

So today, we're wrapping up our series, Better Decisions Fewer Regrets. And the big idea in this series is the often overlooked relationship between good questions and good decisions. Good questions actually set us up to make good decisions. And I'm convinced that if you've been following along in this series, that you're convinced as well that if you will ask, answer honestly, and act on your answer to the five questions we're talking about in this series, you will make better decisions and consequently, you will live with fewer regrets. Your life will be better. And the people who look to you and depend on you, their lives will be better as well because we aren't the only people impacted by our decisions, right? And we're not the only people impacted by our regrets either. Quick review.

The first question we explored was the integrity question. The integrity question. Am I being honest with myself? Am I being honest with myself really? You will never get to read where you want to be until you are honest about where you currently are. The most difficult person to lead is always the person in the mirror. So whenever you're making a decision of

any consequence, before you commit to an option, ask yourself, am I being honest with myself? Am I being honest with myself about why I'm doing this, choosing this, purchasing this, calling him, calling her back?

Second question was the legacy question. The legacy question is, what story do I want to tell? When the decision that you're in the process of making right now, relational, financial, academic, professional. When the decision you're in the process of making right now, when it's nothing more than a story you tell, what story do you want to tell? Make it a story you're proud to tell. In fact, better than that, be the hero in your own story, not the villain. Be the person who exercise self-control, not the person who lost control. Use your super power, we've talked about that. Your responsibility, that's your super power. And you decide your story one decision at a time. Because as far as it's up to you, you write the story of your life one decision at a time. I want you to write or decide a great story.

Our third question was the conscience question. Is there a tension that deserves my attention?

Is there a tension that deserves my attention? You're considering an option and you're thinking about doing something specific. You're about to pull the trigger on the decision and everybody's nodding and everything looks good on paper, but there's just something about it that doesn't seem right, something that you can't put your finger on. When that happens, pause and pay attention to that tension.

Now, last time we were together, we explored the fourth question, the maturity question, and the maturity question is, what is the wise thing to do in light of your past experience, in light of your current circumstances, in light of your future hopes and dreams? What is the wise thing for you to do? An option may be legal or acceptable or permissible, not exactly immoral, but is it wise? Remember this. A decision, a decision can be not wrong and not wise at the same time. Unwise decisions, remember this, unwise decisions are gateway decisions. They lead to regret. In fact, your greatest regret, your greatest regret was preceded by a series of unwise decisions. How do I know that? Because it's true for all of us. The decisions that preceded your greatest

regret, they weren't wrong, they weren't illegal, but looking back, they were terribly, terribly unwise.

So decide wise. And that brings us to our last question. Our fifth question is actually the relationship question. Now, again, if you've been a part of this series, you know by now that most of these questions, most of these questions are a bit terrifying because they are in fact, so clarify. And by clarifying, I'm referring to the fact that in most instances, you know the answer to the question even before you've finished asking the question, right? And once we know, we can't unknow. And once we know the answer to these questions, we feel accountable. We feel accountable to ourselves, which is good. And honestly, it's a bit terrifying.

It actually reminds me of a question my mentor, Regi Campbell, used to ask me. He used to say this, he used to say, "Andy, Andy, what do you hope I don't ask you about"? Now, that's a terrifying question, right? "Andy, what do you hope I don't ask you about"? So I would dodge this question and I would say this, "Well, you

can't ask that question, Regi, you gotta dig around a little bit, that's cheating. You gotta discover that for yourself". And he would laugh and then he would repeat the question, "Andy, what do you hope I don't ask you about"? So our fifth and our final question is perhaps the most clarifying question of all, but honestly, in some ways, it's the most terrifying question of all. It's clarifying in clarity.

Come on, clarity is often the thing we need to push us past our resistance to making a good decision. And I promise you, there will be resistance with this one. In fact, this may be the question you will be most tempted not to answer honestly, because it will require the most of you. So once again, the disclaimer. You don't have to act on your answer, but you owe it to yourself to know the answer to this question because what you won't know, what you refuse to know can hurt you. And in this case, what you refuse to know or acknowledge or admit is going to hurt the people closest to you as well. Again, this is the relationship question.

