

ANDY STANLEY



Keeping Your Job From Cheating Your Family

WHEN WORK & FAMILY COLLIDE



Previously released as *Choosing to Cheat*

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WORK &
FAMILY
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For Bob Walker,

Father of my wife
Grandfather of my children
Example to me

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Who Wins?

Several years ago my wife, Margaret, and I were having dinner with Andy Stanley and his wife, Sandra, as he shared with us his vision for our church. It was a pivotal moment for the leaders and congregation of North Point Community Church, because we had once again outgrown our space. Andy was already preaching twice on Sundays, and it had been suggested that the church start a Saturday night service. As he shared with us that night his hesitation about cutting into his family time on Saturdays, I once again saw the heart and wisdom of this godly man.

Week after week, using the Bible as his guide, Andy teaches and confronts his congregation with the important challenges we all face. One of those challenges is finding a balance between work and family responsibilities. And in this book he eloquently addresses the issue. He asks us: Is there a more important subject than this? Andy believes that for leaders, professionals in all industries, pastors, teachers, homemakers, and parents, the issue is the same—we have a critical need to bring balance to our lives.

Andy asks the tough questions and then gives us some answers about how we can go about accomplishing what may be life's greatest challenge—achieving our goals outside the home when faced with the crucial task of partnering and parenting at home. How can we be successful without sacrificing our relationships with those closest to us?

Andy's answers are biblical, practical, and extremely relevant to our modern way of life. He doesn't pull any punches. He confronts us with truth and transparency. Just as he has made a commitment in his own life to balance his family time with his work, he encourages us to make similar commitments.

This is a life-changing book. And one of the main reasons it's life-changing is that a godly man who makes choices in his own life to never sacrifice his family for success has written it. If he wins the world but loses his family, what has he gained?

Who Wins?

Every couple, every parent, and every leader needs to read this book and consider the question: Who wins when my family and work collide?

—Dr. John C. Maxwell

Founder, The John Maxwell Company

Best-selling author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*

Everybody Cheats

For almost everyone, the word *cheating* has negative connotations, especially if you've ever been cheated. Students cheat in school. Adults cheat on their income taxes. Husbands cheat on their wives. Most of us have cheated in a card game or two.

But allow me to use this unpleasant word in a broader sense. Try thinking of it as simply *choosing to give up one thing in hope of gaining something else of greater value.*

By that definition there's no doubt we're all cheaters. Daily we decide to shortchange one thing in order to more fully experience another. It's especially true with our schedules. We face a

variety of responsibilities and opportunities—work, family, hobbies, clubs, sports. The list is endless. Each competes for our attention. Each competes for our most valuable resource: our time. But to give each the time it demands or deserves would require more time than any of us has.

So we “cheat.” We give up certain opportunities for the sake of others. We invest in some relationships while neglecting others. We allocate our time the best we can, knowing all the while that somebody’s going to feel cheated. Unfortunately, that “somebody” is usually someone we care a great deal about.

Which brings me to the point of this little book.

I’ve spent hundreds of hours with men and women who’ve cheated their families for the sake of their career goals. They all admitted knowing there was a problem. They all tried in their own way to dissipate the tension. But they felt trapped. Over time they dreaded coming home. The reception was cold. The conversation was filled with sarcasm used to hide the pain. The discomforts of home drove many to work even longer hours. Others went to the gym. Some to the bar. A few found comfort in the arms of co-workers or friends.

Eventually things unraveled to the point that they had no choice but to seek help. For most there was an event, a wake-up call: *Suddenly* their kids had withdrawn. *Overnight* someone’s grades had dropped off. *Out of nowhere* she was more interested in tennis than the family. *Without explanation* intimacy evapo-

rated. But in each case, these were symptoms of something that had been brewing for quite some time.

We all wrestle with the tension between work and family. Regardless of which side of the equation you're on, you know what it's like to deal with the endless cycle of guilt, anger, jealousy, and rejection. Left unattended, these seething emotions have the potential to erode the foundations of even the strongest marriages.

