

Announcer: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, a podcast all about leadership, change, and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before in your church or in your business. And now your host Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well hey everybody and welcome to episode 259 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well today's a fun episode because we are combining a few things that I find really fascinating and I hope you will too. I think you will as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: One is stand-up comedy. I just have always been fascinated by it. Really interested in stand-up comedians for a number of different reasons. One is, man, do you know how hard it is to nail a 40 minutes set of just joke after joke after joke? Like as a communicator, if you're speaking or preaching, you can stall a little bit, you can kind of loop back or whatever, man. When you're in a stand-up routine ... And so we dive into that art.

Carey Nieuwhof: Secondly, today's episode features a young leader, and he's 26 and moved from accounting into stand-up. We talk about that. Plus he's the son of a friend and a previous guest on this podcast, Andy Stanley. So Andrew Stanley is my guest today, and he's going to talk about making a career move, exactly how to put a comedy set together. We're going to hear his story, and he'll talk a little bit about his dad and granddad and parents as well. So, it's going to be a great episode.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thanks for joining us, and a man, all of you who have subscribed, thank you so much for that. You know we are just seeing record downloads, massive amounts of feedback on the episodes and I just want to say thank you. I really do hope to help you lead like never before, and it's fun to have so much variety in the shows as well. We've got Michael Hyatt coming up, Ruth Haley Barton, Nona Jones from Facebook, also got Les McKeown, Horst Schulze, Sean Cannell from YouTube and so many others.

Carey Nieuwhof: So good incentive to subscribe. And I would love for you guys to join me in just a few short weeks in Dallas, Texas. The Pushpay Summit is happening May 22nd and May 23rd in Dallas. I'll be joined by some amazing speakers like Patrick Lencioni, Nona Jones. It's not your typical church conference. At this summit, Pushpay is leading discussions about tactics and strategic steps that set your church up for success. Now one of the questions I wanted to ask one of their vice presidents, Troy Pollock, is okay, in an era where you can get content anywhere, why do live events still matter? This is what he had to say.

Troy Pollock: I think that's a great question, honestly. And my response to you, Carey, is I believe collective wisdom is significantly greater than independent wisdom. And when I'm in a room with like-minded people and I'm getting of their takeaways and then some of their learnings, that just adds to what I'm taking away personally from the conference as well too. So we have great opportunities for

attendees to rub shoulders with other churches who are there attending as well too.

Troy Pollock: So people that are in a similar lane or job role set up with people that you would have otherwise not connected with, but then also access to some of the speakers and pick their brains and double click on some of the content that they spoke about from platform. We also have breakout sessions where we have a keynote session then followed by a panel and we can take live Q and A from the audience asking practical, tactical type question.

Troy Pollock: So live events, you can't replace it. I could be alone in my room reading your book and getting a lot from it. But the minute I share that information with five, six, seven, eight other people around me, we get this holistic understanding and content take away that otherwise is not able to happen in a independent fashion.

Carey Nieuwhof: So I'm really excited about speaking live at the Pushpay Summit. I'd love to hang out with you. I'm going to be there for the entire event. Would love to meet you, get to know you, and we have an offer for you. So if you head over to pushpay.com/summit and on checkout, use the coupon code: CAREYN (C-A-R-E-Y-N) you will not pay \$159 to go. You'll get a \$70 discount. It goes down to \$89 per person. So head on over to pushpay.com/summit, use the coupon code, CAREYN at registration and I'll see you May 22nd, 23rd in Dallas.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, hey, staffing is a big issue these days, and a lot of people ask the question, where can I find great people? In fact, when I talk to leaders, that is one of the top questions. Another problem that I see leader after leader having is I don't have enough help. I'm trying to do too much of this myself. Well, the solution that I have turned to again and again over the last few years is Belay. Belay is a company that actually curate some of the best virtual assistance, bookkeepers, web developers, and so much else for you.

Carey Nieuwhof: So they do all the interviewing and then they give you candidates that work remote for you. And they have an incredible client list from Michael Hyatt to Daymond John. I have used Belay for the last few years, and it's one of the reasons you get the show, and some of the people who work in the background on my team. Head on over to Belay solutions, that's B-E-L-A-Y, belaysolutions.com/carey, and you can learn more and figure out why so many people are turning to Belay to solve their staffing needs.

Carey Nieuwhof: And I gotta tell you, I absolutely love working with that company, and I think you will too. Well, without further ado, why don't we jump into my conversation with Andrew Stanley. Andrew, welcome to the podcast. It's just great to have you.

Andrew Stanley: I'm excited to be here. Thanks for having me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Man. Well, I've been around North Point for a little while, and I knew you kind of just casually growing up. And then we were in a green room last September and your dad was there. He was speaking at his event. And I was there for another event, and I'm like, "Oh my goodness, that's Andrew." And you had quit your job three days earlier.

Andrew Stanley: So, right before we saw each other.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, like literally hours.

Andrew Stanley: I was still in the just quit my job fog. I was like, "What have I done?"

Carey Nieuwhof: I remember you said, "Don't tell my dad I quit my job." But I'm sure that was a joke.

Andrew Stanley: He thinks I'm taking a vacation day to spend the day with him.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's right. Dad, they give me all this vacation. It's amazing. Indefinite. But you were in finance, right. And all of a sudden now you're a full time, like legit professional stand-up comedian. Not a typical journey.

Andrew Stanley: I guess it's true that I'm at least a full time comedian per fun. I think professional comedian, I think about the guys that are famous. But I guess technically it is my profession now is the way to think about.

Carey Nieuwhof: I mean someone paid you to do it, right? Like, isn't that the definition?

Andrew Stanley: I'm tricking people into paying me to do this thing that doesn't feel like work, but it is fun. Like you said, I graduated from Auburn with a finance degree, and like a good boy, went and got my finance job and did that for three years. And then about one year into that job, I decided I wanted to start getting into comedy. So, that's where it kind of began.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. And like what area of finance? Because it's not a typical, I have a son who's in finance as well, so it's what, like were you doing audit? What were you doing?

Andrew Stanley: So yeah, so I was working at corporate finance at a big public utility electricity company for the southeast doing budgeting and financial planning type stuff with them. And people always tease me now they're like, "That was a waste of time now that you're a comedian." And in some ways I guess it kind of was, but I learned so much at that job that I use now.

Andrew Stanley: And as I'm doing stand-up and kind of managing myself, it really is like a small business and some of the stuff I learned in school and a lot of this stuff I learned working in the corporate world has really served me well. Just being professional and emails and using excel to keep track of things. So, in a

roundabout way, all that kind of finance experience kind of helped prepare me for this comedian thing. So, it's funny to see the way God uses things.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. You'll be a solvent comedian. Like I'm sure that's a rarity.

Andrew Stanley: Right. Well, I think I'll be able to go longer without having a manager because I can handle some of that stuff on my own than maybe some of my friends that are comedians and don't have the professional background.

Carey Nieuwhof: Funny how that goes. I mean, I was in law briefly before I felt a call to ministry and moved into ministry, and people used to ask me when I was at your stage, just starting out, do you ever use your law? And I thought about it in a very direct like, am I negotiating contracts, am I suing anybody? And the answer was no, I'm not, sorry. But now I look back on it. And that training and that time in that profession changed the way I think. And so now I say I use it every day, like just very indirectly.

Andrew Stanley: I totally believe it. My girlfriend is in law school right now and she always says we're learning the law, but what they say they're teaching us is how to think. So, that totally makes sense to me. I mean, just going through something that difficult is going to make you a stronger person no matter what.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you know what kind of law she wants to practice? That's fun.

Andrew Stanley: She either wants to do real estate or corporate, she doesn't want to litigate. She learned early that she didn't care for that too much.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's like my wife, she's on the solicitor side, the corporate side, whereas I'm more the litigator, like bring it on. That'd be fun. Which is dangerous and not good for your soul.

