

God came to him and said, "You're the one I want."

But Satan tells us, "Bubba, you're done for. There's no point in going back to Church. There's no point in going back to Christ, and there's no point in going back to God. He will never forgive you for the decisions that you've made." Satan lies to us in all different ways and he picks the thing that's going to work on us. For someone that's very scientific and wasn't raised in a Church, he tells you that you must be an idiot to believe in God with all the scientific knowledge that's available. And for someone like me who has stepped away believes that God is not going to forgive you because you chose to step away from Him. When I had finally realized what Satan had done, God said, "Andy, if you come back, I'll have you back. And I won't just have you back as someone I look at through the corner of my eye and say, 'I remember what you did'. I'll forgive you and things will be exactly as they were before. Just come back." One of the greatest stories in the Bible is prodigal son. He knew what he was doing. He said, "I'm not willing to wait. Give it to me now. I want it all right now. I'm going live my life the way I want. And when he came back, he came back on his knees begging for forgiveness. Because when I'm in charge of my life, I make a mess of things. I screw it up as bad as you can. I allowed myself to believe that God was finished with me. There was nothing left for me and Him together and I believed that lie. But God had told me, "No, come back. Come back. I love you no matter what you've done." And now that I have a son, I understand that love of God a little better. But God's love for me is so much greater than my love for my son. I can't imagine that, but I know it now because I had that moment when God said to me, "Come on, you know this is wrong, you know this is foolish. It's not working out the way you want it to work out with the decisions that you're making. You're not having what you wanted to have. Are you satisfied with what you have? Are you satisfied with the life that you've made for yourself? I know that you're not, and I can make you happier if you'll just come back to me and follow my laws." I started practicing law, and was elected a county judge. During this time there have been times when I've been in absolute despair about the world and the way that it is. The things that people choose to do to one another, but I also get to see those moments of mercy. I also get to see those moments of grace, and I begin to understand when God looks at me, He's not looking at me like an earthly judge would look at someone before them. I'm not His defendant. I'm His child and He needs to correct me. My struggle with cigarettes is not over. That's a bad decision I made a really long time ago, and I'm still suffering those consequences. My mom told me always,

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“God will forgive you what you have done if you truly repent, change your ways and turn back to Him in that direction. But He does not agree to save us from the consequences of our sin.” And that’s an important thing to remember and as a judge, that’s a thing that strikes home. I am not saved from the consequences of my sin. We are not saved from the consequences of the things that we have done, but we always have God’s forgiveness. We will always have his mercy. We always have his grace. And I can go back when I am discouraged because I have made another mistake. I think it was Paul that said, “Why do I do the things I know I should not, and why do I not do the things that I know I should?” This is one of the great men of God in history who put his own life on the line for Jesus. But even he gloried in the idea that when he fell, there was God waiting to catch him.

My grandmother had a picture hanging in her house that said, “The times when we walk beside each other.” I think it was called “Footprints in the Sand.” I used to think that was the corniest thing when I was growing up. She had it on a piece of wood laminated and lacquered on there, but y’all it’s the truth that when we are not strong enough, God is. He’s always with us, He’s always beside us and when I make a bad decision, when I again mess up and do the thing I know I shouldn’t, when I again give in to my anger, when I again allow myself to raise my voice at somebody that I’m dealing with at court and yell at them at something that they’ve chosen to do. Then I go back to my office and I feel the weight of what I’ve done and I say to myself, “Andy, why can you not stop?” You know, I know that God forgives me. I ask Him for His help, and He gives it to me. I know He forgives me when I do. We all tend to revel in God’s grace instead of just having that joy that God is so good to us and that He’s so willing to forgive us. I think that sometimes I have that tendency to think, “Well, it’s alright, I’ll do it. I think God’s going to forgive me.” We got to be on guard against that.

This has been a great experience for me because the reality is you don’t think about how good God is to you as often as you should. I tend to get wrapped up in my job, the world around me, and the things that are going on around me. This has been a real opportunity to think of what God has done for me, and what it means to me what He’s done for me, and what He saved me from. But God gave me the grace to go on. Every day I get to say that about the people who are standing in front of me. Who at some point when they were 5 or 10 or 15 or 20 made a decision that has altered the entire course of their lives. But it’s always good for me to remember too that I have a God, no matter where I am, no matter where they are, if we would just go to Him and say, “I give up. I cannot do it on my own. I need

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