

Dave Anderson: I was embarrassed to say, "No, I can't do that. No, I don't think I'm good at that." And now it's easy to say no because I know what I must say yes to. What are you wired to do? And then how does that impact the company that you're running? Because it's going to be an extension of that. Until you decide what you're designed to do and how that is going to guide whatever it is you're leading, I think you—

Jim Piper: Hello everyone again, this is Jim Piper and it is the Today Counts show. Today I have with me as my guest, Dave Anderson. Dave Anderson, I would say it's fair to say he's a leadership expert, does a lot of training, trains leaders, and he is, I think it's the right thing to say, the founder of Learn to Lead that he started 25 years ago. Good morning, Dave, and is that correct?

Dave Anderson: That is correct. Good morning, Jim. Good to see you.

Jim Piper: I am sure glad that you have joined us today. Tell us a little bit about Learn to Lead. You told me that you started 25 years ago. Why? What's your mission? What are you up to? What's it all about?

Dave Anderson: Yeah, it was never really a master plan. I started in the automotive retail business as a car salesman in Wichita Falls, Texas. And I loved the business. It was not hard to get ahead because most people didn't want to work hard, kind of like it is out there today. And I worked up in the management, got a wonderful job opportunity to move out to Palo Alto, California. And I was part of a nice-sized leadership group there that I was director of operations for. I developed the leadership training for the group and wrote our own programs and wrote my first book while I was running that group. It was a wonderful experience.

A public company bought the group in 25 years ago. And my first conversation with them was that they wanted to cut my pay. And I said, "Well, let's make this our last conversation. It'll be our first and our last." And I went home and I told my wife, "Well, I hope you enjoyed your semi-retirement because we're starting a company and we're going to work." And so it was not a master plan, but it evolved really well because I'd written the first book and I was writing a column for a magazine on leadership. We were known for the results we were getting there. And I'd already started to get some invitations to speak in different places. And so that was 25 years ago and it's just evolved into a wonderful, wonderful experience in business.

We're in Southern California now. We're about 35 miles north of Los Angeles. Our corporate offices are here and our training center and I'm gone a lot. I speak about a hundred times a year. I've spoken in 21 countries and because of the 16 books, Jim, we deal with all sorts of

industries. So I still have a large niche in the automotive business. I've written some business books based on biblical principles. So we have that as well. I have a martial arts background, so I got into mindset, getting your mindset right, and I work with athletes as a mental skills trainer on an individual basis, and I've worked with three different college basketball teams as our mental skills trainer.

And so, principles are principles, and principles don't care who you are, where you're from, or how old you are, or what you do. They will work if you work them. So it's just been, it's been a wonderful ride, and we started a foundation. The Matthew 25:35 Foundation, my wife and I did about a decade and a half ago and we, you know, do what Matthew 25:35 says. We feed people and support prison ministries and take care of orphans and a lot of the inner city kids here in LA that we're able to help maybe get a trade rather than join a gang. And so it's always rewarding to give back that way. So that's the short bit of my last 25-year history or so.

Jim Piper: Yeah, Dave, I've never sold cars. I've never been in that industry, but we do have a lot of similarities. I was a volunteer police chaplain for Chino Police Department, which is also considered, you know, the the LA sprawl. And I learned a lot there and dealt with and worked with a lot of the kids in the LA area. And there's a lot of challenges there for sure so that struck a chord with me. You come off pretty clearly as an energetic, outgoing, proactive type of person. Have you always been that way? When you kind of step outside of yourself and evaluate yourself, has that always been your personality from the time you were a kid or has that developed over time?

Dave Anderson: No, it was. It was odd because even as a kid, I was a really early riser, you know, even as a teenager, which is really rare, I was an early riser and an early-to-bed type of person. And I always had a lot of energy. It wasn't always spent in the right places. A lot of times it was scattered, too many interests, chasing too many things. And so I think like a lot of us learning how to harness and focus that energy is, you know, was a key for me. And like in our business, just really drilling down on accountability and leadership and holding yourself accountable and not trying to be everything to everybody in the training business, you know, and just like get yourself right, you know, and if you're a leader, get yourself right before you try to get your people right and focusing on that niche rather than being a jack of all trades, if you will, in the training business, I think has really helped us grow and develop an identity. So it's about taking that energy and harnessing it in a way that's productive, I think, but it's always been that way for me.

