

## *Reframing Your Appetites - Andy Stanley*

The internal tension that we all carry because of our appetites, the only word that all of our appetites know is **“more.”** We think about food, but there are lots. There’s food and sex... I’m sure there’s more, but there’s food and sex. Of course, I’m thinking about this through the eyes of a guy because that’s all I’ve ever been.

- There’s an appetite for love, to be cherished, to feel successful, there’s all of these things we’re designed with, but each one of these creates tension because they only have one word in their vocabulary, **more.** “Every time you get more responsibility in an organization, you want **more.**” “No matter how many times you win, you want **more.**”

When it comes to leadership there are some appetites that are heightened above the average person. These are the one’s you’ll have to manage more than the average person.

- Progress
- Responsibility
- Respect – We want recognition for what we’ve accomplished
- Win – This sounds so non-spiritual, but we want to win. Every year Outreach magazine publishes the list of the fastest growing, best, etc. churches. Every year my assistant sets it on her desk, and I don’t dare allow anyone see me pick this up. We all know that stuff is kind of silly, but of course I want to know.
- Growth
- Fame
- Achievement
- To Be Envied – I heard Rick Warren talk about this. This was very powerful and convicting for me. Guys, why do we buy the cars we buy. We want to be seen. We can’t see our car when we are driving it...because we are inside of it! There is something in all of us, we want to be seen and envied.

Three things related to appetites.

- God created them, and sin distorted them. – To win, create, take responsibility, etc. are all good things.
- **Appetites are never fully and finally satisfied. EVER.** – About three days after a big win, the win is in the rearview mirror, and you want **more.** We get in trouble because we think there is something or someone out there that is going to absolutely, fully and finally fulfill an appetite. We spend our lives pursuing a golden ring that doesn’t exist. You’ll never have a big enough church, have written enough books, have a cool enough car, perfect enough children, etc. This means there is always tension in this area of our lives.
- Your appetites always whisper **NOW**, never **LATER.**

If we just stop here, we’ve covered a lot.

***They are never fully and finally satisfied. I can't let them rule my life.***

Your response to that truth will determine the direction of your ministry, family, and life. Some of your parents have torn their family apart searching for that ultimate person. Some of your parents have finished well because they've realized there is no one else.

I can't name two people who have lost their ministry because of bad theology, but we can name countless people who have lost it because of their inability to manage their appetite.

If we can't get this right, it doesn't matter if we get anything else right. If we live as if just ***a little more will finally satisfy, in the end is embarrassment and the loss of what you consider most valuable.***

### ***Genesis 25 – Jacob and Esau***

In ancient middle eastern culture, the oldest son was given by his father a thing called a birthright. It was extraordinary valuable. 1) It had a financial side. The oldest son received 2-3x as much inheritance as the rest of the kids. 2) You were given authority over the rest of the family. You could just make decisions and no one could dispute it because you had the birthright. 3) There was a belief that if you had the birthright, God was almost forced to bless you. That He would be with you in a unique way.

Older brothers rarely need or want anything from younger brothers, but when they do, the smart younger brother hits the pause button. I don't want to rush through this moment, you actually need me. When older brother needs something from younger brother, younger brother pauses and thinks, what is most valuable to my older brother? This is what's going on with Jacob and Esau when Esau comes in from the wilderness and needs food from Jacob. Jacob replies. "First sell me your birthright."

Who would trade their future for something invaluable, temporary of a bowl of stew. Who would throw away their ***ministry, marriage, respect of their children, reputation in the community, influence in the community, their future,*** for something as temporary as a bowl of stew.

***Do you know who would trade their future for a bowl of stew? You and I would if it were the right bowl of stew.*** Appetites are powerful.

Every single month and year, you're going to be offered a bowl of stew, and you'll be tempted to make a trade.

Esau says, "Look, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?" This sounds extreme, but there's not a person who doesn't have this problem.

Every single one of us have had this moment where our appetite becomes larger than life. This is a psychological reality.

**Impact Bias** – Takes a simple appetite and magnifies it out of proportion. Your brain tells you this thing is going to feel **way better** than you’re actually going to feel.

**Focalism** – Focuses our minds on one thing and blurs out everything else. Guys, this is why there are girls you remember in high school who didn’t notice you then and has not thought of you since.

This is why Esau says, “Who needs a birthright when I can have a bowl of stew.” This happens in your brain every single time an appetite gets blown up out of proportion.

But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. (*Genesis 25:33 TNIV*)

It would have been so helpful to Esau if one of us could appear and say, “Wait, wait, wait.” Imagine how Esau’s legacy would have been different if it had been his family that had become the nation of Israel. *If God had been the God of Abraham, Issac, and Esau. If Jesus had come from the line of Esau.* Now, I know you’re hungry, but you want to trade all of that for a bowl of stew. It would be better that you die than give that away. But there was no one there to reframe the appetite, and there **will not** be anyone standing next to you or me and reframe our appetites either.

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and they were gone. So Esau despised his birthright (*Genesis 25:34 TNIV* paraphrased slightly)

This tension will never ever go away. Whatever you want, you will only want **more**, and all of your appetites will whisper **now**, not later. Your only hope is to reframe your appetites in the context of what God has called you to do, in the context of that still small voice when God called you as a teenager. ***There are opportunities you should never take advantage of because they’re going to pull you away from what God has called you to.*** There are places you should not go just because they’re bigger and better. You’re going to get there and realize you never should have gone because they’re ***bigger and messier, not better.***

***Ten years from now...***

Sometime during this conference, I want you to put that phrase at the top of a blank piece of paper and write whatever comes to mind. What do you want to see happen in your ministry, your marriage, your church, the people you disciple. In doing so you will reframe every single one of your appetites.

Someone told me to do this 22 years ago. It took me weeks to figure it out. The bigger and clearer and more defined the frame, the less grip our appetites have on our lives. ***They always want more and the tension never goes away.***

- ***What’s your bowl of stew?*** What’s the thing being held out in front of you that is promising more than it’s going to deliver. For some of you this is a relationship that will wreck your marriage and your legacy, one that will change the stories your children and

grandchildren and great-grandchildren tell about you. You've decided to trade what you've decided is most important for a bowl of stew.

- ***What are you talking yourself into?*** You know how this works, your appetite gets all bowed up around something and sends a message to your brain to make up reasons for something. You already know what you would tell someone else in your situation. You're not unique, and your situation is not unique.
- ***What are you contemplating that your spouse is uncomfortable with?*** And you're just saying, "You just don't understand."
- ***What is it that you're doing that is not illegal or immoral but you hope no one finds out about?*** One of the best pieces of advice I ever got was from Ronald Blue. ***Never do anything that you wouldn't want to stand up in front of your congregation and explain.*** That piece of advice has guided me away from things that weren't illegal or immoral but that looking back I'm so glad I didn't do. That's a reframing question.

Here's what I know about you. What's true of Esau is true of you. ***You have no idea what God wants to accomplish through your life.*** You have no idea what God wants to accomplish through your children. You have no idea what God wants to accomplish through your grandchildren. You have no idea what God wants to accomplish in your community. But God knows.

***Reframe and Refrain – but whatever you do, don't trade your future for a bowl of stew.***

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