And as I mentioned last time, when you envision your future, isn't this true? When you envision

your future, you never envisioned yourself alone. There's always somebody beside you. This is true of all of us. And perhaps that somebody is already besides you. Our final question, this fifth question, will help you keep them there. Perhaps you're looking for that someone. Getting in the habit of this question now, if you do that, you will become the person that the person you're looking for is looking for. Because you know who you're looking for? You're looking for someone amazing, right? So are they. Asking and acting on this fifth question will increase your amazing quotient, I guarantee you. But the benefit of asking this question this relationship question, actually extends beyond that special somebody.

This question, when asked and answered honestly and then acted on, it has the potential to enhance the quality of every single relationship you're in. It has the power to restore broken relationships, heal relationships. It has the power, honestly, to rekindle romance, to restore what was lost. But before the big reveal, another disclaimer. Unlike the other four questions in this series, this one does not come with a guaranteed ROI,

return on investment. The other four do but not this one, here's what I mean. You will always come out ahead by being honest with yourself really. You'll always have something to show for writing a story you're proud to tell. There will be a measurable return for paying attention to the tension and doing the wise thing. You ask those other four questions, you are going to benefit.

Our first four questions always yield a favorable return, sometimes immediately, but always eventually. But our fifth and final question is different. There may be no tangible, measurable, or even noticeable return on your effort in asking this question. While the first four questions are demanding in the moment, our final question is demanding throughout very waking moment. And the reason being, our final question isn't about making your life better. It's about making someone else's life better which may make your life better, but honestly, it may not. However, this fifth and final question, should you have the courage to ask it and act on it, positions you to make the world better.

So here we go, Throughout Jesus' ministry, when you follow Jesus through the gospel, throughout his ministry, he was constantly hinting at the fact that something new was on the horizon, something designed to actually replace much of what was in place in first century Judaism. And while many people were hoping for political reform, Jesus had something entirely different in mind, something much bigger than political reform, something far more inclusive. His hints, his parables, his foreshadowing, they were all designed to create a sense of expectation in the minds and the hearts of his followers. So when he entered Jerusalem for his final visit, you know this story, crowds lined the streets to welcome him. They knew something was up but their expectations were political, regal, messianic. He had their attention but they did not understand his intention.

In fact, even as 12 apostles were confused about his ultimate aim, right up to the very end, right up to the very end. They are jockeying for positions of power in the soon to be re-established independent kingdom of Israel. So on the night of his arrest, he gathers them together for what would be their

final Passover meal and he finally reveals his intentions. He makes his intentions clear. To begin with, he announced that he was leaving. And that was a problem. As we've talked about before, Jesus was their security blanket. Wherever Jesus went, crowds gathered and the crowds kept Jesus' enemies from getting close.

So if Jesus leaves, if Jesus goes missing, odds are the apostles are probably going to go missing as well and not in a good way. Besides why would Jesus leave now? They were on the precipice of a revolution. I mean, the kingdom was about to be restored. So on this final night together, he spells it out for them in terms that, well, in terms that have become so familiar to many of us, I'm afraid that they leave little to no or make little to no impact. Now we don't doubt they're true. We don't doubt what Jesus says is true. After all, Jesus spoke these words. But these words don't rock us back on our heels. They don't send us rushing home or back to work or back to the neighborhood with an apology on our lips. These words, this command from the lips of our Lord, think about that. They just don't stand guard over our words like they should. They don't stand guard

over our responses, our actions, or our attitudes, the way they were intended to.

In fact, when I read Jesus' words to you in just a moment, you may be tempted to respond with, "Oh, I've heard that before. Oh, that again," which is unfortunate because these words spoken by Jesus to his closest friends, men who would earn the reputation for turning the world upside down, these words explain the event that we cling to when we sin, when we fall short, isn't this true? When you wonder where you stand with God. When you wonder where you stand with God. In those moments, as a Christian, what do you lean into? You lean into the event of Christ's death on the cross as the payment for your sin, right?

Jesus died for me, so I have a right standing with God. But his death, his death on the afternoon after he spoke these words was actually an illustration of these words and a reminder of how central these words are to our experience as Jesus followers. They represent in a way, the epicenter of the Christian faith. These words are really what the kingdom of God looks like on earth. Paul who was unclearly

rocked back on his heels by these words and actually never recovered. When he wrote his letter to Christians living in the Roman province of Galatia, he said this, he said, "The only thing, the only thing that matters is these words". And then in 1 Corinthians, he declares that if we don't get this one thing right, it doesn't even matter what else we get right. He understood what we missed.

