

reSource

£7.50 (UK) No 6
Autumn 2005

magazine



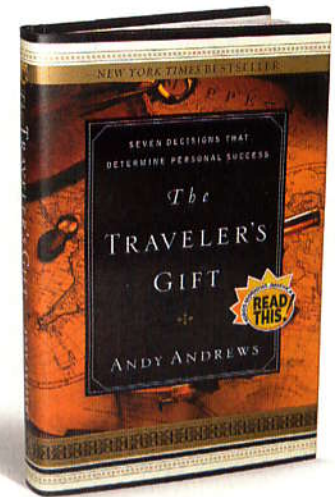
Seven Decisions to Personal Success

Andy Andrews talks to Christine Miller

Andy Andrews was one of the keynote speakers at the 2005 National Speakers Association convention I attended this summer in Atlanta, Georgia, and I have to admit I had never heard of him before. His entertaining, engaging style certainly amused the 1600-strong audience, but contained within his stories and jokes were powerful messages concerning the growth and development of ourselves and our planet. Homeless as a young adult, Andy made the discovery that there are seven decisions that work without exception to transform lives. Now, as someone who has been invited to speak by four different US presidents, has performed for the US Military, and delivered speeches for many Fortune 500 companies, Andy has been described as one of the most influential people in America today.

After I contacted his office to arrange this interview, Andy's Chief Solutions Officer, Nick Francis, sent me two books - "The Traveller's Gift" and "Island of Saints" - so I could be fully conversant with his work. I wasn't sure what to expect, although the reviews were excellent, and Andy definitely seemed to have a knack for storytelling. In fact, I found both books powerful, yet easy to read, and those skilful storytelling skills were prominently displayed throughout, making them a joy to read.

I was curious about what had prompted Andy to turn his life round at the age of nineteen, and here's what he told me.



Christine: Was there a certain something, a defining moment that prompted you to ask yourself the key question "is life just a lottery ticket or are there choices one can make to direct his future?" at a critical point in your life when you were 19 years old and sleeping rough on the streets, that helped you get your life back on track?

Andy: The defining moment that really got me to the point of asking that question was the realisation that I was at the point where I had no money, no family, nobody to help, no car, no place to live, no job. So I really was at my wits' end, and that was the moment when I asked: "Is that all there is in my life?" "Can I control this?" "Is this life just a lottery ticket, and this is my ticket?" So that was when I really started to examine whether life was just chance, or if I had any control at all over my future.

It was those questions that started directing my search, and at that time I started reading. I read between 200 - 300 biographies of these happy, successful, financially secure, influential people and in my search I asked myself what is this about? Were they born this way, or was this something that they did, something that they became. If it was something they did, then how long did it take them to do it, and what exactly did they do. That was how I discovered the seven principles, which I then used for to pull my life out of those circumstances. These later became the Seven Decisions around which I

built the story of the Travellers Gift.

Christine: How did you determine which were the seven main principles when you were sifting through the 200-plus biographies you read?

Andy: Those were the seven things that cross-referenced in every one of those people's lives. I could see all seven things in each one of those people's lives, and that's how I narrowed it down to seven. There were other characteristics that people had, but they may have not necessarily cross-referenced with everyone else, so these were the principles that were enduring in people's lives. That is why the Seven Decisions are so powerful, why they work every time, because they are principles. I later put them in a story in *The Traveller's Gift*, because stories are the easiest way for me to learn.

*Christine: Apart from your material for your comedy act, which was obviously very highly effective, had you been writing at all prior to *The Traveller's Gift*?*

Andy: I wrote magazine articles, or short stories, but *The Traveller's Gift* was the first novel I wrote.

*Christine: Was there an event or a significant happening in your life that prompted you to start writing *The Traveller's Gift*?*

Andy: For years, I had been studying those Seven Decisions from the time I had identified them, and even through to this morning, I continue to study them, to think about them, and try to figure out more effective ways to relate them to people. Through the years, I had talked about them with certain people at certain times, and I would search for a really effective means to put those seven things across. Essentially, it evolved over a period of time until about six years ago, when I thought "I learn best with stories" - and so I came up with the story.

The Seven Decisions

1. HARRY S. TRUMAN

The Responsible Decision:

The buck stops here.

I will not let my history control my destiny.

2. KING SOLOMON

The Guided Decision:

I will seek wisdom.

God moves mountains to create the opportunity of His choosing. It is up to you to be ready to move yourself.

3. JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN

The Active Decision:

I am a person of action.

Many people move out of the way for a person on the run; others are caught up in his wake.

4. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

The Certain Decision:

I have a decided heart.

Criticism, condemnation, and complaint are creatures of the wind. They come and go on the wasted breath of lesser beings and have no power over me.

5. ANNE FRANK

The Joyful Decision:

Today I will choose to be happy.

Our very lives are fashioned by choice. First we make choices. Then our choices make us.

6. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Compassionate Decision:

I will greet this day with a forgiving spirit.

You will find that God rarely uses a person whose main concern is what others are thinking.

7. GABRIEL

The Persistent Decision:

I will persist without exception.

Reason can only be stretched so far, but faith has no limits. The only limit to your realization of tomorrow is the doubt you hold fast today.

am able to see things in a clearer manner if somebody presents ideas to me in a story rather than in a text book. With a text book, I can remember the facts until it's time to take the test; but with a story I'll remember the facts forever. I wanted to present an effective way for somebody to be shown in the worst position in their lives, and so David Ponder, the hero of the *Traveller's Gift*, his life is in a shambles. His job and his financial means have been taken away, his daughter is sick, his life is in trouble. I put him in a situation where he is able to travel through time, and meet seven historical figures who are each going through tough times in their own lives.

He has conversations with each of these seven people, and then has the opportunity to receive from them a written decision. If he understands and follows that decision, and puts it in his heart and makes it part of his life, then each of these Seven Decisions will change his future.

There are troubled times when we would all like to be able to go back and get some advice from great people, whether it is our family or great leaders - and it was an interesting device to be able to put into this situation and create a story.

Christine: Do you tell stories to your children?

Andy: Yes, every night and several times during the day. I think that's the best way to teach my boys, because that way they do listen. Nobody wants to listen to a lecture, but if somebody says "Let me tell you a story about a time...", then that perks you up and grabs your interest. So with my children, I tell them stories about when I was a little boy, when I did such a thing, and what my daddy did.

Christine: How has your life changed since you added being a highly successful author to your accomplishments?