

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

better decisions, fewer regrets



— 5 —

QUESTIONS

TO HELP YOU DETERMINE
YOUR NEXT MOVE

ANDY STANLEY

Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets

— 5 —

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YOUR NEXT MOVE

STUDY GUIDE | 6 SESSIONS

ANDY STANLEY

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Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets Study Guide

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Introduction

I'm glad you made the decision to take this journey. You won't regret it!

The *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets* study reveals how good questions lead to good decisions. Specifically, we're going to focus on the five big questions that will lead to better decisions and fewer regrets in every area of your life.

Yes . . . even that one particular area you're thinking of now but wonder if anything can help.

Look at it this way. Life is all about decision-making. Every day. Multiple times a day. Sometimes we're sure. Sometime we're unsure. Some of us are quick to decide. Others of us (me included) can't ever get enough information before we decide.

In the end, we are where we are because of decisions we've made. Our futures will be determined by our decisions as well.

Your decisions are about the only thing you can control in life. This means your decisions are *how* you control your life. Decisions are your steering wheel. Your joystick. Your keypad. Which means . . . and this is big: Your decisions determine your story.

The story of your life.

I know you want to get this right. You want to write a story worth

telling. I'm convinced you can. This study provides five questions that, when asked honestly and consistently, will ensure your fingerprints on the future will be worth celebrating.

When you first meet as a group, do your best to let go of all distractions! Start by going around the room and introducing yourselves. Agree to be honest, fully engage, cheer each other on, and keep what's said in the group confidential. You share a common desire to grow in this area . . . so lean in and let's learn together.

You can experience a life filled with better decisions . . . and less regret. Let's get started!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann S. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "S".

How to Use This Guide

— GROUP SIZE —

This study has been written with different groups in mind. Whether you're a leader in your organization, a stay-at-home parent, or a college student, we believe good questions lead to better decisions. As a group leader or a participant, this study provides five questions that, when asked honestly and consistently, will ensure your fingerprints on the future will be worth celebrating—and will prepare you to make a lifetime of better decisions.

You can use this study in groups of all different sizes. But we think the ideal group size is eight to twelve adults or four to six married couples. Why? Because that's a large enough group to provide the diverse opinions that drive dynamic conversations, yet small enough that group members can hold one another accountable.

Accountability is absolutely crucial to the group dynamic. Reading this material, watching the videos, and having some discussions probably won't create a big, sustainable change in your personal life or in your decision-making. That will only happen if you apply what you learn. And you'll probably succeed in application only if you have a group of people who are willing to encourage you and hold you accountable.

— MATERIALS NEEDED —

Here are the things you'll need for this study:

- This guide
- The accompanying teaching videos on DVD or digital streaming/download
- Something to write with
- A copy of the *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets* book (optional for the group meetings but recommended for the between-sessions study)

That's it.

— TIMING —

The suggested time for each group session is 90 minutes. This can be broken down as follows:

Conversation Starter: 10 minutes

The Conversation Starter is designed to tee up the session's topic while helping you to get to know one another a little better. This is especially helpful if your group is new.

Video Teaching: 20 minutes

After the Conversation Starter, watch the session video teaching together. It will present the content you'll discuss as a group.

Group Discussion: 45 minutes

Spend most of the session having a conversation about the content you watched together. Use any of the Group Discussion questions to guide the conversation.

Making Better Decisions: 10 minutes

Making Better Decisions provides a simple way to begin to apply what you're learning. Don't skip this section of the study. It will help you change and grow.

Session Wrap-Up: 5 minutes

The Wrap-Up helps you to put a bow on the session, so to speak. It's an opportunity to reiterate the bottom line of the session's topic. It's also an opportunity to close the meeting in prayer, if you so choose.

Note that there are also suggested personal study activities for you to complete on your own between the main group sessions.

— FACILITATION —

You probably have a mental picture of what it will look like to lead—what you'll say and how group members will respond. Before you get too far into planning, there are some things you should know about leading a group discussion.

Cultivate Discussion

It's easy to assume that a group meeting lives or dies on the quality of your ideas. That's not true. It's the ideas of everyone in the group that make a meeting successful. Your role is to create an environment in which people feel safe to share their thoughts. That's how relationships will grow and thrive among your group members.

Here's a basic truth about spiritual growth within the context of community: the study materials aren't as important as the relationships through which those materials take practical shape in the lives of the group members. The more meaningful the relationships, the more meaningful the study. The best materials in the world won't change lives in a sterile environment.

Point to the Material

A good host or hostess creates an environment where people can connect relationally. They know when to help guests connect and when to stay out of the way when those connections are happening organically. As a group leader, sometimes you'll simply read a discussion question and invite everyone to respond. The conversation will take care of itself. Other times, you may need to encourage group members to share their ideas. Remember, some of the best insights will come from the people in your group. Go with the flow, but nudge the conversation in the right direction when necessary.