And here's the thing. And I understand this, we want deeper. And Paul would respond to that we want deeper requests like this. You want deeper? You want deeper. You want deeper because you've never witnessed a man being flogged to the point to where he wants to die, but can't because the soldier inflicting the pain knows exactly when to stop, not out of mercy, but because the goal was to inflict as much pain as possible. Death would be merciful. But out of a desire to cause as much suffering as possible, they would stop. When we think there's got to be more, it's because we've never witnessed a crucifixion. We've never seen someone choose days ahead of time to lay down their life for an enemy.

There is nothing deeper. There is nothing more profound. There is nothing more contrary to fallen human nature. There is, well, there's nothing with more potential to change everything than Jesus' instructions to his followers the night of his arrest. His words represent a paradigm shift of, it's no exaggeration to say of epic proportion. They would, again, they would turn the world upside down because they established a kingdom that looked upside down to the world. And what began as a harmless threat to the empire, a harmless threat to the temple, a Nazarene sect, a cult, would eventually engulf the empire. And his words to his disciples during that last Passover meal, they serve as the context, they serve as fuel, the match, for our fifth and final question.

Here's what he said. And I wish for a moment, you could hear them as if you're hearing them for the very first time. Allow these words to set you back on your heels, to leave you scrambling for your slice of the conflict pie in your relationships. I hope they will compel you to forgive, to be kind, to loan your strength, to tame your tongue, to adjust your

pace, to open your wallet, to reshuffle your values. Here's what he said. "A new command. A new command I give you". And of course, they didn't need any new commands. They had plenty. Besides earlier, Jesus had just reduced the entire list to two, love God and love your neighbor. Those are the two we know, right? So why do we need a third? And besides that, why was he talking about command? They needed to make plans, I mean. And what gave Jesus the right to add any new commands? Only God could... Only God have the authority to add commands. Exactly, right?

As it turned out, Jesus wasn't adding a command to an existing list of commands. He was doing something far more radical. He was replacing the existing commandments, all of them. And one reason, one reason that this new command doesn't have its desired effect on many of us is because we were raised to believe that his new command was simply another command. Another command to be added to the big 10 or the big 600 plus. But it wasn't. Jesus had come to replace much of what was in place. "A new command I give you; love one another," which wasn't really actually new. But then as we've

said before, Jesus wasn't actually through and he wasn't commanding them and he wasn't commanding me and he wasn't commanding you to feel something. He was commanding us to do something.

And what came next? Well, what came next was unthinkable. But what came next changed the world. What came next trumped the golden rule. What came next trumped love God and love your neighbor. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another". This was so disturbing. In this moment, Jesus establishes himself as the standard for love. The standard against which we are to measure and evaluate our behavior if we're Jesus followers. You've heard it said believing is all that matters. If you were raised in certain kinds of churches, it's all about believing. Jesus would say to you, "If you're going to participate in my kingdom, loving as I have loved is what matters most. Doing for others what one hoped others would do for them in return, that was so last century, that was so old covenant". Jesus tells his followers on the night of his arrest to do unto others as he had done unto them.

Now this was extraordinarily, extraordinarily personal for the guy seated around the table, right? I mean, when we read, "As I have loved you, you're to love one another," we think of the cross, they didn't. They thought back over the previous three years. I mean, Jesus could have gone around the table and called them all out one by one, "Matthew. Matthew, you remember what you were up to when we met"? "Yes, sir, I was working for Rome from home. Well, I was pretty much a government sanctioned thief with body guards. I remember because good people, well, they kept their distance from me".

And Jesus could have said, "Matthew, do you remember what I said to you that afternoon when we met"? "Yes sir. You invited me to follow you. And No one had ever done that before. In fact when people thought I was following them, they just rushed home". "Exactly, Matthew, extend that same grace to every single person you meet for the rest of your life. As I have loved you, Matthew, that's how I want you to love". And he could have worked his way around the table one by one, "Love as I have loved you. Extend the same grace, the same forgiveness that I have extended to you".

So that real quick. How about you? Let's put you in Matthew's seat for just a minute. What were you up to? What were you up to when you first understood and accepted the call to follow Jesus? Think about that season of your life. And to think he loved, loves you anyway. He hears your prayers. He forgives you over and over for the same dumb stuff. Right? Me too. I mean, in my case, I have no excuse. I mean, I have no excuse not to extend grace, forgiveness, and mercy, second and third chances to everybody I meet because I've been commanded to love as I have been loved. And I have been given second and third chances by my savior.