Jim Piper: Yeah, let's talk about that for a minute. I too struggled with that. When I was very young, as a teenager, until I was about 20, and I know maybe sound like I'm being hard on myself, but I had all kinds of jobs. I mean, I jumped from job to job to job to job while I was in

school. And then once I got that first corporate job with Bank of America, I think my shortest stint anywhere has been seven years. But even when I started my own thing, I struggled to figure out what it is that I do. And because often questions would come to me, do you do this? And, but what I didn't hear, do you do this? I heard, can you do this? And so, especially when you're in the beginning and you're trying to put food on the table, you know, your default answer is yes. Yes, yes, we do that. Yes, I do that. But I've also found working with my clients that a lot of people struggle with that, a lot of companies struggle with really defining who they are and what they do better than anyone else. Do you find that as a common topic in your leadership training?

Dave Anderson: It's pervasive, I think. I think it's pervasive. It's everywhere. I was at same way. So many of the people, I do a lot of Zoom coaching, one-on-one coaching with executives and athletes and so forth. And it's just getting them to do what I had to do back a few decades ago when I finally looked in the mirror and it's like, I got to understand, I'm not really great at that many things. Okay, so part of growth is identifying what are your gifts. I mean, there's a difference between an ability and a skill. An ability is the capacity to perform a task. So some people have the ability to interview or the ability to hold someone accountable, but it's not a skill. A skill is an ability you do particularly well, something you do particularly well. And usually, that's going to be because you have some talent for that. You have some wiring for that that makes developing that skill a little bit easier. And we all have talents at something, but certainly not everything. That's why we need each other. That's why we need to build a team. And it's being mature enough really to look in the mirror and say, this is what I'm good at. And I had to face the fact that I'm really not good at much. But the two things I felt like I can do, which is write and speak and communicate and be impactful in that way, I needed to spend more time there. So first you have to identify what are you wired to do? And then how does that impact the company that you're running? Because it's going to be an extension of that.

And I'm not good at technology, I'm not good at accounting, I'm not good at social, and I'm not trying to get good at that stuff. I have people that are good at that stuff. I'll outsource that, I'll delegate it, I'll automate it. I need to be able to stay in my zone. And when I start to get out of it, I make a mess of things. And I'm over-involving myself and I'm micromanaging and making talented people frustrated because it's like, get back in your lane.

Now that doesn't diminish my authority in those areas. I still have the final say and I still set the expectations, but I'm hiring people who are good at figuring out how to meet that expectation in a way that doesn't violate our processes or values. And a lot of people never get to that point. They brag about being that jack of all trades. They take pride in it and they're just worn out and they never-- They can get good at some things, but they never really become exceptional at anything. The good and the great things get in the way of the exceptional things. And I think until you decide what you're designed to do and how that is going to guide whatever it is you're leading, a church, a company, and what type of team you need to bring around you to supplement what your weaknesses are, I think you put a lid on yourself. And I did for a long time. I was embarrassed to say, "No, I can't do that. No, I don't think I'm good at that." And now it's easy to say no because I know what I must say yes to. And if you don't know what you must

say yes to, the things you're gifted to do, you don't know what to say no to, so you're spreading yourself way too thin.

Jim Piper: Yeah, if I could, I would, I'd like to kind of tag team with you on that and add to that. I think that, you know, I already inferred it and implied it that in the beginning of Lead Today, I really didn't know what-- Shame on me. I mean, I was 48 years old when I started it, I should have, but I didn't really know what it is I was trying to accomplish. And, I could fool myself into believing that I was multi-gifted and, you know, AKA jack of all trades to your point. But as I grew through that experience, I not only realized and came to the conclusion that you did is that, you know, I'm really good at this and I'm really good at this and I'm really good at this and I have received feedback that I'm good with this.

For example, for whatever reason, I do really well unraveling conflict. That's something that I do really well. I'm pretty good in a strategic place where I could sit and listen to a team and I can see the holes. I could see the things that could be. But I also sought help in helping me figure this out and I remember one story was that I was kind of at a fork in the road because most of my career success has come from the idea of executing, you know, executing tasks, executing things. And I was kind of addicted to that executing idea because I was good at it and I was receiving love for it. And so, you know, all of that gets involved in your psyche and it's difficult to escape even if you could do something different, better.

And what I learned is that really influencing is what I do best. It's what I do best. But I had to let go of executing to elevate myself to get better at that. And then I would say then finally, you know, once I made the intentional cognitive decision to let go of that guy who's always getting tasks done, stuff done, because A, for me, it was an appetite that, you know, no matter how much you got done one day, the next day, there's that pile and just keeps on coming. It's almost like the more you get done, the more that, you know, comes your way.