Depart from the Material

We've carefully designed this study for your group. We've written the materials and structured the questions to elicit the kinds of conversations we think will be most helpful to your group members. However, that doesn't mean you should stick rigidly to the materials. Knowing when to depart from them is more art than science, but no one knows more about your group than you do.

The stories, questions, and exercises are here to provide a framework for exploration. But different groups have different chemistries and different motivations. Sometimes the best way to start a discussion is to ask, "Does anyone have a personal insight you'd like to share from this week's material?" Then sit back and listen.

Stay on Track

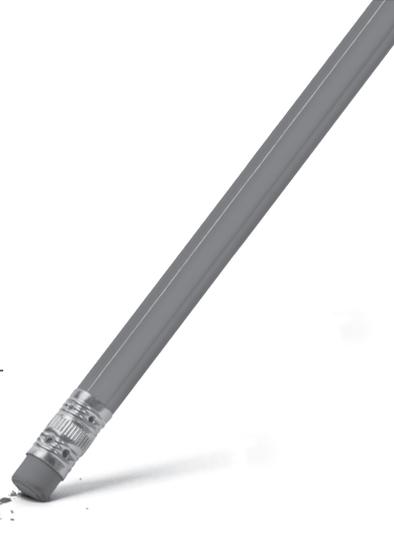
This is the flip side to the previous point. There's an art to facilitating an engaging conversation. While you want to leave space for group members to think through the discussion, you also need to keep your objectives in mind. Make sure the discussion is contributing to the bottom line for the week. Don't let the discussion veer off into tangents. Interject politely in order to refocus the group.

Are you ready to begin? Then let's jump into the first session of *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*.

SESSION

— 1 —

More Than a Decision



“Questions are places in your mind where answers fit. If you haven't asked the question, the answer has nowhere to go ... You have to ask the question—you have to want to know—in order to open up the space for the answer to fit.”

Clay Christensen, Harvard Business School Professor

— SESSION OVERVIEW —

Every decision we make impacts our stories and the stories of those closest to us. There's no getting around the fact that *well-placed, appropriately* timed, *thought-provoking* questions result in better decisions and fewer regrets.

What if you had a list of questions you could *ask yourself* when faced with important decisions? My goal is to give you the questions ahead of time. Not *all* the questions. But five key questions that can change everything.

I believe asking them leads to lives of better decisions and fewer regrets. That's why these five questions comprise the heart of this study:

The Integrity Question: Am I being honest with myself?

The Legacy Question: What story do I want to tell?

The Conscience Question: Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

The Maturity Question: What is the wise thing to do?

The Relationship Question: What does love require of me?

We'll address each question in detail in a future session.

In this session—which corresponds to Chapter 1 (“More Than a Decision”) in the book—the focus is on an important but easy-to-miss relationship between your decisions and your future: You are where you are because of the decisions you've made. You'll discover why that's true, why you make bad decisions, and how you can rewrite the story of your life . . . one decision at a time.

— CONVERSATION STARTER —

What is the last decision you'd like to unmake? Why?

— WATCH VIDEO (16:30 MINUTES) —

Watch the video segment for Session 1. This summary is provided for your benefit as well as space to take additional notes.

Key Teaching Summary

In this first session, we discuss how your decisions determine the direction and quality of your life. If that's not motivation enough to focus more on the choices you make, consider this. Your decisions also determine the direction and quality of other people's lives—not just today but for generations to come.

I was first introduced to the power of decisions at a young age. When I was a kid, my dad wouldn't tell me what to do. Specifically, he wouldn't tell me what to do when I didn't know what to do and wanted him to tell me what he thought I should do. Now, I know . . . most kids don't want their parents telling them what to do. But on occasion, I wanted him to tell me what to do. And he wouldn't. Worse, instead of answering my questions, he asked me more questions!

His go-to question was: What are you going to do when I'm not around to tell you what to do? My go-to response was: But you are around, so tell me!

By opting for questions over direction, my dad helped me make the connection between good questions and good decision-making. It also led to fewer regrets. We've all heard someone say, "I should have asked more questions." That's because we know intuitively that the more questions we ask, the more information we acquire . . . which leads to greater insight and, hopefully, better decisions.

Your decisions, along with your responses to other people's decisions (which are also your decisions), are about the only thing you can control in life. This means we would be wise to stop at every decision-making juncture and consider the story we want to tell.

Perhaps even more compelling, we should consider what story we want told about us. The good news is that you get to decide one decision at a time, because that's how you write the story of your life . . . one decision at a time.