But there's a solution. Strangely enough, the solution is similar to the problem. Both involve "cheating," in that broad sense of giving up one thing to gain something else. Simply put, you must choose to cheat at work rather than at home.

In chapter 1 you'll be introduced to some friends of mine whose struggles typify the experiences of many. In chapters 2 through 5 we'll focus on the dynamic created in the heart of a spouse or child who feels cheated.

Then in part two we'll develop a strategy for change. The principles in these final five chapters are drawn largely from the life of a young man who found himself with a dilemma similar to ours. The primary difference being that his *life*, not merely his livelihood, was on the line.

When Work and Family Collide is about establishing priorities. A priority is something you put ahead of something else. A priority is something you say *yes* to even when it means saying no to other important things. Everybody "cheats" like this. It's

Introduction

a principle already at work in your life...one way or another. When you put it to work *for* you, it has the power to transform every facet of your life. When you choose to do so in accordance with God's priorities for your life, it's an invitation for him to bless you in ways you never dared to imagine.

PART ONE



INSIDE THE
CHEATED
HEART



When Your World Needs Reordering

Joel Manby entered the work force with all the subtlety of a meteor entering the earth's atmosphere. With an MBA from Harvard and tremendous leadership instincts, he was destined, it seemed, to move from one accomplishment to the next.

Growing up, Joel had watched his father work sunup to sundown plowing fields, mowing lawns, and working in a factory. But somehow the family never seemed to get ahead. With the opportunities Joel had been given to make a better life, he felt a responsibility before God to be a good steward of those

prospects. In essence, he felt called by God to achieve his maximum career potential as a servant-leader in business.

And achieve he did.

Upon graduating from Harvard, Joel was offered his dream job—he was one of the first four people hired for a new General Motors start-up soon to be known as Saturn. As part of this groundbreaking team, Joel distinguished himself in the auto industry.

Fueled by that early success, Joel moved up quickly through the GM ranks. His skills, gifts, and work ethic made him perfectly suited for high-level executive leadership. He was destined for the top. At the age of thirty-four, he received an incredible offer to become the president of Saab Cars USA. So he left GM to take on a whole new level of demands. Joel excelled in his new position, and with the success came more responsibility. Joel was soon put in charge of Saab in Asia, South America, and Canada as well. There seemed to be no limit to his future, but at the same time, there seemed to be no end to his frustration.

You see, career wasn't the only arena in which Joel had goals for his life. He and his wife, Marki, had dreams for their family as well. By the time Joel reached his peak at Saab, they had three daughters. While each of Joel's promotions took them a step closer to reaching their financial goals, each demanded more of his time as well. Time that he knew belonged to Marki and the kids.

Marki embraced her role with the same tenacity Joel exhibited in the marketplace. She was committed to being a team player. She didn't always like the hand she was dealt, but she accepted it and did the best she could. She held down the home front while Joel worked to build a bright future for the family. But there was always the frustration, the loneliness, and at times, the anger.

As Joel describes it, "I was traveling more than 50 percent of the time. There were car shows and dealer meetings all the time. And when I was home, I wasn't really there—I had a late-night conference call with Japan or an early-morning conference call with Sweden. In my heart I wanted to be with my family. But I felt like this job was something I had to do. Our family had financial goals, and I felt like God had given me this talent that I should be using. And I viewed each promotion as his reward for a job well done. The truth is, I just couldn't say no. Looking back, it wasn't God prying me away from my family. It was me."

One day, a close friend called Marki to wish her happy birthday. During their casual conversation, a wave of emotions began to surface, surprising even Marki. It was the second year in a row that Joel had been out of town on her birthday. He hadn't forgotten. He just had a job to do. And she had willingly agreed he should go. But somehow, in that moment, Marki was hit with the reality that the very things they were working so

hard to achieve were slipping through their fingers with each passing day.