Andrew Stanley: Well, I think that one of the things that turned her off to it is that she met so many and there were all divorced. All the people that were on these huge litigation's rarely were they in their first marriage. And she was like, "I don't think that that ..."

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a bad indicator. Yeah, for sure.

Andrew Stanley: Right. Yeah. The data doesn't lie.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell us about how you got interested in comedy. Like were you a funny kid? Is this something that ... were you the class clown or how did this spark start with you?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. No, I've always been big introvert, so definitely it was never the class clown. I was homeschooled until high school, so I wasn't even ... there's only three of us that could have been the class clown for most of my schooling. And

it was not me. But I always loved... from the first time I heard stand-up comedy, I remember the first live performance I ever saw was a fundraiser. I went with my parents to where Jeff Foxworthy was performing.

Andrew Stanley: And I can remember experiencing laughter in like a way that I had never laughed so hard that I couldn't stay in my chair before. And I think I must've been around 11 or 12. And then of course, listening to Brian Regan growing up, people like that. I always appreciated stand-up comedy, but it's nothing I ever saw or considered doing myself. I never saw that for myself. I never had any desire to try it.

Andrew Stanley: But what happened was the first kind of taste I got of it was like I said, I went to Auburn and I was in a fraternity. And your senior year, you get an opportunity at the end to give a senior speech to everybody in the fraternity, and you can say whatever you want. So I decided to just try to write a funny one. And I wrote like superlatives for everyone that was my age that was graduating. So like most likely it's a blank and...

Andrew Stanley: And most likely to share a Facebook account with your wife one day, and stupid, funny things like that. And so I wrote them all down. I took a long time, I loved writing and it was so much fun. And then I got up there and I just kind of read them, and it killed, because it's a group of people, everybody knows each other, and you're making inside jokes. I remember that going really well and being like, "Wow, that was fun."

Andrew Stanley: And even then it wasn't like I should try to stand-up comedy. I was like, "That was really fun. I would love to write comedy. I think I could do that." So graduated soon after that, got my job and just kinda had an itch that I needed to scratch, I think. And I didn't know how I wanted to do comedy, in some way I thought it would be writing. And so about a year into the job, I was talking to my dad, and I was like, "Yeah, I just really think I could do something in this world, but I have no idea where to start."

Andrew Stanley: And so he said, "Well, you should have dinner with Jeff Foxworthy." Because I had met Jeff a few times. We actually went on a mission trip with his family when I was 12. So, we had some ... and he's been a North Point guy for a long time. So, I texted Jeff. I was like, "Hey Jeff," kind of told him where I was coming from, asked him to dinner and he said, absolutely. He met me at California Pizza Kitchen and I took maybe 11 pictures of him and other people that were at California Pizza...

Carey Nieuwhof: He can't even have a pizza without being stalked.

Andrew Stanley: I remember when we were in Kenya, people were recognizing him in Kenya. It's amazing. And it was more the other like European people that were there and not the Kenyans, but it was still amazing to be in Nairobi, Kenya, and Jeff Foxworthy people were, "Redneck guy, redneck guy." So, he was so gracious. He

sat down with me, listened to me and said, "Yeah, I think that's great." And he ended up connecting me with the guy. He didn't even think I should do stand-up comedy. That didn't come up.

Andrew Stanley: He recommended that I get in contact with a guy that he would use for writing projects if he's ever on like a game show or something. And he has people helping them come up with stuff. So, he connected me with this guy, start emailing this guy in Nashville and he's this guy's name is Scott. And he said, "I'd love to help you, but I'm only going to help you if you write five minutes of jokes and go do the me stand-up comedy open mic." And I said, "Well, I'll just find someone else to help me then because that is not anything I'm interested in."

Andrew Stanley: And he said, "No, well don't worry. I'll help you. You send me the jokes, I'll make sure you're not going to make a fool of yourself." And so I said, "All right, I'll at least write the jokes. And then if I like them, then maybe we can talk about going up." But I said, "All right, I'm at least going to write them and then we can go from there." Because I don't want to lose this guy from helping me. So I took a couple of months, so I started writing some jokes. I'd never been to a stand-up comedy open mic before.

Andrew Stanley: So I went to the club, The Laughing Skull Lounge by my house, which is not a lot of clean comedians in the states there for open mic night. So I went just to watch with some friends, and it's 20 comedians doing five minutes each. It was about two hours. And I remember leaving thinking, "Okay, well I wouldn't be the worst one," because at an open mic like that, the five of the guys are excellent, and have been doing it a long time and are great. And then there's five people trying it for the first time that are trying it for the first time.

Andrew Stanley: And then there's 10 people that are somewhere in the middle that usually are the filthiest ones and don't get any reaction. And sometimes comedians will get up, and they just want any reaction, even if it's not laughter, they'll go for a gasp, will bring them just as much joy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Shock value.

Andrew Stanley: Getting a laugh. Exactly. Shock value. So I remember leaving that and in a weird way encouraged because I was like, "Okay, I would not be memorably bad among this group. I'm not going to be anybody's topic of conversation on the ride home after this thing." So I kept working on the jokes and Scott was so helpful to me. He was kind of telling me why certain things should go before. Talking about order and joke structure. And he recommended some podcasts for me to listen to.

Andrew Stanley: And so I went, you had to schedule a day to do the open mic. They have a really long waiting list to that club. So I had like a month where I knew the date and it was leading up to it. So I was practicing every chance I can get just in the shower and my room. And I went in and it went okay. I was so nervous that I couldn't

remember it afterwards. I kind of blacked out, but I had the recording and heard that I got at least a couple of little laugh in there.

Andrew Stanley: But the thing was that I thought, "Okay, my jokes were good, but my delivery was bad. Like I need to do better." I thought, "Okay, these jokes I can work on." So, I kind of kept wanting to do better. So I kept signing up for that open mic every two or three weeks and did that about six times I think before I started getting asked to do other stuff around Atlanta because it was going well. So, I started kind of going to some other open mics and meeting other comedians and getting booked on shows and doing that for several months and then started getting opportunities to do stuff at church, which I never wanted to do.

Andrew Stanley: I never wanted to be on stage at church. You know, people ask me my whole life if that's what I was going to end up doing. And I always said, absolutely not. But this was kind of a fun way to even explore that. And so it kind of spiraled out of control from there.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's pretty amazing though. So I mean, the first spark, like, hey, that frat graduation thing. How many years ago was that?

Andrew Stanley: So that would have been 2015.

Carey Nieuwhof: Pretty recent. Like to discover this whole vein.

Andrew Stanley: No. And this was just not on my radar at all, and I'm so incredibly indebted and thankful to Scott Dun, the guy that Jeff recommended that didn't know me and just emailing with me, challenged me to do this thing that would become the thing that I love to do. So, grateful to him. And of course, we know that's a God thing too, but it's funny, I've gotten to go to Nashville and hang out with him a few times now and get to know him. And his son is starting to do stand-up now, he's in high school, so I'm helping his son a little bit. It's just been fun to see the way it's all worked out.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well and it's pretty incredible I mean even in that green room that day in November, whenever it was last fall, the fall of 2018 you had said, "I think I've got enough ahead of me that I can responsibly quit my job and try this." And now you're completely booked. Like not indefinitely, but I mean you have night after night after night of work. I mean, you're in a different city every night. It's been pretty incredible. What causes that kind of quick rise in the world of comedy?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. It's definitely a combination of several things. And some of them are just me being lucky about the family I was born into, and the opportunities that that's led to for me. And I've kind of had to learn to not...