But then I grew to a place, Dave, where, I actually was able to say, I'm not even sure for me it's relevant whether I'm good at this or not good at this because some things I simply don't want to do anymore. And there are things where now I say, "Yeah, I'm good at that, but I don't want to do that because it takes away from what I really want to do." So one of the big questions I ask my clients, when I see that they're at this weird place, they're stuck. And maybe I'm detecting burnout, maybe I'm detecting boredom, maybe I'm detecting a lack of purpose in their life. I'll simply ask them, "Jim, do you even want to do this anymore?" And it's amazing how many of my clients said, "I've never even thought about that." And some of them come back and say, "I don't want to do this anymore." So we're not talking about-- I think I use the word trait the way you use the word ability, you know, so I took some notes. I agree with you there.

Ability, if I understand where you're coming from is to me a raw material. It's a fuel, but it's gotta be put in the right mechanism in order for it to become a skill, in order for it to actually be productive. But I think the conversation that we've already kind of tripped into is a really

important one for men and women that are really trying to get to the next level, is really step outside themselves and really think about some of these things. So what do you say to that?

Dave Anderson: I think you brought up a couple of really terrific points. You know, sometimes I think we glorify busyness and we, you know, if you're going to grow, you have to stop the glorification of busyness. I mean, we mistake motion for progress and speed versus direction and activity versus accomplishment. And we create the swirl of activity every day. And we have this false sense of accomplishment because we got all these things done. But I think a bigger question is not what you got done, but should you even be doing those things at all? It's not what did you get done today, but should you even be doing those things at all and realizing what those things are and what those things aren't? I love what you said about being good at it, but still not wanting to do it. There's some things I'm good at, but it takes me away from the things I need to become exceptional at. So I have to give up to go up. You have to make trade-offs. There's only so much time and so much energy. So you have to make trade-offs. It's giving up to go up.

And then I think the question you asked that person about, do you even want to do this? I was working with a college basketball athlete. You know, they're paying them now and they're paying them a lot. Some of them are making more than professionals. It's crazy what has happened. And I watch body language and I watch game films and I have conversations with them and I could just tell something had changed from his junior to his senior year. And he'd been playing basketball since he was like five years old. And he always had the aspiration to become a pro. I could say he's not having fun anymore. Not having fun anymore. So I asked him a question no one had ever asked him. Do you still want to do this? Do you still want to play basketball? Or are you just trying to meet someone else's expectation for what they think you should be because of what you've always done, because of your height, because of what your skill set is? He said, "You know what? I wanna do business. I wanna go into business. I've got an entrepreneurial mind. I don't wanna do this." I said, "Okay." Well, that's clarity. And until you have clarity, you're just really misusing a lot of energy. And I think that's a great thing to get someone to realize.

Jim Piper: I'm impressed he even knew the term. Is he a business student? Maybe that's where he learned the term? Yeah.

Dave Anderson: Yes, he had, and even through his years of college, he always had a side hustle, if you will. There was some little business something that he had going on and I could see it in him. And he made a little money this last year. They paid him half a million dollars to do a very average season. And so now he's got some capital and you know, he doesn't want to travel, he's got a girlfriend. He's like, "Let me start a business, let me go into business, that's

what I really want to do." And maybe it can be a business that's somehow connected to basketball. It could be.

Jim Piper: I think achievers struggle with this a lot. I think that we live with a pass-fail mentality. And to your point, which I think is very good, we have this image that once we step outside that image, we don't even know who we are anymore because we've attached what we do to who we are. And that is so easy to do. So it's like if I quit playing basketball and then I must be a quitter, I must be a failure, I must not have been good enough. Those are all the voices. And some of those voices, there may be voices out there that say that, but who cares? It's your life and you know the truth you gotta follow. I'm not talking about relativism here, but what I'm simply saying is that, man, if you don't have a fire in the belly-- My mentor used to tell me that, to be a good leader at anything, you gotta be the number one believer. And whatever it is that you're doing, you gotta be the number one believer. You can't be the number two believer, you can't be the number three. If you really wanna get to that next level, then you've got to believe. And so, in the story you're telling, if everything in him says, man, I wanna create things, I wanna bring value to a company and see the win and get the backside of the deal, that's usually what that term involves, I mean, that's good for him. Good for him because it takes courage to walk out of the persona that we and others helped create that may no longer work for us anymore.

Ad: Let's take a brief break from the podcast to let you know that our very own Jim Piper has released a brand new book called *Story: The Art of Learning From Your Past*. Everyone has a past but not everyone learns from it. Jim unpacks lessons in this book that help leaders and learners understand the potential our past has to impact our present and future. Be sure to grab your copy of the book *Story* where books are sold. All right, let's get back to the podcast.