In yet another long-distance phone call, Marki confronted Joel with the painful truth that he was not being the husband or father she had signed up for. In the weeks that followed, Joel and Marki had many heart-to-heart conversations. As Joel began to notice the despair in her countenance, he knew he had to make some major changes. Fast.

“I looked at Marki, and she was bawling her eyes out,” he explains. “I knew that if I continued down this path, I was going to lose my family.”

Joel made a decision right then and there. He didn't have a plan. He wasn't sure how he could pull off the changes necessary to bring balance to his personal life. He didn't know how he could disentangle himself from his involvement in the car industry. But one thing was certain: He refused to keep going in the direction he was going. Things had to get better. Little did he realize just how bad things would get.

In an attempt to regain control of his life and family, Joel left the international demands of the auto industry for the fast-growing dot-com world. On the morning of April 4, 2000, Joel began his first day as the CEO of a well-funded Internet start-up company, with high hopes for the future. By the end of business on April 4, 2000, it was a very different picture. That day's market plummet marked the beginning of the stock mar-

ket crash of 2000–2002, which caused the loss of five trillion dollars in the market value of companies, as well as the loss of Joe’s hopes for an easy answer to the challenges between work and home. In fact, two weeks into the new company, Joel found himself laying off two-thirds of the company’s three hundred employees. The emotional toll of firing two hundred people, combined with twenty-hour workdays, led to more sleepless nights. His first attempt to reclaim the life he wanted led to further distance from Marki and greater desperation.

The remarkable events that followed have had an incredible impact on Joel’s life. As he and Marki describe it, the aftermath of Joel’s decision to reorder his world was the clearest indication they’d ever experienced of God’s presence in their lives and marriage.

FORCED INTO IT

In the midst of their crisis, Joel and Marki heard me share a simple principle that serves as the thesis of this book. On the occasion Joel and Marki heard me share this truth, it was the first time I’d ever said it publicly. I’d been sharing this principle with couples for more than a decade in the privacy of a counseling environment. But for some reason, I never considered the value of sharing this principle in a group setting. Since that time I’ve had the opportunity to explain this principle to thousands

of business and church leaders, and the response has been overwhelming.

Perhaps the reason I was initially reluctant to talk about this in public is that it highlights a tension I live with every day. This isn't a lesson I've learned and put behind me. This is a principle I have to make a conscious decision to apply daily, or it will slip away. Like many people I know, I love what I do. I rarely have a bad day at the office. My work environment couldn't be any better suited for my gifts and personality. I love to go to work. And like you, I have more to do than I can ever hope to get done. Every afternoon when I leave the office, there are loose ends: phone calls I didn't return, meetings I cut short, and people I didn't get to spend time with who need and deserve my undivided attention.

At the same time, I love my wife and kids. I love to go home. And like you, there's more to do at home than will ever get done. Never once have my kids looked at me and said, "Hey, Dad, we've played enough. Why don't you run back in the house and see if you can get some work done?" Never once has Sandra complained about me coming home too early or doing too many things to help her around the house.

What it boils down to is this: Someone's going to get cheated. Worse yet, somebody's going to *feel* cheated. Someone will feel as if I'm not giving him or her what they deserve or need.

In that sense, the issue is never “Am I cheating?” The issue is always “*Where* am I cheating?”

TAKING THE PRESSURE OFF

Everybody holds back, stops short, cuts corners, sets boundaries. You have to. You have several important calls on your life. You have career potential to fulfill, a spouse to love, a family to raise, a ministry to perform. The list goes on. Each of these things has tremendous merit in your life and for the world at large. None of them should be neglected.

However, when you consider the limited number of hours in a day, there’s no way you can reach your full potential in all those areas. There’s just not enough time.

Your situation isn’t that different from mine. If you stayed at work until everything was finished...if you took advantage of every opportunity that came your way...if you sought out every angle to maximize your abilities, improve your skills, and advance your career...you would never go home.