And as Jesus looked around the table that night, he could have added, "And gentlemen, if you think you've seen me love, you haven't seen anything yet, because tomorrow, covered in my own blood, I'll put on a demonstration of love that will take your breath away, but more important, It's going to take your sin away, and it's going to take your excuses away not to love the way I have loved you. Tomorrow, I'm going to give my life away for you and for my

enemies". And then he continues. And this is the part, if we ever got this right, if I ever got right, it would change. Maybe it would change everything. He said, "Gentlemen, by this. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another".

Now the term this is a demonstrative pronoun. Remember those? A demonstrative pronoun is used to point to something very specific. And in this particular case, it's a singular demonstrative pronoun. Jesus is pointing to one specific thing that was to be the identifying characteristic of his followers, namely, the way we love. This new command, this new command brand of love was to serve as the unifying and the defining characteristic for his new movement, the church. His new command was to serve as the governing ethic against which all of our behavior should be measured. And this stood in stark contrast to the current first century way of thinking. Unfortunately, it stands in stark contrast to the way that many of us were raised to think in the church today. This litmus test, this would be the litmus test for being a Jesus follower.

And again, the new litmus test was not some sort of ritualistic day of the week, festival-driven, don't forget your goat. Don't forget to say your prayers, worship of an invisible and somewhat distant God. Following Jesus would not be looking for ways to somehow get closer to God who dwelled out there somewhere. Jesus followers, according to what Jesus said that night, Jesus followers would demonstrate their devotion to God by putting the person next to them in front of them, as he would do the following afternoon. Authentic Jesus followers would not authenticate their love for God by looking up. They would authenticate their devotion to God by looking around, by loving the people around them. And then this was so unprecedented.

In an unprecedented move for a religious figure, especially, Jesus didn't leverage his position or even his equality with God or his messianic authority to stir his followers to action. He didn't say, "Hey guys, you better do this because, well, do you know who I am"? He didn't anchor his new command to his divine right as king. Paul said it best, that Jesus did not regard equality with God as something

to be leveraged for his own benefit. Instead, do you know what he used to inspire his followers to actually? Do you know what he used to inspire you and me to action? He leveraged his sacrificial love, why? Why should his disciples obey this command to love? Because he loved them first. He went first. They were to do unto others as Jesus had already done and was about to do unto them.

"A new command I give you; love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another". Jesus knew all encompassing command was. Well, it was far less complicated than the prevailing system but it was far more demanding. There are no loopholes, no workarounds in this brand of love. It's why we avoid it. It's why we are tempted to take the new command and simply add it to a list of commands, perhaps hoping it will get lost in the mix. And that brings us at last to our fifth and our final question, the relationship question. The question, honestly, that paves the path to relational health. The question that really lays a foundation for mutually beneficial and mutually satisfying relationships. A question that honestly brings

inescapable clarity to just about every relational decision you will ever bump up.

Again it's a question... I think a question everyone should ask but a question that Jesus followers, we have to ask it. Our fifth question is this, what does love require of me? What does love require of me? This clarifying, and as I said earlier, terrifying question should stand guard over our consciences. It should serve as a guide, a signpost, a compass as we navigate the complexities of relationships. It should inform how we date, how we parent, how we boss, how we manage, how we coach. It should form a perimeter around what we say and what we do in our roles as spouse, coworker, neighbor, friend. This question gives voice God's will for us on so many issues, on issues where the Bible is silent. It fills the gaps, it succeeds where concordances fail.

If you're a Christian, it crushes that insipid justification that we all grew up using. But the Bible doesn't say there's anything wrong with, right? This question closes all those loopholes. In fact, it exposes our hypocrisy.

It stands as judge and jury. It's so simple, but it is so inescapably demanding and it intersects with every imaginable relational scenario. I mean, we're all tempted to ask or wonder sometimes relationally, how little can I get by with, right? The very thing we don't want the person on the other side of us to consider This question calls us to account.

So relationally speaking, when you're not sure of what to say or do, simply ask what does love require of you. When unsure of what to say or do, ask what does love require of you. And then do unto others as your heavenly Father through Christ has done unto you. He did what was best for us. We are in turn to do what's best for others. We are to love as we have been loved. And when we fall short, we're to own it quickly, we're to own it before anyone even has to bring it to our attention. And if that sounds like too much to ask, congratulations, then now you know that you understand exactly what Jesus is asking of us. If there's something in you that's like, "I just don't know if I can live up to that," then you understand what he's calling us to.