Dave Anderson: It's so true. And I think one thing that helped him come to that place, and I think it would help anybody come to a similar place, is early on when I work with an athlete, we identify what is your identity as a person, and it has nothing to do with what you do. Leave that out of it. Okay, are you a father, a brother, a son, a Christian? What are you? What are the traits? What is your identity? A kind person, a compassionate person, a generous person. And we come up with this personal identity reel and it's because if you identify yourself with what you do when you have a bad game, all of a sudden you feel like you're a lot less good about yourself as a person. And it hurts your self-esteem and your self-confidence. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. Self-confidence is how we feel about our abilities. So if we tie our identity to what we do, we're going to have an overinflated value of really who we are when things are going well and a very detrimental image of who we are as a person when we're struggling. And so we have to separate that. So he was able to say, yeah, basketball is not my identity. I've got these other things. I'm creative. I'm energetic. I'm a giver. And I want to take this part of my

identity and put it into business, you know. And it was an easier transition because he knew who he was upfront.

Jim Piper: But we've even done that in leadership, right? I mean, because we use terms like he's a good leader, she's a bad leader, she's a good leader, she's a bad leader. Instead of, you know, look at the human being as a soul and then use terms like she practiced really good leadership in that situation or that wasn't the best leadership here that we could be practicing that. They don't create enough separation.

So for example, I know that I lead better when I can differentiate myself from the thing that I'm trying to lead. One person once told me to see myself as a physician and to see what I'm trying to do as the patient. And keeping my objectivity there. I had another friend who told me that the danger of becoming an advisor, to one company where you get swallowed up in that one company and you're there for a long period of time, you end up becoming so much, you become so much of the fabric of that organization that you can no longer differentiate and stay objective. So I do think that what we're talking about is really important.

Going back to what we were talking about before, and we haven't really left it, but we just kind of expanded on it. We were talking about how does one know, how does a company know, how does an individual know that this is what I'm about, this is what I'm after. Something that I don't know about you, Dave, with all the things that you have created. You've created a lot of things. You've created a curriculum and you've written, was it 16 books. You have to create every time you get behind a podium to speak. I don't know about you, but some of my best products and services have come from my own life, my own experience, where I've had to figure something out, where I've had to learn, and then it becomes incarnate. And when something becomes incarnate, it's yours.

I remember I was at a leadership summit at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, and a pastor by the name of Wayne Cordeiro. I think that's how you pronounce his last name, Wayne Cordeiro. He pastors, I believe in Honolulu.

And he had his Bible open, and his topic was burnout. That was his topic for church leaders. And he held his Bible up. And for those of you who are listening to this podcast and you're not watching the podcast, just imagine holding a Bible up with it open in the palm of my hand. And then Wayne says, "When I first started in ministry, what I would do is I would dig into the word, meaning the Bible, and he would take his hand and go to a page of the Bible. And he would pull it out like those claws in that kind of game. And then he would apply it to his heart. He would move the hand towards his heart, and then from his heart, he would then cast it like seed out into the congregation." Then he said, "As my church grew and it got bigger and I became more of a CEO than a teaching pastor, sometimes that happens, and I also got better at speaking and I also became more and more familiar with the passages in the Bible, I found a shortcut."

And he held up the Bible again and he dipped into it, just like before, but instead of bringing it to his heart, he went right from the text and then he sprinkled it to the people. And what he explained, and it was such a powerful image, what he explained is that he was robbing himself of the process of bringing things in, letting it change me, therefore becoming this powerful incarnate message then flowing out of me.

And I say all that to say this, one of the things that I have found to be helpful in working with executives and entrepreneurs and leaders, one of the first things I do is, you know, you mentioned athletes, I've been coaching sports for a long, long time. And, you know, when you think about the little kids who are trying to learn how to dribble a basketball. And besides the fact that they're double dribbling, you know, all over the place, their focus is on the dribble. They're looking at the ball and they're looking at their hands. Same thing with soccer. You know, you see them dribbling, but their heads are down. And, you know, a lot of leaders don't realize it, but in time, they have their heads down. And you can't do much when your head is down. You might be amazed by your dribbling abilities, but you don't see who's open. You don't see what opportunities are out there. You don't see what's coming right at you. You're just not aware. But when you can dribble with your head up, then, and almost second nature, dribbling, then you see the opportunities, you see the obstacles, you see who is open. And so from a leadership perspective, the same is true.