Carey Nieuwhof: So, I'm sure I'll say this in the intro, but if you guys are wondering, you want to tell everybody who your father is and grandfather?

Andrew Stanley: Yeah, my dad is Andy Stanley and my granddad is Dr Charles Stanley.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, that helps a little bit. And your mom, don't forget your mom. She's pretty awesome.

Andrew Stanley: And my mom. She's in seminary right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: She gave you half of your routine. I mean the whole home schooling bit.

Andrew Stanley: I talk about my mom a lot and one day I sat down, and I was like, "Hey, it's something subconscious going on." I don't know. Yeah, I definitely have the whole family gag quite a bit.

Carey Nieuwhof: So that place is it, but that's not a guarantee. I mean, not every child of a famous person becomes well known in their own right, or it may be a leg in, but it's not always a guarantee. So. Okay. Back to the question, so you said it helps to have the family connections I have for sure.

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. And so at the end of the day, I have to be funny no matter what. Like you said, I can get my foot in the door with maybe somebody that wants to book Andy Stanley's son, but I have to deliver to get asked back into. Honestly, doing comedy when it doesn't go well is worse than anything in the world. So, I don't want to show up to stuff that I'm not ready for. So the big part was working hard in the clubs, and the in the rooms where no one cares or knows who I am.

Andrew Stanley: Making sure that I am funny and then taking it to stages where maybe I do have a little bit of a poll and people are interested to hear me because they know who my family is. But the main way that those connections have helped me is that they put me on big stages in front of people that make decisions about booking stuff like, or very early on, way too soon. Early on, I got to introduce my dad at catalyst conference in Atlanta after I'd been doing stand-up for less than a year, I think, which is horrifying to think back now.

Andrew Stanley: I would hate to go listen to my recording, I would be so critical I'm sure. But that got my foot into a lot of doors that I'm still booking gigs from the children of that and the grandchildren of that and the workers...

Carey Nieuwhof: People who were in the room at that point.

Andrew Stanley: People who were in the room exactly. And then I do shows with them and then those shows lead to more shows. So it kinda trees down into one big show can end up being a whole year of stuff for me. And then I got to do Orange Conference as well, which was just as big if not bigger in terms of people booking me after that. So blessed and lucky to kind of have had those opportunities, but also had to work really hard to be funny enough to take advantage of the opportunities, which is what I have to remind myself up whenever I feel like a fraud for getting all this stuff so fast.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I've seen you work, I've seen your routine and I mean, I've communicated my whole life. I'm always in awe of stand-up comedians because if you're in the middle of a 40 minute Kino, like, I'm speaking at South by Southwest this weekend, there's room for me to fake stuff. Like if I lose my place, you can sort of skip back. But like even the writing is so clean. I mean, you can surf off a key point for a long time as a preacher or communicator.

Carey Nieuwhof: You can stall a little bit, but you look at how much content is even in a 15 minute set, let alone a whole night. What's your act at this point? Are you up to 40 minutes of content? An hour of content?

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. My act now is about 40 minutes, so I'm adding the bet in real time as we go. But that's about as long as I'll let somebody pay me to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: How many jokes or bits would there be in a 40 minute set?

Andrew Stanley: Right. That's a good question. So, bits probably it's different for every comedian. Some comedians can do one joke for 20 minutes, and some people are 20 seconds. But for me that'd be probably be ... my average joke is two minutes long. So probably 20 bits or 40 bits.

Carey Nieuwhof: So 20 bits that are connected to each other. They're not random funny things. Is there a sequence?

Andrew Stanley: I try to connect to them and yeah, it's fun. And as comedians, we kind of call it our act once the jokes kind of come together to be a big performance, we call it our act. So you know, when you're starting out you're just writing jokes and then kind of overtime you learn the order that they fit best in and they kind of flow and transition well. And I still tweak things every now and then when I have new jokes, sometimes I have to move other stuff around.

Andrew Stanley: But as a comedian, the more you can make that flow and kind of feel like one coherent speech rather than just a bunch of jumbled topical old jokes, the better. And comedians all have different styles and approach it differently. And sometimes jumping around from topic to topic is funnier for some comedians, but I've tried to make my act as much about myself as I can, so I'm trying to kind of tell a story. But at the end of the day, it's just a bunch of jokes I've learned to tell in the order that gets the most laughter.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Okay, because I'd really like to break down sort of the art and the science of comedy and stand-up and joke writing and all of that with you. So tell me why order matters. What you're saying is if you have five jokes, if you do the one, two, three, four, five, it could be funny, but if you go one, four, two, three, five, it could kill the set. Like is it that?

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. It totally depends on where I am too. Like I said, I'm doing comedy clubs all the time where the only clean comedian there, and that can be different than

me showing up at First Baptist of south Georgia or wherever I am. So I kind of cater to where I'm going to be. But like you said, the order really does matter. I think for me, what I've learned is that the more I can introduce myself at the beginning and let them know where I'm coming from, the more they're going to enjoy my jokes later because they're hearing them through the filter of who I am.

Andrew Stanley: So the first joke I ever wrote, which I still tell it's been changed a lot, but I talk about being homeschooled a lot at the beginning of my set because that gives the audience, whether they're a church crowd or a club crowd or brewery or wherever I am, that kind of gives them a filter to hear me through, was like, "Okay, this guy was homeschooled. So everything we hear is coming from a homeschoolers' perspective."

Andrew Stanley: And there's all these preconceived stereotypes about homeschoolers that everyone kind of understands. So, it's an easy way for me to introduce myself and tell them a lot about myself without having to really tell them very much. So, the more I can talk about myself and how I was raised in the beginning of my act, I've learned that my jokey jokes towards the end are more successful when I'm telling stories. And then as comedians, and you can use this in preaching or any kind of speech or communication is we have call-backs.

Andrew Stanley: So if I tell a joke early on and then kind of people forget about it a little bit. And then in another joke, I can all of a sudden bring that back in. That can get an even bigger laugh. So, I always want to make sure if I have call-backs in my act, I need to make sure I'm doing those in the right order. I can't do the call-back before I tell the joke that it's calling back too.

Carey Nieuwhof: So can you give us an example because I've heard you do that, the call-back, your homepage and it may be different by the time people hear this, you do this long, 20 minutes set, you do a call-back at the end and it got a huge laugh. So, give us an example.

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. So, that's one, that's definitely one that I do a lot. So the beginning of my act now I talk about being homeschooled, and I talk about how it was hard basically. And I exaggerate how hard it was and how it's made my more difficult. And then at the end, I'm talking about my mom. And this has been kind of my closing joke for a long time now, and I'm talking about my mom and how instead of sending her to a nursing home one day, I think I'm just going to frame her for a crime and let her go to prison.

Andrew Stanley: My last joke is usually, but at the end of the day, I don't think that's unfair. I didn't get to go to real school. She doesn't get to go to a real nursing home. So, that would be an example of a call-back. And I kinda like to end where I began with the homeschool stuff and it kind of ties it up and usually that's a good way to end it. But some comedians are so good at just putting that kind of stuff throughout their whole hour. And it's constantly learning and trying to make

connections between jokes to figure out how to do that without overdoing it and still surprise the audience with them.

Carey Nieuwhof: And are those things you learned from Scott and from some of the other people who have mentored you or trained you or that kind of thing?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. So Scott was so helpful, and I'll still send him sets every once in a while. Usually when I'm doing a set, I'll put my phone on the stool and record it so I can go back and listen to it. And a lot of times I'll send those to Scott just to let him hear what he's created. I've had so many people helped me along the way. It's hard to remember where even heard individual things. One of the things Scott pointed me towards at the very beginning, it was a great podcast that I would love to recommend anybody called the School of Laughs Podcast with comedian Rick Roberts.