Likewise, if you stayed at home until every ounce of affection was poured out in all the appropriate places...if you kept giving until every emotional need was met...if you did every chore, finished the “honey do” list, and did everything necessary to ensure that everyone felt loved...you would never make it to work.

In fact, if you're a parent, you know that your kids alone could command every waking hour if you let them. Add to that your fitness goals, hobbies, and friendships. The list is endless, and so are the time requirements.

So let me take some pressure off. Your problem is not discipline. Your problem is not organization. Your problem is not that you have yet to stumble onto the perfect schedule. And your problem is not that the folks at home demand too much of your time. The problem is this: there's not enough time to get everything done that you're convinced—or others have convinced you—needs to get done.

As a result, someone or something isn't going to get what he wants from you...what she needs from you...what he deserves from you...certainly not what she *expects* from you. There's no way around it. There's just not enough time in your day to be all things to all people. You're going to have to hold back somewhere. Our knee-jerk reaction to this dilemma is to answer the call of the squeakiest wheel. Whoever creates the biggest mess ends up with the lion's share of our time and attention. We run from fire to fire, troubleshooting our way through life, rescuing the needy and rewarding those who can't seem to stay out of trouble.

But that certainly isn't strategic, and it doesn't solve anything. Over time, our families learn that the only way to get our attention is to create a crisis. And let's face it; it's amazing how

much time we can steal from work when our kids are in crisis. Men and women become incredibly bold with their managers, company presidents, and boards when there's a crisis at home. What was unthinkable becomes nonnegotiable.

I know a CEO who spent twenty-nine days with his wife at a detox center six hundred miles from their home. Twenty-nine days. Yet in the previous three years, he had done almost nothing in terms of investing in what he would tell you now is his most important relationship. And if anyone had suggested he take a twenty-nine-day vacation in order to invest in his marriage, he would have laughed. But he did—only when he had to.

I know a contractor who almost had to shut down his business to attend to his daughter's drug addiction. He escorted her from one rehab center to another, trying to find her "the best medical treatment in the country." This is the same guy who could never find the time to complete an entire week of vacation with his family. They left on Saturday; he joined them on Wednesday. But suddenly he has the time.

Wouldn't you do the same for your wife, your husband, and your kids? Of course you would.

So why wait? Instead of allowing the most recent crisis to force the issue, why not be governed by the greatest purpose? Why not "cheat" by design?

But how? How do we scale back at work without destroying our careers? And if you cheat your career goals, won't that

end up cheating your family in the long run? Can a homemaker cheat her “to do” list without cheating her family?

These are complex issues. On paper there seems to be no solution. But all is not as it appears. For as we’ll see, when we’re willing to reprioritize in a way that honors our heavenly Father, he’s willing to touch down in the midst of our personal chaos and bring the order and balance we so desperately desire.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

Before we go any further, I need to provide you with a word of warning. As I mentioned earlier, this approach to addressing the collision between work and family is held together by a principle.

Principles are powerful things. In the same way gravity affects everything around the earth, a principle influences everything in your personal universe. Whether you’re aware of a principle or not, it still applies. You can ignore it, or you can leverage it. But either way, it goes right on affecting your world. You can break a rule, but not a principle. In fact, by failing to observe a principle, you can break yourself against it.

The principle in this book will cut right to the heart of your priorities. It will test your loyalty and expose your commitment. When exposed to the light of this simple truth, gray areas will suddenly become either black or white. It will reveal your heart

as it relates to your family, your work, and your children. This principle will expose your attitude toward your heavenly Father as well. It may upset you. It may offend you. But one thing it won't do is lie. If you're ready to take an honest look at yourself, the choices you've been making and why you make them, you're a candidate for change. My prayer is that you can put this principle to work *for* you, before the consequences of ignoring it have a chance to work *against* you.