And what I like to do is I like to encourage people to get their head up by starting with this question. What do I want to do with the rest of my life? What do I want to do with the rest of my life? And then there's an exercise that I take them through. But I think to your point, people get so much in the grind, Dave, that stuff like values. And when this is all said and done, this is where I want to be. A real quick story, one more that- because I want to ask you about a really important topic about accountability here in a second.

But I went to go visit Mike Andres, who at the time was the president of McDonald's USA. He had just taken the helm. The company wasn't in good shape. Franchisees were wanting to get out of their deals. The stock was down. There was unions trying to move in. You know, the menu was a mess. Everything, the culture, the culture was a mess. The books that you and I would study if we went back to the university would tell us that McDonald's was a real estate company, not a restaurant company. And I remember reading that at the University of Redlands in Southern California. That was actually in the textbook.

When I went to go visit Mike, he said, "Well, the first thing we're going to do is we're going to remind the world, including ourselves, that we are a restaurant business. We are not a real estate company. And this is what this means." And then he talked about the culture. He talked about the menu. He talked about the commodities and how to better manage the commodities. He gave me all kinds of examples. But then the thing that really blew me away is. In his mind's eye, he knew about how long that would take. And he knew that that was when he would step off and start his new thing. And I was so amazed at his ability to lead with his head up. You know, that's an example. It impressed me so much. In fact, in my mind's eye, I was sitting there in Ray Kroc's office, because that's where he was at the time, he took over Ray Kroc's office. I was sitting at the little conference table he had in there, and I think my jaw just dropped. I'm

going, I've struggled in that area. I mean, I would get into it, drop my head, go to work, and then at some point in time, I'd go, where am I? Who am I? And what am I doing?

Dave Anderson: I think that's a great example. The whole dribbling with your head up is a great metaphor for anything that we do. It's like when I work with athletes, I don't teach them how to shoot a basket. I teach them how to shoot a seventh one with confidence after they missed the first six, how to keep focused on what they do have, what they can control. And I think that applies to anything that we're at. And I have a lot of young people, and it's not just young people that are confused about which direction do I go? Do I go this way? Do I go that way? I mean, what is my purpose? And I think a lot of people say, "Well, follow your passions." And I say, follow your gifts. You know what? I have a passion for singing. The problem is I'm terrible at it. If I followed my passion at singing, I'd be living on a park bench. You know, there's a lot of people doing that here in Southern California. And so I think you follow your gifts.

For instance, when I got into car sales, I did not have a passion for being a car sales. I needed a job. I had been knocking door to door on insurance, selling \$5,000 burial policies in the poorest part of town, and then collecting the premiums weekly. And I was like a 20-year-old kid at the time. My family's restaurant business had gone broke. They all left town. They were kind of running from creditors. I stayed, I moved into a house. I didn't have any furniture. It was infested with rats. I slept in a sleeping bag for a year. So I needed to make some money. And I had a friend that was in the car business. And he said, "Dave, you might enjoy selling cars more than selling death policies." I said, "Well, okay. I mean, that sounded like an upgrade to me."

So I did not have a passion, but I got into it and I realized I'm good at this. I can relate to people and they believe me and I keep my commitments and I enjoy people and I like making it about them, not about what I want them to have. And as I started to make some money and as I started to wear nicer clothes and as I started to drive a better car and as I started to eat better food and move my wife when we got married into a better place, I'm telling you, I became very passionate about the car business. And so because I followed my gifts, and saw where they could bring me, I became very passionate about something I was not passionate about at all to begin with.

Now, if you're truly blessed, you're passionate in areas where you're gifted. That is truly a win. Not everybody has that. So for the people who are listening or watching and they have a passion for an area where they are gifted, you have got to leverage that, narrow your zone. That's what you've got to develop. Now, Gifts don't arrive fully developed, you still have to develop them. I mean, talent, you know, a lot of people with talent are lazy. A lot of people with talent take shortcuts because they're talented. They don't have to work as hard. They make bad character choices. They think they're above the rules and above the values. So character protects talent. But if you have talent, if you have this giftedness, it is a great head start, but you still have to work at it. It's developed within the structure of disciplines and processes and personal accountability and putting in the reps and perfecting whatever it is that your craft is. And I think as you continue to learn, I think learning, Jim, is so energizing. It keeps you fresh. It

keeps you relevant. You have something to share to other people. I think people who start to feel burned out very often have just gotten stuck and it's the same old thing again and again. And they've gotten so busy doing, they stopped learning. They've stopped changing, they stopped risking. And so I think that once all this starts to align, and it's really easy to get out of alignment, I mean, you turn your head for a minute, it becomes the next two years. It's really easy for that to happen. But once we get it into alignment and are more aware about the importance of keeping it in alignment, I think some really great things can start to happen in our lives.