Andrew Stanley: He's another Nashville guy and he's been doing it a long time and he basically, it's if you want to start to stand-up comedy, he goes through, basically it's like an online course where he's got an episode of like what you should and shouldn't wear. Here's how you do a call-back. Here's how you talk to the crowd without messing up your set, and just very practical things you might not think about when you're first starting.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'll have to listen.

Andrew Stanley: Great. Especially if you go back towards the beginning, now he's doing a lot of interviews with comedians, but back towards the beginning when he started the podcast, it was a lot of just lessons. So, that helped me a ton and is where I learned a lot of that kind of comedian jargon and technique.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. No, that's super helpful. So what are some do's and don'ts of comedy writing? And then I want to talk about delivery.

Andrew Stanley: It's so funny. I feel so unqualified to be the person you're interviewing about the art of comedy because there's just so many people that have been doing it so much longer. But do's and don'ts for writing. I think the biggest thing I've learned from working clean shows and not clean shows, and it's just what people are the funniest when they write the most true to themselves, when they're being their most authentic selves in the way they write in the way they're performing is when the audience is going to connect the most.

Andrew Stanley: So if I got up there and started talking about all this crazy stuff and if I tried to be Anthony Jeselnik or one of the another Bill Hicks or somebody on stage, it would be inauthentic and it wouldn't work for me. And at the same time, a lot of my comedian friends that are not clean, it's funny when they try to be clean, it comes across as not very authentic. I mean, when you're really writing in the vein of who you are is when you're going to be the most successful.

Andrew Stanley: So I think that's the best place to start is if you're trying to write comedies, think about, "All right, what is my perspective on this topic? Whatever I want to write about," and try to make it as much your voice as you can.

Carey Nieuwhof: Where do you find the humor? I mean I've heard that comedy is noticing, right? And so you're making all these observations that everybody kind of knows about homeschoolers and making fun of yourself and making fun of the things that have happened in your life. Like how do you find a joke in moments?

Andrew Stanley: Yeah, no, it's hard. And I would love to know the answer to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, you've done it. I mean, you've got a 40 mindset.

Andrew Stanley: Sometimes I'll have a week where I feel like I got four new jokes that I'm excited about and then I'll go a month with just really not finding anything I can get ahold of and get to work. The technique that I've used that I've had the most success with is really, I just have a note on my phone and anytime I think of something funny, I will just write it down quickly, and I don't need to write the joke right then, but I ... you know how easy it is as a writer to think of something then, "Okay, I'll remember that."

Andrew Stanley: And then you go back the next day and be, "What was that thing I was trying to ..." So, it's the worst feeling in the world be like, I really was excited about that, and now I don't remember. So, anytime I have a thought or a topic or a premise I want to write about, I will write it down. And then sometime that week I will find a good, hopefully more than once a week. But I'll find time to sit down, look through my notes, pick one of those topics that I wrote about and try to put it into a joke.

Andrew Stanley: And the thing with stand-up comedy is there's no way to practice except for in front of a live audience. It's not like a band that can go practice in the garage until they get it right and then go show it to people. If I think of a joke, I've got to go try it on stage that night and if it's a minute and a half long, maybe 30 seconds of it was good the first time. So that's why I have my phone on the stool recording so I can go back and be, "Okay. The part that I thought was going to work really didn't work, but this other thing I said offhand got a big laugh. So let's build a joke around that instead and go back the next night."

Andrew Stanley: Having edited from the last night and just kind of whittling it down until you're using your words as efficiently as possible and getting the most laughs out of that topic that you can and adding more on top. The other term that we use as comedians is tags. We have a set up and then a punchline and then a tag. And so set up punchline is kind of obvious what that is. You're setting up your premise, explaining what you need to explain, and then your punchline is the funny part. And then the tag is maybe another funny part.

Andrew Stanley: And then another thing, you can have as many tags as you want. So if I have a punchline, I try to think of as many tags as I can, get onstage, and just see which ones work. And then all the ones that work I want to keep because I want to push that joke as far as it'll go.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you give us an example? I mean I've talked to Jon Acuff about comedy before. I think it might've even been on this podcast. I've had so many conversations with him and he said when he's coached me on like delivering humor, he's like, "Oh man, there were like five more places you could have taken that joke." And I think he must've been talking about tags because he does that really well. So what would be an example of a tag in a joke?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Let me think. Okay. So a joke I've been telling lately as it relates to the homeschool. I talk about how I was homeschooled for 10 years and then my mom and my parents put me in public high school. And I say, because I guess they stopped loving me. And then the joke is I say I think if you grow up in regular school, you learn all the bad words gradually. And in the ninth grade, I learned them all on the first day and then the tag is in the same conversation and then the other tag is with the lunch lady.

Andrew Stanley: So you kinda just keep piling on as much stuff as you can until the laughter goes away. But then it sounds like Jon was talking about maybe different from that, he may be talking about more just taking a premise and exploring different angles on it, which is what the really good comedians doing. That's how you get like a 10 minute bit. Some comedians that are great at that, like Mike Birbiglia, if you ever listened to him, his whole hour will be one story with a lot of tangents, and he ties it all together at the end.

Andrew Stanley: And then there's guys like Gary Gulman who's excellent, and he'll take a premise and I think he has like a 12 minute bit about cookies or something like that, different types of cookies. And he's just literally saying, "All right, well what if we thought about it this way?" So he's writing a joke that probably maybe four minute, I don't know, but he probably started that joke with a small version and started thinking about how much can I squeeze out of this topic of cookies? And let's think of every angle that might be funny about cookies.

Andrew Stanley: So, that's probably more what John was talking about is if you're making a joke about being homeschooled, come at it from every angle you can think of and squeeze as much juice out of it as you can. Because at the end of the day, you need to be able to fill as much time on stage as you can and turnover as much materials as you can make funny.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you walk us, and I'm sure it varies, you know you're on the road a lot, but walk us through how you would write a joke. It's interesting because I think a lot of us, we have a lot of communicators listening, and I always try to say one or two things that, I'm not a comedian, I'm a communicator, but like that kind of comedy connects and particularly if you're talking about something really

controversial like money or sex or whatever, I always say you have to have a laugh, you just have to.

Carey Nieuwhof: Somewhere in the service, somewhere in the message, you got to crack people up because it disarms them. But writing those can sometimes take more time than other parts of the message or the talk.

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Yeah. And a funny speaker makes all the difference. It makes different memorable speech. And even if the content was just as good, I feel like I always remember a sermon or a speech that had more humor. One of the things that pretty much every comedian would tell you and as there's a great tip for speaker that's trying to be funny is put the funniest part ... if you're making a joke, put the funny word or the funny part at the very end.

Andrew Stanley: That's how we think about punch lines is we're setting it up and then we want the last word we say to be the one that makes the crowd laugh. We don't want them to start laughing too early. The quickest example I can think of just this, one of my opening lines for an act for my set would be if I seem uncomfortable up here, it's not because I'm nervous, it's because I was homeschooled. And so the laugh comes at homeschooled.

Andrew Stanley: But if I reordered that and said I was homeschooled, if you were wondering why I seem uncomfortable up here, that might still get laughs. But the laughs aren't going to all be at the exact same part. Everybody's not going to know exactly where to laugh. The more you can tell someone ... people want to laugh is one of the things I've learned. Nobody is unless you're in like a weird situation or like a men's conference.

Andrew Stanley: Like people want to laugh. So, if you can tell them when to laugh, they will. So the more you can arrange your words to let them know it is okay to laugh right now and not have to wonder like, was he being funny? So, I'm rambling now, but basically if you can put the funniest part at the end, you're going to get a more coherent, unified laugh.

