want my relationships to go, how I want my finances to go, what is the wise thing for me to do?

And I call this the maturity question because it takes a lot of maturity to ask this question. Here's why. Because we already know the answer to the question before we ask it. Before you can finish asking yourself: what is the wise thing for me to do, we already know. It is so clarifying that at times it is terrifying, and I think sometimes that's why we avoid it.

SHEILA: I actually want to skip back to the legacy question because you tell a story in the book about a friend of yours going through a very painful divorce. I think, it relates to that but so many other circumstances where we are tempted to defend ourselves, to speak up. Would you talk a little to that about the decisions we make today in a situation that might be really difficult impact the legacy we're leaving for our children?

ANDY: I'm glad you brought that up, Sheila. I didn't want to spend too much time on each one of these but yeah, this is an absolute true story and of course, it's been replicated many, many times in the lives of people we know, people we love. But it was a dear friend of mine. He's going through a very, very complicated expensive divorce.

Without going into all the details we met one night. He just wept. I've known this man since he was in the ninth grade. He was in my student ministry growing up. I said, "Here's all I can tell you is that one day, believe it or not, this divorce and everything connected with it, it's going to be in the rearview mirror of your life. And you need to wake up every day and decide, when this is nothing more than a story I tell, I want to be

able to tell my children the entire story and not skip any parts and not lie about any parts. So when you're tempted to try to get back at her, when you're tempted to manipulate, when you're tempted to manipulate the money, manipulate the kids, when you're tempted to just tell half-truths, you just remember, you are writing a story. And you're going to want to be able to tell your entire story.

As I say in the book, Sheila, about every two or three weeks I would get a text from him, and he would text me, "Andy, I can still tell my entire story." Now that was years ago. He's remarried. He's got a fantastic life. But he navigated some deep, deep waters. But the thing that held him through all of that, he would tell you, is I just had to avoid the temptation to do what everybody told me to do, what everybody in my situation would be tempted to do, and I had to remember one day this is just going to be a story I tell. What story do I want to tell? That's the story I want to write.

Because every decision we make, every decision we make is simply a line in the story of our lives. And I want people to write a good story. And you write good stories by making good decisions.

SHEILA: So good!

RANDY: It is. Can we give this book to our viewers that want it? Are you okay with that, Andy?

ANDY: Absolutely! I would like to give it to every college student and everybody in graduate school and everybody starting off in life because again, I didn't make any of these up. I just brought these together. It really is life-changing content and it has shaped my life and it's shaped the way I've raised my kids.

RANDY: Okay, great. Well, we're going to tell you how you can get it in just a minute. But that last question in here, I think it needs a little explanation on your part because it almost sounds sort of a pat Christian answer. And that is: What does love require of me?

Tell us what you mean by that.

ANDY: Yeah, this is the relationship question. Now these five questions, of these five questions four of them have a return on your investment. In other words, you ask these first four questions your life will be better. If you ask the fifth question, it's going to cost you something, but the fifth question changed the world. The fifth question is: What does love require of me? And in the book, I explain when I talk about love I'm talking about a very specific love.

When Jesus gathered with his apostles for their final Passover he said, "I'm giving you a new command." They didn't need any more commands. He said, "No, I'm not adding, I'm replacing. My one new New Covenant command is going to replace all the other commands. I want you to love one another, but I'm not finished, I want you to love one another the way that I have loved you." And then the next day he put on a demonstration of love that took his breath away and took their sin away. And then after the resurrection he sent his followers and essentially, sent us into the world to love people not the way we've been loved but to love as he has loved us.

So the relationship question is: What does love require of me? I know what I'm tempted to do. I know how she responded. I know how I responded last time. I know what people expect me to do. I know what they deserve for me to do. But what does love require of me? There may not be any positive return on this question, but this is at the epicenter of the Christian experience. We are to love as we've been loved. We are to forgive as we've been forgiven. We're to accept as we've been accepted. We're to honor as we've been honored by our Heavenly Father. So the fifth question is the most difficult question of all. It is the most demanding question of all, what does love require of me?

SHEILA: Well, honestly, Andy, my son is in grad school and I'm definitely sending him this book because even just your point of private decisions has public outcomes, when I look at social media these days and so much of the stuff that's going on that's so ugly and from believers, and then you hear all these stories of people falling away. Honestly, some

of them have really impacted my son. But the huge lesson there is that every decision you make in private has a public outcome.

So I wonder, as you've just come through 2020 with your church and I know it's a very rapidly growing church in Atlanta. I have friends that go there and love it so much. If there was one, obviously, it's five questions, if there was one thing that you'd want to say to people who are just watching the program today and who don't have the book in their hands yet, what would you say to them?

ANDY: I would say that the question, what does love require of me can heal just about any relationship if both people ask it. The question what does love require of me is what catapulted Christianity into the Roman Empire in such a way that the empire eventually accepted the Rabbi from Nazareth that they had crucified as their God and as their Savior and as their Lord. That this is the distinguishing mark of the Christian, not the Christian necessarily but certainly the Jesus follower, what does love require of me? And if we would ask that question every day as it relates to every single relationship the world would change.

SHEILA: This is such a powerful book, *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*. As I said at the top of the show, I wish I'd read this many, many years ago but I just read through it twice. So we want to make sure we can put one of these books into every single one of your hands and we're going to do that.