Jim Piper: Yeah, alignment is one of my keywords and accountability is one of yours. Before we went live, you had mentioned that I said, I said, "Dave, what's what's your message?" Right? I mean, we know the message is leadership and that's such a big, big thing, right? A big, big thing. There's this there's this cycle of self-awareness and then leading self and then leading others and then sustaining that. I mean, there seems to be different kinds of leadership personalities too that are somewhat natural. Some of us are good turnaround guys or good startup guys or good sustaining guys and gals. Some of us are just so darn creative, we're too creative, and we need someone to help us and all those things.

But you talk a lot about accountability, and I would like to pick your brain on accountability, particularly in our current culture and what leaders face. Now, I'm sure you can probably start with personal accountability. And as you do, please unfold that to how do we go beyond, what does personal accountability look like, first of all? And then how does that spill over into the leading of others? particularly in a culture today that believes in the word accountability, but it always seems to be in the negative.

Dave Anderson: Sure. It's like the word discipline. There's this negative association and they're both exceptional concepts when you put them into practice. I do believe it needs to begin with personal accountability. To me, personal accountability is not doing less than your best in any of life's arenas. It means you get up in the morning and you make your bed. Okay? It means you you you don't you don't leave the dishes in the sink. In my new book, I have a chapter called Start Stacking Wins Early and every time we make a decision, Jim, to do less than our best, we tell our conscience that that's okay. Now we only have one conscience. And if you send your conscience the wrong message enough times, you start to mute it. You don't even hear it anymore. And you start to dumb down this conscience that we did less than our best. And then we found a reason to excuse it. It wasn't that important. I didn't have time. It wasn't my fault. Whatever. Now we bring that same conscience into our arena no matter what you do, and you've already conditioned it to do less than your best, and you don't even realize how it's impacting you. So to me, personal accountability begins from when you wake up in the morning, expecting more for you, not under-challenging yourself. If you under-challenge yourself, you cheat yourself.

And so it's getting the little things right, following a good grooming process, hydrating, taking the right vitamins, putting some nutrition in your body, not watching the news and that nonsense that's gonna mess up your mind and feed the negativity bias that's already inherent in your brain, but have a mindset routine where you're tuning it up with some positive things, whether it's affirmations or devotional reading or prayer, meditation, whatever you do, and you're stacking these wins. You're doing the best you can wherever you're at. And now you're holding yourself to this higher standard, and now you have the credibility to expect others to do likewise. It's crazy to see how many leaders talk right and walk left. They talk about raising everybody else's bar and theirs are so low they're tripping over it. And I'll give you an example. I had a coach and I tell this story in the first chapter of my new book and he picked me up at the airport. It was the first time I was going to talk to his team and he said, "Dave, I hope you're going to talk to them about the concept of how you do anything is how you do everything." He said, "Because it's an important concept and they're getting sloppy off the court and it's carrying onto the court. They're cutting corners, they're not precise, they're not sharp." And I said, "Well, coach, I always talk about that because number one, it's not a cliché, it's true because of the way you condition your brain. How you do anything is how you do everything." I said, "But coach, do you really buy into that?" He said, "Well, of course I do. That's why I want you to talk to them about it because they're not buying into it." I said, "Well, the reason I ask, and no disrespect intended," I'm known as being somewhat direct, but I think you can speak truth in love, I said, "Coach, the truck you picked me up at the airport," I said, "The back seat of it looked like someone had vomited up a rummage sale." I said, "You have clothes on the back, there's water bottles, the floor mats are filthy. I'm sitting here in your office," this guy's making \$3 million a year. I said, "You have a pile of sweats and hats and banners on the floor. It looks like an out-of-business rummage sale. There's dust on your shelves, there's a stain on your carpet that you probably don't even see anymore because you've walked past it so many times." I said, "I think the reason they're not paying attention to it is they don't see you living it. They'd rather see the message in you than hear it from you." I said, "So yeah, I'm gonna talk to them about it."

Jim Piper: That is so powerful.

Dave Anderson: Isn't that true though, Jim? It's just true. They would rather see the message in you than hear it from you. They hear it from us all the time. When I work with an athlete, when they contract me, a professional athlete, to work with them for a year, they'll come out to my house at Los Angeles and they'll live with me for three days. They need to see that I walk my talk. I want them to see how I live, what I eat, what my routines are like, and so I can start to kind of work them into those same routines. If I don't live it, I can't talk about it with any type of credibility.