Carey Nieuwhof: You mentioned earlier that you will write a new joke and you deliver it and it didn't quite work the way you thought, but then you said something in the moment that made it really funny. A lot of us get one shot at a message for those who are preachers. And so is there any way to sort of predict how those things will land or where it will land or what to do, not that comedy is a goal is just like comedy's really hard to do well, it's really hard to do well. So, I'm just curious with all these tips.

Andrew Stanley: And it's such an advantage that we have as comedians over maybe a speaker that's going to give a speech one time. So, we get to do it and then edit it and there's no open mic for preaching. Maybe that's what doing the middle school room is for, but it's hard. It's hard for me still to know the first time I tell a joke, well it's going to work and I have what I think it's gonna happen and the more

experienced I get in comedy, the more accurate I can be predicting what's going to happen. But it really is trial and error.

Andrew Stanley: I think the more you incorporate humor into what you're doing, the more comfortable you get with it. And the more you understand how to be funny in your voice and the more often you're gonna be able to predict, "All right, this will get a laugh if I pause here or I can steer this into what I want." But it's tough. It's tough when you're trying something for the first time to anticipate what an audience is going to do unless you are really familiar with that audience or you've told the joke before.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Let's talk about delivery. So, if you have 20 jokes or 20 bits over 40 minutes set, sequence, timing, all of that is important. How do you learn your set? Like do you memorize it? How do you do that?

Andrew Stanley: Again, that's probably different for everyone. Some people I know like to go on stage without a plan. They're just so good at thinking on their feet and do an improvisational stuff that they can kind of have, "I'm probably going to tell these three jokes at some point, but they just go up there." And Bill Heck Steven used to tell people, "Your act is what you do when you have nothing else to say." It was a quote through it.

Andrew Stanley: So he would say, get up there and be yourself as long as you can. And then when you got nothing else to say, go into your act. But that's not how I operate and it's such a style thing for everyone. But I mean for me, what I do before every set is normally you'll have a time you say, or if I'm at the club, they say, tonight we just need everybody to do eight minutes. Or if I'm doing a corporate event and they're saying, "All right, we want 25 minutes, we want 40 minutes."

Andrew Stanley: So what I'll do, usually the day of, I'll get in my notebook and I know how long I have memorized ... I know how long this joke takes, and I know the order I normally tell them. And so based on the amount of time I have, I will write out a set list, just like a band or a musician and write the times of them next to each other, make sure it adds up to the amount of time that the person is asking me to do and then go from there.

Andrew Stanley: And then I can adjust if it's going slower or faster than it normally does, I can take something out or add something in. But in terms of knowing what order to put things in, it comes down to what we talked about earlier. I have my act and I've been slowly with trial and error figuring out what goes best where. So even if I'm doing an eight minute set, I still kind of know the order things should go in. If I'm telling these four jokes, this is the order I normally tell them, but okay, if I'm just telling those, does it still make sense? Yes or no.

Andrew Stanley: So there's something really intentional about thinking about that stuff. I think it's easy for me to just show up to a show where I'm doing 10 minutes and think, "All right, I want to do these four jokes. I'll just do them in the order I normally

do." And without putting in extra thought and say, "Okay, but if this is now my act for the night, and it's just these four jokes, maybe a different order would work better."

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh ow. Okay. So let's say you're into a longer set. How do you keep that straight? Because, a lot of communicators gets stuck. Like particularly if you're mixing it up, right? If you don't just have one thing that you can out night after night after night, how do you not get stuck on stage? How do you stay clear? How does that work for you?

Andrew Stanley: For me now, I've been telling a lot of this stuff so many times that I just kind of have them in the rhythm and like we talked about, I have the luxury of getting to do the same act most nights, whereas a speaker is maybe doing this topic for the first time and it's a lot harder. I remember when I was first starting now if I'm at an open mic, I like to try like two new jokes and then do two jokes that I know will work so that I know all these get laughs. But when you're starting, everything's brand new.

Andrew Stanley: So when you're doing a speech or comedy set that is new to you, every single piece of it is new. And that's when I would get, I'd have to pause or look at my notes or have a panic attack on stage. I'm like, "Oh no, What was I going to talk about next?" The thing that I have realized is when that has happened to me, if I have my phone on the stool recording and then I go back and listen after, that pause was never as long as it felt like. It's never as long as it felt like.

Andrew Stanley: So, if I address it onstage and one thing in the comedy world, you can get away with one thing like this where if I pause I go, I totally forgot what I was going to say next. I can't admit it to the audience. And that's funny. They laugh at that. Now if I do that three times, it's not as funny. It may be a little different in preaching or speaking, but the audience knows what you're doing. They know that you're up there delivering something that is hard.

Andrew Stanley: And it's relatable to them if you say, "You know what, I totally just forgot what I was about to say. Let me go back." And that almost humanizes comedians, especially for me when I'm up there just kind of rolling through my jokes and I'm less likely to interact with the crowd even though I do try to do that. That's a very like in the moment thing to be able to address. And if you're in talking about something really serious in a sermon, it might not be the appropriate thing to do.

Andrew Stanley: But I've learned that just a pause, you can just pretend like you're thinking or you can pretend like for me, I think I'll catch myself just laughing into the microphone as if I'm laughing at what I just said while I'm thinking. So it kind of seems like I'm still in the moment, so I've learned that when I'm having that panic attack, it's way less noticeable to the audience than I think it is in the moment.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. You know, and now that I think back of other comedians or other communicators or even moments where I've done that, yeah, it seems kind of weird in the moment, but it probably looks totally natural. And you find your place and where you go. That's good. What about the thing that always gets me and I've gotten better at it as I've done more speaking rather than just preaching. But I always found it difficult to retell a story again and again and still like get the facial expressions right, the timing right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Like how do you not become bored of your own material, or there's something that happens in a spontaneous moment that is really magical. I've heard people, I haven't seen this clip, but like Chris Rock or something like that, he looks totally spontaneous, but you can basically cut up 10 of his shows and he's got the exact same body language, the exact same facial expression, same vocal intonation. And it feels like you're hearing it for the first time. How have you navigated that so far?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Well, one of the things that helps me is that I'm not very expressive ever. I'm kind of more out there, but you're totally right. It gets very monotonous going through the same thing over. It's hard to have the same enthusiasm, telling the same story even if it's new to the audience. All the time, I'll catch myself going on autopilot and just going through a joke and realizing and be like, "Oh no, I'm not even ..." I have to think of it as, "Hey, I'm not here telling jokes. I'm up here performing. I'm a performer."

Andrew Stanley: So, if I'm performing, I need to be in a character even if the character is very true to who I am. I can't sell that short by phoning it in and just going through the motions of telling the story. I need to be thinking about what I'm saying and delivering it in a way that shows that I'm excited to be telling it or I'm just as shocked about what I've revealed is as I was the first time. And the audience picks up on that.

Andrew Stanley: And you mentioned too that the spontaneity really does come across to the audience because there's moments where, like we talked about earlier, something will happen on stage I didn't plan and it's hilarious. And then I think, "Okay, good. I'll start doing that every time," and then I can never get it to work again. You know, it worked the one time because it truly was in the moment thing. And then no matter how hard I try to duplicated it or replicated it or recreate it, it just doesn't work anymore.

Andrew Stanley: So there is something to saying something for the first time or saying something spontaneous that definitely adds to the crowd's appreciation of it. But it's one of those things you can chase all you want, but at the end of the day, it's just is what it is.

Carey Nieuwhof: You get different audiences at every show as well, and you probably found that they respond differently. Some will be right there and you've got them from the first word and others, it must feel like you're spitting bricks or something and they're not paying attention. How do you interact with the audience and what

do you do and how do you even keep your head in the game if it's not going well?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Yeah. It's hard. And some nights you show up and you think, I already have a bad attitude. I show up to it, Maybe it's should church where everybody's a little older and I'm thinking man, I think it'll be fine, but I didn't write these jokes for these people. You know, most of the time I'm surprised and they're awesome and it's great. But every once in a while you get in that situation where whether it's people just weren't really feeling comedy that night or I'm not connecting with them the way I should be.