Now, I imagine that you're smart enough and emotionally dialed in enough to know what love requires of you most of the time, even if we don't want to admit it, right? But just in case, if love one another is not specific enough, the New Testament is actually full of real world applications of what Jesus' new command brand of love looks like. In fact, the authors of the New Testament did not add to Jesus' new command. This is an area where it gets confusing really quickly. They didn't come along and add to Jesus' new command. They simply explain what it looks like. They tell us how to apply it. And the apostle Paul provides us with, I think the clearest applications.

In his letter to Christians living in the Roman province of Galatia, we mentioned earlier, he insists, he says this. "When it comes to relationships, God will always nudge you. The Spirit of God will always nudge you in the direction of kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control". When you're tempted to try to control someone else, Paul says the spirit of God is going to nudge you in the direction of self-control, because that's what love requires of you. When in doubt,

simply max these out. But this was actually the apostle Paul's abridged list. His most detailed description of what real world love looks and acts like is found in his first letter to Christians living in Corinth, right? We've talked about this so many times.

In fact, that list is so familiar, I fear it doesn't even create so much as a ripple in our conscience sometimes, especially for most modern readers. And that's unfortunate because Paul's description in 1 Corinthians is the gold standard of what love looks like in the real world. What does love require of us? You know this, he says, "Well, it's patient. It's kind. This brand of love doesn't envy. It doesn't boast, it's not proud. It does not dishonor others. Love never treats another person dishonorably, disgracefully, indecently".

Again, love never treats another person, dishonorably, disgracefully, or indecently. One more time. Love never treats another person dishonorably, disgracefully, or indecently because Jesus never treated another person, including you, dishonorably, disgracefully, or indecently. What if we just got that right?

Love, he goes on, he says that love doesn't create regret. It's not self-seeking, it's not easily angered, it doesn't keep score. Love conveniently forgets the bad and elevates the good. Love forgives and pretends to forget. That's what love requires. Love doesn't delight in evil, but rejoices with what's true. It always protects. In other words, love never smuggles something harmful into the relationship, just the opposite. Love keeps harmful things out. Love doesn't seek to win arguments. Love works to protect the relationship. Love chooses to trust.

See, he finishes up this powerful piece of literature. He says, "Love always hopes and it always preserves. It always protects". That's what love requires of us. That's why our fifth question is not for the faint of heart. But before you decide to remove it from the list of questions to ask, whenever you're making a decision, I want you to consider this, isn't that or aren't these things, what you hope for or even expect from the people closest to you, your spouse, your fiancée, your significant other, your kids. Isn't this what you hope for

from your friends and your neighbors and the people you work with?

I mean, if these are the behaviors or responses we consciously or even subconsciously expect from others, shouldn't they be required of us as well? So, before you react to someone, before you over respond to someone, before you remind them of their past, before you get out of the car and go into the house to straighten everybody out, before you walk into his or her office, as you're contemplating that invitation, before you decide, ask, what does love require of me? What does love require? I know what I've done in the past. I know what everybody expects. I know what everybody else does. I know what my pattern and my habit has been. I know what they deserve, but what does love require of me?

If you're a Jesus follower, this is like asking, what does my Lord require of me? It may require you to get up out of your chair in just a few minutes and walk into the kitchen or the bedroom and apologize. It may require you to pick up your phone and rebuild a bridge that you burned down with your unassailable logic

and sarcasm. You are right, but being right wasn't what love required. You may need to write a letter or rewrite an email and know the other party may not be interested in what love requires of them or what love requires of you, but that's okay, right? Chances are, isn't this true? Chances are there was a time when you weren't interested in what God's love for you required of him, but he didn't quit pursuing you.

There are things, and this may be hard for you to take coming from me. But there are things that I'll never understand. In fact, there are things that Jesus said, I'm not exactly sure what to do with in the modern world. But my lack of understanding never impedes my capacity to put others first. As complicated as so many things are, there's so many things I'll never understand, but when it comes down to this question, as much as I don't know, I almost always know what love requires of me. And if Jesus was correct, apparently that's enough. If Jesus was correct, that's what it means to be his follower. That's the center. That's the kingdom of God on earth. What does love require of you?