Now, I have a lot of clarity in my life. I know exactly what I expect from myself. And I know the top four things I want to accomplish every day that I go into work. We can't hold ourselves accountable without clarity. And you can't hold other people accountable without clarity because

the question is accountable for what? So accountability starts with clarity. Who do you want to be? What standard do you have? What will you not settle for? And once you decide that, making decisions is a lot easier. And then we take those same principles with our people. It's crazy. I was talking to a really good professional basketball coach and his staff. And I said, "What goals?" They said, "Well, we have a problem holding our people accountable." And this was the team that had won the championship the year before, world champions. I said, "How are you having a problem holding your people accountable? What are their goals? You set individual goals for each of them at the beginning of the season, right?" He says, "No, we don't do that." I said, "Well, how can you hold them accountable for anything?"

Jim Piper: Right, accountable to what? Yeah.

Dave Anderson: So ambiguity is the enemy of accountability. I said, you have to have clarity, specific growth objectives, specific areas that you want them to achieve. Now we can have intelligent accountability conversations based on that clarity. And I have a two-day seminar called How to Master the Art of Accountability. And people get all-- We talked two days about accountability. And at the first break, they come up and say, "Man, this is what we need. I got to go back. I got to have tougher consequences. I get to give more feedback." I said, "Well, slow down. That's all important. But it's not where you start." I said, "First, you've got to be resolutely clear about what you expect up front. What are the non-negotiable outcomes, your non-negotiable processes, your non-negotiable values, your non-negotiable daily activities that are most predictive of creating those outcomes? They've got to be customized. They've got to be clear. They've got to be high enough. They've got to keep relevant. If you don't have that, you can't hold them accountable."

And so accountability for ourselves and for others starts with clarity in those areas. What are the outcomes I want to accomplish? What are the values I'm going to live? What are the processes I'm going to follow? And what are the key activities, not the 40, but I limit it to four. What are my key activities I need to engage in as a priority every day despite the 40 things I have to do that are most predictive of taking me to those outcomes? And once we have that, accountability is so much easier, but without it, it's a joke. It's not going to happen.

And I think today, a lot of leaders are afraid to be too clear. They're so afraid of offending anybody by expecting them to do a little extra or to be on time. Is it really an unreasonable expectation for someone to be able to get their rear end through the door on time? I don't think that's an unreasonable expectation. And so they're so reluctant to hold someone accountable because good people are hard to find and what if I lose them and what if they get their feelings hurt. Without even realizing it, they leave it vague. Because if they leave it vague, they don't have to back themselves into a corner to actually have to have that tough conversation with somebody because they're not doing what's expected. It's a strategy of surrender. and then even realize they're doing it.

Jim Piper: That's really good. One of the things that I like to share that has worked for me in your strategy and in breaking down your strategy into daily tactics, right? And what I would call habits is this mindset that-- It's funny how people can push back. They'll push back and say, "But you don't understand. I got to do this, this, this, this. I got all these other responsibilities, interruptions," blah, blah, blah. And so I have this phrase, look, whatever you think, whatever you think, here's how you get from here to here. If you can't answer this question, and the first thing in the morning, if nothing else gets done today, what will get done? In spite of the interruptions, in spite of the workload, in spite, can you tell me, can you tell me that if nothing else gets done, this is going to get done? Can you tell me what that one thing will be or two or three or whatever?

And I find that that helps people with extreme clarity, right? They're able to do their work. They're able to do the things that they need to do. But when they have a focus on no matter what, no matter what, this will get done today, they move ahead. And to your point, they build confidence. You know, I tease a lot of my clients. I say, "Now, you know, I only coach winners, right?" That's my little jab, you know, whenever I feel like somebody's plateauing or came back-- I mean, "I just want to make sure we still have a relationship here because I only coach winners." I said, "It stains my reputation-

Dave Anderson: I love that. No pressure.

Jim Piper: -if we don't win." Yeah, no pressure. Well, you've also you also have a new book coming out that you you referred to earlier, Elevate Your Excellence. Now, I guess it's not out yet, right? It's is what?

Dave Anderson: No, it's not. Our publisher sent us 20 copies. We got the first copies Friday, just a few days back. And it'll be out. It's called Elevate Your Excellence, the power of doing ordinary things extraordinarily well from the minute you get up. And it's the least business-centric book I've written. I've written books on up your business and how to run your business by the book. This is more of a life book. This is more of about get yourself together, do your best in all areas so when you're in the workplace, whatever your arena is, it comes naturally. The only way we can make something part of our nature, if you want to make excellence part of your nature, always doing your best. Doesn't mean you're always excellent at everything, but to you, it was an excellent effort. You gave it all you had and you're trying to figure out how to do it better. The only way you can make it part of your nature, which is to where you don't have to think about it, is if you do it in all your life arenas. You can't turn excellence on and off. You can't have it be situational or occasional, depending on how you feel, or if you're getting credit, or if anybody else is watching, or if you don't feel you're fairly rewarded. It has to become part of who you are.