Andrew Stanley: Sometimes it's like, "All right, let's slow down and maybe I'll talk to somebody in the audience." So a lot of times a lot of comedians if their act isn't working, they'll start doing what we call crowd work, which is where he started talking like, who here is on the date? Then you start talking to people. And a lot of audiences, at least in the comedy clubs especially, really want that. A lot of people go to a comedy show and expect that. They think, "Oh, we're going to go and the comedian will make fun of my friend and it's her bachelorette party."

Andrew Stanley: So we'll be really loud, obnoxious until he talks to us. And sometimes a room has to be, you have to kind of let them know, "Hey, we're here. This isn't just me saying stuff and we're all here experiencing this," and that can change the whole show. But sometimes it's just a room that is just not going to happen, and I just have to deliver my jokes with the same enthusiasm as if it's going well and maybe three of those 200 people really are enjoying it and I don't want to sell myself short to them and I want them to still be able to enjoy it.

Andrew Stanley: It helps for me a lot of times if I am in that situation to lock in with somebody, the person that I see that is enjoying it and almost just deliver straight to them. If it's all right, well, you're the one that's enjoying this. I'm just going to tell these for you. And then everybody else can enjoy whatever they want. But it's tough. Sometimes it's crowds of the club and everybody's drunk. Sometimes the show starts at 10:30 and I don't go up until midnight, and everybody's drunk. And that's a whole different crowd, you know?

Carey Nieuwhof: What's different about that crowd? I'm curious. They're drunk.

Andrew Stanley: What I say is most of the time when the crowds drunk, it's great until it's not because they're laughing. They're the best crowd ever. You know, they're having a great time. They're happy, they want to laugh, they're laughing, they're laughing at the wrong parts of jokes sometimes. But then it gets to where they maybe had several more than they even planned to have and it gets to where they're being disruptive or they just can't follow what you're saying anymore.

Andrew Stanley: And then it's like, "All right, I feel like I'm telling jokes to children at this point," and you have to just kind of get through it. And sometimes at the clubs, you have to kind of make eye contact with the club owner in the back of the room

and have somebody removed if they're being too disruptive and they're keeping everybody else from being able to enjoy themselves. So I thankfully haven't had to deal with that very much.

Andrew Stanley: There was one time I was at a show and a guy got up and unzipped his pants and was going to start peeing in the middle of the comedy club because he's that drunk. You're on stage, you're just like, "What are you going to ... are you peeing?" It is that kind of stuff every ... you can't just tell jokes through something like that. You have to address it.

Carey Nieuwhof: That'll make it into your act one day, I'm sure.

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. Maybe. I actually, I wasn't on stage, thankfully when that happened. I had just finished performing, I was out watching, look over in this guy's ...

Carey Nieuwhof: That's crazy.

Andrew Stanley: But every room is different. And I've learned doing ... I travel to churches all over, and I'd do volunteer appreciation nights, fundraisers, things like that. And all these different denominations of churches, and I've learned like which denominations laugh at jokes maybe a little easier. And everybody has a different line because you know, as a comedian, you have to play close to the line of what's inappropriate. If you play it too far below the line, you're not going to get any big laughs. You certainly don't want to cross the line unless it's barely and then step back over it.

Andrew Stanley: But you have to figure out where the line is for each crowd. Every crowd, even different crowds at the same comedy club have a different line for where they're willing to go. And especially in churches is the most extreme version of that. I mean, I tell a lot of the same jokes in different churches and sometimes it's their favorite joke of the night and they quote it back to me. And then sometimes they're like, "Hey, that was an interesting one."

Andrew Stanley: So, it's a lot of learning and trying to gauge where that line is towards the beginning of my set so I can kind of tip toe around it for the rest. But the one thing I always say, and I've probably heard this somewhere, but you got to cross the line to find the line. So, sometimes you kind of get across it and step back. But it's fun to figure out where it is at every venue.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think we pulled too far back from the line, and we're not talking about some egregious moral line here. We're just talking about like what's funny, what's not because I've noticed that even in my own communication that there are times where I practice self-censorship that actually isn't helping anybody. It's like, "No, you could have gone further. This was a more radical point than you made. You need to get in their face a little bit more, or you could have been funnier or you could have been this." How do you navigate that? How do you know where that line is?

Andrew Stanley: So that's such a good question, and you're so right, but it's just tough. I think that at the end of the day, my goal is to be respectful of who hired me. So, if I'm in at a church and they don't want me to do a joke, even though I think the joke is perfectly fine and no one should ever be offended by this joke, at the end of the day, I need to be respectful to where I am. But also in general, as Christians, we need to be able to laugh at ourselves.

Andrew Stanley: I talk about that in my act. I say I think that as Christians, a lot of times we look crazy from the outside looking in because we're happy, and we look crazy and if we can laugh at ourselves it helps to bring that wall down and opens up conversations with people outside of our religion. And then I say, so keep that in mind as I tell these next jokes. And then I tell a bunch of jokes about mission tips and all that stuff.

Andrew Stanley: I say, I always tell them when I'm at comedy clubs I'm clean. A lot of times I'm the only clean comedian on the lineup, try to be a light in a dark place, and then I come to your church and I can be the darkness in a light place.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a good line.

Andrew Stanley: But it really is how it feels a lot of times. It's so weird, but the censorship in the overall media is more than it's ever been. And you've got guys like Dave Chappelle saying, we're the last comedians, we're the last kind of free speech because we don't answer to anyone and we can kind of say what we want. And then anytime people come in and say, "Well, you can't say that, it's restrictive." But when it comes to church stuff, I always try to be really respectful of wherever I am. But at the end of the day, I think we need to be able to laugh at ourselves. And I always hope that the people will give me a little bit of freedom to explore that.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've got a couple of ... by the way, I just want to add this one comment. One of the exercises I've had for a while is we've used your dad's messages now for years at our church. And so I will sit through multiple showings of something on video. So it's a prerecorded piece. We're not doing a live sync with North Point. I am amazed because often as a communicator, I'll get up, and I'm like, "Man, I was terrible. Like nobody laughed. Nobody seemed to engage. The congregation was dead in this service. And the next one it went a lot better."

Carey Nieuwhof: But I will watch versions of your dad's messages play through sometimes three, four, five, six services. So I'll watch them with multiple audiences. He's exactly the same.

Andrew Stanley: You do that voluntarily.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I get paid.

Andrew Stanley: It was mandatory for me growing up.

Carey Nieuwhof: You didn't have much of a choice, did you? But you know, you take the communicator variable out of it and audiences can be entirely, they can engage completely differently with identical content. And so, it's always important to own it and say, "Okay, what could I do with that?" But sometimes the crowd just wasn't laughing. The crowd just wasn't leaning in. The crowd just wasn't that interested. And other times, they're eating out of your hand and it's exactly the same message.

Andrew Stanley: Yeah. And at the end of the day, you have to think, okay, for me I'm like, "All right, well did I write a joke that works really well for half of the people because that's good, but it's not good enough. I need to write jokes that are ..." And at the end of the day, you have your audience and some people are gonna think your style of comedy is funny and some people aren't. But it is weird when, like you said, the same content gets different results. And I think I admire what you guys do as pastors and communicators because for me, it's really easy to know how I'm doing.

Andrew Stanley: You know, never has to wonder if it's going well or if it's connecting because there's this audible response and this immediate feedback. And when you're on stage, I know that you guys as communicators learn to read the crowd, but it's so much more subtle to be able to tell all right, are the people picking up on this, are people paying attention? But it helps me a lot when I've told a joke 200 times, and it works great, and then one time it doesn't work, then I can kind of take some of the blame off of myself and say, "Okay, well I have enough data to know that that joke is good."