But we'd like to ask you to help us with something. This, as you probably remember, this is our last week of Rescue Life where we go into the hellhole of some places in Southeast Asia and around the world where young, young girls are being trafficked. And we want them to know that there is a God in heaven who hears their cries and we have come in their name. So I'm going to ask you to watch this and then I'm going to tell you how you can get a hold of Andy's brilliant new book. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Open Captions:

>> Girls? How old do you want?

>> Young.

>> How old?

>> What's the youngest?

>> Huh?

>> The youngest.

Don: We couldn't imagine the extent of the evil that allowed four-year-olds to be trafficked and sexually abused by men coming from all over the world. We knew we needed to do more.

One day our phone rang, and it was a young girl trapped in a brothel calling for us to help. So we gave the information to this other organization, but we had to wait three days for them to get into position to do a raid. But it was tipped off and none of the girls were rescued. And now they were moved to a new brothel and we didn't know where they were or how to get them out.

We would never let this happen again. So we partnered with the government and started our own SWAT team. Everything turned around. Instead of raids being tipped off, there was hardly ever a raid that wasn't successful. And now that girl that made the phone call, she is not only rescued, she's not only healed but today she is a social worker of our SWAT team. And when a rescue happens, the first person those girls see is her. She's also testified against a brothel owner. All the girls were rescued, the brothel was shut down, and no girls were being hurt there again.

So much incredible work has been done through the power of Christ but there is still so much more to do. There are girls trapped in brothels. We know where they are, and we know how to get them out, but we can't do it alone. We need your help. Together we can defeat the greatest evil of our lifetime.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I have to be honest with you, I find that piece really hard to watch. I cannot even conceive of anyone having that kind of interest in a four-year old child. That is so clearly absolute evil from the pit of hell, and it is destroying so many of these young lives.

But one of the things I love about that story is it's such a picture of redemption. This young girl that you saw there who was in such a bad place and now she's in a place where girls who are being literally snatched from the very gates of hell, hers is the first face they see. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of redemption, of him taking all our brokenness and bringing beauty.

That's what we do. This is our last week of Rescue Life. And if you remember, it's a three-stage process: Reach, rescue, restore. Reach is we go into the villages and we teach these young girls what to be aware of. We tell them not to go out by themselves. Always go out hand in hand with another person. And if someone comes up and offers them something, yell as loud as you can. So we teach them, we get them prepared.

But then for the ones who have already been trafficked, you'll see those teams and they will go in at midnight and break down doors and they will rescue these girls. But then they will bring them to a place where they can be restored. Where they can have the lies that have been spoken over them dispelled by the truth of the Word of God.

And I have to tell you, the last time I was in one of our homes that love built, that you helped build, to hear the testimonies of these young girls who were steeped in darkness and despair, speak about the love of Jesus Christ, how they've not only been delivered from the darkness of a cell, but they've been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and now they love and serve Jesus. This is our last week. We need

you to help us. It really takes everybody, Randy.

RANDY: It does. And you know Andy Stanley just told us from his book, *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*, "What does love require of me?" A question we need to ask ourselves and it will cost you something. Scripturally, love requires that when we see a need, we reach out and we do something about it.

Right now, with the matching gift, normally it costs an average of \$128 to save one child but with the matching gift that \$128 will save two. \$1280, if you can do that level that will save 20 children--20 lives! 20 people! What will you do?

I hope you'll go to the phone, go online, make the best gift you can. Request Andy's book, we'll gladly send it to you. But join us as we reach out, and we rescue, and we save these children. It's too important for us to just say, not today. So I'm asking you to do it. Do it right now. Go online, go to the phones, give the best gift you can.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking is one of the world's darkest sources of criminal activity and money. As a result, children and young people are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators into a never-ending nightmare.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at the risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved and restore young lives giving them a future. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you *Natural Remedies*. This beautifully illustrated and

essential book explores ancient nutrition and the health benefits found in God's creation. A valuable reference with biblical insight to help you live your best life.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Jesus My Refuge* journal and pen set filled with scriptures reminding you of God's covering in times of need. You'll also be reminded to pray for those seeking refuge from the horrors of human trafficking.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

Sheila: The situation here, you can probably tell by my circumstances, there was abject poverty. The people who are using and trafficking these little girls are very organized, they're very well-financed. They know what they're doing. I asked one of the girls, have you thought of just trying to escape? Their thing is, if I try and escape, they will come up to my parents because my parents are so poor. My parents are desperate. They have no money. So I'm forced into this life.

But you and I can do something. So what I'm asking you to do, would you let these little girls here who think nobody cares about them know there is a God in heaven who knows their name and who loves them. But he has a people who are committed to reaching out. So please, go to your phone, go online, make the very best gift possible and let's bring life to these trapped beautiful little girls.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: So let's fight for these girls. Let's give them a story that they will want to live out. Andy, I just want to thank you so much for writing this book. It's a wonderful book. And to all of our viewers, any gift at all today please say I want that book and we will get it to you. Andy, thank you so much!

ANDY: Thank you so much, Sheila. Thanks Randy. I hope to see you all before too long.

RANDY: It is great to have all of you with us on *LIFE Today*. If you've missed any episodes go online at LifeToday.org and you can watch, you'll probably need to watch this one again. We'll see you next time here on *LIFE Today*.