To get more than you've got, you've got to become more than you are. So it's about doing these ordinary things extraordinarily well, doing your best in all things, and then making it part of your nature to where there's not a switch to turn on and off. That's who you are. Whether you're at dinner with your spouse, You're talking with your kids, you're leading a church group, or you're leading a team in the workplace.

To me, it was an exciting read because it's evolved over the years of working with athletes on these little nitpicky things that really aren't nitpicky at all. The first chapter is called, The Little Things aren't Little Things. The great performance begins before it begins. You don't slop your way through the morning and then walk into your arena and flip a switch and all of a sudden have excellence show up. You didn't stack wins, you stacked losses. And now you're not gonna get your first win you to walk into your workplace. I want eight, nine, 10 wins when I walk into my workplace every day, Jim. I have a sign above my office that says, "Be the boxer, not the bag." The only way I can come in as the boxer, not the bag is I'm already in motion. I already know what to hit. I already have that focus. And I love what you said earlier about getting people focused and I think this can become part of people's identity. I want to be a person of excellence, a husband of excellence, a wife of excellence, a father of excellence, an excellent friend. And I want that to be part of who I am, but I'm going to have to stop doing less than my best in those areas. And I'm going to fall short, but I'm going to be more aware of it. So I fall short less often. And when I do get off track, I catch it faster because I think most people, Jim, that are good folks, they're not held back due to lack of effort. They're held back due to lack of focus. They don't have the focus that really maximizes that effort. And so this book is going to be out in late August, but I think it's ahead of schedule since we already got our first copies in. You can pre-order it already on our website or on Amazon now.

Jim Piper: It almost seems to me like this book, Elevate Your Excellence, the book that you referred to coming out here in August, is an antidote to other folks that I don't mean to throw a left jab at them, but by the time they do get to work, they're already in a position where they're having to make a comeback. They're not winning. They're already in the hole. And every day, they're trying to make a comeback, you know?

Dave Anderson: They're still getting dressed as they walk in. I mean, they got their shaver going and they're doing their job. It's like, how ready are you to be here? And you're right. I love what you said. They have to make a comeback when they get into work. And momentum is earned. Momentum is earned. You don't walk into the workplace waiting for something to happen from the outside to create momentum. I want to create my own momentum, one right decision, one right discipline at the time, even when it's tough, even when I got a lot working against me. What can I do? What do I have? I can do my best. I do have the ability to do that. Let me focus on that and I'll work through these times. But a lot of people don't think of it that way. They listen to the news on the way to work and I know people, Jim, they arrive at work, they're so angry. It's like, do you know what I heard? And now they're making everybody else less productive. I'm aware

of world events. I'm certainly not obsessed with them. I'm obsessed with the things I can control and trying to be the best I can be in the various situations I'm in. And I think that really changes your life.

Jim Piper: Dave, how do people get a hold of you and learn more about Learn to Lead?

Dave Anderson: Yeah, learntolead.com is our website. Spell it out just like it sounds, learntolead.com. And we have something there. It's a great resource. It's free. It's called the Insider Club. And it takes you about a minute to sign up. And you'll have access to articles and videos and things that'll help you grow. Our seminars are there. The books are there. The pre-order for the new book is there. Zoom coaching. I do a lot of Zoom coaching with teams and individuals. All that is there, video downloads. So learntolead.com is really the headquarters for-- Our podcast. We have a podcast called The Game Changer Life. We have almost 500 episodes. It's downloaded in I think 173 or 174 countries. You can access that from there or you can access that on any platform. I'm gonna record one of those when we're finished here today. But go to learntolead.com and you can take it from there, Jim.

Jim Piper: Dave I feel like we just got started today and I would love to circle back and let's get another one scheduled and continue this conversation if you're up for that.

Dave Anderson: That would be great. I think there's a lot more to talk about. I think we can have some relevant conversations that will connect with people. It's very real world and it's things that will help them.

Jim Piper: Yeah, I think what I would like to suggest that we talk about next time then is, from your vantage point, what do you see as the greatest challenges for leaders today?

Dave Anderson: Great topic.

Jim Piper: And yeah, and I think that would be a great way to kick off the next podcast.

Dave Anderson: Let's plan on doing it. Let's do it. Thank you. Thank you for the courtesy of having me on.