Andrew Stanley: But if it's a newer joke and now it's baton 500, then I'm thinking, "All right, well this joke clearly isn't done if I'm only getting what I want half of the time from it." Because sometimes you just grit a great audience and they're with you and they are loving everything you say, you can do no wrong. They're laughing at stuff you're coming up with in the moment. And then sometimes you get an audience that just doesn't get what you're doing. So, it's so dependent on that.

Andrew Stanley: But at the end of the day, my goal is to write jokes where I could get any audience at least engaged and following along and chuckling even if they're in a terrible mood.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any of a tips and tricks on writing or delivery before we ... I got a couple more questions I want to ask you.

Andrew Stanley: I think what we already talked about. I think for me, making sure I'm staying in the moment and not just reciting stuff is so important. I learned to use my eyes more. When I first started, I was just so about the words and making sure I say the right words and now I'm trying to become a better performer, using my hands better, but without being distracting. And I've learned that for a comedian, of course the timing and the pauses are so important. And I've learned that in those pauses, if I can use my eyes and my face, that helped me a lot even if it's just subtle.

Carey Nieuwhof: What does that mean? Like how do you use your eyes and your face?

Andrew Stanley: Like for me, I tell one joke now where I talk about babysitters I had growing up, and I talk about one of them. I tell this is really creepy story about stuff. She would make us look at our feet and she'd be like, "Guys, one day and your feet will do this again and your feet will be bigger than mine." And I just pause and I kind of look at the crowd like, "What?" I open my eyes real big and kind of move side to side, like what the world.

Andrew Stanley: And that kind of gets a laugh if I'm in a room where I'm well lit enough for them to be able to see my face or if I'm on a screen and they can see my eyes and face doing things, I'm kind of responding to things that I've said, and then that kind of lets them know my attitude towards what I just said. And a lot of times, that kind of gets a laugh in itself. So, that's something I'm not good at, but I'm working on that I've been thinking about a lot and trying to be intentional about.

Andrew Stanley: Another writing thing, I need to get ... I've always heard that people would get great results from doing the morning pages thing first thing when you wake up just write one or two pages, three pages, just stream of consciousness. I have not tried that. That's something I want to get into now that I'm full time comedy, trying to get in a rhythm of doing that kind of stuff. But at the end of the day, for me it's just always being in that mindset of what I'm observing today I can translate into material. Everything that happens to me is relatable. So, kind of trying to look at the world through the lens of how can I make this funny?

Carey Nieuwhof: You have a father and a grandfather who are well known for their communication styles. What did you learn from your dad and your granddad about communication, delivery, content, all those things?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Well first things first. I just hope that one day I grow into the voice of my granddad. He has the coolest voice in the world. Every time I talk to him, I'm like, "Man, I hope that I sound like that one day." But I tell people all the time, I think that growing up in church is an enormous advantage for anyone that wants to communicate down the road, whether it's in a business way, or comedy, or preach themselves because every week I was sitting through three services of some kind listening to communicators.

Andrew Stanley: And even if it was subconscious, I was learning what is good that a communicator does, what's bad, what's annoying as an audience when the communicator does it, when a transition is weird, when timing is off. So, I think you just kind of learn a lot of the do's and don'ts just from observing public speaking regularly. And the church is the easiest way to do that. So, I think preachers and comedians have a lot in common. I know Chris Rock says all the time that he loves watching preachers and how they communicate to do stand-up.

Andrew Stanley: And I think that there's a lot to learn both directions. But from my dad and my granddad, specifically my dad, I grew up in the same house with him, so I had a little more of a line of sight on how he prepares for sermons and all that kind of stuff. And I mean, he's locked in his office all of Saturday afternoon just preparing. So I think I really learned that if you want to be an excellent communicator, preparation is not ... you don't just go up there and wing it.

Andrew Stanley: Preparation makes a huge difference and he's got an outline for every sermon, and just seeing how much work he put into it every week definitely taught me about, "Hey, being a good speaker isn't just talent." It's a lot of preparation and a lot of hard work and a lot of saying no to things on Saturday afternoons or for me saying no to things on days when I have important shows that night. So, definitely all of that I've learned from them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I'm curious, I've never asked your dad this, but does he rehearse out loud or is that more of like just he's in his study and I know the Saturday routine, he's talked about that pretty publicly. You would rehearse your jokes out loud, you've said that.

Andrew Stanley: I would, and I don't do that as much anymore now that I'm more comfortable with my jokes, I'll write them down. I will try to, maybe when I'm driving to the show, it's nice to have said something out loud, I think so that when you're in the moment, it's not your first try saying this thing. So, I always like to do it a few times. I'm not as relying on it as I was when I was first starting, but I know from my dad, I never heard any voices coming from the office as he was preparing on Saturday night.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't think he did. That was my guess.

Andrew Stanley: I don't think he does that. He may just hide it really well, but I think for him, I know it's all about outlines. I don't think he's typing out things word for word. It's all about outlines. What are his main points? And he's working on his slides now that he uses every Sunday. He's got his TV on stage with him, with all those main takeaways.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's good. What does your granddad, Jeff Henderson wants to know this. I asked him, "What should I ask Andrew Stanley?" He said, what does your granddad think about you as a stand-up comedian?

Andrew Stanley: Man, it was really funny when I think, I can't remember when I told him the first time that I was doing that. I think his first instinct was to be worried. Because I don't think that his impression of stand-up comedy, I don't think he'd ever heard, I don't think he heard about many clean comedian. So he was picturing this awful comedy club, Don Rickles type stuff. And so, and I love Don Rickles, but that's another thing. So, he was always saying, he was like, "So how's the comedy going?"

Andrew Stanley: He was real wanted to ask me about it, but he was kind of like, what is he doing? And he goes, "Can I come to see it at the comedy club?" And I said, "I don't think you should be seen there." But it was great. They had me come do the In Touch Ministries Christmas party this year, so I got to perform for him and his whole ministry. It's probably the most nervous I've ever been aside from when I was first starting to do a show like that. And thankfully, it went really well and he laughed and after that, he kind of understood and he was like, "That's great." He seemed very relieved.

Andrew Stanley: But he's been very supportive, and one of these days I'll get them to come out to The Laughing Skull Lounge, and take pictures with him in front of all the inappropriate posters on the wall.

Carey Nieuwhof: Rumor also has it, speaking of Jeff Henderson that he and his team turned over the Gwinnett Church Twitter feed to you during the super bowl. What are some of the fun things you did with it? And then any tips for churches on how ... we're so serious all the time. Right? Like what would you say, "Guys, be a little more playful here," or what advice would you have?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. Well it's funny Jeff told you about that day. Jeff and Gwinnett Church really in general do an amazing job of being so plugged in to their community. So Jeff approached me, I guess it was two years ago, or I guess it was a year ago about the Super Bowl. And he said, "Hey, we would love to have you come and just live tweet the Super Bowl. Just do funny tweets, try to get some attention on our Twitter, and we're just gonna try to be funny and appropriate and all that stuff."

Andrew Stanley: And I said, "All right, well I'll do my best. I can be funny. I'll do my best to be appropriate." So, that night I think was the first time I ever watched the Super Bowl by myself with like a work mindset. But he was doing the same thing, so I would text him stuff before I posted it. I'll say, "Hey, is this okay?" And usually he said yes, a couple of times he was like, "Maybe not say that." But it was fun. I think we ended up doing like 15 or so tweets. Just kind of funny stuff about things that were happening in the game as they happened.

