

SERMON SERIES *from NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR  
—ANDY ANDREWS—

*The*  
TRAVELER'S GIFT



*Seven* DECISIONS THAT DETERMINE  
PERSONAL SUCCESS

by JAN *and* RICK LOY

SERMON



THE RESPONSIBLE DECISION:  
“THE BUCK STOPS HERE”

“The buck stops here. I accept responsibility for my past. I am responsible for my success. I am where I am today—mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and financially—because of the decisions I have made. My decisions have always been governed by my thinking. Today I will begin the process of changing where I am by changing the way I think. My thoughts will be clear. I will make the right choice. Adversity is preparation for greatness. I accept this preparation. I accept responsibility for my past. I control my thoughts. I control my emotions. I am responsible for my success. The buck stops here.”

ADAPTED FROM *The TRAVELER’S GIFT*, by ANDY ANDREWS

Luke 15:11-24; James 1: 2-4; 16-17



**I. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS A DANGEROUS TREND IN OUR NATION TOWARD AVOIDING AND/OR DENYING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN VIRTUALLY ANY AREA OF LIFE.**

**A. Common justifications for lack of personal responsibility:**

1. “My parents (or their absence) are why I am who I am.”
2. “My environment was really negative; that’s why I am where I am.”
3. “I wasn’t given the gifts, abilities, and advantages others have; that’s why I’m where I am.”
4. “I have rights and am entitled to what I want and need.”
5. “I don’t want any responsibility...I just want to live my life.”
6. “Life’s not fair, and it’s not my fault; I never got any breaks or any help.”

**B. General truth about being responsible and taking responsibility for my life:**

1. “*You are accountable for your actions, your decisions, your life; no one else is but you.*” -Catherine Pulsifer
2. “*When we are really honest with ourselves we must admit our lives are all that really belong to us. So it is how we use our lives that determines the kind of men we are.*” —Cesar Chavez
3. “*One person’s irresponsibility always creates extra responsibility for others.*”  
—Unknown

4. “We must reject the idea that every time a law’s broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions.” Ronald Reagan

5. “I am responsible. Although I may not be able to prevent the worst from happening, I am responsible for my attitude toward the inevitable misfortunes that darken life. Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have – life itself.”  
—Walter Anderson

### C. God’s Word regarding accountability and personal responsibility:

#### 1. These are freedoms/privileges given by God for our good.

a. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.”  
—Deuteronomy 30:19

b. “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.”  
—Jeremiah 17:10

c. “For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.” —II Thessalonians 3:11-13

d. “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?”  
—Luke 16:10-12

#### 2. In God’s economy, responsibility is about hope that things can change and appropriate control over thinking, emotions, and choices.

a. Philippians 4:8 “...dwell (think) on these things...”

b. Proverbs 4:23 “...guard your heart (mind, will, emotions)...”

c. Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

## II. JESUS TEACHES ON RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY – LUKE 15: 11-24

### A. The prodigal son made choices based upon his best thinking – vs. 11-13

1. He allowed thoughts/appetites to create attitudes.
2. He allowed attitudes to create a general mindset.
3. He now makes the “logical next step” in that skewed pattern of thinking.

### B. His “best thinking” betrays him; he loses everything – vs. 14-16

1. The thrills are temporary.
2. The freedom is gone along with his self-esteem.
3. There is no “Plan B.”

### C. He chooses honesty and embraces responsibility – vs. 17-21

1. He begins thinking differently.
2. He decides to act on those new thoughts and pursue change.
3. He accepts responsibility/accountability for the choices he made.

### D. He learns that responsibility is the door to a new, better life – vs. 22-24

1. His soul is freed from the grief and guilt of his recklessness.
2. His father does not blame him but receives him and supports the changes he is making.
3. He has the platform to begin a new life; new thinking=new choices.
4. He did not allow his history to control his destiny.

## III. WILLINGNESS TO EMBRACE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IS CLOSELY TIED TO HOW WE VIEW TRIALS AND ADVERSITY – JAMES 1:2-4

A. For believers, trials/adversities are opportunities to embrace responsibility as opportunity for growth in spiritual and emotional maturity and to gain a clearer perspective on God’s work in our lives.

1. Trials and adversity are not optional; they are the norm – vs. 2: “when.”
2. Embracing them exposes areas wherein I need to grow.
3. Embracing them both facilitates and forces growth.

**B.** Trials and adversity are literally God's tools to build greater faith and strength – vs. 3-4

1. The question is never, "Why, Lord?" The question is, "What, Lord?"
  - a. What would you have me learn?
  - b. What would you have me change?
  - c. What would you have me give of myself as a result of this trial/adversity?
2. The primary challenge is how I think about the trial, about God, and about the future He has designed for me – vs. 4, 16-17

**C.** Trials and adversity are not "problems to deal with"; they are "choices to make."

1. In Christ, I have a will stronger than my emotions; I will use it.
2. In Christ, I have the ability to conquer my thoughts; I will think on good things.
3. In Christ, I have the strength and wisdom needed to face each trial; I will engage and act.
4. In Christ, I can become who He designed me to be; I choose to do so.

**CONCLUSION: THE PRIVILEGE AND OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE THE LIFE I WANT—SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY, PHYSICALLY AND FINAN-  
CIALLY—IS IN MY HANDS THE MOMENT I GENUINELY EMBRACE  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY LIFE.**

*"There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist or accept the responsibility for changing them."*

*—Denis Waitley*

*"There are always two choices. Two paths to take. One is easy.  
And its only reward is that it's easy."*

*—Unknown*

*"Until a person can say deeply and honestly, 'I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday,' that person cannot say, 'I choose otherwise.'"*

*—Stephen Covey*