— MAKING BETTER DECISIONS —

Complete this exercise on your own. Take up to ten minutes.

Truth is, we don't know what hangs in the balance of our decisions. We can't accurately predict outcomes. But we know with certainty there are outcomes associated with each of our decisions. Even the small ones. This exercise reveals the truth of this concept by considering the impact generational decisions have had on your life.

Perhaps your life would be very different if your dad hadn't chosen to keep picking up that bottle. You know someone whose life would be different if their momma hadn't run off and left the family. The opposite is true as well. Maybe your father is the one who conquered that habit and kept the family together. Maybe your mother chose to stay when another woman would have walked. This exercise isn't designed to cast blame or shame on those who came before us . . . but simply to reveal the long-term impact of decisions.

How might this apply to your life? Take five minutes to write your thoughts in the spaces below. Then, if you'd like, you can share them with the group:

What could you imagine being different in your life today had your parents or grandparents decided differently about a few key things in their lives?

What did you learn about yourself and the importance of decisions generational through this exercise?

— SESSION WRAP-UP —

It's true. Your decisions have shaped the direction and quality of your life so far—for good and for . . . well, maybe *not so good*. You are where you are for the most part because of decisions *you've* made. Regardless of how things are going or have gone, *you* are responsible for *you*.

The good news is that you get to write your story . . . one decision at a time. And the best chapters can still be ahead of you. It all depends on asking the right questions!

Your decisions are how you control your life. They are your steering wheel. So consider the story you want to tell with your life. This study gives you the power to make that story a reality through five well-placed, appropriately timed, thought-provoking questions. Because good questions lead to better decisions and fewer regrets.

— CLOSING —

Don't forget that if you choose, there are between-sessions personal study activities you can complete on your own.

— **RECOMMENDED READING** —

Before your group gathers for the next session, read Chapter 2 (“The Integrity Question”) in the book *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*. Use the space provided to write any key points or questions you want to bring to the next group meeting.

SESSION

— 1 —

Between-Sessions Personal Study

To enhance this week’s group study, this section will help you experience personal growth in practical ways. It’s your invitation to take the big ideas from this session and spend time DOING, REFLECTING, and DECIDING how to make them realities in your life.

— DO —

Read or reread the Introduction and Chapter 1 (“More Than a Decision”) in *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*. Write down the insights or ideas that stood out most to you.

Watch the movie *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray. How does this story humorously show the impact of our decisions—while also revealing what happens when one man is trapped in the same day until he discovers how to make better decisions?

— REFLECT —

Have you ever “planned a regret” by failing to plan? If we generally know what to do, why don’t we just do it? How might these five questions provide you with proactive safeguards to avoid future bad decisions?

In this week’s study, Andy Stanley said, “We never know what or who hangs in the balance of the decisions we make. But what we do know is this: private decisions have public outcomes. How does it make you feel to know that your decisions probably won’t stay private? Why?”

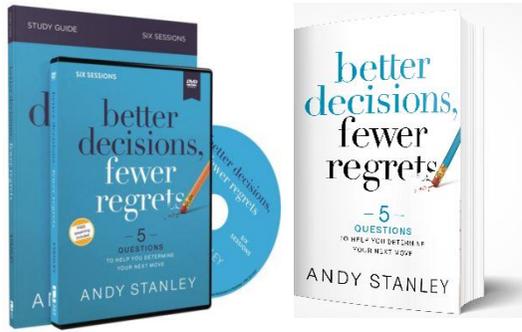
What decision from your past are you most proud of? Why? Now, perhaps the harder question: What is one decision you most regret making? Why?

— DECIDE —

Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” As you begin this study, in what kind of decisions do you most need wisdom from God? As you write your answers, pray for God’s help in these areas.

We create the story of our lives one decision at a time. Decide what you would like your legacy to be and why this is important to you. Write it down.

Decide who—besides you—will most benefit from you starting to make better choices. Write their names below. Consider placing a photo of them somewhere you can see it as you're making important decisions.



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by ANDY STANLEY

Life is all about decision-making.

Every day. Multiple times a day. Sometimes we're sure. Sometimes we're unsure. But in the end, we are where we are because of decisions we've made.

Your decisions, along with your responses to other people's decisions, which are also your decisions, are about the only thing you can control in life, which means your decisions are how you control your life. Decisions are your steering wheel. Your joystick. Your keypad. Which means: Your decisions determine your story. *The story of your life.*

Every decision becomes a permanent part of our stories. That being the case, we should stop at every decision-making juncture and consider the story we want to tell. Perhaps more compelling, we should consider what story we want told about us. The good news is that you get to decide. But you decide one decision at a time because you write the story of your life. One decision at a time.

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