Andrew Stanley: And we got a lot of response, and he asked me to do it again this year. I think I had a show or I was out of town so I couldn't do it, but he did it. And he did a good job. I went back and looked at him. He did a good job, kind of doing the same thing. But at the end of the day, social media is such a huge part of our culture now and it's all about figuring out how to leverage it with whatever you're doing.

Andrew Stanley: I mean for me, so many of the successful comedians right now, whether they're Tim Hawkins and John Crist or they're guys that are on Netflix doing this secular stuff. Most of the ones that are successful have found a way to keep their audience engaged even when they haven't heard them or seen them live in a while. So for a lot of them it's this, it's a podcast and saying, "Hey, I'm only going

to come to your city once a year, but every week you can hear me talk about what's going on and interview people and stay connected with me."

Andrew Stanley: A lot of people like John, he's doing Instagram stories every day. People feel like they're with them all day. They feel like they know him so well because he is carrying them in his pocket. So any way, the church or your business or just yourself as a speaker can keep your audience engaged throughout the year, not just when you see them or have a connection with them, the more they're going to be your fan or your supporter.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And you use Insta that way too. Your Insta stories show up from time to time.

Andrew Stanley: I'm trying to figure out which platform works well for me to kind of accomplish that goal that I was talking about. I don't know if it's that. Right now I'm most active on Instagram, so I'm trying to do stories and funny stuff, and also show where I'll be performing and stuff. But yeah, and it's changing all the time. There's new platforms and ways to connect with people every day. So it's about keeping track of that and staying on top of it and finding out what works for you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Great. Well, Andrew, I would be remiss in not going here before we wrap up, but you know, often preacher's kids, they get an interesting reputation sometimes. Any highlights or like moments before we wrap up about growing up in the home of a famous pastor of a large church?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. No, I say this all the time and it sounds like it'd be something my dad told me to say, but he absolutely didn't. It helped us a lot I say because my dad grew up as the son of a pastor of a large church. So, he really had a good feel for what that's like. And did I think a really good job of taking a lot of that pressure off of us and giving us a lot of freedom to kind of be who we wanted to be and not just make sure we're representing the family and the church as well as possible.

Andrew Stanley: There's definitely a pressure that you feel when you're a preacher's kid, especially if your dad has a large audience. I think a lot of times that pressure causes preacher's kids to run one of two directions and the first one is to run away from church. All right, well this is so hard, I can't live up to this unfair expectation that's been put on me since I was born, so I'm just going to run the other direction.

Andrew Stanley: And then there's the other side of it is like, "All right, well I'm just going to ... if this is my life, I'm just going to lean into it really hard and be the best church poster boy I can be." And both of those are probably unhealthy. So, I think my dad did a really good job of giving us the freedom to not have to choose one of those directions. And that came through, "Hey, maybe it's okay if you skip church to go play your baseball game. We'll let that decision be up to you." And I just could really not be more thankful for the way that they handled that.

Andrew Stanley: I think it goes out without ... There's no way to avoid. I always felt pressured to be good. And I think one of the things I learned or realized later is that a lot of times I made good decisions for the wrong reasons. I would make a moral choice because I wanted to represent my family well, maybe not as much thinking I also need to represent God well as a Christian.

Andrew Stanley: So, those lines were blurred for me sometimes, but at the end of the day, the result is good and as long as my relationship with Jesus is strong, I'm going to be okay. But it's tough. I mean, and I get why so many kids get pushed hard in one direction or the other, but I'm just really thankful the way my parents handled it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any idea why you decided as an adult, you're in your mid-20s now, but why you didn't go the other direction, why you decided to commit your life to Christ?

Andrew Stanley: Sure. I think I just had really great friends. I think when it comes down to it from when I was homeschooled my best friend Johnny was also homeschooled. So, we would just hang out every day and we were best friends since we were probably fourth, fifth grade, probably fourth grade. And in high school, I had a small group, we had our church small group, but we also had a group of five of us that would meet with this leader Jason Carl that runs an organization called Legacy Now.

Andrew Stanley: And he would meet with us once a week and we had a discipleship group, accountability group, and we just would not let each other stray. Anytime one of us had an opportunity or feeling like, "Hey, maybe we should ask out this girl." "Probably that's not a good idea." Like we wouldn't let each other make those decisions. They're really just came down to extreme accountability for me and also my parents just making it not stressful, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof: I love that. That's great. And knowing your dad as I do, and I've met your mom a few times as well, they're the real deal. They really-

Andrew Stanley: I like them. Man.

Carey Nieuwhof: Andrew, this has been incredible. You've helped me think through a lot of stuff I've always been curious about it. It's just exciting to see you at this point in your life doing what you love to do and really that it's coming as much of a surprise to you as anything. That's a lot of fun.

Andrew Stanley: I think to myself all the time I can't believe this is happening, so I'm having a great time just waiting for something to go horribly wrong any day now.

Carey Nieuwhof: You got a great future. People will want to connect with you on social. And tell us about your website too where they can find you, particularly there'll be a lot of people listening to this who want to book you as well.

Andrew Stanley: Great. I hope so. Yeah. Instagram I'm at Andrew W Stanley, and then my website is andrewstanleycomedy.com, there's a page on there where you can send me an email through the website if you're interested in booking me or learning more about comedy or just want to talk, would love to. I travel all over doing shows at churches and fundraisers and clubs and anywhere that'll let me tell jokes. I will would love to come.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. Andrew, thank you so much.

Andrew Stanley: Awesome. Thanks so much Carey for having me. This is a lot of fun

Carey Nieuwhof: Man. I love that conversation and I sure love Andrew and I want you to know I'm cheering for you and man, you make us laugh, like good on you dude. I love seeing young leaders really step into their passion. Hey, we have transcripts, we've shown notes and so much more so you can head on over to careynieuwhof.com/episode259, you'll find everything there, or just go to leadlikeneverbefore.com, and search Andrew Stanley and you'll find the show notes right there as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you haven't subscribed yet, please do so. Next week we are back with a fresh episode, but we actually have two this week and actually on Thursday, we're going to drop a new one with Ruth Haley Barton who talks to us about how busyness tends to ruin the soul of driven leaders and how to make time for rest. I will be taking notes on that one because that's a passion point for me. Here's an excerpt.

Ruth H Barton: Yeah. Well, I write about my own journey with Sabbath in the book *Sacred Rhythms* because it's really been almost the last holdout for me. And it was in my early 40s after I had been practicing other disciplines for a long time, and I just thought Sabbath was too hard. I had put it in the too hard file. My husband is a banker and his bank was open on Sundays. My children were all athletes and so, they were all in sports on Sundays.

Ruth H Barton: I was in ministry and so Sunday was the busiest day for me. So, it was just a can of worms I just didn't want to open. And so, I just sort of left it outside of my awareness in the too hard file. At the same time though, as I was recognizing these dangerous levels of depletion, my longing for Sabbath was growing. And in fact, when I would read books like Wayne Mueller's book *Sabbath*, I would literally weep at the practices that he would describe that were so gentle and so restful and gave us ways to practice trusting God and gave us ways to practice savoring the God's good gifts in our lives and creating space for the soul to come out and to say true things.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, that's coming up in just a couple of days and if you subscribe, you get it all automatically. Remember Pushpay Summit, man, time is ticking and we would love to see you there. May 22nd, 23rd in Dallas along with Patrick Lencioni, Cheryl Bachelder, I'll be keynoting, and it's going to be a great couple of days.

Head on over to pushpay.com/summit, and use the coupon code CAREYN, and you will get in for \$89 per person. That's almost half off the regular early bird pricing.

Carey Nieuwhof: So we'd love to see you there. I will see you again on Thursday. Thanks so much for listening guys and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer: You've been listening to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change, and personal growth to help you lead like never before.